

Bodoni

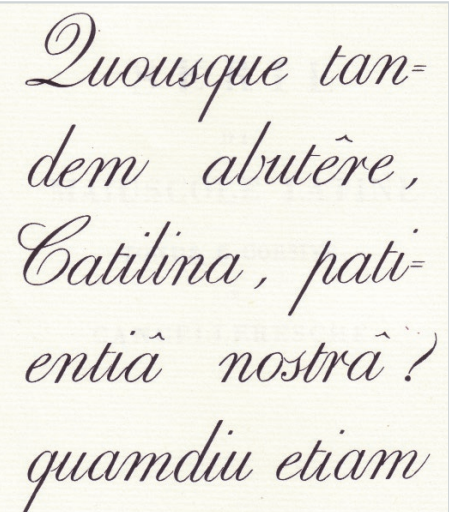
Type designers have a long history of embracing the work of earlier endeavors. Claude Garamond incorporated much of the personality of Francesco Griffo's designs into the fonts he created. Robert Granjon, in turn, revived the work of Garamond, and the 16th-century types attributed to Christopher Plantin echo Granjon's stylistic refrain. Or as Frederic Goudy once said, "The old guys stole all our good designs."

The type of Giambattista Bodoni (1740–1813) is no exception. The fonts of the Italian printer have been copied, revived and interpreted hundreds of times, although not always with success. Bodoni fonts are also some of the most difficult to imitate. The first hurdle facing a type designer wishing to draw a "new" Bodoni is selecting which cut of Bodoni's typefaces to use as a foundation for the revival. He created over 140 roman fonts, a corresponding number of italic designs, more than 115 titling and script fonts, a large number of ornaments and several non-Latin scripts. Much of the strength and beauty of Bodoni's printing is a result of his ability to use absolutely the right design for any given application. If Bodoni wanted to use the equivalent of a 7½ point font, he had that type at his fingertips. If he wanted something of just slightly condensed proportions, or a font minutely lighter than previous lines, he had those also.

The Art of Bodoni

Bodoni's typefaces and typography were studied efforts meant to be seen as well as read. His books, royal announcements and pamphlets were large, regal efforts meant to be looked upon and appreciated as works of art, rather than mere pieces of communication. The typography Bodoni produced is still regarded as some of the most refined and structured printing ever produced. But then, he had the luxury of virtually limitless time, money and effort to spend on any given project. Bodoni once confided to a friend that he agonized for more than six months and produced thousands of trial proofs in the process of choosing just the right type for the title page in one of his books.

Bodoni's lifestyle harmonized with his aristocratic typefaces and typography. History has given him the title of "the king of typographers



ONE OF BODONI'S MANY SCRIPT
TYPEFACES

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ITC BODONI SEVENTY-TWO

and the typographer of kings.” After a relatively short apprenticeship, Bodoni almost immediately became the director of the royal press belonging to the Duke of Parma. A few years later, when Napoleon drove the Austrian governors out of northern Italy, Bodoni was able to continue his work – except under French imperial patronage.

Evolutionary Bodoni Types

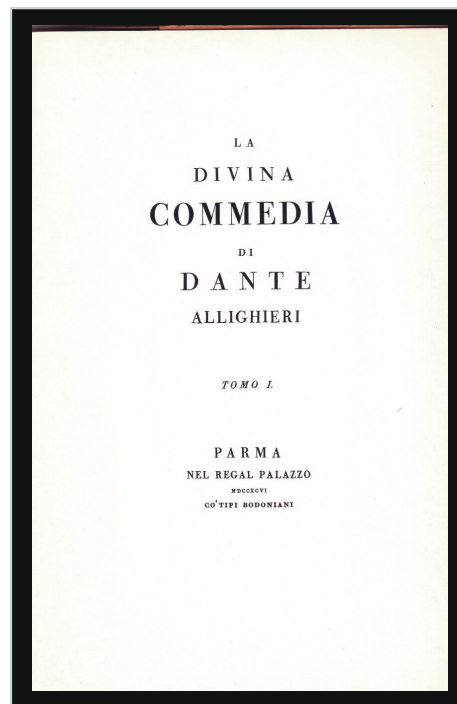
As striking as Bodoni’s types are, however, he was no revolutionary. When he was young, the work of John Baskerville served as his ideal; when Bodoni opened his first printing office for the Duke of Parma, he did so with type from Fournier, the French printer and publisher. In later years, the work of his great Parisian competitor, François Didot, influenced him dramatically. Bodoni was always, in some manner, dependent on the work of other, bolder contemporaries.

