

Letterletter

13 The Burgundian issue

Len me demande chascun jour
quil me semble du temps que von
et je respons cest tout honour
lohaute verite et foy
largesce provesce et arron
charite et biens qui sadvance
pour le commun mais par ma foy
je ne dis pas quanque je pence.

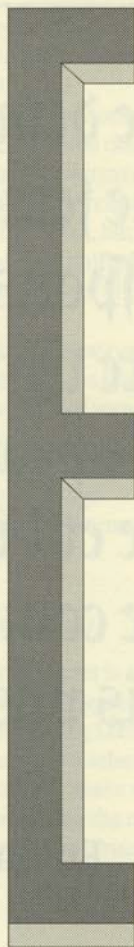
Eustache Deschamps

Gothic

Gothic, this is how American printers used to call a letter when it looked like my picture of an E. Nowadays they likely say *sans serif* because learned men have explained to them that the word *Gothic* has a different meaning. This is not true. For us a word has the meaning that we append to it. You might just look up in a dictionary the expression *desert storm* for advanced contemplation of meaning. Anyhow, by the united efforts of learned men the word *Gothic* has lost the meaning I started with, not because this meaning was wrong, but only because we do not use the word in this sense anymore.

I wish there was a learned man who could disclose the origin of the old American meaning of *Gothic*. I am not sure that it came from ignorance. If you would take *Gothic* for a moment as the label of an art style at the end of the Middle Ages that had its centre and its origin in Northern France, nothing could be more Gothic than my Gothic E.

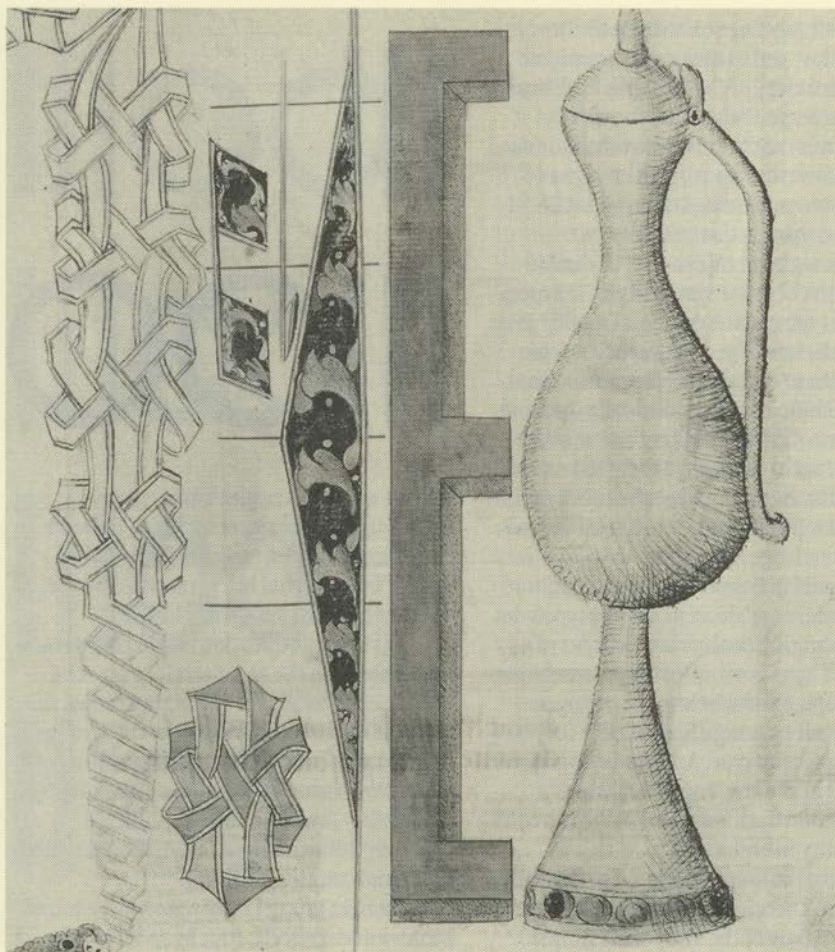
In the summer of 1959 there was an exhibition of Flemish miniatures in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Of all the splendid things I must have seen at that occasion only one pic-



ture has survived oblivion: an E in bright yellow water colour with light grey shading. I lost my note with the signature of the manuscript immediately. Only recently it was reconstructed in an illustrated correspondence with Fernand Baudin. Fernand went to Paris, found the book and got the photograph that is reproduced on page 3. The original drawing was made by Jean Miélot in Rijsel (*Lille* in French) in 1468. It is in a draft manuscript (*minutes* in French) on paper.

