№737 / XVII
APERIODIC MAGAZINE
DIRECTED BY
STEFANO BORSELLI

English edition
Il Covile

18 Dicembre 2025
CONVIVIAL RESOURCES
& VARIOUS HUMANITY
ISSN2279-6924

Let us penetrate again into times that await neither an explanation nor a transformation of the world from the philosopher, but the construction of shelters against the inclemency of time. *Nicolás Gómez Dávila*

Typography: From the Fall of the Fleuron to the Random Font & the Return of the Vignette

With some articles from № 295, January 2015 "Random Fonts & Random Layout"

Fonts as a microcosm of beauty.

By Nikos A. Salingaros

> "*Having been an early admirer of the beauty of letters, I became insensibly desirous of contributing to the perfection of them.*" — John Baskerville, 1758.

> "*Geometry can produce legible letters, but art alone makes them beautiful. Art begins where geometry ends, and imparts to letters a character transcending mere measurement.*" — Paul Standard, 1947.

1. Classic letterforms feel "alive" because of their biophilic geometry.

The attraction of classic European book fonts is not just nostalgia. It is instead rooted in how vision evolved to extract meaning from the geometrical information in natural scenes. The brain is tuned to fractal scaling, multiscale structure, smooth curves, and predictable redundancies in symmetry, and we experience pleasure when perception proceeds more fluently. Aesthetic pleasure links to the ease of perceptual processing (fluency). Complex stimuli that are processed with less effort are more "liked".

Biophilia is triggered by natural patterns often perceived unconsciously—branching, graded thickness, nested contours, and detail that relates to the whole. People show systematic preferences for this visual complexity, based on evolutionary development rather than as a purely learned taste. In typography, good letterforms represent multiscale systems: large strokes organize medium strokes; medium strokes are resolved by small terminals and subtle curvature changes; and those small features are not decorative noise but boundary conditions that stabilize the whole shape. This establishes a scale-linked design, not a self-similar pattern as in mathematical fractals.

A font's smallest scale is defined by terminal behavior—serifs and tiny curvature inflections. Classic serif faces define a pattern that pre-

Indice

Il Covile, ISSN 2279-6924, è una pubblicazione non periodica e non commerciale, ai sensi della Legge sull'Editoria n°62 del 2001. Direttore e tipografo: Stefano Borselli. Segreteria operativa: Armando Ermini, Gabriella Rouf. Redazione: Francesco Borselli, Riccardo De Benedetti, Pietro De Marco, Armando Ermini, Marisa Fadoni Strik, Ciro Lomonte, Ettore Maria Mazzola, Alzek Misheff, Roberto Pecchioli, Gabriella Rouf, Nikos A. Salìngaros, Andrea G.Sciffo, Stefano Serafini, Stefano Silvestri.

Arretrati: www.ilcovile.it. il.covile@protonmail.com. Caratteri utilizzati: per la testata *Morris Roman* di Dieter Steffmann ed *Edu cation* di Manfred Klein, per il testo *Fell Types* realizzati da Igino Marini, www.iginomarini.com Programmi: impaginazione*LibreOffice* (con Estensione *Patina*), trattamento immagini *GIMP* e *FotoSketcher*.

serves identity while distributing information across scales instead of collapsing it into a single skeleton thickness and geometry. Multiple nested levels of structure, together with stroke modulation, resemble natural complexity.

Humans prefer curved contours over acute angles, as sharp transitions can induce a negative reaction linked to threat associations. Sharp angles can trigger negative bias, whereas curvature tends to be calming. If a character's outline has many high-curvature discontinuities (corners, sudden direction changes), the perceptual system must work harder to establish the glyph's shape. Classic serifs soften the boundary conditions at stroke endings, reducing abruptness and making the glyph feel finished rather than cut off.

Many letters are not symmetric, but they contain local symmetries and repeated motifs, which creates redundancy that the visual system exploits. Redundancy compresses the signal and reduces cognitive overhead due to uncertainty. Humans prefer symmetry in abstract patterns. A good font uses "near invariance" or approximate regularity sufficient to unify all visible scales.

Typographical rhythm distributes spatial structure across scales. Visually, a paragraph contains a spatial-frequency spectrum: broad strokes contribute low frequencies; counters and internal shapes contribute mid frequencies; serifs and fine terminals contribute higher frequencies. A classic book face shows just enough mid-frequency information (strokes and counters) while using fine detail to disambiguate letter identities.

Reading is not a sequence of isolated letter recognitions. Some "beautiful" letters fail as text because a display face can be gorgeous at the glyph level but have poor spectral balance at the paragraph level. If the different spatial frequencies fail to cohere, the reader experiences disfluency that the eye-brain system must work to overcome. Interactions between typographic parameters affect readability and comprehension. A successful text face is therefore one whose glyph set minimizes texture shocks in combinations so the paragraph presents a harmonious visual field. Classic book families succeed in this because their designers implicitly optimized the combined effect of details and whole.

