

**The New England Institute of Art** **THE HISTORY AND ANALYSIS OF DESIGN**  
**Chapter Eight—An Epoch of Typographic Genius**

**GD315A** **Definitions**

- *Romain du Roi*—first Transitional typeface, designed for King Louis XIV. Masters engraved by Louis Simonneau, punch-cut by Philippe Grandjean (p119, 8-3)
- *Transitional Type*—(transitional Roman) A break with calligraphy-inspired types, having increased contrast between thick and thin strokes, sharp horizontal serifs, even balance to each letterform. Mathematically-derived.
- *Manuel Typographique*—typographic standardization manuals (four planned, two produced) by Fournier le Jeune.
- *Rococo*—florid, intricate, fanciful French art and architecture, approx. 1720–1770. Characterized by lavish scrollwork, tracery and plant forms derived from nature, classical art, oriental and medieval sources. Use of pastels, ivory, white and gold embellishment, asymmetrical balance.
- *Modern Type*—letterforms having a mathematical, geometric and mechanical appearance—hairline serifs and sharp right angles to upright strokes. Thin stroke and serif in sharp contrast to thick stroke. Imp: approx. 1790, the concept of mechanization.
- *maigre (thin), gras (fat)*—compared to what we now refer to as condensed and expanded type; were produced by Didot, 1780s.
- *ped de roi*—Didot’s standardization of typeface sizes, based on the division of the French inch into 72 points. After adjustments to suit the English system of measurement, the Didot point system was adopted by ATF in 1886 (p127, re: development of the point system to classify type size).
- *typeface family*
- *Old Style Typefaces*—patterned after classical Roman inscriptions:
  - open, round, wide letterforms
  - heavy, pointed serifs
  - little contrast between thick and thin strokes of a letterform
  - Garamond, approx. 1617; Caslon, approx. 1720
- *Transitional Typefaces*—a refinement of Old Style, with...
  - wider letterforms
  - greater contrast between thick and thin strokes of a letterform
  - angled stress (different placement of the thickest part of certain letterforms such as ‘o’)
  - serifs flowing more smoothly out of the major strokes and terminating in refined points
- *Modern Typefaces*—
  - fine hairline serifs that form sharp right angles with the upright strokes
  - no tapered flow of serif into the upright stroke
  - thin strokes of the letterform are the same width as the serifs, providing sharp contrast
  - no stress
- *font*
- *paper*—*Baskerville*, pp122–125. *Laid*: horizontal lines, made by the texture of wire marks during manufacture. *Wove*: use of much finer screens in manufacture w/texture virtually eliminated.
- *engraving*—(p118,119), a drawing made with a graver onto a sheet of copper (ideal medium for Rococo embellishments).
- *Neoclassical era*—late 18th C. Printed work showing typographic contrast, mathematical precision, refinement i.e. the work of Bodoni and the Didot Families

**Web Sites**

- <http://www.adobe.com>
- for more information re: type history, type design...numerous sites; do keyword search.

## Names to Know

- *King Louis XIV*, ordered scholars to develop new typeface based upon scientific principles. 1692. *Louis Simonneau*, engraver and *Philippe Granjean*, punchcutter developed Louis XIV's typeface, *Romain du Roi* (the first Transitional type)
- *Pierre Simon Fournier le Jeune*, initiated the standardization of typeface measurement, approx 1773.
- *William Caslon* (approx. 1720). Engraver from England, Caslon fonts used almost exclusively during 18th C. *Caslon foundry in operation until 1966*. Declaration of Independence is set in Caslon.
- *John Baskerville* established type foundry, paper mill, printing office, mid 1700s. Transitional typefaces.
- *Giambattista Bodoni* Italian printer influenced by Fournier le Jeune, admired Baskerville's work, redesigned letterforms with "interchangeable" parts and geometric precision (parallels time when Eli Whitney was designing firearms with interchangeable parts in CT). Bodoni's type was inspired by Industrialization.
- *Françoise Ambroise Didot* (approx. 1785) revised Fournier le Jeune's typographic measurement system into *le roi* with each French inch into 72 points.
- *William Blake* (very late 1700s) etched text and pictorial elements as one (*Songs of Innocence*, p 120 #8-24)
- *Bulmer (printer) and Bewick (master engraver)* printed with illustrations of wood engraving technique which was highly crafted (end of 18th c). Their technique was replaced by the halftone process approx. 1880.

## Important Information

A spectacular resurgence of typographic design occurred in the 18th Century. 1682 *King Louis XIV* ordered the establishment of a committee of scholars to develop a new typeface design based upon "scientific principles." Louis' committee, headed by a mathematician, designed a 64-unit grid, then divided the 64 units further into 36 units apiece (2,304 units total!) and used this grid to produce new Roman maguscules. This was a movement away from the calligraphic-inspired type designs to a mathematically-produced harmony.

Called *Romain du Roi*, *Louis Simonneau* (1654–1727) provided copperplate engravings as graphics standards for the new type design, and punchcutter *Philippe Grandjean* (1666–1714) produced text type based on Simonneau's engravings. When reduced to text size, it became obvious that the intricate grid was ineffective; ultimately Grandjean's aesthetic judgement played a significant role in the success of the new type.

*Romain du Roi* was the first Transitional typeface. It had contrast between thick and thin strokes, sharp horizontal serifs, and an even balance to each letterform (i.e. note the vertical stress in o and q). Between 1720–1770, French art was characterized by the scrollwork plant forms, use of pastel colors with gold, and asymmetrical balance of this Rococo era.

During the Rococo era, in France, *Pierre Simon Fournier le Jeune* began the process of standardizing typeface measurement. Until approx. 1737 typeface measurements were independently dictated by individual type foundries. Fournier le Jeune developed typefaces with a variety of weights and widths, thus innovating the idea of a type family.

