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**COMPULSIVE BODONI AND THE PARMIGIANO TYPOGRAPHIC SYSTEM**

A project conceived, designed and curated  
by Riccardo Olocco and Jonathan Pierini

With a preface by  
James Clough

And unpublished texts by  
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Thomas Milo

Contributions by  
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Rana Abou Rjeily  
Irina Smirnova  
Irene Vlachou

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Text Regular  
10/16 pt

1782 he is awarded the title of Chamber Typographer  
of Charles III of Spain

**1793 Charles IV gives him  
an annuity of 6.000 reals**

Rough Medium  
10/16 pt

**1803** The Anzianato of Parma gives him honorary citizenship  
and a medal is minted in his honor

Sans Medium  
10/16 pt

*1806 he wins the gold medal  
of the first prize at the Paris Exposition,  
where he sent fourteen editions*

Text Book Italic  
10/16 pt

**1807 he is exempt  
from paying taxes**

Headline Bold  
10/16 pt

**as a great artist**

**1808 he receives  
a life annuity from Murat**

Text Regular  
10/16 pt

**1810** he receives a life annuity of 3.000 francs  
from Napoleon 'en considération des progrès  
qu'il a fait faire à l'art typographique'

Caption Bold  
10/16 pt

*1811 he is made knight  
of the Two Sicilies*

Rough Medium Italic  
10/16 pt

**1812** he is decorated with  
the Imperial Order of Réunion

Sans Regular  
10/16 pt

No punchcutter or type designer in the history of printing has been able to match, or even get close to Bodoni's achievements. The perfection, variety and quantity of his types are mind-boggling. The *Manuale Tipografico* printed in Parma by his Widow in 1818 shows 142 Romans, 34 Greeks and 21 Cyrillics (all with corresponding italics) as well as two dozen other non-Latin alphabets, music types and more than 1000 decorative rules... The mind continues to boggle with the thought that many types shown in his earlier specimen books were excluded from the 1818 *Manuale* because they were considered to be outmoded. And if all this were not enough, during his fifty-year career our hero found the time to print over 1100 editions, many of which are among the finest in the history of the printed book. How Bodoni was able to accomplish so much is a mystery that continues to puzzle his admirers.

His insatiable appetite for glory and his rare capacity for continuous hard work in a profession requiring the most exacting precision go some way to providing an explanation, but not far enough. Perhaps a new hybrid science of typo-psychoanalysis needs to be invented for us to really understand him.

But beyond this, and thinking about Bodoni in our times, how much of an inspiration has his work been to 20th century and contemporary type designers? Since ATF felt the need for a commercial version of Bodoni's romans more than 100 years ago, Bodoni revivals have been exclusive to the USA and Germany. Before digital type design took off in the 1990s, Aldo Novarese was Italy's only type designer of international repute and although he tackled many design themes he was never tempted to design an 'Italian' version of Bodoni. And now that digital type design has become quite widespread in Italy it still seems that nobody is interested in revivals.

Although some degree of interpretation is implicit in any revived version of a historical type, there is no doubt that the ATF, Bauer, Berthold

and ITC Bodonis are revivals. In their different ways each one claimed fidelity to Bodoni for the various 20th century technologies. What distinguishes the Parmigiano Typographic System is not the idea of offering the umpteenth Bodoni revival but a variety of designs that are contemporary interpretations of Bodoni which are more or less closely related to his work. The emphasis on variety was timidly tackled by ITC with their three versions of Bodoni in the early 1990s: a useful contribution for discriminating typographers working with different type sizes. Parmigiano further develops the same basic idea with five different roman designs suitable for settings at different sizes.

We cannot doubt that if Bodoni had been born later and had lived longer he would have tackled the sans serif theme which was first introduced by a London typesetter in about 1819 – only six years after his death. Parmigiano does this and much more too, with Sans, Egyptian, Typewriter and Stencil. Moreover, like the Master punchcutter himself, Parmigiano's ambitions also go beyond the Latin alphabet with Parmigiano Greek and Parmigiano Cyrillic soon to be on the scene and with more non-Latins in the pipeline too. Bodoni successfully applied his own 'modern' roman style to his Greeks and Cyrillics but Riccardo Olocco and Jonathan Pierini – originators of the Parmigiano typesystem – have wisely put the design of the Greeks and the Cyrillics into the typographically capable hands of Irene Vlachou and Irina Smirnova.

We are grateful to Olocco and Pierini for having spared us yet another series of fonts with Bodoni's name stuck onto them. Besides being a reasonable and delectably evocative name, Parmigiano represents an intelligent application to digital type design of some neglected Bodonian precepts.

**James Clough writes on the history of typography and the graphic arts. A member of the editorial board of Codex magazine, he lectures on many aspects of typography in several countries.**



**How did you have the chance to exhibit the Parmigiano Typographic System in Amsterdam, at the Special Collections?**

We started considering the idea of an exhibition dedicated to our Parmigiano and Giambattista Bodoni quite early. We thought about different locations for different dates in several countries, but to be honest we never imagined the possibility of taking our project to the Bijzondere Collecties of the University of Amsterdam – a sort of temple for typophiles – during the annual meeting of the Association Typographique Internationale. When the UvA Library offered us the wall at the Museum Café, we thought it was a pretty smart location for a project which claims to be unconventional. We began to work on this extraordinary opportunity fairly recently, following a kind suggestion made by Silvia Sfligiotti, who introduced us to Mathieu Lommen, book historian and

## The Parmigiano on stage at Amsterdam

Massimo Gonzato interviews Riccardo Olocco and Jonathan Pierini

curator at the Special Collections. And it's thanks to him that this exhibit became possible. Marina Chaccur, an ATypI board member, and the UvA personnel also gave us great support. Finally we couldn't have wished for anything better than this opportunity to introduce Parmigiano to such a highly qualified audience.

### What did you design and produce to highlight and promote your project on site?

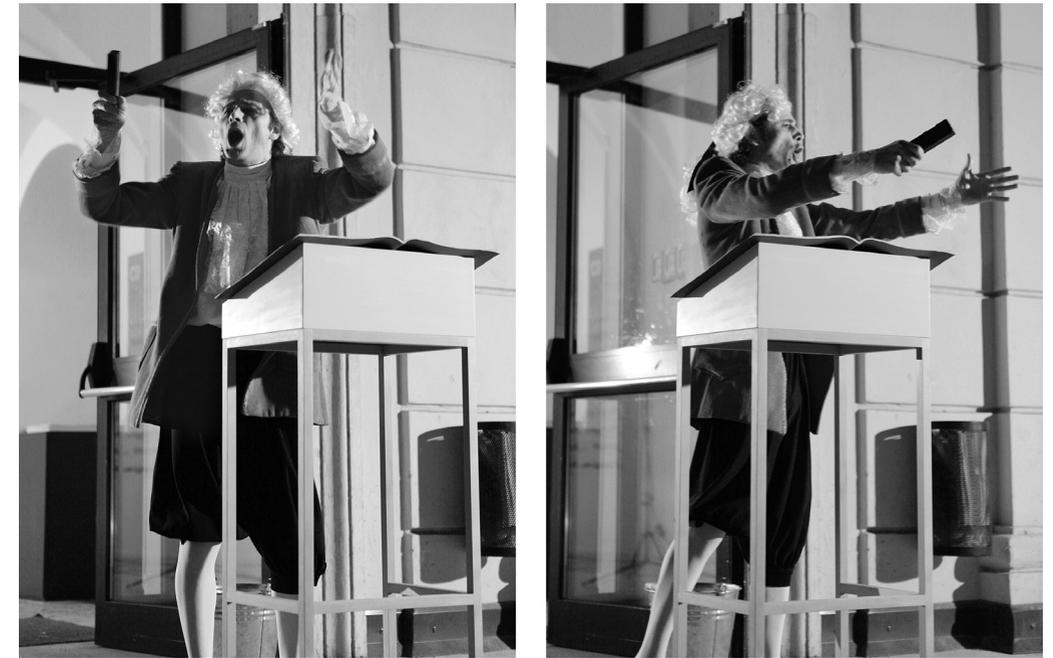
We aim to introduce the Parmigiano Typographic System and show what has been going on from the beginning of our project, how it has been shaping up, and what are going to be the next steps. Thus, we decided to design a multi-layered exhibition wall, which could express the eclectic and compulsive nature of our work. A sample of the non-Latin scripts and a video station with all the Compulsive Bodoni clips are part of the material available at the Museum Café along with our corporate booklet *Compulsive Bodoni and the Parmigiano Typographic System*. This publication has a preface by James Clough and shows the present state of our project with specimens, insights into the designers' approaches, and pungent essays by Giovanni Lussu and Thomas Milo. We also invited a handful of graphic designers to contribute posters to celebrate the Bodoni anniversary. Their works make up the background on which all the other items we produced are displayed.

### Is this the first time the Parmigiano has gone public?

About a year ago, in September 2012, the Unibz Design Festival took place at the Faculty of Design and Art of the Free University of Bolzano where we work as lecturers. We were invited to take part in the Festival by setting up an exhibition and we took the opportunity to launch the Parmigiano typesystem, which was conceived only a few months earlier. The exhibition was a success and convinced us to further commit ourselves to our ambitious and very demanding Bodonian project.

## The Parmigiano on stage at Amsterdam

Massimo Gonzato interviews Riccardo Olocco and Jonathan Pierini



### This year is the bicentenary of Bodoni's death. How significant is that to you?

This project is an opportunity for us to think about Bodoni – the man and his work – without preconceptions or any ritual devotions. While discussions on Bodoni sometimes divide audiences into sycophants or detractors, we try to be objective about the man. We started to think about a project which could celebrate Bodoni's work in an unconventional manner and could accompany the development of the Parmigiano family. Our exhibition in Bolzano – a preview of the typesystem in the shape of a typographic manual, texts, maps and wall hangings – was introduced by a short theatrical piece dedicated to Giambattista Bodoni, by the authors and actors Matteo Carlomagno and Mirko Ciorciari. *Compulsive Bodoni* was the title of this unprecedented play which dramatizes certain aspects of Bodoni's personality. *Compulsive Bodoni*

## The Parmigiano on stage at Amsterdam

Massimo Gonzato interviews Riccardo Olocco and Jonathan Pierini

also became the brand name we chose to communicate Parmigiano. In the run-up to its release, early in 2013, Compulsive Bodoni included a specialized website to introduce the fonts and follow their development along with a series of contents and multi-media events (short clips, musical compositions, articles, interviews, and a collection of posters). And now we have this great opportunity in Amsterdam.