My drawing is the picture as it has been shuffling around in my mind during more than thirty years, twisting my understanding every time when something was said about civilisation.

Thanks to Fernand I can now show in print the mental picture that separates me from established scholarship.



Bibliothèque Nationale, ms. fr. 17001

Proportions

1. The white shapes in words.
2. The shapes between words.
3. The space between lines.
4. The space between columns.
5. The background of text.

This list is the hierarchy of white space in typography. Its order is a condition of legibility. That is to say: you can neglect the condition, but because it is a condition you cannot get legible text by doing so. Perhaps your illegible typography will be beautiful. Some monumental Roman inscriptions are striking examples of illegible beauty. Yet the hierarchy cannot be broken because it is an instance of a law, not an aesthetic rule, but a law in the scientific sense of the word.

8888888888	8	8	8	8	8
8888888888	8	8	8	8	8
8888888888	8	8	8	8	8
8888888888	8	8	8	8	8
8888888888	8	8	8	8	8
8888888888	8	8	8	8	8

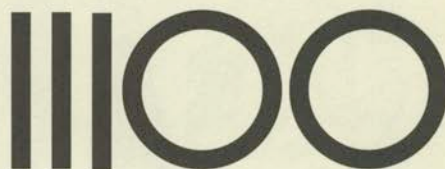
Though you are probably conditioned to consider lines as horizontal structures the law forces you to recognise at once the second arrangement as made up in vertical

lines; you simply have to because the law does not allow you to exchange the second and the third class of the typographic hierarchy. Of course, you might call the vertical lines columns, but there is no verbalistic escape from law: the space between signs of the first arrangement has now taken the value of the space between lines.

In type design the rule cannot be demonstrated with the same simplicity as in typography. The typographic example should make clear that the law of perception has no connection with my private preferences. Sometimes I prefer to combine numerals to numbers in horizontal lines of text and at other occasions I want to arrange them in vertical lines. The law does not prescribe me my preference, but it predicts me its effect. The law is basic knowledge of design.

If you would guess now that you cannot reduce ascenders and descenders of a typeface without changing the hierarchic order of a design, you have got it. What type-merchants with the support of scholars are telling you about the space saving effect of such improvements is not true. Any distortion is under control of the law. For what I want to take more than the hierarchy allows I have to give legibility in exchange.

I am talking common design, not specially type design. Therefore I illustrate the more complicated part of the story with simple



shapes, a few rectangles and a ring.

Imagine the three rectangles as indications of letters. The first question is: What kind of letters could be represented by the set, ascenders or letters at x-height?

To answer this question I have added the round shape to the set of straight strokes. The big countershapes of the ring crowd the straight shapes proportionally; the arrangement cannot produce the rhythmic unity of a word. Now assume that I have a high degree of legibility (a strong rhythm) in mind. When legibility matters I cannot be satisfied; the round counter is too big.

In the next group I have reduced the round counter successively; first by reducing the

|||ooo

|||ooo

|||ooo

|||ooo

ring and then by compressing it. Every step is an improvement of rhythm. In the final step I have reduced the ring vertically.

It is hardly necessary to write down the answer to my first question. There is no doubt: rhythm (legibility) urges me to consider the place holding rectangles as ascenders; even in an extremely compressed typeface they would not fit in the rhythm of words if they were at x-height.