While serif versus sans-serif readability studies suggest little difference in reading speed or comprehension between serif and sans-serif texts, more recent work emphasizes distinct emotional dimensions. Geometric variables dominate recognition and reading comfort, thus making a page of text less or more attractive visually.

The brain's affective appraisal is sensitive to low-level geometrical features independent of meaning. Font designers that remove serifs and also adopt geometric rigidity (uniform stroke widths, hard terminals, rectilinear joins) collapse a font's multiscale hierarchy. A letter's linear boundaries become abrupt; the outline carries more high-curvature events; and the page texture can become either monotonously uniform (too little structured variation) or harshly "edgy" (too many hard transitions). In biophilic terms, the pattern loses the nested, scale-linked structure that people find naturally pleasing. Anxiety rises most with austere geometric simplification.

Note how the "friendlier" sans-serif faces avoid this pitfall. Humanist sans-serifs retain stroke modulation and calligraphic curvature, preserving the multiscale "life" of old-style writing while simplifying terminals. The same design qualities are captured in Art Deco architecture. This is why the serif/sans-serif dichotomy is too crude.

2. Akzidenz-Grotesk, "grotesque," and the modernist narrative.

Akzidenz-Grotesk was released by the Berthold foundry in 1898 as a sans-serif font for commercial printing, later becoming a foundational model for 20th-century sans-ser-

ifs. Drastic simplification was matched to cheap, low-resolution applications. The "grotesque/grotesk" naming reflected how unusual the sans-serif style seemed relative to the visual norms of prevailing serif fonts. But this emotional shock was key to its novelty, even if there was no explicit design brief to cause anxiety.

Typography in the early 20th century became ideological. Modernist and functionalist movements implemented asymmetry, sans-serif, and stripped ornament as signals of a break with historical continuity. Aesthetic disfluency (coldness, harshness, "mechanical" texture) was reframed culturally as a virtue anchored on "efficiency", "honesty", and "progress". Those self-serving slogans established a powerful narrative through socio-political association. People came to identify the anxiety triggered by modernist fonts and layout as essential elements of technological civilization. As a result, austere sans-serif fonts became status symbols of modernity and technical sophistication. At that point, discomfort stops being an unwelcome toll and becomes proof of membership.

The corollary is even more disturbing: reading material that produces positive-valence emotion instead of stress is supposedly "unmodern", hence a threat to economic, intellectual, and social progress. These concocted beliefs thoroughly conditioned the general population and imposed a fundamental aesthetic reversal that remains unexamined and unquestioned even today.

Mechanical, monotonous typefaces help to internalize a powerful subconscious message about the "look" of industrial progress. The conditioning isn't only ideological; it's perceptual learning. A century of exposure to stripped geometry and mechanical text trains expectations, shifting what feels normal, and dampening sensitivity to biophilic structure. Creating an artificial environment anchored on visual poverty reframes people's definition of beauty. Familiarity triggers a norm shift and perceptual recalibration. Over decades, this flattening trend has created a visual monoculture—so the public's baseline expectation shifts, and the absence of biophilic structure ceases to register. The result is a population that still has the biological equipment for these responses but has learned to ignore its own physiological signals.

3. Microvariations in fonts and AI-guided evolution.

A text face whose glyphs carry bounded microvariation feels "alive". Two opposite effects co-exist in a delicate equilibrium. First, the brain likes to see small amounts of naturalistic variability and organic qualities. Humans are extremely sensitive to monotonous repetition. The perceptual system expects subtle variations in symmetries as found in natural objects. In typography, the text needs to maximize positive-valence affect through visual interest. Microvariation helps aesthetically by reducing machine-like periodicity and "visual deadness". A page of perfectly identical glyph instances presents a highly periodic signal. Tiny, well-constrained deviations break strict periodicity: still coherent, but less mechanically repetitive. This effect modulates unconscious feelings of comfort and warmth.

Second, text reads best when the ensemble of letters supports fast, low-effort decoding, which demands the streamlining of excessive visual information. Harmony among characters and kerning spaces preserves decoding efficiency. The emotionally attractive effect of a font influences how we respond to the visual qualities of a text. Useful microvariation thus represents sampling inside a constrained solution space bounded by typographic laws.

Typographers now have "randomized alternatives" in their standard toolbox. Those features can emulate the irregularity and variety of handwritten text, using a pseudo-random algorithm. Other applications use variable fonts with pseudo-random perturbations.

Each instance of text can thus be made slightly different. Nevertheless, increasing random elements will degrade legibility, since irregularity correlates with slower reading.

Evidence from consumer psychology shows that handwritten type cues create perceived human presence that make the text feel more natural and less sterile. Microvariation inside a text face is a controlled injection of "roughness" that looks "handmade" without switching to a literal script font. There is an optimum balance in design where slight variability improves subjective experience without harming function. But excessive variability increases the entropy of the ensemble of letters, forcing the brain to allocate more resources to interpret each instance.