### **You say Parmigiano is ‘work in progress’: in which direction should it develop and why did you decide to involve other professionals from different countries?**

We understood from the very beginning that our work was going to be a long-term project. Perhaps it would be better to say that it is not really possible to imagine a conclusion to a project which aims to be the most extended font family since Bodoni. However, even at this relatively early stage we can already show some important results. Four Serif styles and the Sans are ready for release and Arabic, Greek and Cyrillic Headline versions are on their way thanks to key contributions from Irina Smirnova, Irene Vlachou, and Rana Abou Rjeily. We are still working on Stencil, Fine and Typewriter cuts, the latter being developed by Rodrigo Saiani. We are also looking into the possibility of extending the family to other non-Latin scripts.

### **Who is going to look after distribution of Parmigiano typosystem?**

Parmigiano will be released by Peter Bilak’s Typotheque and we have many reasons to be happy with this choice. We certainly share the same interests in typographic systems, the awareness of the importance of an extended language support and the intention of offering more than just a typeface, which means taking care of the follow-up. And that is exactly what we’re doing with Parmigiano through our Compulsive Bodoni project.

## OH DEAR. BODONI!

Giovanni Lussu

**Giovanni Lussu, a graphic designer and fellow of various professional and academic associations, has taught graphic design and typography in renowned universities and colleges. His book ‘La lettera uccide’ (The Letter Killeth) is a summa of his thoughts. In this fast-paced, illuminating and highly ironic piece, he depicts Bodoni and his work within the framework of the history of typography as compared with some of his great contemporaries.**

English translation by James Clough

Per provvedere la maestà compiutamente assolutista del re Sole dell’appropriato complemento di scrittura a stampa, lo scientismo preilluminista emancipa i caratteri tipografici dalla bassa quotidianità, e cioè dalla scrittura manuale.

Il Romain du Roi è il primo grande passaggio della storia della tipografia, portatore sì di forme nuove, ma non abbastanza, ahinoi!, come già osservava Stanley Morison (per il quale in verità le novità era-

**In order to provide the majestic absolutism of the Roi Soleil with an appropriate form of mechanical writing, pre-illuminist men of science decided to emancipate typefaces from their humble, handwritten origins.**

**The Romain du Roi represented the first big step forward in the history of typography. The shapes were new, but alas, not new enough, as Stanley Morison observed (although, it ought to be said, that even those innovations were too much for him). Sym-**

Parmigiano Headline Light  
14/20 pt

Parmigiano Caption Medium  
10/16 pt

no già troppe): viene imposta la simmetria alle forme curve e le grazie sono tali da non poter essere eseguite a mano, ma grazie e andamento degli spessori tributano ancora la loro passiva dipendenza alla calligrafia.

E così la retorica bibliofilistica potrà continuare a esercitare il proprio nefasto dominio, e noi ci ritroviamo ancora a dover leggere in lettere ormai inefficienti di più di mille anni fa, riesumate da Coluccio Salutati e dai suoi comparì, espressione della restaurazione aristocratica e latifondista alla fine delle esperienze comunali, sulla base di un grossolano equivoco e a scapito di fiorenti scritture commerciali. Dal romano del re viene certo Pierre-Simon Fournier, ma da lì viene anche John Baskerville; e da Fournier e Baskerville verranno i Didot, Walbaum e Giam-

**metry was imposed on curved letterforms, but serifs and the progression of thicks and thins continued to pay passive homage to calligraphy.**

**Consequently, the rhetoric of bibliophiles continued its pernicious domination and we still have to put up with reading inefficient letters that are a thousand years old. These expressions of the restoration of the aristocracy and landowners, as well as the end of the city states, were dug up by people like Coluccio Salu-**

battista Bodoni. Ma da Baskerville, l'imprenditore agnostico, acuto esponente di una classe in ascesa, verranno poi Richard Austin e John Bell, gli Scotch roman, i Martin e il Bulmer, e infine i Benton e il Century, in pratica l'intera produzione libraria in lingua inglese per due secoli.

Delle derivazioni commerciali strette dei caratteri dei Didot (anch'essi in realtà piuttosto inefficienti) si lamenterà Leopardi nei *Pensieri*, ma i Didot rappresenteranno, e non è poco, l'imperialità napoleonica e comunque tutta un'altra linea retorica, ininterrotta fino a oggi.

E da Bodoni?

Ah, povero Bodoni! Confinato nel suo minuscolo ducato, in un paese agricolo non ancora stato, nel

**tati. Behind all was a gross misunderstanding to the detriment of several flourishing commercial styles of writing.**

**Pierre-Simon Fournier certainly followed in the footsteps of the Romain du Roi and John Baskerville did too. Then came the Didots, Walbaum and Giambattista Bodoni. The agnostic entrepreneur Baskerville (subtle exponent of the rising middle class) had his own 'descendants' like Richard Austin, John Bell (Scotch roman), William Martin (Bulmer) and finally Benton with his**

quale la borghesia moderna stenterà a farsi faticosamente strada, nel quale la tipografia rimarrà povera cosa per più di cento anni, e oltre, fuorviato da una committenza ancien régime verso un'elitaria ricerca sostanzialmente artistica, cosa verrà dalla sua meravigliosa abilità, dalla sua immensa passione artigianale?

Testi al negativo su fondi in quadricromia.

Ah, Bodoni!

**Century: a stylistic hallmark covering two centuries of the entire book production in the English language.**

**In his 'Pensieri' Giacomo Leopardi complained about the close and rather inefficient commercial imitations of Didot types. Nonetheless, those Didots were able to represent Napoleon and his Empire and another very different line of rhetoric which still goes on to this day.**

**And what about Bodoni?**

**Poor Bodoni in his little Duchy (hardly a state) set within an agricultural Nation with a modern bourgeoisie trying hard to get on, but led astray to artistic elitism by its ancien régime clients. Printing in Italy was destined to be something quite trivial for the following century... And what was to become of Bodoni's wondrous skill, his immense passion for his chosen craft?**

**Texts in white on a four-colour background.**

**Oh dear. Bodoni!**



In the middle of 2010 I started taking macro photographs of original copies of Bodoni's 1818 *Manuale Tipografico*. My purpose was to analyse Bodoni's roman types in order to develop some fonts inspired by his work. Without any previous experience in 'modern' typeface design, shortly before the bicentenary of his death I made the decision to study the work of Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813). Bodoni's roman types adhere to the so-called modern trend of his time, initiated - so some historians have claimed - by the Didot family in Paris. Thin, horizontal serifs, vertical axes, high contrast between thick and thin strokes and round terminations on certain lowercase letters are the main features of these faces.

#### **The most prolific punchcutter in history**

To my knowledge no one has ever fully investigated the many typefaces contained in Bodoni's *Manuale Tipografico*. There has been no classification of Bodoni's roman and italic types, and it seems that nobody has ever catalogued the punches and matrices preserved in the Museo Bodoniano in Parma - one of the most important collections of its kind in the world. The *Manuale Tipografico* displays 142 sets of romans arranged by type-size, from the smallest to the biggest. Bodoni experimented with colour, proportion and detail. Many of the characters show differences that are almost undetectable to the naked eye, but with macro photography we can identify dozens of different shapes of the main letters a, b, e, g...

The problem in analysing Bodoni's faces is that the *Manuale* never displays the whole set of letters of a typeface, but just some of them. Indeed among the characters with bigger type-sizes only a few letters are shown. For instance the letter

g, which carries a lot of information about the morphology of the alphabet, disappears at the 95th roman: the Manuale does not display any g bigger than ‘Parangone’, which is equivalent to about 17 points.

These investigations led me to design three typefaces in the style of Bodoni. I followed a philological approach in two of them (one for continuous text and one for titling) while the third face was a condensed display roman rather than a revival. However, I was not satisfied with the philological approach. Following some trial offset prints I came to the conclusion that the proportions were too far-removed from contemporary tastes. The faces looked weak.

#### Compulsive Bodoni

Many of Bodoni’s alphabets have extravagant proportions: some letters are too narrow, others too wide. These do not seem to be the products of contemplated design decisions and it appears that Bodoni was not following any particular scheme. For example: in the Albano roman (Sopracanoncino 1, about 28 points, Manuale p. 127) the letter n is considerably narrower than o, while in Tolentino (Canoncino 6, about 26 points, p. 125) n is wider than o. These differences of proportions occur throughout the Manuale. My opinion is that Bodoni was following neither traditional schemes (neoclassical or earlier proportions) nor establishing his own proportions. His experimentation was compulsive. He kept on changing proportions as though he was never satisfied.

The initial idea of designing a vast family of Bodonian fonts came from a brief conversation with Albert Pinggera, in March 2012, on the way back from Robothon. We tried to imagine

how to adapt Bodoni’s work to our times. How would Bodoni have acted if he were living and working in the early 21st century? What would his approach to type design have been? As a Jansenist, Bodoni was convinced of human depravity: a man must spend his life in hard work and obedience to wash away original sin. He was a teetotaler, and he was completely obsessed with his work. Besides being a formidable compositor, printer and publisher (he was the Director of the Royal Printing House of Parma from 1768 until the end of his life), Bodoni was also the most prolific punchcutter in the history of printing. In the 1840 inventory compiled by his widow, his typographic material comprised 25,491 punches and 50,283 matrices. Such a number of steel punches cut by hand represents a truly colos-



sal effort and to say that Bodoni was an obsessive-compulsive punchcutter is no exaggeration.

#### Parmigiano first steps

Early in 2012 I reworked the Bodonian romans trying to find a way to make a system of serifed families – without the necessity for decades of work. I found a good solution working with four master designs, each with different proportions and details. Mixing the four masters I could produce variations among different styles which were not only optical – such as can be found in many large font families – but morphological too.

Given the variety of typefaces Bodoni cut (142 series of romans in his 1818 Manuale) it is illusory to talk of a single Bodoni



roman. The idea most designers have of Bodoni is based on the Bodoni designed by Morris Fuller Benton for ATF (American Type Founders) in 1910 – the first face to take the name of Bodoni and still the most important revival with that name. Benton was inspired by the original types but he also had to meet financial and mechanical limitations Bodoni would never have accepted. The result is a masterful synthesis which is more vigorous, although less modulated and less ‘organic’ than any of Bodoni’s romans. Reworking the Bodonian romans I eschewed a philological approach and kept a distance from Benton’s and other 20th century designs. My intention was to interpret Bodoni according to contemporary taste. As Bodoni spent most of his life in Parma I called them *Parmigiano* (i.e. Parmesan or ‘coming from Parma’).

In the Spring of 2012 I talked about the project with Jonathan Pierini, a friend and colleague. He seemed to be just the right partner for the crazy project I had in mind. Together we set up a development plan and the Parmigiano Typographic System took on its current configuration.