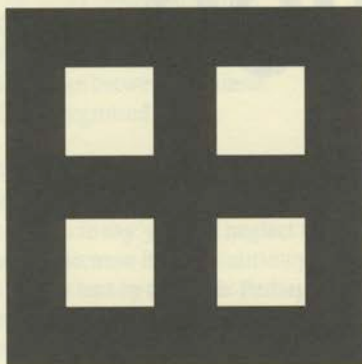
At increasing compression the ascenders in the middle group fit more harmoniously in the arrangement. They are becoming more convincing as well. In the first line the ascenders are rather deviations from the x-height, disturbing the unity of the arrangement. Only at further reduction of the counters the ascenders become self-evident: they look higher than the rings.

What if I do not want the extreme horizontal compression of the rings horizontally? The last specimen is the answer: then I have to increase the ascenders.

Again, you do not need to respect the law. Feel free to make cluttering and useless typefaces.

|||ooo

Design and type



The discussion of type deals with weight, slope, contrast and proportions of serifs, curves, stems, ascenders and descenders. It is all about black shapes. As a character the big square is either a framed cross or a crossed frame.

Design considers the same picture as a set of four white squares in a black square as well. The perception of the framed cross cannot suppress the perception of the white squares. In my perception the image twinkles at intervals of about 1 second.

Real characters have built-in stabilisers that keep the black shapes in the foreground.

The writer creates the white shapes while drawing black shapes. A good writer anticipates this result by drawing his strokes in balance with the still imaginary white shapes.

The conventional type talk distracts from design. It looks for the secret of writing in the details of the black shapes. It is neither there nor in the proportions of the white shapes. The secret of writing is the balance of black and white. Change this balance slightly, were it alone by underexposing the composition or by overinking the plate, and you have different writing. To make typography understood we must teach design by teaching handwriting as the art of visual equilibrium.

Wang Xuan is professor of computer science at the university of Peking. He told me that type design has no cultural status in China. It is considered as just another profession among bicycle repair, accountancy, surgery and brick laying. It does not have the rank of an art, let alone a position like calligraphy, the first of the arts. Only gradually the Chinese mind is becoming aware of type design as a condition for embedding modern technology in the Chinese tradition. This explains, Wang said, why there are twenty good Chinese type designers at most against more than thousand excellent calligraphers.

With due respect for that great civilisation I could not believe at once that China would outnumber all other civilisations of the world with as much as twenty good type designers.

Afterwards I came in doubt. Chinese calligraphers do not easily get astray in artistic noise and trendy decoration and they do not have to look for a traditional background either. Simply by being Chinese they are breathing the inspiration of a great tradition. There is no need for them to learn how the principles of design could be applied to calligraphy because their handwriting is already the principle of design in a complete fashion. As a master of the square every Chinese calligrapher is a potential type designer.

Non-Chinese are dreaming of type design that could exist independently from handwriting. This view cannot explain type design; it has no future because it has no past.

Learn so much Chinese at least: the future of a civilisation is founded on its tradition.

Lady of Steel

Burgundy is an idea owing its name to a region of France. Even as a worldly power it was a dream rather than a territory with a capital. In a schematic history of Burgundy the political entity got moving because it was confronted with difficulties in France and with opportunities in the Netherlands. Notably the wealthy Southern Netherlands were attractive. A drifting state has little use for architectural monuments. The Burgundian court preferred portable art, paintings and books. The most precious gift Charles the Bold could present to his daughter was a prayer book.

Maximilian has told an allegorical story about Burgundy in *Weißkönig*, the white king. The book is about the knight of white arms (Austria) and his love for the lady of *Feuereisen*. (The badge of Burgundy is a sparkling steel; German *Feuereisen*, French *briquet*, Dutch *vuurslag*. The links of the

chain of the order of the Golden Fleece are golden steels.)

Pages of the *Weißkönig* are often reproduced in publications on the history of typography. The book does not have as many readers as spectators. When I took it up to see whether Maximilian's interest in books and writing is mentioned in his book (it is not) I became fascinated by his zeal to remodel history. The archduke of Austria, the emperor of the Holy Roman German Empire presents himself as the Burgundian count of Holland and Flanders. His ability to speak in their native language with his Flemish servants and with the English archers of his stepmother in law is recorded with the same pride as the great deeds of his glorious ancestors who are always Burgundians or Dutch but never Habsburg Austrians or imperial Germans. Maximilian does not supply us with real facts but with the dream that generated the reality of Burgundy.