So, what is interesting is to have variation inside a controlled set of parameters, not arbitrary noise. At zero variation, the page can feel sterile or mechanically repetitive, even though reading is efficient. At very small, well-constrained variation, one may gain perceived naturalness and warmth and reduce the "machine periodicity" without lowering comprehension. Past a certain threshold, irregularity starts to tax reading, and comfort and reading speed drop.

A page of text is not only decoded; it is also statistically modeled by the visual system. Over a paragraph, the brain learns a font pattern and can predict what strokes and joins should look like. When every instance is identical, the cognitive system quickly saturates, attention drops and the stimulus becomes perceptually "dead" (even if perfectly readable). When there is bounded microvariation, however, prediction error stays small but nonzero —enough to sustain the sense of vitality without pulling attention away from meaning. A tiny amount of unpredictability keeps the perceptual system from going fully inert.

The key for evolving emotion-centered fonts is how to define fitness. A controlled evolutionary search allows microvariation only where it increases naturalness while leaving the reading speed intact. Generative AI can be used as a constraint-and-selection tool rather than as an unconstrained randomness generator. AI produces microvariation just like biology does—local diversity inside global stability—guided by fitness functions tuned to human perception rather than fashion that embodies inherited stylistic prejudice.

In conclusion, microvariation is beneficial when it behaves like biological variation that creates local differences within global stability. The problem is that social engineering dulls the innate sense of visual beauty necessary to create and judge attractive fonts and text. The emotional forces discussed in this essay are suppressed — we still respond but have been trained not to trust the response. After generating random perturbations in type designs, one must select from among the alternatives based on positive-valence emotion. In a contemporary culture trained to equate discomfort with modernity, that mechanism must be rebuilt using experiments that recognize emotional comfort as biologically grounded.

Nikos A. Salingaros December 2025

Random fonts & random layout.

By Stefano Borselli

Jacques André & Bruno Borghi.

The first pioneering study on the topic we are dealing with is dated 1989: it is a short article by Jacques André and Bruno Borghi named "Dynamic fonts".[1] In it were explored the chances offered by computerized typographical computation, a tool that would have made possible to set the many exemplars of any single letter in a given text all different from one another..

Taken from "Dynamic Fonts".

The two authors concluded

> Why such fonts? First to reproduce the complexity of the real world, which is non-deterministic (e.g. to simulate handwritten characters). Secondly, to revive the old tradition which sometimes allowed typesetters to use various (clearly discrete) letter widths (e.g. some type designed and cut by Rudolf Koch). And thirdly, to allow character designers to invent new signs (one dares not call them letters!) however much classically-minded designers and typographers dislike the idea.

Luc Devroye & Michael McDougal.

Later on, in 1995, Luc Devroye and Michael McDougal released the work *Random fonts for the simulation of handwriting*.[2] In this essay the authors presented two methods of obtaining an almost imperceptible difference between any instance of the same letter.

Taken from *Random Fonts*.

Their goal, clearly expressed in the title and substantially reached, was to get as close as possible to handwriting, as shown in the not just typographically lovely "tuscan menu" the authors proposed on page 294.

Garmugia 3.49
Minestra di farro 3.49
Acquacotta Maremmana 4.39
Zuppa di fagioli di Montalcino 3.99
Penne alla Toscana 6.49
Grandinina o orzo coi piselli 7.99
Pasta alle olive 7.49
Pezze della nonna 7.99
Pappardelle ai pepperoni 7.99
Maccheroni stirate alla Lucchese 8.49
Risotto al basilico 10.49
Buccellato di Lucca 6.49
Torta co'bischeri 6.99
Ciliege al vino rosso 7.99
Crema zabaione al vinsanto 11.99
Meringato fiorentino 8.99
Crostata di uva 7.49
Brutti ma buoni 2.99
Necci 3.99
Torta di maroni al cioccolato 8.99
Bombaloni livornesi 7.49
Zuccotto all'Alkermes 11.99

Taken from *Random Fonts*. "Italian menu".

A first balance.

Twenty years have passed and sadly we have to admit that little has been done to proceed on this path, although in the meantime the methodologies and standards for fonts' definition have had a significant development.[3] As a matter of fact, it stands true that these new stan-

1 In *Raster Imaging and Digital Typography* (J. André e R.D. Hersch, ed.), Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 198–204.

2 *Electronic Publishing*, Vol. 8 (4), pp. 281–294, December 1995.

3 See the *OpenType* standard, especially for writing non-Western languages, but also for the management of slurs, embellishments and alternative forms of the same character.

dards made it possible, thanks both to complex techniques and to a few tricks, to make fonts with variations available, but more in graphic art than in actual publishing.[4]

Alternative shapes of the same character in Zapfino,

Swash letters for the end of the line.

What do we need them for?