#### The Parmigiano Typographic System

Our aim was to produce contemporary designs that aspire to be the irreverent descendants of Bodoni’s letterforms. We decided to add other roman styles to the serifed ones. Although we certainly cannot deny the influence of Bodoni’s work in our project, Bodoni never cut sans or slab serifs (these styles came in a few years after his death); neither did he cut stencil or typewriter styles, which were introduced many decades later. Slab serifs were distant from the grace and grandeur that Bodoni strived for. Parmigiano Rough, among the serif styles – with

its rather clumsy proportions – belongs to that same period; it is a parody of 19th-century typefaces, a gross and ungraceful workhorse. Bodoni never cut such shapes and we can presume that he would feel offended by our choices.

However, we felt that this was not enough to celebrate the spirit of Giambattista Bodoni at the bicentenary of his death. Bodoni is also famous for his many non-Latin faces which he displayed in the second volume of his 1818 *Manuale*. Not just Greek and Cyrillic scripts, but also many Hebrews, Arabics, Armenians, an Ethiopian, a Tibetan etc. Bodoni was very proud of this part of his work (quite uncommon at the time), which he called – in a rather eurocentric perspective – exotic alphabets. So, with due consideration given to the growing request for non-Latin typefaces, and not content with limiting our efforts to various styles of the Latin alphabet, we embarked on non-Latin scripts, involving designers from all over the world. The Parmigiano typosystem became a group project. Rana Abou Rjeily, Irina Smirnova and Irene Vlachou have already joined us.

These notes complete and update ‘A compulsive tribute to Giambattista Bodoni’ published on the blog ‘I love typography’ in march 2013.

The typefaces shown in the previous pictures were designed for the preview at the Unibz Design Festival, September 2012. Most of the letters have been reworked.



No type designer can escape from the long debated discussion about revivalism in the field of type design, its usefulness and appropriateness in relation to his or her time. Any new design is at first evaluated in these terms: to what extent is it an original design? What are its roots and how much of a design debt is owed to them?

It is widely accepted that designers approach the same historical model in different ways, each following his or her sensibilities and making design decisions in the process of interpretation.

It has been emphasized – and not just in the field of type design – that the technologies we use are not neutral and affect our work directly as well as indirectly. This is so because they establish uses and practices which contribute to influence our approaches and intentions.

Many contemporary designs of historical models offer extended character sets with an impressive number of stylistic variants and weights, and some go further to give the user a system of fonts to articulate complex texts or to give voice to several tones of expression.

However, this is not mere technology. We can even say that there is no such thing as mere technology at all, as this develops within a cultural milieu which technology itself contributes to re-define. To look at type design from a contextual perspective would eventually induce us to ask questions concerning the validity of a new type design.

One consequence of market pressures is an increasing awareness that a type design project cannot just be a new file to install in our computer.

Typefaces become toolboxes which provide users with great autonomy and a high degree of customization. At the same time they are able to communicate a vision or a message. We can see how typefaces have a hybrid nature: we can buy and enjoy them as we do with any other commodity, or – as for instance it happens with music and fashion – we can share their vision and message.

We prefer to speak of a Parmigiano Typographic System instead of a

font family, as with Parmigiano our intention is to offer a series of typographic tools which can be mixed according to necessity.

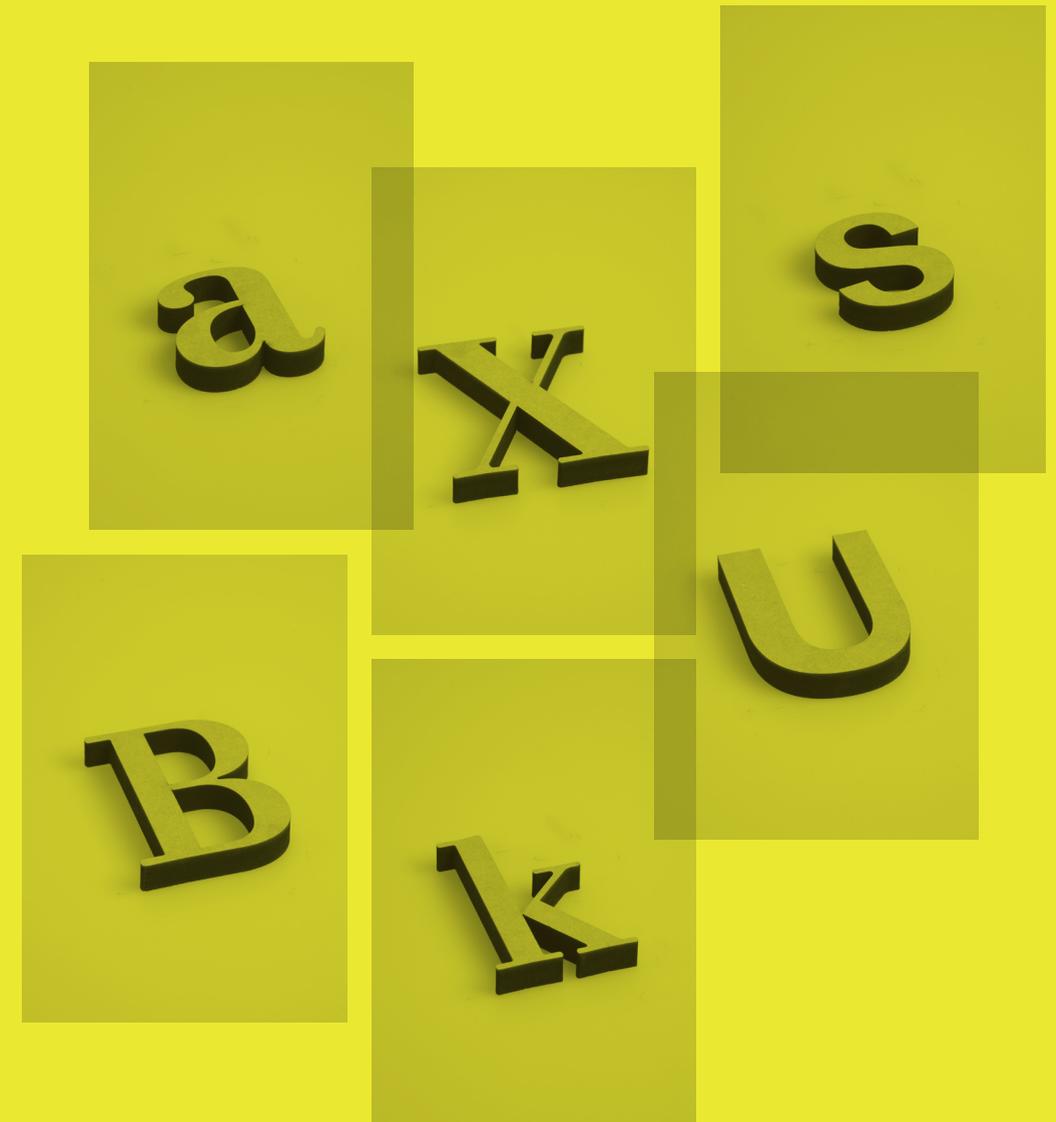
In the recent history of typography, the first great example of a complex typographic system was Univers, designed by Adrian Frutiger in 1956. According to the 'international' stylistic principles Univers aimed to become a universal type anybody could use in any circumstances.

The idea behind the Parmigiano typosystem is still that of offering a systematically conceived tool, but without the intention of universality.

On the contrary, the project is the result of a precise idea of an idiosyncratic set of fonts which plays with styles reflecting historical moments and tendencies yet living together.

Parmigiano is not an open project. Still it has been strongly influenced by those contemporary ways of working which rely on sharing and networking. Keeping copyright, as in traditional projects, preferring central control, and marketing only complete and tested fonts which can guarantee the professional level of the product, Parmigiano is developing thanks to a growing network of designers. Different versions and scripts might be developed in the future by us as well as by others.

The Compulsive Bodoni project – which has the task of launching the typosystem in the Bodoni bicentenary year – is a platform based on both research and communication. Precisely because there is no clear division between business and research, we would like our project to be seen as a new, reliable example of good practice.



Headline  
pag. 31

Parmigiano

Text  
pag. 37

Parmigiano

Sans  
pag. 43

Parmigiano

Rough  
pag. 49

Parmigiano

Caption  
pag. 55

Parmigiano

Stencil  
pag. 63

Parmigiano

Fine  
pag. 66

Parmigiano

# Parmigiano

Rodrigo Saiani

# Пармезан

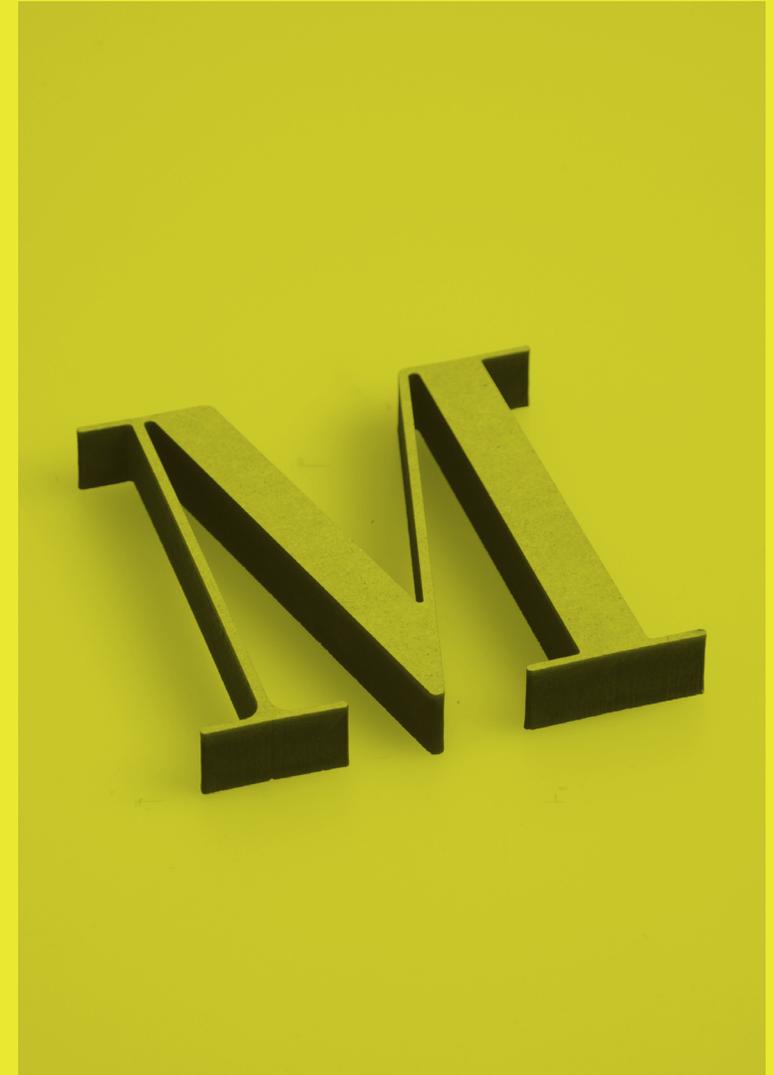
Irina Smirnova

# Παρμεζάνα

Irene Vlachou

# البارميزان

Rana Abou Rjeily



Aa

Headline Light

Aa

Headline Regular

Aa

Headline Medium

Aa

Headline Bold

Aa

Headline Black

*Aa*

Headline Light Italic

*Aa*

Headline Italic

*Aa*

Headline Medium Italic

*Aa*

Headline Bold Italic

*Aa*

Headline Black Italic

**Parmigiano Headline** is the group leader, the posh and self-confident cut of the family. Among all the versions it is the closest to Giambattista Bodoni's original designs.