When his adored Mary died Maximilian inherited her position together with her prayer book that her father had commissioned from Bruges. When Maximilian became king of the empire he commissioned a prayer book himself, also from Bruges. When Maximilian was emperor he commissioned a typographic prayer book from the Augsburg printer Schönsperger. To this commission from Flanders by the lord of the golden steel Germany owes its tradition of fractura.

The origin of fractura is a fascinating enigma for German scholars. They want to find it in Germany or Austria. The facts about Maximilian point in another direction. Maximilian has found his script in his precious treasure, in the heritage of Mary of Burgundy, Lady of the Steel.

The construction named

Bastarda

I write the history of the Burgundian script in technical terms. The construction of writing (building characters with pen strokes) is beyond the scope of learned authors. The subject and its terminology are exclusive topics of Letterletter. Because I cannot refer to available knowledge I have tried to make this article self-reliant.

1a  1b 

 1c

 1d

Hand and writer

A few years ago the newspapers wrote about a man who was sent to prison for robbing a bank in The Hague. He had denied the charge but an expert had demonstrated convincingly that a scrap of paper lost by the culprit was written in the hand of the suspect.

One year later a burglar was caught in the act. When interrogated he also confessed the bank-robbery. The prisoner was released and the expert continued his convincing demonstrations.

Letterletter says: forensic graphology should be forbidden because any assessment founded on graphology insults the dignity of man. I cannot recognise a hand and neither

2a  2b 

can you. Graphology is humbug with criminal effects.

A *hand* is a basic conception in palaeography. A hand is a group of phenomena that are considered as characteristic for a style of writing (more precisely a *script*) a school of writers or an individual writer *from the point of view that is taken by the observer*. A hand can fall in pieces when the observer changes his point of view a little. When the point of view is not specified a reference to a hand is necessarily vague.

Because the first cursive *a* (1a) has an upstroke I cannot see whether it has been written as two (1b) or more strokes in *interrupted* construction or as one stroke (1c) in *running* construction. This *a* could even have been written as three strokes with the upstroke converted into a downstroke (1d).

The second cursive *a* (2a) can, however, at once be recognised as written in at least two strokes (2b) because there is no upstroke. This letter can only be completed by lifting the pen before returning to the top.

It is remarkable that in Western civilisation nobody has ever been aware of this obvious disclosure of interrupted construction. This is very convenient too, enabling me, the outsider, to solve some tricky palaeographic problems.

3a *arum*3b *a a a*4a *arum*4b *arum**arum*5b *ar m*

Form and construction

The next picture shows a Gothic cursive. In the first line (3a) the *a* is all right. In the second line (3b) the top of the first *a* is not closed. In informal writing such an *a* could assimilate to *ci* or to *u*; the running construction conflicts with cursive form.

This happens easily in a wide cursive script as Gothic cursives had to be. Do you remember Gothic art explained as perpendicular? Then you have nonsense in memory. You better learn why Gothic handwriting had to be wide.

Anyhow the broken *a* needs repair. A very common solution is drawing the stem of the *a* backwards to meet the beginning of the stroke. Another solution has been invented in Paris in the fourteenth century. The concluding downstroke of *a* has a recessed turn containing the top of the *a*. I have shown the construction more clearly in 5b.

The weak point in my otherwise satisfying explanation is the recessed downstroke at the bottom of *r*. There is no constructive necessity for it. I could save my story with the help of some aesthetics: *r* might have been considered as an incomplete *a* written upside down. If you are not impressed I could point at the compensation that the recessed stroke offers for the white gap under the flag of *r*. The recessed downstroke can reinforce

the rhythmic unity of the word. In many old books the recessed downstroke seems to have been used for this purpose. But the point is not if I can explain the facts to your satisfaction. I have invented my explanations only to draw your attention to the essential aspects. And in this regard you can be sure, this is one.