In our opinion the authors of *Random fonts* reduced excessively the extent and possible usage of these techniques in respect to the original proposal by André-Borghi, in some way influencing the same subsequent address of research. In fact, according to Devroye and McDougal:

> There is little need for random fonts in ordinary texts, but we believe that there are enormous possibilities such as in private mail, personalized advertisements, automatic form letter generators, mathematics texts in which one wants to emulate blackboard mathematics, captions in *Tintin*'s and comic strips in general, restaurant menus, the generation of test samples for handwriting character recognition systems, and all applications requiring a human touch.

Instead, we believe that the natural field of application for the new possibilities offered by computerized computation is actual publishing, particularly quality books and magazines,[6] and that the fonts to be treated with random algorithms are not just either "creative" oddities or the useful and pretty *script* type ones, but their whole set, from the classical *serif*, like Palatino, Garamond, or Times, to the *sans serif*, like Helvetica or Arial.

New theories on perceived beauty.

A theory exists (see *Lectures On Architecture — Algorithmic Sustainable Design*,[7] by Nikos A. Salíngaros) according to which there is a biological-evolutionary basis to the perception of beauty, a basis which has developed through the active contemplation of nature.

And in nature order and symmetry are obtained with shapes that repeat themselves,[8] but are never exactly the same: just think of the leaves of a daisy, at first sight all identical, but in fact each one unique.

4 Who woud like to have updated news on randomized fonts and the related baggage of experiences and concrete results, refer to the appropriate page on the site of Luc Devroye, full of information on typography.
URL: http://cg.scs.carleton.ca/~luc/randomized-fonts.html.

5 Professor Devroye teaches Computer Science at McGill University of Montreal, Canada, but is Belgian. Professor André teaches in Rennes: The whole random fonts story looks like a francophone affair...

6 We can already announce that Il Covile will use these techniques with pleasure as soon as they'll be available.

7 Published by www.umbau-verlag.com. See pages 32 and 174–5. We also bring to your attention the quality and originality of the typographical choices for this text.

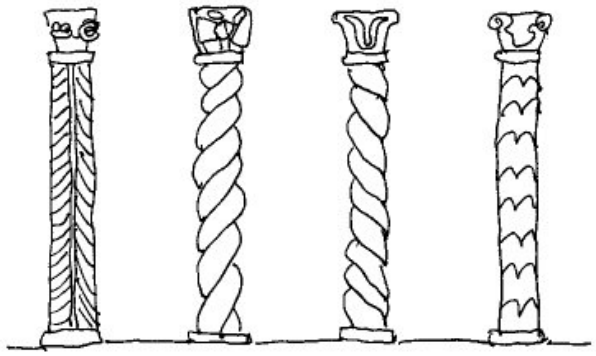
8 Often the shape is maintained even at higher scales. These are fractals: trees, leaves, landscapes. Again by Nikos A. Salingaros, see *A Theory of Architecture*, Umbau-Verlag, Solingen, Germany, 2006

Daisy.

For the same reasons an order carried to the extreme is perceived as discordant, disturbing, alien.

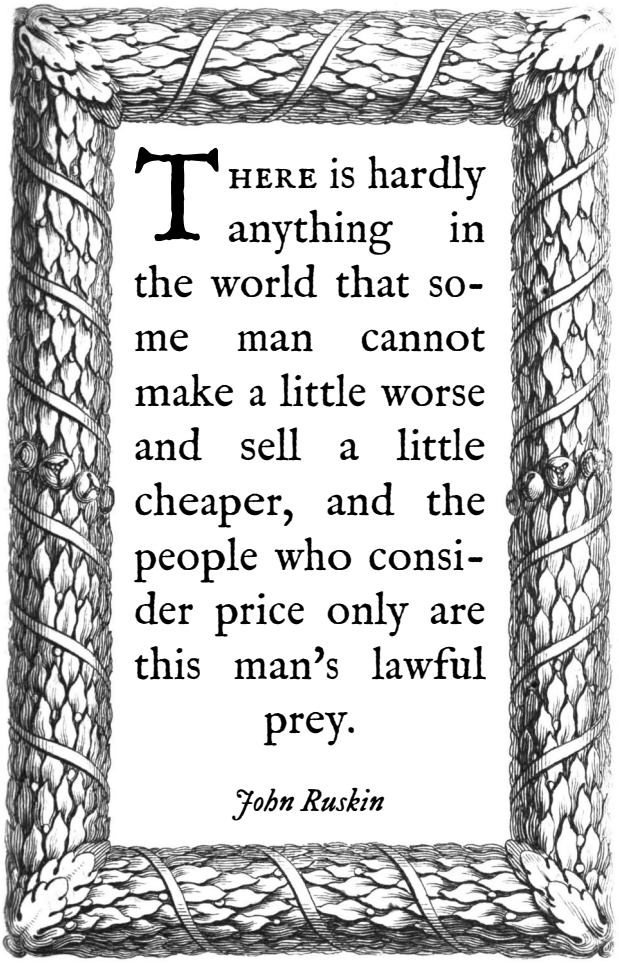
Die casting chairs.