Some may think that Bodoni was too influenced by Didot. While there are distinct similarities in the two designers’ work, and it is clear that Bodoni studied Didot’s designs carefully, a close examination reveals that the weight transitions of Bodoni’s designs are more gradual, and serifs still maintain a slight degree of bracketing. There is even a hint of old style traits in Bodoni’s fonts. Didot designs, however, are quintessential neoclassical fonts with geometrically precise hairline serifs and a rigid vertical stroke stress.

New Bodonis

The first modern revival of Bodoni’s work was drawn for the American Type Founders Company in 1910 and was one of Morris Fuller Benton’s first designs as the company’s director of typographic development. In his research for the project, Benton tried to choose the best qualities from several examples of books printed by Bodoni. As a result, Benton’s Bodoni is not a replication of the Parma printer’s work, but more of an interpretation.

Benton’s design was an instant success, and, carrying on the tradition of typeface-design emulation, it served as the foundation for virtually every new Bodoni to follow for more than 80 years. Linotype produced an interpretation of the ATF design in 1914, followed in the



TYPICAL BODONI TITLE PAGE



MANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIDOT (UPPER) & BODONI (LOWER)

1920s and 30s by Monotype, Haas, Stempel and Berthold. These designs were either direct copies or close interpretations of Benton's work. The only exceptions to the lineage were the Bauer Bodoni™ design, released in 1926, and Ludlow Bodoni Trueface, created in 1928.

All of the Bodonis drawn before the late 1900s, however, suffer from two major flaws: they all have the cold, uncompromising hairline serifs that are caricatures of Bodoni's (albeit minutely) softer, friendlier designs, and none capture the spirit of Bodoni's original italics. Most are hybrid adaptations of Didot's more rigid and geometric designs.

Better Interpretations

The Bodoni Old Face™ design, drawn by G. G. Lange for Berthold in 1983, took the first steps toward a true representation of Bodoni's original typefaces. Based on the little-known Bodoni Modern, designed by R. H. Middleton in the 1930s for the Ludlow type foundry, Lange's design faithfully captures many of the character shapes and proportions of Bodoni's designs. Its serifs, however, lack bracketing and are as straight as a die.

Late in the 1980s, Tom Carnase – assisted by Massimo Vignelli as design director – collaborated on WTC Our Bodoni for World Typeface Corporation. This version was also constructed along the lines of the ATF style – with one major difference. It was designed specifically to set well with the Helvetica® typeface. Vignelli is famous for his use of just two typefaces: Helvetica and Bodoni. The problem was that he could not find a Bodoni that was the same size and proportions as Helvetica for those instances when he wanted to use the two typefaces together. The goal of WTC Our Bodoni was to solve that problem.

More recently, the Bodoni Classic, ITC Bodoni™, Filosofia, FB Detroit Bodoni, Lanston Bodoni, Parma™ and Linotype Gianotten™ typefaces have been added to the list of new Bodoni designs. There are also large Bodoni offerings with extended multilingual character sets from URW++ and Elsner+Flake (E+F). The more notable of these newer designs are Bodoni Classic and ITC Bodoni.