Bastarda

The manner of writing *a* with the recessed downstroke is, probably from the onset, known as *bastarda*, and in a *bastarda* the *r* has a recessed downstroke as well (4a). I have shown the turning path of the pen in big letters in fig. 6. When written with a small pen the construction results in the German current hand (5b) which is not current anymore. This so called German writing is a *bastarda* (of French origin) written with a thin stroke.

Why not extend the recessed downstroke to every sharp turn between upstroke and downstroke? (*u* and *m* in 4b). Because it is waste of time.

Why then did the Burgundian scribes introduce this extension after the introduction of typography? Because they were paid for splendour rather than speed. Meanwhile they were able to write a full ornate *bastarda*

quickly. A striking example of such command of hand, a manuscript on paper written by Brito, is preserved in the library of Leiden university. I regret that I cannot show it here.

This elaborated script is now known as *Burgundian bastarda* (some palaeographers say *lettre bourguignonne*, but that is no English).

Burgundica

Burgundy was a conception of a state. Eventually it could be attacked and destroyed just like a real state, but it has survived as an invincible exuberant way of life. The state drifted to the North East, away from its French homelands to the wealthy Low Countries, Flanders in the broadest sense of the word. Everywhere in these Southern Netherlands workshops were soliciting commissions

from the court which was the focus of cultural life. About 1450 the calligraphic workshop of Jacquemart Pilavaine in Bergen (which is called Mons in French) seems to have introduced an elongated version of the Burgundian cursive (5a). The elongated script is distinct enough to deserve a name of its own: *Burgundica*. In the high days of Burgundy this Burgundica was the favourite book hand in the Southern Netherlands.

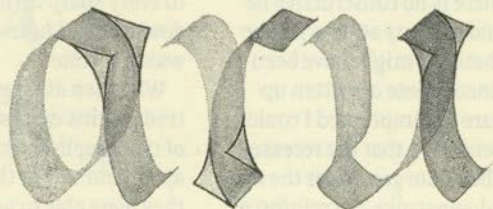
Attention, *Burgundica* is my invention; do not use this expression without reference if you want to be understood outside. The same care should be observed with the distinction between running and interrupted *construction* and between cursive and text *scripts*, or with analytical terms in general: There is no theory of writing outside *Letterletter*.

In any past, present and future civilisation material conditions will result in a running

construction next to an interrupted construction, and always and everywhere aesthetics will formalise *running hands* in *cursive scripts* and finally over-formalise the cursive script in an *interrupted construction* again. Just look what your own hand is doing when you are trying to make 'very good letters'.

From the very beginning Burgundica has also been written in an interrupted construction just like any other cursive (7b). Superficially the important elements of the running hand are there but for the upstrokes that could explain the elements. Whenever you want to understand an interrupted cursive hand, as, for instance, Palatino's cursive examples, put it aside until you have found the roots. This is also necessary in analysing the Burgundica; 7b has to be understood against its origin in 7a.

Once you have seen it the difference be-



7a arum

7b arum

tween a running and an interrupted construction is obvious. Before I started to look at it nobody in Western civilisation has ever seen it. Otherwise this distinction would have been mentioned in every treatise on writing because it is essential for learning how to write. When scribes would have been aware of the distinction they would not have mixed both constructions as carelessly as they have always done. Johann Neudorffer has described the construction of the running Bastarda rather precisely in his 'analysis' but if he has ever been understood he has always been neglected too. Stanley Morison even recommended the neglect of Neudorffer. Obviously he did not like him: 'a nauseous hybrid of gothic and baroque, remarkable for the puerile degree to which embellishment is preferred to legibility'. (*Early Italian writing books*, edited by Nicholas Barker, 1990 Edizioni Valdonega, Verona ISBN 88-85033-16-4, British Library London ISBN 0-7123-0235-2.) It becomes important for Morison to do away with Neudorffer when he wants to praise Arrighi for the first writing book because Arrighi was not the first. Even Stanley Morison has to admit the fact that a few years earlier Neudorffer had published his *Fundament* (1519). By producing the occasional condition that the *Fundament* was 'never regularly published' whatever this may be, Morison saves his story at

the expense of facts and of his position as a scholar alike.