Here's why bibliophiles are so in love with the sixteen-eighteenth century editions, which they consider unsurpassed. It is not just the preciousness of the binding or the quality of the paper: those editions also stand out in reading on the LCD screen. To make another example, just take the charm and sense of peace and harmony of the medieval cloisters, built with all different columns.



Variously shaped columns, symmetrically spaced. From *Twelve Lectures*.

Back to typography, sometimes, in case the most elegance is sought, deliberately imperfect fonts are adopted, such as, for example, the *Fell types*[9] normally used by *Il Covile*. If characters aren't too small, as in the common saying shown below, the irregularity of the profile is clearly visible.



IM FELL DW Pica font.

A GOOD BATTLE.

THE name of John Ruskin didn't appear by chance. In fact, just like the great English thinker denounced, the development of industrialization, including typography, defined itself as a process of loss of expressive possibilities and above all of beauty. However is it possible that computer composition can/should make it possible to finally reverse this secular trend.

This was the gamble of Hermann Zapf,[10] unanimously regarded as the greatest fonts de-

9 Superbly reproduced in digital format by Igino Marini, see *Il Covile* 531. These fonts, created by Dutch masters, owe their name to John Fell (1625–1686) who decided to use them for the newborn Oxford University Press.

10 See *Il Covile* 539.

Examples from a great classic.

Leonardus Craſſus Veronenſis Guido Illuſtriss. Duci Vrbini. S. P. D.

CVM ſemper Dux inuictiss. ob ſingulares uirtutes & famam tui nominis te colui, & obſeruaui, tū maxime ex quo frater meus tuis auſpiciis ſ Bibienæ obſidione militauit, quicqnid enim tunc per te ſ eum collatum fuit, id autem multum fuiſſe ſæpe memorat benignitatem & humanitatē in ſe tuam referens, id totum ad Craſſos omnes pertinere arbitrati ſumus, & quod unus tulit, id omnes tibi acceptum ferimus, nec iam ei concedimus, ut magis tuus ſit, q̄ nos omnes ſumus. Sed fratres mei occaſionem expectant cauſa tua non modo ſua omnia, ſed uitam etiam exponēdi. Ego autem, quī pro uirili mea, quo nam pacto me tibi aperiam ſæpe cogito, cogitaboq; donec perfecero, nunc in uoti mei ſpem uenio aliquam. Namcum ſciam tecum non fortunæ bonis plus agi poſſe, q̄ aquis (ut fertur) cū marī, ſolasq; apud te literas & uirtutes poſſe, literis aditum ad te tanq̄ uadū tentaui. Venit nuper in manus meas nouum quoddam & admirandum Poliphili opus (id enim nomē libro inditū eſt) quod ne in tenebris diutius lateret, ſed mortalibus mature prodeſſet, ſumptibus meis imprimendum & publicandum curaui. uerum, ne liber iſte parente orbatus ueluti pupillus ſine tutela, aut patrocinio aliquo eſſe uideretur te patronum p̄ſentem delegimus, in cuius nomen audaculus prodiret, quo, ut ego amoris nunc & obſeruantiæ in te meæ miniſtro & nuncio, ſic tu ad ſtudia, & multiplicem doctrinam tuam ſocio ſæpe utereris. tanta eſt enim in eo nō modo ſcientia, ſed copia, ut cum hunc uideris, non magis omnes ueterū libros, q̄ naturæ ipſius occultas res uidiſſe uidearis, res una in eo miranda eſt, q̄ cum noſtrati lingua loquatur, non minus ad eum cognoſcendum opus ſit græca & romana, q̄ tuſca & uernacula. Cogitauit enim uir ſapientiſſimus, ſi ita loqueretur, unā eſſe uiam, & rationem, qua nullus, quin aliquid diſceret ueniam negligentiæ ſuæ prætendere poſſet, ſed tamen ita ſe temperauit, ut niſi, qui doctiſſimus foret in doctrinæ ſuæ ſacrarium penetrare non poſſet, qui uero non doctus accederet non deſperaret tamen. Illud accedit, q̄ ſi quæ res natura ſua difficiles eſſent, amœnitate quadā tāq̄ referato omnis generis florum uiridario oratione ſuaui declarantur, & proferuntur figurisq; & imaginibus oculis ſubiectæ patent & referuntur. Non hic res ſunt uulgo expoſitæ & triuiis decātandæ, ſed quæ ex philoſophiæ penu depromptæ, & muſarum fontibus hauſtæ quadam dicendi nouitate perpolitæ ingeniorum omnium gratiam mercantur. Suſcipias igitur princeps humaniss. Poliphilum noſtrum, qua doctos fronte ſoles, & ita ſuſcipias, ut cum animi grati munuſculum ſit, tui Leonardi Craſſi admonitus libentius legas, quod ſi (ut ſpero) feceris, & hic nullius cenſurā