Compared with the other styles of the family, Parmigiano Headline has the most contrast. It also features smaller bowls as well as delicate and subtly refined shapes.

Its generous ascenders add elegance to the words and its narrow proportions balanced by round letterforms make it a space-saver. Parmigiano Headline is perfect for use at big type sizes without sacrificing the black and white rhythm within the line.

Aag Aag Aag

Parmigiano Headline, Text and Rough

With its five weights, Parmigiano Headline is a great choice for advertisers and magazine titles.

The frugality of the drawings, the controlled width and the delicacy of the letterforms recall some of the display cuts shown in Bodoni's 1818 *Manuale Tipografico*. But far from being a facsimile of any of Bodoni's types, Parmigiano is more of a synthesis of the key features to be seen in the bigger Romans of the *Manuale*.

These features reflect our approach to the design of these fonts. The result is a series specifically conceived for setting titles and headlines (not recommended for sizes below 20 points).



Parmigiano Headline Medium  
400/250 pt



Parmigiano Headline Light  
300/350 pt

Parmigiano is an extraordinary cheese with amazing aromas and a unique texture and taste.

*Parmigiano is produced exclusively in the provinces of Parma, Reggio Emilia, Modena and parts of the provinces of Mantua*

**and Bologna, on the plains, hills and mountains enclosed between the rivers Po and Reno. The cheese makers are the custodians and interpreters of the secrets of process-**



## Parmigiano Text overview

Aa

Text Light

Aa

Text Book

Aa

Text Regular

Aa

Text Medium

Aa

Text Bold

Aa

Text Black

*Aa*

Text Light

*Aa*

Text Book Italic

*Aa*

Text Italic

*Aa*

Text Medium Italic

*Aa*

Text Bold Italic

*Aa*

Text Black Italic

**Parmigiano Text** was specifically conceived for setting long texts. It has a delicacy which contrasts with the Rough version and it is more solid than the Headline cut. It is the ideal choice for a relaxed reading experience where contents need to be easily accessible. Readability has obviously been a prime consideration here, but we also wanted to offer sharp and elegant letterforms.

With its six weights Parmigiano Text is a highly versatile font suitable for body copy, especially for magazines and books. Compared with the continuous text typefaces cut by Bodoni himself, Parmigiano Text has a higher contrast and a less eccentric structure. Eye-catching details, best suited for display purposes, have been softened in order to offer a more neutral effect. Contrast is slightly more accentuated than in most text faces because Parmigiano Text was designed to be used in sizes above 10 points. Although it is not without a certain distinction, Parmigiano Text is 'neutral' and among the Parmigiano typesystem it is the easiest to use. For sizes below 10 points we suggest Parmigiano Caption which was designed for this purpose.

B Ď b à g 2

*Like any modern face, the main features of Parmigiano Text are the thin, horizontal serifs, vertical axes, high contrast between thick and thin strokes and round terminations on certain lowercase letters.*

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Mantua and Bologna, on the plains, hills and mountains enclosed between the rivers Po and Reno. The cheese makers are the custodians and interpreters of the secrets of processing milk. The result of their work is inextricably linked to their personal experience and sensitivity giving a pleasing diversity of taste and aromas. Every day,

the milk from the evening milking is left to rest until morning in large vats, where the fats rise to the surface. These are used for the production of butter. As soon as the whole milk of the morning milking arrives from the farm, the skimmed milk from the night before is poured into the typical bell-shaped copper cauldrons where calf rennet and fermented whey, rich in natural lactic ferments obtained from the processing of the day before, are added. The milk coagulates in around ten minutes, and the curd which is formed is then

A B C  
D E F  
G H I  
J L M

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Aa

Sans Light

Aa

Sans Regular

Aa

Sans Medium

Aa

Sans Bold

Aa

Sans Black

The idea of a sans serif to accompany a roman inspired by Bodoni raises design questions such as the degree of contrast, modulation and treatment of terminations of single letters. **Parmigiano Sans** owes a design debt to early 19th century Grotesques — such as the William Thorogood’s Seven line Grotesque (1834) — characterized by pronounced contrasts of thick and thin strokes, ‘clumsy’ terminations and an overall roundness of the letters. While these features are quite obvious in the bolder cuts of Parmigiano Sans, the lighter weights show less contrast and the Light cut is almost monoline.

Our intention with Parmigiano Sans is to strike a balance between the primitiveness of the early grotesques and a less eccentric and normalized structure. Although the proportions and the weights of Parmigiano Sans are based on its serif companion, thanks to the fine crafting of details it gains its own personality which makes it suitable for a wide range of uses. Parmigiano Sans shows its sturdy and no-nonsense qualities for texts in small sizes. When used in progressively bigger sizes the details become clear and prominent, making it a good choice for headlines. The quite narrow proportions of these fonts which come from the Serif Text cuts are another good reason for choosing it to set headlines.

Parm Parm

The proportions of Parmigiano Sans are based on the Parmigiano Text structure. The contrast of the letters reminds us of the modulation of the Text cut but with Sans it is decreased to make for a stronger and highly versatile face.

Parmigiano  
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traordinary  
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Every day, the milk from the evening milking is left to rest until morning in large vats, where the fats rise to the surface. These are used for the production of butter. As soon as the whole milk of the morning milking arrives from the farm, the skimmed milk from the night before is poured into the typical bell-shaped copper cauldrons where calf rennet and fermented whey, rich in natural lactic ferments obtained from the processing of the day before, are added. The milk coagulates in around ten minutes, and the curd which is formed is



Aa

Rough Light

Aa

Rough Book

Aa

Rough Regular

Aa

Rough Medium

Aa

Rough Bold

Aa

Rough Black

Aa

Rough Light Italic

Aa

Rough Book Italic

Aa

Rough Italic

Aa

Rough Medium Italic

Aa

Rough Bold Italic

Aa

Rough Black Italic

At a first glance **Parmigiano Rough** does not appear to be anywhere near Bodoni and its thick-set and ungraceful design would seem to belong to another family. Although it shares the same structure as the other cuts of the system, Parmigiano Rough is closer to the Scotch Roman models of the early 1800s, ancestors of the well-known Century family. Rather than aspiring to elegance and perfection, Scotch Romans are distinguished by reduced contrast, shorter ascenders and descenders, and some have rather narrow proportions. Unlike the motivations which guided Bodoni during his remarkable career, they are the outcome of commercial considerations. Similarly, Parmigiano Rough focuses on practicality and legibility.

Parmigiano Rough is the ugly duckling, but whether or not you also come to think of it as the bastard child of the family, it is the one to trust in critical conditions. Thanks to its reduced contrast and strong serifs, it is the perfect choice when the roughness of the paper or the quality of printing threaten your text.

a b ë ğ R

*But beyond technicalities there are other reasons for choosing Parmigiano Rough. You might want to accentuate the contrast between headline and body copy, or perhaps you are looking for a deliberate touch of roughness. You might also just appreciate ugliness.*

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Aa

Caption Light

Aa

Caption Book

Aa

Caption Regular

Aa

Caption Medium

Aa

Caption Bold

Aa

Caption Black

*Aa*

Caption Light

*Aa*

Caption Book Italic

*Aa*

Caption Italic

*Aa*

Caption Medium Italic

*Aa*

Caption Bold Italic

*Aa*

Caption Black Italic

**Parmigiano Caption** was conceived to accompany **Parmigiano Text** for setting secondary texts such as captions and footnotes. The idea of having different cuts for specific point size ranges is rooted in the history of typography. It comes from the times of hand-cut metal type when different fonts were used for each point size\*.

Typical adjustments for fonts to be used at smaller sizes consist in decreasing the contrast, thickening the serifs, widening the space between letters, opening up the counter forms, shortening ascenders and descenders, eventually darkening the overall weight of the font.

Parmigiano Caption features all these adjustments in order to guarantee great readability and consistent quality in print. Apart from technical reasons, Parmigiano Caption is perfect for work with complex texts in several sizes.

Abèg Abèg

#### Parmigiano Caption and Parmigiano Headline

\* This practice stopped with the changeover to digital type. But in the 1990s it came back again, for a while, with the ‘Multiple Masters’ – a technology which allowed for many interpolated variants within the same font file. This was not a long-lasting technology but it did emphasise the importance of optical sizes in type design. Nonetheless, today only a small number of typefaces on the market are offering optical variants.

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**tool called ‘spino’. After the cooking process, which reaches 55 degrees centigrade, the cheesy granules sink to the bottom of the cauldron, forming a single mass. After resting for around thirty minutes the cheese is removed, with deft movements, by the cheese maker. Cut into two parts and wrapped in its**

its typical cloth, the cheese is then placed in a mould which will give it its final shape. Each cheese is given

A B C D  
E F G H  
I J K L M  
N O P R  
S T U V  
W X Y Z

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## MORE LATIN STYLES

**Parmigiano Stencil**

**Parmigiano Fine**

**Parmigiano Typewriter by Rodrigo Saiani**

Parmigiano Stencil

Parmigiano Fine

Parmigiano Typewriter

Parmigiano Stencil

Aa

Stencil Light

Aa

Fine Light

Aa

Typewriter Light

Aa

Stencil Regular

Aa

Fine Regular

Aa

Typewriter Regular

Aa

Stencil Medium

Aa

Fine Medium

Aa

Typewriter Medium

Aa

Stencil Bold

Aa

Fine Bold

Aa

Typewriter Bold

Aa

Stencil Black

Aa

Fine Black

Parmigiano is an extraordinary

Parmigiano Stencil Medium  
100/95 pt

cheese  
with am-  
azing  
aromas  
and a

unique  
textu-  
re and  
taste.  
Parmi-

P

Parmi-  
giano is  
an ex-  
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nary

# Parmigiano

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## MORE HEADLINE SCRIPTS

Parmigiano Headline Cyrillic by Irina Smirnova

Parmigiano Headline Greek by Irene Vlachou

Parmigiano Headline Arabic by Rana Abou Rjeily

Parmigiano Headline  
Cyrillic

Headline Cyrillic Light

Headline Cyrillic Regular

Headline Cyrillic Medium

Headline Cyrillic Bold

Headline Cyrillic Black

Parmigiano Headline  
Greek

Headline Greek Light

Headline Greek Regular

Headline Greek Medium

Headline Greek Bold

Headline Greek Black

Parmigiano Headline  
Arabic

Headline Arabic

MORE HEADLINE SCRIPTS

During his career Giambattista Bodoni designed many non-Latin scripts without knowing much about them and he often ended up with results which puzzle native readers. However, we decided to pay homage to him by setting up an international group of designers.