Fournier le Jeune experimented with decorative type styles, and the embellishment characteristic of the French Rococo. *His measurement system was the first step in the development of the French point system of measuring type* (also see Didot, approx. 1785) which developed further (1886) into the typographic point system we use today.

During the time of Fournier le Jeune, type maintained a rigid horizontal and vertical alignment characterized by the physical nature of the metal.

Engravers at this time however were free to produce ornate embellishments and added text to their ornamental illustrations. Some engravers produced entire books which were well-received by the elite during the ornate and decadent Rococo era, and also in France although moving away from Rococo embellishment, see Louis René Luce.

In 1789 the French Revolution brought the Rococo era—and the French Monarchy and the radical class differences in France at that time—to a halt. Note the irony: *Romain du Roi* type was used to print documents in support of the French Revolution!!!

...in the early 1700s after over 2 1/2 Centuries of civil war, religious persecution and government censorship, England began to 'recover' from a drought of typographic creativity.

Approx. 1720 a young English engraver, *William Caslon*, designed a font which remains popular today (*Caslon Old Style*). Through most of the 18thC, Caslon fonts were used almost exclusively throughout England and around the globe as the English began to colonize other areas of the world.

A young printer in North America, *Ben Franklin*, introduced Caslon type to the American Colonies, and the official *Declaration of Independence* was printed in Baltimore with Caslon type.

Caslon's type was not innovative, however it was extremely legible, sturdy and 'friendly.' Caslon developed type with an increased contrast between the thick and thin strokes of his letterforms. With a rhythmic visual texture, Caslon's type was interesting and appealing, Although still characterized as Old Style, when compared for example, to *Romain du Roi*.

The Caslon Type Foundry was in continuous operation by Caslon's heirs from approx. 1720–1966.

In the mid-1700s, the tradition of designing Old Style type was broken by John Baskerville. Baskerville...

- established a type foundry: designed, cast and set type
- opened a printing office: made improvements to the printing press
- established a paper mill: refined the quality of paper and inks

Baskerville's type designs (in use today) represent the Transitional style of typeface design, bridging between Old Style and Modern typeface design. His sense of design was in sharp contrast to the French Rococo design, his books consisted of pure type with...

- no embellishment
- generous margins
- liberal letter- and line spacing (see illustrations, p \_\_\_\_\_)

Transitional type, with its greater distinction between thick and thin strokes and its more refined serifs, was successful due in part to the advances Baskerville made in producing higher quality papers and inks. In an era when ornate illustrations and intricate engraved title pages were the norm Baskerville opted for the purely typographical book with generous margins and liberal letter and line spacing. A purist, with a sensitivity for high quality, Baskerville produced smooth papers which set his books apart—the smoothness was produced by

calendering (hot-pressing). p \_\_\_\_\_, story of calendering.

NOTE: the development of information graphics (pp \_\_\_\_\_) occurred after DesCartes developed analytical geometry (1637).  $xy$  coordinates (Cartesian coordinates), with the  $x$  axis repeated at regular intervals was the Cartesian grid. Hence, the development of line (fewer) graphs, bar charts and pie charts.

During the 1700s, Giambattista Bodoni—in Italy—was a young printer's apprentice who greatly admired Baskerville's work. Initially, Bodoni was influenced by Fournier le Jeune. However, after the French Revolution and the total rejection of the lush French Rococo style, it became popular to embrace classical Greek and Roman forms of art, architecture and design (1790s; re: 1799, the discovery of the Rosetta Stone). The field was ripe for a new direction of design and Bodoni took a leadership role in designing new type styles and page layouts.

Influenced in part by Fournier le Jeune's early work, but more strongly by Baskerville's Transitional type designs, Bodoni (1787) redesigned roman letterforms with a mathematical, geometric and mechanical appearance—with interchangeable parts (at the same time that Eli Whitney was fashioning firearms with interchangeable parts in CT, p \_\_\_\_\_).

As the Industrial era was beginning, standardization was becoming an important criteria. Bodoni's type designs, inspired by the industrial 'climate,' were created using combinations of a limited number of identical units. Bodoni's severe, 'pure' and geometric style of type design was carried through to his page layouts, having severe economy of form and functional efficiency.

The term 'Modern' was first used in describing typeface designs by Fournier le Jeune. We see its beginnings in the design of the Romain du Roi.

Bodoni's work, as is Baskerville's is characterized by severe purity, generous margins, wide letter- and line spacing—a severity of form and function that is again evidenced in the functional and 'pure' design of the 20th and 21st Centuries (i.e. Jan Tschichold, W.A. Dwiggins). Bodoni published 345 books.

Throughout the 18th Century, the Didot family set standards of excellence in printing, typography and book design. François-Ambroise Didot (approx. 1785) revised Fournier le Jeune's system of typographic measurement into the *piéd du roi*, with each French inch into 72 points. This system was revised to the English inch in 1886.

The designs of Bodoni and the Didot family provided the visual communication component of the Neoclassical era (late 18th C) with evident contrast, mathematical precision and refinement to their printed works.

A sharp contrast to the works of Bodoni and the Didots, which appeared in the very late 1700s, was the illuminated etchings of William Blake. Rather than combining moveable type with engraved illustration, Blake etched text and pictorial information as one. After printing, he and his wife carefully hand-colored each page (p \_\_\_\_\_ #8-24, Songs of Innocence).

Also of importance is the work of Bulmer and Bewick, in England at the close of the 18th C.

The 18th C closes as the Industrial Era begins, as unprecedented numbers of people move into cities, machine production dominates for the first time in the history of humanity and economic, social, cultural and political changes occur at a dizzying rate.