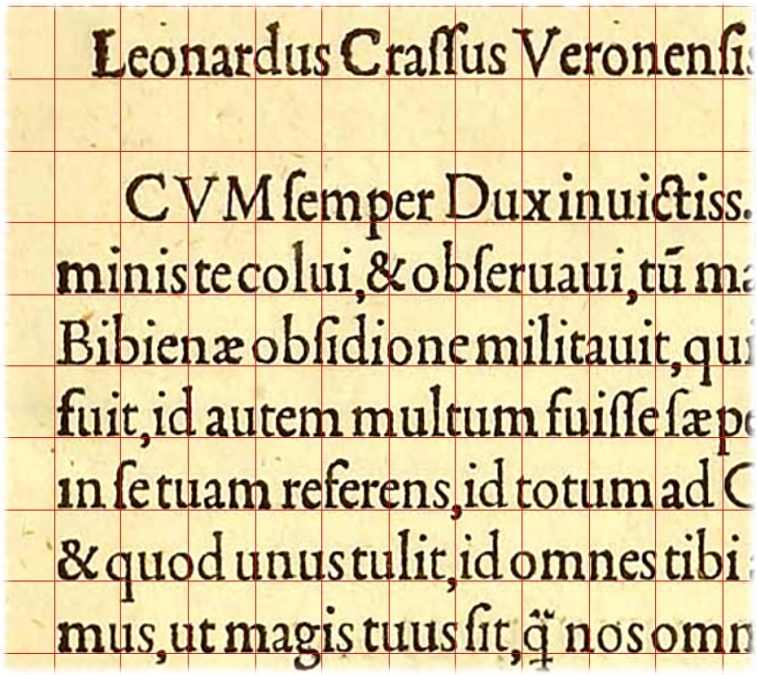
Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Ed. Aldo Manuzio, Venezia 1499.

signer of the twentieth century, a gamble in line with the one of William Morris and his Kelmscott Press (1890), as with the work of Stanley Morison and the group of *The Fleuron* magazine (1923–1930).

Omen.

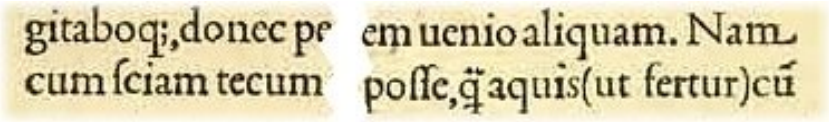
If we assume that beauty requires a "natural" order and not a mechanical one, then we can't stop at the font, that is the definition of the character, in which we will have to introduce a randomness both of shape, taking into the standard the techniques of Devroye-McDougal and similar ones, and of kerning.[11] It is the whole layout which must be random: the

11 i.e. the distance between couples of characters, which allows their optical concatenation.


Leonardus Craſſus Veronenſi

CVM ſemper Dux inuictiss.
miniſte colui, & obſeruaui, tũ ma
Bibienæ obſidione militauit, qui
fuit, id autem multum fuiſſe ſæp
in ſe tuam referens, id totum ad C
& quod unus tulit, id omnes tibi
mus, ut magis tuus ſit, q̃ nos omn

Ibidem. Horizontal and vertical alignment.


gitaboq;, donec pr em uenio aliquam. Nam
cum ſciam tecum poſſe, q̃ aquis (ut fertur) cũ

Ibidem. Swash letter "m".

proposal[12] is to make available a quid of uncertainty, a small difference, also in the *measure* and height of each line, as well as in the size of each single character and in its vertical position. And the same grids on which characters are disposed should not be formed by mathematically parallel lines, but should remember those drawn by hand or with human scaled tools as a ruler and a set square.

This would have a further positive outcome: it would significantly increase operating margins, the tricks of the trade that permit typographical programs to achieve the good justification of paragraphs.

Stefano Borselli

12 These observations also want to be message in a bottle to the worthy' community of developers that produces free high quality typographical software, as *Latex* or *OpenOffice*. When will we have a version where between the paragraph options, besides alignment width etc., we will see also "Activate handwriting simulation", perhaps with an assignable variability value?

The Retreat of the Vignettes.

Typography between Ornament and Ideology in the Age of Revolution

The Fourniers were a dynasty of typographers, the most important in French history. The father of the most famous, Pierre Simon, Jean Claude, was also in the trade. In 1825, 60 years after Pierre Simon's *Manuel*, another Fournier, Henri, printed a *Traité de la typographie* in his Parisian printing house on rue de la Seine, but by then the decorations were almost forgotten, the title page desolate.

To understand what had happened in the meantime, we turn to a great scholar of the subject, also (like everyone in this story, except the *déesses*) an engraver and typographer, Gérard Blanchard (1927-1998). From his essay "*Le «Fournier»: caractère du bicentenaire*"[13] we

13 In: *Communication et langages*. N°82, 4th quarter 1989. pp. 32-48. Available at:

draw two brief portraits: we will also call upon the second character to bear witness.