Irina Smirnova who lives in The Hague, is taking care of Cyrillic, Irene Vlachou is working on the Greek design in Athens and Rana Abou Rjeily who is based in Lebanon, is designing the Arabic. You can read more about them and their ‘Parmigiano experiences’ in the following pages.

Пармезан  
— это не-  
обыкновен-  
ный сыр  
с удиви-  
тельным  
ароматом,

неповторимой тексту-  
рой и вкусом. Пармезан  
производят исключитель-  
но в провинциях Парма,  
Реджо-нель-Эмилия, Моде-  
на, and parts of the provinces  
of Мантуя and Болонья, on  
the plains, hills and mountains  
заключенных между река-  
ми По и Рено. Сыроделы  
бережно хранят и истол-  
ковывают каждый на свой  
лад секреты переработки  
молока. Уникальный чело-  
веческий опыт и чувство  
рождают разнообразие

Η Παρμε-  
ζάνα είναι  
εξαιρετικό  
τυρί με  
εμπληκτι-  
νά αρώ-

Η Παρμεζάνα είναι ένα εξαι-  
ρετικό τυρί με εμπληκτινά  
αρώματα και μια μοναδική  
υφή και γεύση. Η Παρμεζάνα  
παράγεται αποκλειστικά στις  
επαρχίες της Πάρμα, στην  
επαρχία του Ρέτζο-Εμίλια,  
στην Μόντενα και σε τμήμα-  
and parts of the provinces  
of Μάντοβα and Μπολόνια,  
on the plains, hills and moun-  
tains enclosed between the  
ποταμούς Πάδο και Ρένο.  
Οι τυροκόμοι είναι οι φύλακες  
και διερμηνείς των μυστικών  
της επεξεργασίας του γάλα-

# البارميزان هو جبنة استثنائية

تتميز برائحة شهية  
وطعم وتركيبه فريدتين

Parmigiano is pro-  
duced exclusively in  
the provinces of

In the following pages Irina Smirnova talks about her first encounter with a Bodonian typeface and her motivations in examining historical Cyrillic material. Irene Vlachou tells of her intention to design a typeface that respects the unique identity of the Greek script, Rana Abou Rjeily explains why design of a Modern Arabic is still a challenge.

Finally, based on his remarkable practical and theoretical knowledge of Arabic typography, Thomas Milo presents an informative text in which he investigates the origin of Bodoni's Arabic. The most innovative feature is the graphical representation of his observations.

## THE CYRILLIC EXPERIENCE

Interview with Irina Smirnova

**Irina Smirnova** is a type designer living and working in The Hague since she graduated from Type and Media at the KABK in 2010. Previously Irina taught type and calligraphy in various higher education establishments in Moscow. Being specialized in her native script, she is pleased to share her skills by giving Cyrillic workshops.

**Irene Vlachou** is a type designer based in Athens. She graduated from the graphic design program of Vakalo School of Art & Design in Athens and she holds an MA in typeface design from the University of Reading. Currently she's collaborating with various international type foundries and working as a Greek consultant on several projects.

Based in Beirut, **Rana Abou Rjeily** teaches design and typography at Notre Dame University and is currently developing a typeface for teaching Arabic as a second language. She studied Graphic Design and later graduated from Central Saint Martins London with an MA in communication design. In 2011 she published her book 'Cultural Connectives' which bridges Arabic and Latin scripts.

**Thomas Milo** is linguist, type designer, researcher and pioneer of Arabic font technology. He holds the Peter Karow award for exceptional innovations in the development of digital type and typography-related technology and represents the Sultanate of Oman as full member of the Unicode Consortium.

**Let's start with the big question: why do you design typefaces? What's your interest in letterforms and what to you is the most valuable thing about this work?**

I was fascinated by the perfection of the letterforms designed by the great masters, so I did my best, and worked hard to achieve this kind of perfection. Since I came to study at Type and Media in The Hague, my idea about type design started to change and it took a few years till the rhythm became my main aspiration. The first time I felt satisfied with the result was when I was practising calligraphy and the rhythm started to work in the Latin minuscule, so I wanted to achieve it in type design too. Last year I have been working on two headline typefaces for Google and I experimented with the simplest rhythm where the ratio of black and white is almost 1:1, typical for Fraktur and German lettering. The result was two fonts, Denk and Fjalla, which have a different expression but share the same rhythm. My challenge is to find a good rhythm in Cyrillic.

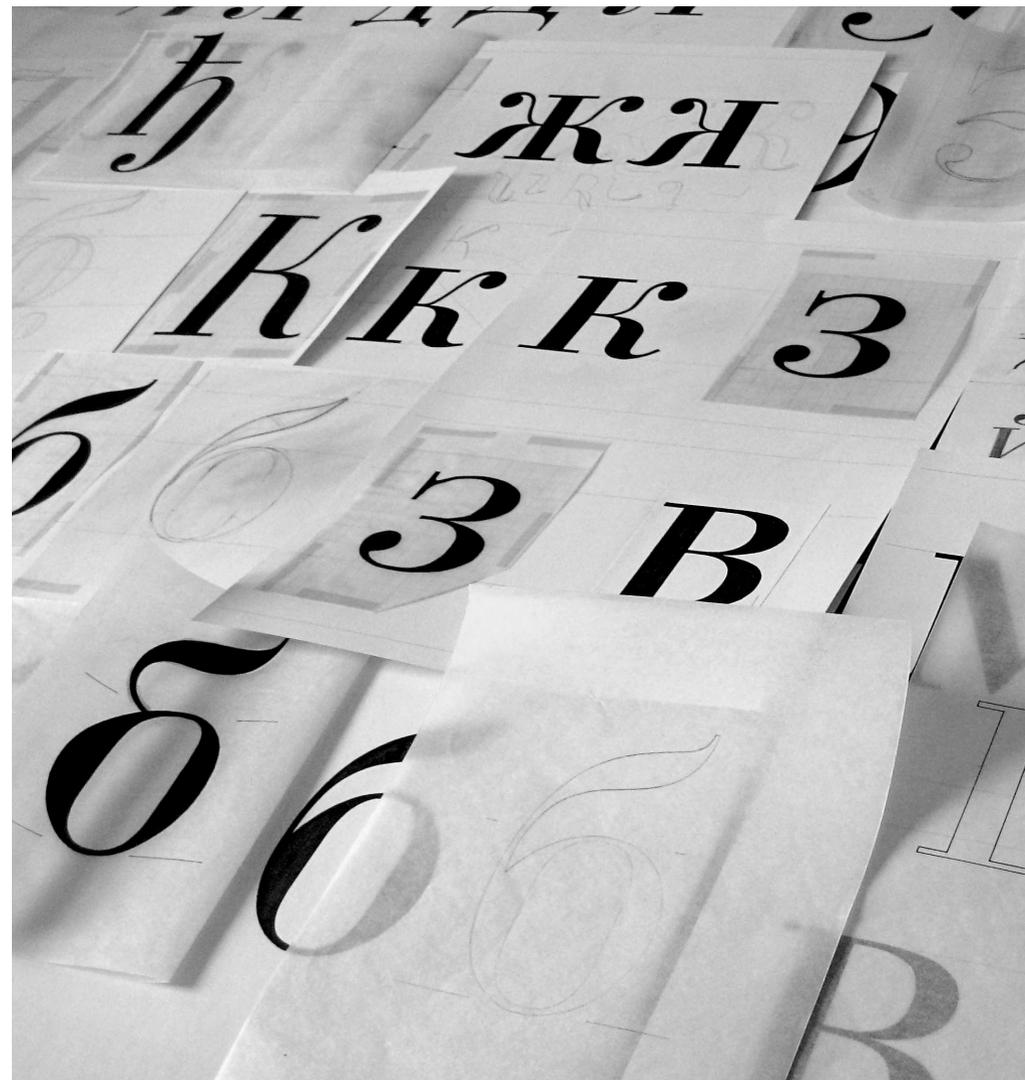
**Time to get to know more about you. How did you come to type design and what are your interests and your experiences in type design? Could you tell us about one of the projects you are most happy with?**

I studied at the Moscow State University of Printing Arts. The faculty of Graphic Arts has a great tradition created by several generations of book artists. I learned painting, drawing, book illustration, printing techniques and graphic design. Though the drawings were mostly realistic, the emphasis was put on the space between the objects. I learned to work with the white space of a book page and to value the light coming from the surface. Perhaps the urge to move from realistic drawing to abstract forms

brought me to type design, with its clear rhythms of black and white. I was fascinated by the music of calligraphy from the first moment I touched the broad nib pen, which at that time was just a piece of a wooden ruler split and cut for writing. I became seriously interested in type in the final year of my bachelor degree and did my internship at ParaType. A year after the graduation I was invited to teach typography at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Moscow. In the beginning I had very little knowledge and a lot of courage and curiosity and the interaction with students was exciting and taught all of us a great deal. Surprisingly enough, a few years later when I had my lectures well prepared the interest was gone and I started to question all my ideas and practice. In search for the new perspective I came to The Hague to become a student again. Speaking about my favourite project, it is still to be designed. Every typeface I've been working on is a step towards it.

**Many things are said about Bodoni's heritage. What was your idea of Bodoni and of Bodonian typefaces before joining the Parmigiano Project?**

With my natural inclination for the broad nib pen and the dynamic of the Renaissance typefaces, the Modern serifs looked too static and rational to me and I used to feel like a guest in an alien world. It is interesting that Robert Bringhurst refers to Bodoni as the 'nearest typographic counterpart to Byron and Liszt' calling him 'typography's arch-romantic'. Before joining the Parmigiano project I thought that his designs were pure perfection. This impression was created by a few images I have seen in the books on type history and mostly by designing Cyrillic for Bauer Bodoni, and I spent hours and hours trying to make perfect drawings. My teacher Tagir Safaev patiently guided me through my learning process



**My first steps in type design and my first encounter with a Bodonian typeface: in 2003 I made numerous sketches for Bauer Bodoni Cyrillic. An 'old school' technique: tracing paper, pencil 0,35 mm, isograph 0,1 mm, black ink, white gouache for corrections, the size of a capital letter 70 mm.**

back then. I had a feeling that Bodoni shapes were flawless. But looking at the original copy of *Manuale Tipografico* changed this impression. There I found such a variety of forms and proportions that I understood it was a continuous experimentation, endless change, as if the master was never satisfied with the result. The endless urge to move on, to do something different. At least, this is what I saw studying Bodoni's Cyrillics.