If you would accept Morison's condition, you had to conclude that the *New Testament* precedes the *Odyssey*.

Invented facts

Any attempt to explain historical facts is speculative and, what is worse, also the selection of the facts is speculative. You could find the workshop of Jacquemart Pilavaine mentioned in the same historical works where I have found it, but you would look in vain for its use of the new Burgundica that is not mentioned either. This fact is my own invention made for my own purpose. I could also invent a number of explanations:

Error: The inventor of the Burgundica might have been mistaken by confusing the formal bastarda with the perpendicular text-script of his time.

Assimilation: He might have elongated the Burgundian bastarda intentionally to have the cursive Burgundica more easily accepted as a book hand.

Astigmatism: Distorted eye sight could have been a more trivial origin. I have often sent students to the ophthalmologist when they complained their poor control of proportions. Many of them returned with cylindrical glasses. Art historians like to explain the

elongated figures in the paintings by El Greco with the same impairment.

Affection: Obviously the inventor liked his invention.

If you like you might invent lots of other explanations yourself but their number reduces their meaning. They do not always contribute to our understanding of the subject. It would do good to historical publications if the authors could hold back their explanations. In the literature of our profession notably Stanley Morison has talked too much nonsense of this kind. To recognise his flaws we do not need to see them pasted on every subject of his studies.

I would like to avoid explanations beyond the unavoidable manipulation of facts which makes the art of history.

My facts about the Burgundian book are not found in literature but in the sources only. Scholars keep silent about the Burgundian culture. It cannot be neglected completely; Jan van Eyck, the Van Limburg brothers and Rogier van der Weiden cannot be overlooked. They cannot be pushed into obscurity by labelling them as 'primitives'. Books containing their paintings and drawings are in high esteem, that is to say the pictures, not the books.

For scholarship the Burgundian book is inconvenient. The rise of a new calligraphic

^aSpecimen
 Igitur perfecti sunt
 caeli et terra et omnis
 ornatum eorum

book script after the introduction of typography is in contradiction with the postulate of palaeography and of the history of typography which demands that typography should have put an end to the development of book scripts. It is in contradiction with Morison's economic gospel of efficiency too. But first of all it is in contradiction with the premise of a renaissance, of a miraculous enlightenment amidst the darkness of mediaeval barbarism. A study of the Burgundian civilisation would make clear that the Florentine renaissance had its equivalent in Flanders and that both movements were equally mediaeval. And this would imply that our cultural conception is fallacious. Arrived at this point I took up again Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen*, and now the sentence was there that I needed for my purpose: 'What distinguishes a Burgundian knight from an Italian humanist? Charles the Bold read his classics in translation'.

The history of Jacquemart Pilavaine should be forgotten again because it is against the rules of history. The Burgundica should not exist. It is an affront of anything that has been said about book production. Nevertheless it is a beautiful history telling that technological development can come from ideas, from design, and not from greed only.

The myth of fractura

The Germans say *Fraktur*. Fractura is a script that has survived in type only. In the German public opinion fractura is a German script. This is true for its spread; if Danish, Latin, French and English applications could be neglected the use of fractura type was restricted to German texts. German mythology reversed this observation by distinguishing fractura as German script from Latin scripts, though any Western script is 'Latin'. The upside down reasoning wants to forget that Maximilian introduced the Flemish script in German typography for printing his Latin prayer book. Instead we should believe that German orthography or even German language should require fractura and that the emperor's Latin script in a Latin book should not be a genuine fractura for that. Finally the rule was imposed that words from other languages have to be composed in roman instead of in fractura text type. If, however, the Latin, Greek or otherwise alien origin of a German word is not observed in the spelling it has to be composed in fractura. Do you

understand? This rule freezes typography.

Mythical regard is also reflected by the special position of fractura in German orthography. The current German orthographic system has accepted the disappearance of the long *s* from Western usage of writing; of course, one should think. It is, however, a serious mistake to neglect the obsolete *f* in a German text as soon as it is composed in fractura. Go, tell your computer.