Bodoni Classic

Drawn by Gert Wiescher after 10 years of on-and-off research and design, Bodoni Classic is one of the closest interpretations of Bodoni's original roman. The face includes several characteristics normally not found in previous revivals. The ball serif on the tail of the cap "R" is a good example. Authenticity is also exhibited in italic lowercase letters such as the "v," "w," "x," and "y," in which cursive strokes replace the



ATF BODONI

Bauer Bodoni

BAUER BODONI

Bodoni

BODONI OLD FACE

Good Buds

WTC OUR BODONI AND HELVETICA



CLOSE-UP OF ORIGINAL BODONI PUNCHES

Drawn by Gert Wiescher after 10 years of research, Bodoni Classic is one of the closest interpretations of Bodoni's original roman.

BODONI CLASSIC

more common straight diagonals. Bodoni Classic also sports the softer serif designs found in the original 18th-century original.

ITC Bodoni

ITC Bodoni is one of the most carefully researched and accurate interpretations of Bodoni's typefaces ever attempted. The process involved two trips to Parma, Italy, hundreds of hours of research, and thousands more hours carefully designing fonts using one of the original copies of Bodoni's 1818 *Manuale Tipografico* (a collection of Bodoni's type-design work published posthumously by his widow in 1818), as a benchmark for accuracy. (There were several copies printed of the book.)

A Pilgrimage to Parma

The first step was a trip to Parma, Italy, in the summer of 1991. Members of the design team traveled there to examine and photograph Bodoni's original steel punches. They also visited the Museo Bodoniana and examined numerous specimens from the *Manuale Tipografico*.

The Bodoni design team included Janice Prescott Fishman, Holly Goldsmith, Jim Parkinson and Sumner Stone. After Parma, the band of type pilgrims returned home to draw letters. The romans were first. The small size, based on the font that Bodoni called *Filosofia*, required a lot of interpretation. The challenge was to preserve the feeling and gesture of the original Bodoni letters sculpted on the end of a bar of steel, without making the type a mock-antique design incorporating every bump and lump.

The large design was based on Bodoni's *Papale* ("the Pope's type"). Here the challenge was different. The goal was to capture the engraved elegance that the 18th-century master put into his work without reducing characters into oversimplified geometric shapes.

Bodoni in Three Sizes

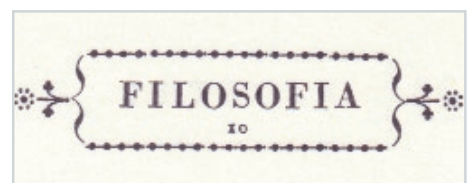
Once preliminary sketches had been made for the foundational characters in the two designs, the design team returned to Parma to confirm that the chosen design direction was the right one. Subtle modifica-



BODONI CLASSIC



BODONI'S PAPALE



BODONI'S FILOSOFIA



**RANGE OF ITC BODONI DESIGNS:
BODONI 6, 12 AND 72**

tions were made on the spot, and the rewarding but arduous process of drawing the complete collection of characters in roman and italic began. The interpretation of Filosofia became ITC Bodoni 6, and that of Papale became ITC Bodoni 72. The design that represents the middle size of Bodoni's originals was developed, in part through an interpolation of the large and small designs, and is called ITC Bodoni 12.

Using Bodoni

Bodoni is not easy to use. Its extreme contrast in stroke weight and hairline serifs make for a typeface that is, in many circumstances, difficult to read. When used well, however, Bodoni almost always creates a favorable impression. Text copy takes on a refined and elegant demeanor, and headlines are quiet, sophisticated statements. Some typefaces shout and demand attention; Bodoni speaks in polished tones.

First, Bodoni should be set large enough to ensure that the hairlines maintain their integrity. (Using one of the designs drawn specifically to be used at text sizes is a good idea.) Text character spacing should also be kept open and even. Normal or even a little extra line spacing will also help to offset the strong vertical emphasis of Bodoni. For best results, column width should be kept moderate. Very long lines of Bodoni tend to tire the eye and make reading difficult.

The Bodoni type style is not an all-purpose workhorse. It is, rather, a high-strung thoroughbred. Most interpretations are exceptionally handsome designs that perform best within a narrow range of functions, but in these they performs like few others can.



**BODONI COMPARISON:
LINOTYPE, BAUER, BERTHOLD, ITC**



GIAMBATTISTA BODONI

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