**What's your opinion of Bodoni's Cyrillic designs?**

The Civil Type we are using now was introduced in the early 18th century, when the reform took place, and during the following century Cyrillic evolved to work well with the Modern Serif. Typefaces designed by the Didot family had a great influence on Cyrillic typography and were popular in Russia. With Bodoni Cyrillics it was different, he never sold them to Russia and I wonder if they were ever used for any publication besides the Manual. I wonder why did Bodoni cut so many Cyrillic fonts (81 pages in the second volume of *Manuale Tipografico* are dedicated to the Russian fonts). Perhaps he used as a reference some Cyrillic examples from the early and mid 18th century, while the script evolved and his design would look old-fashioned for Russian eyes even in his time. But his exploration of Cyrillic was very dynamic and daring, especially the way he treated the 'inconvenient' letters. Some shapes are very expressive, some are clumsy, but he kept all of them. I have the impression that his experimentation was not systematic, but rather he wanted to try all the possibilities. For different sizes he used letter patterns originating from the different historical periods, for example zhe in the big size is more archaic than in small. It is very interesting to observe how one letter changes from one size to another.



Digital photographs of Cyrillic letter zhe from 1818 *Manuale Tipografico* show the changes in letter pattern from the smallest size to the biggest and the experiments of the great master with a foreign character.

**What's your approach in designing Parmigiano Cyrillic? How would you describe the Parmigiano you're working on?**

For me this project gives a reason to look at the rich historical material for Cyrillic we have from that period, from the great Italian master himself, from his competitor, the Didot family in Paris, and from Russian type foundries. The Royal Library in The Hague has an original copy of *Manuale Tipografico* so looking at the Cyrillic designs made by the great master will be a great source of inspiration. Making a revival of Bodoni's design won't work nowadays, but there are a lot of ideas definitely worth trying. For example, Bodoni systematically made the 'legs' of zhe much thinner than the

stem, I am almost sure this solution can work well in the text. The spirit of experimentation will be the key for my design process. I will try different ideas, I will compare the variations, I will see how they influence the rhythm and how they change the balance between historical and contemporary feeling. What I like most about Parmigiano is that it is a contemporary type system inspired by the work of Bodoni, so my aim is to find the unique Bodoni expression in modern Cyrillic.

**Thinking about Parmigiano typofamily in use. What would you think to be one of the most interesting applications?**

I think for a big family the most interesting application would be a piece of complex typography, with different kinds of texts. It might be interesting to set a theatre play with this family. I would think of loud, expressive, experimental typography rather than calm and classical, because the whole family is a crazy set of contrasting styles. Back at my university we had an assignment to give intonation to the text by means of typography. So the choice or the change of the typeface was not determined by the function of the text but by the emotion and emphasis we wanted to give to it. It involved mixing more than two or three different typefaces, and Parmigiano Typographic System can give amazing variety and unity at the same time.

**How did you come to type design and what are your interests and your experiences in this field?**

Typography was something that fascinated me ever since starting my graphic design studies in Athens.

Soon I looked into the MA at the University of Reading and especially after my visit there I decided that I wanted to explore type design in depth. I was intrigued by the variety of the collections of the department and particularly the ones for the non-Latin scripts. As a non-Latin user myself, the collections and the tutors in Reading broadened my view and made me eager to research and master typeface design and especially the Greek script.

I consider it a great chance to have been able to get access to resources like those of the department, especially with such a lack of resources and research in Greece. That gave me the urge to become more interested in the history and development of my native script.

After my studies I collaborated as a freelancer with various companies and type foundries both as a designer and as a Greek consultant, for either corporate faces, or retail fonts.

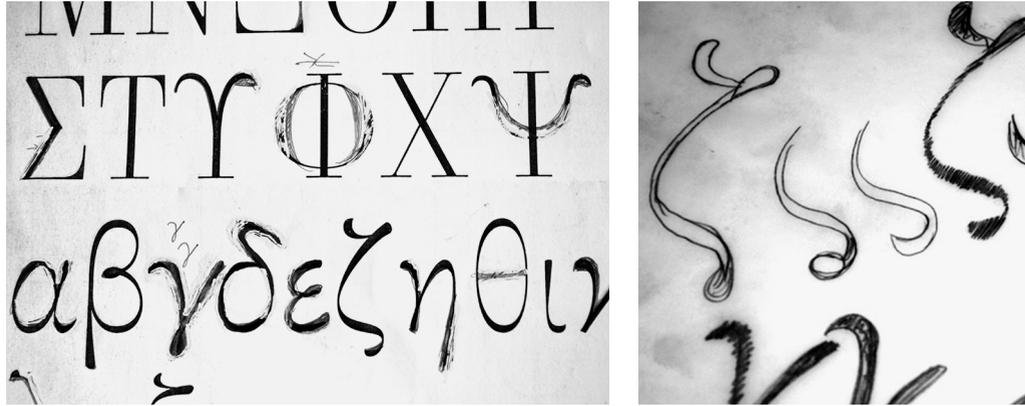
I guess my main interest is to research and experiment as much as I can in typeface design and with Greek script especially.

**What's to you the most valuable aspect of this practice? What about your current projects, which is your favourite one?**

What always fascinated me was the methodology, the detail and the precision that is needed to have an efficient result. How you begin to work on a micro scale, glyph by glyph, having at the same time always in mind the effect that it would have in a block of text, then work on various details that shouldn't be visible at first sight, especially for a text font, and at the end achieving a unified result.

## My Greek script with a Bodonian flair

Interview with Irene Vlachou



It's not about aesthetics, it's about functionality and carrying out the information without any disturbances. A typeface needs to communicate its purpose and make the user's life easier.

I can't truly say that I have a favourite project, each of them is an incredible challenge to me. At the same time, for the sole purpose of replying, I guess I have to pick the typeface I did for the Greek version of the New York Times. It was a Greek adaptation of Matthew Carter's Cheltenham typeface. It was my first project that started from scratch and went through the entire production of testing inside the newspaper.

I guess apart from the knowledge and the experience I gained working on a project like this, the reason why this is one of my favourites is because I saw my typeface printed and used in something so ephemeral as a newspaper, so I could see it from places like the newsstands or even crumpled in a trash can.

### What was your idea of Bodoni and of Bodonian typefaces before joining the Parmigiano project?

I knew the work of Giambattista Bodoni: his background, his influences, his printing achievements; also his trip to the UK that fortu-

## My Greek script with a Bodonian flair

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nately didn't happen, with the result of his staying in Italy and making a great impact on the history of typography. He produced numerous examples of Latin faces, great fine publications and series of – as they were called back then – 'exotic scripts'. After my involvement in the Parmigiano project I invested more time to study his work in detail and I discovered a playfulness that gives a special vitality and a vibe to these classic designs.

### What's your opinion of the Greeks designed by Bodoni?

Bodoni's Greeks show an attempt to modernise the Greek handwriting style of the period.

He seems to keep the various details in each letterform and to experiment a lot with them, but if you have an overall look at the designs you can see that they don't have a homogeneous result. He treats every Greek glyph as an independent entity, with the only purpose of making it stylish and elegant. The *Manuale Tipografico* has 32 different styles of Greek lowercase and many uppercase. He tried many styles for the Greek, most of them italic style, that were more common at the time, but he also tried uncial styles (Silvio No 17, p.11 vol II, Ascendonica No 26, p.15 vol II), uprights (Lettura No 7, p.6 vol II, Silvio No 14, p.9 vol II, Soprasilvio No 21, p.13 vol II) and a Byzantine (Silvio No 23, p.14 vol II). There are also designs influenced by the Grec du Roi (Silvio No 12, p.8 vol II) and Baskerville's Greek (Silvio No 16, p.10 vol II).

If we look in detail we'll see many alternatives, new ideas and a lot of experimenting. It's a great work to study and you can learn a lot about the pen stroke of the Greek script, the alternate forms, the do's and don'ts. Some of the details in in-strokes and out-strokes, – i.e. uppercase Upsilon, Phi and Psi, lower case beta, gamma, the open theta and the alternate pi – , can be used even today in more display typefaces.

**What's your approach in designing Parmigiano? How would you describe the Parmigiano Greek you're working on?**

There have been already at least seven or eight attempts to design a Bodoni Greek. Most of them were designed back in the 80s and were kind of latinised. Like any other script, Greek typeface design has many approaches. The most common are one that is more influenced by the historical sources and academic standards and another that is closer to the needs of the market. I personally believe that with the right technique and proper methodology you can accomplish both. A traditional design doesn't mean that it cannot be up-to-date and usable. We can see the great success of Latin designs with clear references to calligraphy and historic models.

My idea for this project is to create a typeface with a Bodonian flair that would respect the unique identity of the Greek script, accompany the other scripts properly and maintain some of the unique details that Bodoni designed.

**What would you think to be one of the most interesting applications of Parmigiano typofamily in use?**

Parmigiano typeface is a complete system font. Apart from its multi-lingual support, it contains all the stylistic variants that make it easy to use in various applications. It could have conventional applications, a classical publication for its rhythm and historic value and even more experimental ones. My pick would be to see it used for an identity of a museum or an art space; to see it used from small scale to large scale, from signage to brochure.

As a student, when I first learned about Bodoni typefaces in my typography class, I was very intrigued with the nature of its elegant shapes and rhythm. Giambattista Bodoni seemed to be the first to design Latin type while moving away from the traditional pen stroke and stress that the usual classical typefaces followed. His approach seemed less organic and rather neat and flawless.

At the time, I was not aware of the body of work that Bodoni had produced and was still new to the field of type design. During my studies in London, I grew more fond of Arabic type, met several great typographers on the way who mentored and assisted me greatly in my personal work and later helped me design my first Arabic typeface. It was only then that I became aware of the hard work and extensive process put into Bodoni's typefaces that have been described by many as a colossal body of work which comprised Latin, Greek, Cyrillic and Arabic amongst other non Latin scripts in the volume II of his 1818 *Manuale Tipografico*.

In order to be able to assess Arabic typefaces, such as the one created by Bodoni, I attempted to explore the foundations and rules of Arabic type designs. However, this seemed to be quite challenging due to the lack of straightforward books about Arabic type design and limited real references to Arabic type classification or legibility criteria. This is not surprising as the latter is a relatively new field of research that only recently started to attract a lot of type designers in the Arab region. It was however obvious that a fair knowledge of Arabic calligraphy is an essential basis for the assessment of type in general and Arabic in particular.