Pierre Simon Fournier le jeune.

It seems that in France Fournier has been completely forgotten, whose typefaces (created by himself) served to express, two centuries ago, both the last years of the Ancien Régime and the first of a new era. What the Revolution repudiated of his work are the 'vignettes', that is, the extraordinary decorative assortment (initiated by his contemporary Luce,[14] the king's printer). These vignettes, composable like lead type characters, were meant to replace the old wood-engraved vignettes and the fascinating small copperplate prints by fashionable masters. The taste for ornaments (rococo), dear to Pompadour, gave way, under Louis XVI, to the severe taste for a sober decor inspired by Antiquity. [...] ¶ Pierre-Simon Fournier, called the Younger[15] (1712-1768) — with whom we are concerned here — published in 1766 his *Manuel typographique* in which he cites the best writing masters of the Renaissance: the Palatino (Rome 1545), the Cresci (Venice 1575), the Francesco Luca (Madrid 1580) and the letters engraved by Theodore and Israël de Bry (Leipzig 1596). He knows the famous treatise by Geoffroy Tory, the *Traité sur la fonderie, l'imprimerie et le langues anciennes* by Gennesner (Leipzig 1742).

Antoine François Momoro.

Antoine-François Momoro was born in Besançon in 1756 and died on the guillotine in 1794, condemned by Robespierre with a whole cartload of Hébertist friends. ¶ Printer and typefounder by trade, he arrives in Paris. In 1785 he writes his *Traité élémentaire* [...]. In 1787 he is admitted to the booksellers' guild and sets up as a printer-bookseller on rue de la Harpe. He married the daughter of Jean-François Fournier,[16] whose type foundry he adds to his commercial assets. [...] His admiration for Pierre-Simon Fournier is boundless and in his *Traité* he constantly refers to the work of his illustrious relative. [...] ¶ In 1789 Momoro sides with the revolution [...] he is a member of the famous Club des Cordeliers. A friend of Hébert, he breaks with Danton and Robespierre, whom he considers too moderate. He is sent on many missions to French departments and to the Vendée to oversee the operations of generals. An influential member of the Paris Municipal Council, he is the one who invents the motto *Liberté, égalité, fraternité* which he has engraved on Parisian monuments. An organizer of festivals, he has his wife Sofia, née Fournier, impersonate the goddess Reason at Notre-Dame, according to some at Saint-André-des-Arts.

We would then expect to find in the manual of the anti-aristocratic and anti-Christian revolutionary Momoro a full deployment of that sensibility hostile to ornament alluded to by Blanchard. Instead, no.

www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/colan_0336-1500_1989_num_82_1_1135.

14 Louis-René Luce, (Paris, 1695-1774), engraver of the Royal Printing House, published in 1771, *Essai d'une nouvelle typographie ornée de vignettes, fleurons, trophées, filets, cadres et cartels, inventés, dessinés et exécutés par L. Luce,* graveur *du roi, pour son imprimerie royale.*

15 The only studies, published in France, that allow an understanding of the dynasties of the *Fournier family are in: Jeanne Veyrin-Forrer, La lettre et le texte, trente années de recherches sur l'histoire du livre*, Edition de l'École normale supérieure de jeunes filles, 1987, Paris. Author's Note.

16 Jean-François Fournier, son of Jean-Pierre called the Elder, was a founder to the king, in Paris, in 1786. He is the brother of Simon-Pierre and of that Fournier d'Auxerre, protector of Restif de La Bretonne [...] Author's Note.

When Momoro leaves the Phrygian cap to return to being a typographer, he comes back to his senses and recounts with complete truth how his world, prisoner of what we would today call the great imposture, wears a mask: "*légers, philosophes aimables, nous voulons paroître philosophes profonds, réfléchis, misantropiques mêmes: nous nous refusons de rire quand nous en brûlons d'envie; nous, etc. nous, etc. etc.*". So this is how it went: the icy and funereal beauty of the celebrated Baskerville-Bodoni-Didot axis could become the norm, making printed pages wither, only together with the advent of *homo ideologicus*, with the "face that never laughed".[17] But let us give the floor to Momoro, to then conclude with a positive image, a work by our William Morris (1834–1896), to which we will return.

The vignette in typography.