It is easy to detect extravagances in another cultural circle just as it is difficult to analyse your own folklorist oddities. The absurdities in Dutch conventions I know of have been revealed to me by outsiders; for me they were too evident. Scholars should also be aware of their near sighted view. In the case of fractura, however, German investigations have always observed mythical opinions. German authors are inclined to disqualify the more objective observations made from the safe distance of an outsider because of their objectivity. In German studies the origin of fractura has to be found in Germany because it is a German script. Imagine a study of italics restricted to Italy and a study of roman to Rome and accepting the competency of Italians and Romans only.

German type design was obsessed by word fetishism. Everywhere you are told that fractura is an angular script because the word

fractura 'means' *broken*. Yet even German scholars would be surprised when a scientist would teach that plastics should not be made rigid because the 'real meaning' of the word *plastic* is *flexible*. This reminds me of a forgotten meaning attributed to *fractus*; apparently the word has also been used in the sense of *soft* or *weak*.

German history

In 1538 the manual by Johann Neudorffer, *Eine gute Ordnung*, was published (if Stanley Morison allows the expression). Neudorffer describes the construction of the recessed downstroke that merges with an upstroke along a path that encloses a triangle. From my point of view this is one of the most important observations in the literature on writing: Neudorffer speaks of *fractura* when a script is constructed with such triangles. *Fraktur* is the name given by Johann Neudorffer to the *construction* of the *Burgundica*. The important moment is the appearance of construction in his description of writing.

The Dutch mannerists were aware of the identity of the German and the Burgundian script. Boissens, for instance, refers to *Burgundica* as *Nederlandse bastarda* and as *Fraktur* alternately. By that time, in the first half

of the seventeenth century, German printers had already forgotten a construction which could only be studied in handwriting. Preoccupied with assumed meaning they were 'breaking' *fractura*.

The accumulated efforts of schoolmasters, scholars and designers have effectively weakened the position of the script. In January 1941 Adolf Hitler could blow the remnants away with one crazy sentence.

The German discussion avoids the typographic issue. A comparison of German typography with English or Dutch book design would reveal this at once: the latter have always used different scripts together to 'italicise' structural levels in the text, whereas German book design cultivated stylistic and grammatical purism.

This issue of *Letterletter* might mobilise this difference. German readers might ask how I can mix *Fraktur* with roman and use it in English or Latin text like the Burgundian emperor of Germany, whereas others would simply criticise my design. A typographic discussion can only be founded on this other position.

Despite the mystification in German history German typography and German type design maintain a high standard. Sensitivity and practical craftsmanship compensate for theory but the price is high: the substitute cannot be taught or explained.

The Dutch scene

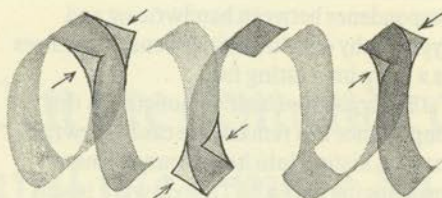
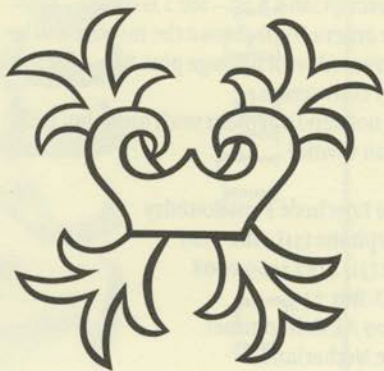
For the Dutch republic 1585 is an important turning point. The young commonwealth had to surrender Antwerp to the Spaniards. It was the last great loss. From then on the small republic which had been thrown back to Holland and surroundings remained more or less victorious during the rest of the eighty years war. The part of the immigrated Calvinist elite from Flanders in the raise of the republic is impressively illustrated by the spectacle of the so called Dutch writing books. Of over thirty authors one was Frisian, one was from Zeeland and only one from Holland. The others are Flemish, among them Jan van den Velde (from Antwerp) who in co-operation with Simon Frysus (the Frisian) produced the main work of the movement, *Spiegel der schrijfkunst*. The pretext of the mannerist writing books was to provide examples of handwriting. The issue was rather the desire for abstract art. The same desire inspired the earlier German and Italian writing books.