In several of his lectures, Thomas Milo, partner in DecoType,

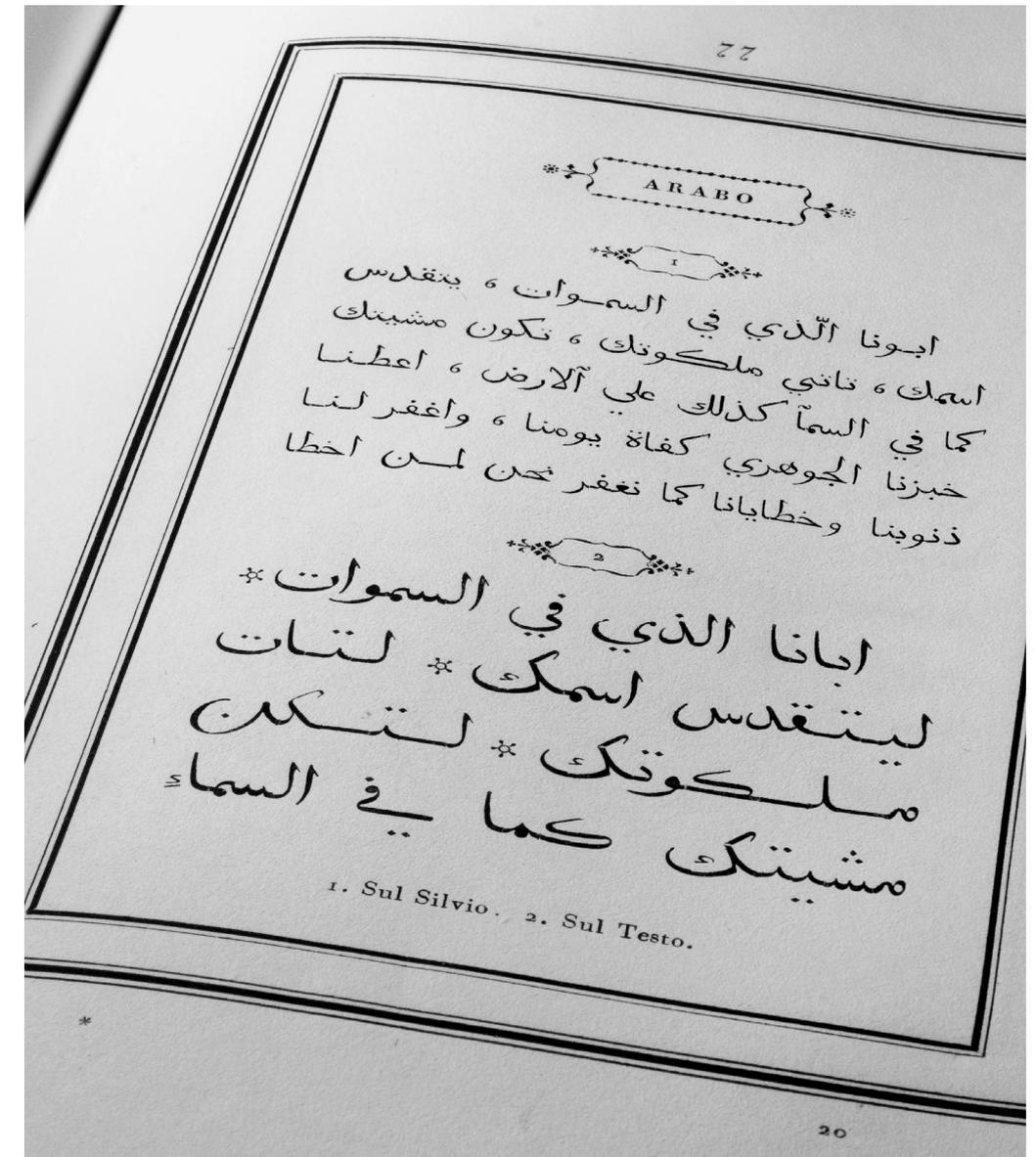
clearly explains that all previous trials of Arabic metal type in Europe are not based on the true rules of the script. Bodoni's Arabic seems to fall in the *Eurabic* category as called by Milo, Eurabic being the Arabic type created in Europe to imitate Arabic script without enough knowledge of or access to true Arabic script expertise.

Bodoni's attempt to create an Arabic typeface resulted in designing simplified Arabic letters in comparison to Arabic calligraphic forms. This form of simplified Arabic that Bodoni and several other printers in Europe developed is widely accepted and seen nowadays as a legitimate form of the Arabic script even if it lacks the rule systems of the original calligraphic forms. It is widely used and taught in most design and type design schools in Europe and the Middle East.

Nevertheless, Bodoni's Arabic seem to be lacking perfection; the rhythm, proportions and the anatomy of the characters are not homogeneous. At times, some letters such as 'Kaf' in its different forms (initial, medial and final) look unrelated as if they belonged to different typefaces.

In addition, while the flat nib pen is usually used to determine the size of the diamond dots in Arabic calligraphy, Bodoni's dots are smaller than usual. Moreover, the stroke stress seems a little irregular but one cannot say if it is the result of lack of research or the result of an endless experimentation as he did with his Latin designs. Bodoni's Arabic is the least elaborate in the *Manuale* and we are left with little evidence to evaluate the master's work around the topic.

In conclusion, the simplified Arabic metal type designs created in Europe have deeply influenced later designs in the digital age providing a simple version of the more complex



From the second volume of 1818 *Manuale Tipografico*: two sizes of Arabic type by Bodoni.

اليصابات وكان كلاهما بارين قدام الله سايرين في جميع  
Elizabeth. Et erant ambo iusti ante Deum incedentes in omnibus  
الوصايا وحقوق الرب بغير عيب ولم يكن لهما ولد  
mandatis, & iustificationibus Domini sine macula, & non erat illis filius,  
لان اليصابات كانت عاقراً وكانا كلاهما قد طعننا في ايامهما  
eò quòd Elizabeth esset sterilis, & ambo attigissent dies suos.

.dicentibus verum ex ipse ac, mētitur illa  
فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ  
à laceratā ejus tunicā vidit ut Et 28  
فَلَمَّا رَأَى قَمِيصَهُ قَدَّ مِنْ  
: vestro dolo de hoc Vtiq; dixit, tergo  
دَبْرِي قَالَ إِنَّهُ مِنْ كِبْدِكَ

Two European predecessors of Bodoni's Arabic type (see article by Thomas Milo). Above: the *Typographia Medicea*, Arabic translated from Latin: fragment of Lucas Gospel in Granjon's types (Rome, 1591). In the first and third lines Ayn (E- in the table at pag. 96) has the naskh feature, in the second line one Ghayn (also E- in the table) has the thuluth feature. Below: Thomas Erpenius, Latin translated from Arabic: fragment of *Sūrat Yūsuf* (Koran, surah 12) in types copied from Granjon's by Erpenius (Leyden, 1617).

Arabic script. Bodoni's Arabic designs are highly playful but lack the mastery and perfection that his Latin designs have.

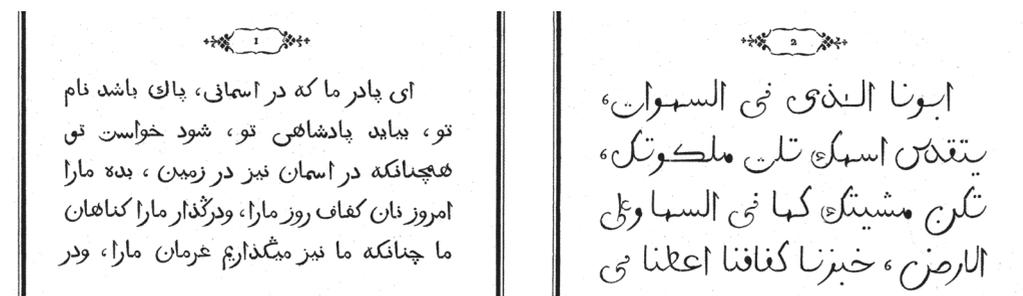
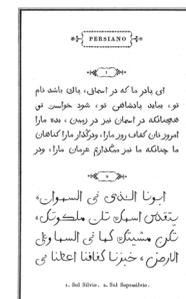
To my knowledge, few Arabic designs were created to match a Modern typeface and this remains a challenging task for us designers involved in the Parmigiano project. How can we transform the playfulness, contrast and vertical rhythm of his Latin designs into a matching Arabic typeface?

### Catholic coverage of scripts

Giambattista Bodoni, the Italian typographer extraordinaire, ventured well beyond the trodden path of Latin typography. He covered scripts that had interested scholars since the Renaissance: Greek, Hebrew, various forms of Aramaic, including Syriac and Coptic, Ethiopian but also Armenian, Old Church Slavonic and Contemporary Russian Cyrillic. He worked on Nagari and derived Indian scripts, and even Etruscan, Phoenician and Punic. Bodoni's Arabic samples cover the three main languages of contemporary Islamic culture and political power: the Arabic language, Persian and Ottoman Turkish (Turco), but, interestingly, also Tatar Turkic (Tartaro, which he also covered with Christian Aramaic derived Uyghur script). With such a catholic interest, it is forgivable that he didn't cover every single script family with equal rigour.

### Bodoni's Arabic samples scrutinised

From a modern perspective, Bodoni's Arabic script specimens strike one as juvenile and inexperienced. Yet they do fall in line with what the Europeans at the time were used to. Bodoni's Persian type specimens provide a fascinating glimpse in the mindset of European printers dealing with Arabic script. There are two designs, where number one illustrates how Bodoni follows existing European models without any inno-



Persian page from Bodoni's 1818 *Manuale Tipografico*, volume 2 (full page and details).

vation. This is how Arabic had been typeset since the early 17th century. Number two, however, is different. This typeface exposes Bodoni's level of understanding of the Arabic language and script. Into a typeface that doesn't deviate from contemporary European Arabic practice, Bodoni manages to mix novel shapes for Arabic, not seen before or after. Here one cannot but conclude that Bodoni had no knowledge of Persian and

**Isograph table: a checklist, based on selected letters that characteristically differ between Arabic script styles. For positive identification all isographs must fall into the same column.**

	THULUTH right serifs	NASKH left serifs	NASTĀLĪQ no serifs	Distinctive isograph
A	ا	ا	ا	thuluth has a right serif naskh has no serif, forward slant nastālīq has no serif, backward slant
D	د	د	د	thuluth has a strong upcurve and right serif naskh has curved back and left serif nastālīq has a heavy and light strokes
K	ك	ك	ك	thuluth has a curved base naskh has a straight base nastālīq has a curved base and top stroke
K-	ك	ك	ك	thuluth has an upward top stroke naskh has a straight top stroke nastālīq has a straight stroke
-E-	ع	ع	ع	thuluth has an open loop naskh has a closed loop nastālīq has a closed loop
H-	ه	ه	ه	thuluth has a right serif naskh has a subtle left serif nastālīq has no serif
H	ه	ه	ه	thuluth has crossing strokes naskh has a clean oval form nastālīq has heavy and light strokes
LA	لا	لا	لا	thuluth has a right serif naskh has a right serif nastālīq has no serif

Bodoni Arabo 1	Bodoni Arabo 2	Bodoni Persiano 1	Bodoni Persiano 2
THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ
Erpenius (1617)	Guillaume Le Bé (1599)	Robert Granjon (1591)	<p><b>The isograph score charts show that the analysed typefaces deviate significantly from the Arabic naskh style.</b></p> <p>■ Isograph present and identified</p> <p>■ Missing isograph inferred by analogy</p>
THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH NASKH NASTĀLĪQ	

Arabic languages nor of the Arabic script, and that he had no one near him who did: the second Persian specimen text is not in Persian but in the Arabic language with four short lines that are riddled with language errors and elementary writing mistakes, like connecting Lam-Alef in a U-turn. Given his classification Persiano 2, Bodoni apparently tried to persianise the generic European Arabic style. The horizontal curves and the occasional letter Seen without teeth, but possibly also the lam-alef U-turn, suggest that his approach is an uninformed impression of the Persian nastālīq style.