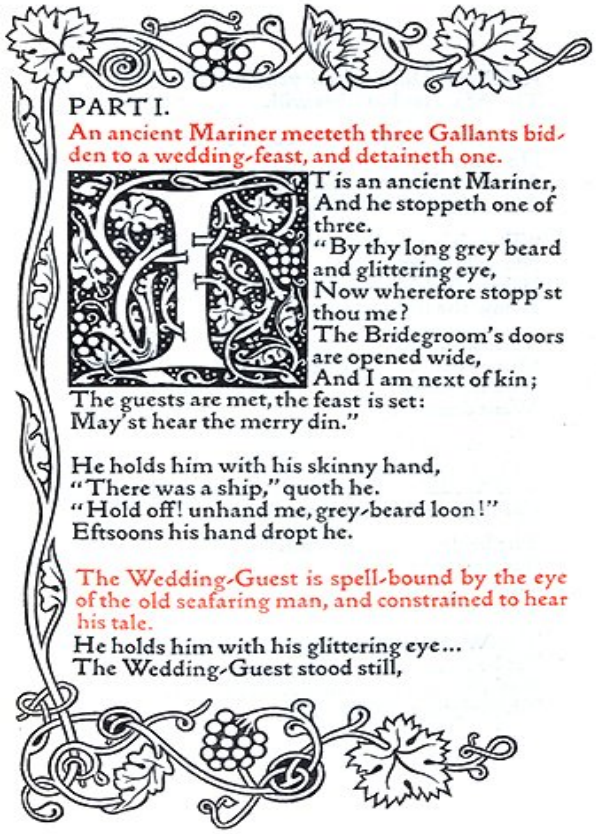
> There are vignettes in type (*font*) and vignettes in wood. ¶ Vignettes in type are small ornamental engravings, set by the compositor following the justification of his work and according to his taste, placed at the head of a volume or at the beginning of a new chapter. These can be of different widths, justifications and designs. ¶ Woodcut vignettes or copperplate engravings serve the same purpose as those in type; but they are more commonly used. They are placed at the head of a work or a new subject, at the different parts, divisions, prefaces, etc. ¶ The taste for vignettes seems to be currently fading and the English have transmitted this aversion to us, just as they have made us desire to imitate them in everything: light, amiable philosophers, we want to appear profound, reflective, even misanthropic philosophers: we refuse to laugh even when we are burning with the desire to do so, we, etc., we, etc., etc. ¶ Consequently we suppress the vignettes,[18] to put absolutely nothing at the head of a book. Consult the *Oeuvres de Voltaire*, printed in Kelh, by the Société typographique-littéraire, with Baskerville's typefaces, in 1780 and the following years: you will not find a single vignette, not a *cordon de vignette*, not a *filet*, except for those called *English*, which are of this type:
>
> ---
>
> In this way, we give the public only the pure text, and not broad vignettes or large ornaments often multiplied without necessity. ¶ In works, however, when a vignette is used, the following principles should be followed. ¶ 1°. Always place vignettes on odd-numbered pages, and therefore never on even-numbered pages unless absolutely necessary. ¶ 2°. Never put space between the woodcut vignette and the line of the running title, where the number or *folio* is usually found. ¶ 3°. Proportion the space around the *fleurons* to be inserted so that there is a little more below than above. ¶ 4°. When engravings are to be inserted after the printed sheets, leave the appropriate blank space for this purpose. ¶ 5°. Choose *fleurons* less wide than the page in which they are to be placed, take them on a subject analogous to the matter of the book, pleasant to the eye, and discard those which excessive use has worn out, which become muddy in printing.[19]

S. B.

17 These are verses by Giosuè Carducci about Giuseppe Mazzini. The Jansenists also laughed little: *Il Covile* will try to highlight their role in the formation of the taste for *amor vacui*.

18 In the original: "*En conséquence nous retranchons les vignettes*".

19 Entry Vignette from *Traité élémentaire de l'imprimerie, ou le Manuel de l'imprimeur*, by Antoine François Momoro, chez l'auteur, Paris, 1793, pp. 328-330.


PART I.

An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast, and detaineth one.

IT is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long grey beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?
The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, grey-beard loon!"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

The Wedding-Guest is spell-bound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye...
The Wedding-Guest stood still,

The return of the vignette: from *Poems Chosen Out of the Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Kelmscott Press, 1896.

Enlargement of eight consecutive lowercase letters.

eeeeeeee

Characters from *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, (Aldo Manuzio publisher, Venice 1499) considered by bibliophiles to be perhaps the most beautiful of the incunabula. Note how each character, while maintaining its shape, is different.

eeeeeeee

Modern Standard characters.
Identical.

eeeeeeee

Patina effect Characters from Covile editions.
Differentiated.

Daisies in a meadow.
Different, while maintaining their shape.

Patina, the Covile proposal.

In order to make the print even more natural, in November 2013 we prepared a program for LibreOffice (the application used for page layout) that introduces small, barely noticeable random variations in repeated characters. In February 2015, this character differentiation technique, still in use for all our publications, including this one, was made public in the form of an extension for LibreOffice called "Patina."

https://extensions.libreoffice.org/en/extensions/show/patina

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood? A woodchuck would chuck as much wood as a woodchuck could chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

Mainstream

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck could chuck wood? A woodchuck would chuck as much wood as a woodchuck could chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood.

Patina