The emigration of the Flemish aristocracy shifted the Burgundian civilisation North East once again, leaving the devastated territory as an empty shell to its princes. The immigrants brought the *Burgundica* with them

but the script did not sprout in the new environment that was already occupied by textura and roman. The use of the Flemish hand remained restricted to gilded text panels and tomb stones in churches commissioned by immigrants. In some instances the engraved calligraphic model can be traced, but the script was not cut in type again. When the immigrants became settled in Dutch society their Burgundica faded away.

The badge

The badge of Burgundy, a sparkling steel, can be found on Burgundian and Dutch coinage. In numismatic publications the steel is described as a crown and the sparks as sticks. Beware of scholars.



Construction and shape

You might wonder how Neudorffer's clear and precise characteristic of bastarda (fractura) could have been overlooked. The answer is simple: you cannot see it.

Neudorffer is pointing at *triangles* where the observer sees *lozenges* only. Addressing *craftsmen* Neudorffer has described how fractura is made. This is hidden to the *spectator*. The remarks about Neudorffer by Stanley Morison betray the revenge of the frustrated ignorant. To avoid a disaster of this kind I have written my diagram with diluted ink. This helps the spectator to imagine what the craftsman sees. In the case of fractura the difference between *construction* and *shape* is the difference between a triangle and a lozenge.

Burgundian offspring

The *Burgundian issue* is composed in Tret. Tret has a smaller ratio of the distance between lines and the x-height than any other roman typeface. In the present columns it is almost as small as 1:1, whereas a ratio of 2:1 is common. However, Tret does not fit 50% more lines in the column than other typefaces, because Tret has to be set with a greater x-height to equal out its rivals.

I have applied Tret in a few editions of the Bible for the Dutch Bible society. I could reduce the number of pages with 300 and still widen the margins. Notably when set with fixed word spaces the compact lines of Tret reinforce the background. This is an important property for a typographic tool.

My considerations for the design are hidden in the articles on *Proportions* and on *Bastarda*. The Burgundica is remarkable for its compactness. Roman text script is more open by its nature. There are, however, occasions when we need the tightness of the Burgundian text script. Bent to the Burgundian attitude Tret owes much to the analysis of the Bastarda construction which resulted in my Burgundica.

The frame on page 1 contains Burgundian verse in Burgundica. Do not follow them: just say what you think.

Sceptical editorial

The Association Typographique Internationale (Atypi) distributes Letterletter among its members. The increasing demand for subscriptions could not be met so far. I still cannot believe that there would be someone who really wants to subscribe, but in co-operation with The Enschedé Font Foundry Atypi shall give you a chance.

In producing and publishing digital typefaces The Enschedé Font Foundry continues the tradition and the standards of the renowned Enschedé type foundry with new techniques.

The programme of Letterletter

Typography is writing with prefabricated characters. This point of view is comfortable because it has not to be adapted to changes in the technique of typography. There is little to learn about typography and type design when we understand writing. Obstacles for this understanding must be dissolved and this concerns much of what has been taught and believed for centuries. The old learning is founded on the dogma of typographic autonomy. Its important fact is the difference between typography and handwriting. I cannot deny this obvious fact, but its very evidence makes the fact meaningless. The secret cor-

respondence between handwriting and typography despite their obvious differences is a more interesting fact.

The Burgundian issue demonstrates this importance in a remarkable case. It rewrites current history into its contrary by merely rearranging old facts. The real work is still waiting for a real historian, but the point of view is clear. It has been shifted to a position that makes the coherence of all writing visible.

From the old point of view typography has lost its foundation that was laid 500 years ago. From the new point of view the technical revolution integrates typography in the old tradition of writing with a foundation that was laid 5000 years ago.

This is in short the programme of *Letterletter*.

Old issues

The stock of previous issues is almost exhausted. Readers have suggested the publication of a book containing Letterletter 1-12, but it is difficult to make a selection and an integral edition does not make much sense. I would prefer to reconsider the main subjects in a new context in future issues of Letterletter.

Letterletter

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