**Eurabic: thuluth and naskh combined in a pseudo-naskh typeface**

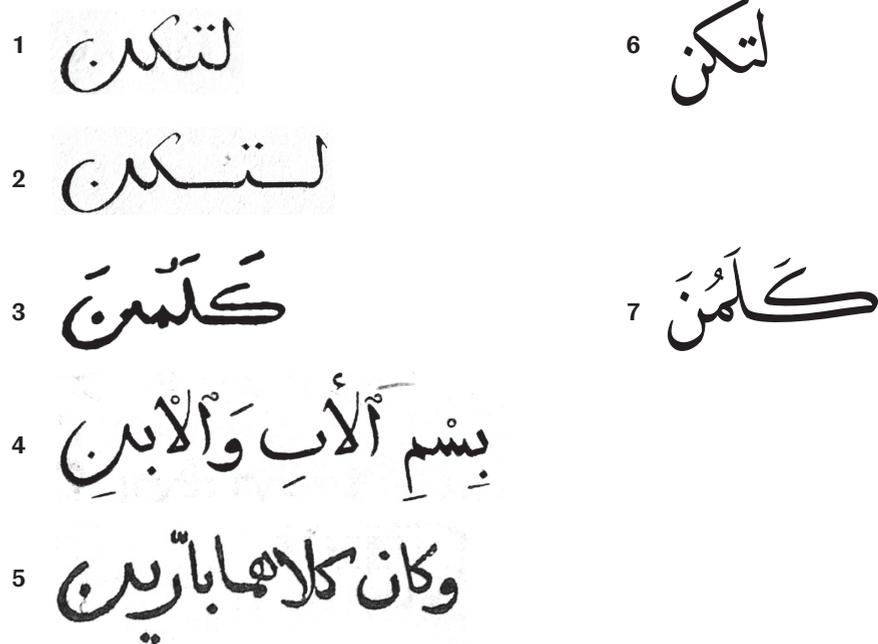
European Arabic type designs are characterised by a misformed mixing of elements of mutually exclusive styles: in a word where there is naskh there cannot be thuluth. This generic European style crudely mimics naskh, but the letters Alef, Dal, Kaf and Ha' are consistently given the distinctive features of the thuluth or the closely related muhaqqaq style, which in Middle Eastern practice cannot be mixed into naskh, if only for the simple reason that they are hugely different in size. As for the 'thulthisms', Alef is given a serif, Dal is given a curved base, the vertical stroke of Kaf is given a curved upstroke and the Ha' has 'rabbit's ears' – each of which is a feature that is alien to naskh script. Though the Persiano 1 typeface is a crude European Naskh with a straight Kaf, it does have the Alef-cum-serif typical for European Arabic. As for the Arabic type specimens, they do not contain enough text to expose the Lam-Alef, but all other features confirm the European Arabic character of the designs. There is one particular feature that helps to connect Bodoni's design with well-established European Arabic typesetting practice with greater precision: the extraordinary shape of final Noon.

The same shape occurs in work of the Dutchman Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624): Erpenius had inherited the types from Franciscus Raphe-



In Middle Eastern practice thuluth and its close relative muhaqqaq hugely differed from naskh in size. A page with authentic muhaqqaq and naskh by Ahmed Karahisari (d. 1566) (1) in comparison with Bodoni's Arabic from the 1818 *Manuale Tipografico* (2) and from the 1806 'Oratio Dominica' (3). The latter two are a fascinating pair of specimens showing the exact same types with the exact same text, but in variant compositions.

lengius. The scholar-printer Franciscus Raphelengius cut an Arabic fount and printed specimens in his *Specimen characterum Arabicorum officinae Plantiniana Raphelengii*. The characters were modelled on the Medicean fount but were of inferior elegance. Erpenius is representative of European thinking about Arabic: he was convinced that his typefaces



Tracing Bodoni's origin through the final letter Noon. 1 and 2. The same word taken from different specimens of Bodoni's large Arabic type of 1818. 3. A word taken from a Koran passage set by Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624) in Arabic and Latin (Leyden, 1617). 4. Three opening words of a Christian prayer set an Arabic typeface by Guillaume Le Bé (1525–1598), claimed to be the first Arabic punches cut in France (Paris, 1599). 5. Five words from New Testament text printed in Latin and Arabic from the Typographia Medicea (Rome, 1591) with an Arabic typeface cut by Robert Granjon (1513–1589). The same line contains another Noon that has the authentic naskh shape of the period (compare with images 6 and 7). In this line one Kaf (K- in the table) has the naskh and one Kaf has the thuluth feature. 6. For comparison, the same word as in sample 1, in Middle Eastern naskh script typical of the period. 7. For comparison, the same word as in sample 2, in Middle Eastern naskh script typical of the period.

were in the naskh style. He writes: «However, since all the Arab nations do not depict them in a single way, and the Persians, Turks, Tatars, and others depart somewhat from their true manner of writing, most often in order to speed up writing, and since not all of this diversity can be expressed with few types and words, we have contented ourselves in the

Cum autem non uno nationes omnes Arabicæ eas pingant modo, Perfæque Turcæ, Tatarî, & alij à genuinis earum ductibus, celerioris plerumque scripturæ gratia, non nihil recedant neque omnis ea differentia paucis typis & verbis exprimi possit, fatis impræsentiarum habuimus nobilissimæ & genuinæ scripturæ, quæ نَسْخِي vocatur, characteres, à quibus reliqui, levi plerumque mutatione, derivantur, fideliter expressisse.

present work to faithfully print the characters of the noblest and true writing style called naskhî, characters from which the others are derived with slight changes in most cases.» So if Roman typefaces are the ancestors of Bodoni's Arabic, then the extraordinary Noon should be found there. And indeed, it

occurs in typesetting by the Typographia Medicea (1591) to which Granjon is known to have supplied Arabic typefaces. The typeface displays the characteristic features of the European Arabic hybrid: the Kaf with curved upstroke and the disconnected vertical stroke of the Lam-Alef.

Interestingly, less than a decade later a very similar typeface by Guillaume Le Bé appears in Paris, claiming to be the first Arabic punches ever cut in France: It has the same extraordinary Noon curve.

### Detailed knowledge of Arabic script

In the preface to his *Manuale Tipografico*, Bodoni offers some backgrounds to his Arabic work. He writes: «But, besides this [sc. naskh], which is peculiar to books written or, dare I say, painted in the East with great care and neatness of handwriting, Arabs have many more kinds of writing. In fact, apart from the ancient Cufic and Carmatic and the modern Malay one, and the West Arabian writing, which I would call Moorish rather than African or Punic, as someone quite improperly called it, several are used in the same provinces where the Nischi [sc. naskh] and some of these other styles of writing are used also in learned books. So the intricate Sulsi [sc. thuluth/sülüs] letter is employed in frontispieces and beginnings, the hanging Taalik [sc. nastālīq; the English translation gives the erroneous term Tajik] is very fashionable in Persia, while Turks love the reverse Divân [dīwānī].»

Bodoni, as we have observed above, who had no first-hand knowledge of the Middle East and matters Arabic, appears to paraphrase Carsten



Script chart drawn by Carsten Niebuhr in his 'Beschreibung von Arabien'. Nessich = naskh; Talik = nasta'liq; Dtült = thuluth.

Niebuhr's (1733-1815) notes on Arabic script in the report of his exploration of the Middle East, *Beschreibung von Arabien*, Copenhagen 1772. In his report Carsten Niebuhr presents a table that is a rare example of correct, albeit clumsy, reproduction of Islamic script styles.

A telling detail is Bodoni's use of the term Taalik. Carsten Niebuhr also uses this term for what clearly is nasta'liq. Niebuhr made no mistake,

1. Niebuhr's table includes an illustration of the obsolescent *riqā'* style, whose name he transcribes, remarkably, as 'Rokai' – as if it were *ruqī'*, today a common synonym for modern *ruqā'*. The latter is an original Turkish Islamic script style that according to two Turkish authorities like Ali Aplanslan and Muhittin Serin was introduced well after Niebuhr's return to Denmark: in the beginning of the 19th century. See Aplanslan, 'Osmanlı Hat Sanatı Tarihi', Istanbul 1999, p. 198. and Serin, 'Hat Sanatı ve Meşhur Hattatlar', second edition, Istanbul 2003, p. 328

Carsten Niebuhr thuluth			Carsten Niebuhr naskh			Carsten Niebuhr nasta'liq		
THULUTH	NASKH	NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH	NASKH	NASTĀLĪQ	THULUTH	NASKH	NASTĀLĪQ
ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا	ا
د	د	د	د	د	د	د	د	د
ك	ك	ك	ك	ك	ك	ك	ك	ك
ح	ح	ح	ح	ح	ح	ح	ح	ح
ه	ه	ه	ه	ه	ه	ه	ه	ه
و	و	و	و	و	و	و	و	و
ل	ل	ل	ل	ل	ل	ل	ل	ل

Isograph tables showing that Niebuhr's rendering of Arabic scores much better than that of European typographers for the three styles under scrutiny.

but he quoted the Ottoman Turkish term for it instead of the Persian one.

Summarising one can say that the fact that Bodoni's typefaces reflect the common uninformed European hybridisations of Arabic script, in contrast with the accurate details in his Preface make it very likely that Bodoni was quoting sophisticated information whose implication escapes him: after all, he writes: «the naskh and some of these other styles of writing are used also in learned books. So the intricate thuluth letter is employed in frontispieces and beginnings».

If Bodoni had fully understood this description, he would not have continued the tradition of mixing thuluth and naskh elements. It is clear that he directly or indirectly copied Granjon's types and he was aware of Carsten Niebuhr's report on Arabic script styles.

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