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The Punctator's World: A Discursion

BY GWEN G. ROBINSON

Part Three

Into Print: 1400–1550

This is the third in a series of articles on the past and future of punctuation. The years under focus here are crucial ones, for they include the invention of the printing press and the shift it caused in the human response to the written word.

The scribal era retained the oral-aural sensibilities of its prealphabetic mother culture. A medieval manuscript reverberated with speech sounds, and not surprisingly, for its nature was rooted in the traditions of rhetoric and dictation. More likely than not, an early scribe pronounced the words as he proceeded letter by letter through an exemplar crammed with ligatures, abbreviations, and idiosyncratic spellings—all written in a Latin that was no longer truly his own. Despite his alphabetic competence, he would rely on his hearing for the intellectual assimilation of words,¹ his strong aural memory making a surer vehicle than his visual one for the transfer from copy to fresh parchment. The process is set forth by an eighth-century scribe: “Tres digiti scribunt, duo oculi vident. Una lingua loquitur, totum corpus laborat, et omnis labor finem habet, et praemium ejus non

1. Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), 82–85. With this dependence on aural reception, medieval ‘publication’ continued the classical custom of being oral. “Among the Greeks the regular method of publication was by public recitation, at first, significantly, by the author himself, and then by professional readers or actors, and public recitation continued to be the regular method of publication even after books and the art of reading had become common.”

habet finem.”² But alas, stamina was not the only requirement for a happy result.

In the transmission of oral to written, there is much room for error (as journalistic misquotations even today will attest). Speech has wings, as the ancients well knew, and tends to arrive at the page with exhilarating inexactitude. In pretypographic times the accurate transmission of a text depended on the integrity of middle-men—scrivener, corrector, quotation borrower, and anecdotalists—who were not held accountable as such folk are supposed to be today. An exact duplication was neither expected nor achieved—as the composite quality of old materials now locked in print makes plain to see.

The amorphous, kinetic action of a handwritten product meant that no statement was likely to be perceived as private property. Authorship, as we know it today, with its entailment of rights and adulation, was an extraneous concept, applicable, if at all, to giants—Demosthenes, Cicero, Jerome, Augustine, and the like—all safely dead and candidates for hero worship. Contemporary writing was more vulnerable to Nature’s way, for it induced a sort of dogfight amongst admirers. Passages were cheerfully ripped apart and choice phrases, rhyme schemes, plots, and jokes were reclaimed without shame, let alone citation. Thus, ideas—deemed to be public property—survived through their appeal to fashion. The words that conveyed them were likewise free-floating. Generated by the tongue with whatever degree of integrity, they swarmed into the common domain and promptly changed their shape. Memory could not contain them, nor would they abide correction; certainly, no ordinary pen sufficed to fix them firmly. Generally, a scribal ‘duplication’ rendered a unique result, and readers of copied documents, cosmographies, maps, philological commentaries, and the like could not be sure that the facts

2. “Three fingers write, two eyes see. One tongue speaks, the whole body labors, and all labor has an end, and its reward does not have an end.” Henry John Chaytor, *From Script to Print: An Introduction to Medieval Vernacular Literature* (Cambridge: W. Heffer, 1950), 14. As a man becomes more facile at reading, his pace picks up and exceeds the speed at which he can pronounce the words. He begins to mutter rather than articulate, when he substitutes the visual for the audible image. But most interestingly, Chaytor points out, the silent reading still provokes an action in the vocal chords. See page 6.

upon which they were building fresh theory were indeed the facts at all.³

In his own search for correct readings, Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406: Chancellor of Florence, bookman, scholar, and friend of Petrarch) concluded that scribes do not *copy* so much as *corrupt* the ancient texts. Suspicious of newer manuscripts, he himself preferred to use the older codices for study, since scribes (whose minds incline to wander) “omit words, . . . change what they do not understand, and introduce marginal and interlinear glosses into their texts”.⁴ Without trust in the scribe, readers too (learned or not) began to make arbitrary emendations, some of which were absolutely indefensible—and so it went. The answer, Coluccio said, was to set up a good, many-volumed library (as did the Alexandrians, and as Cosimo de’ Medici would soon be doing at the monastery of San Marco) where erudite masters (if they existed—and he doubted it) might collate revisions after careful study.⁵

With reason, then, a good copier was highly prized, a treasure; a bad one was worse than the devil. A few decades later saw Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459: disciple of Coluccio, humanist, apostolic secretary, and intrepid hunter of lost classical texts) also ranting at the havoc wrought by sloppy scribbling. Frustration blusters through his extant letters. The following sample was written in the autumn of 1417:⁶

3. Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 10, 29–30.

4. Berthold L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua: Antenore, 1963), 101.

5. *Ibid.*, 102.

6. Poggio Bracciolini, *Two Renaissance Book Hunters: The Letters of Poggio Bracciolini to Nicolaus de Niccolis*, trans. and annot. Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1974), 212–13. Later, in a letter of 1427 (see page 119), Poggio writes: “I shall send you Caesar’s *Commentaries* as soon as I have found someone to carry them carefully so that you may have them rubricated and bound. I have a copyist of uneducated intelligence and peasant habits. For four months now I have done nothing but teach him in the hope that he may learn to write, but I fear that I am ploughing the seashore. He is now copying Valerius, on whom he proves his ignorance, but day by day he becomes stupider. And so I yell, I thunder, I scold, I upbraid; but he has ears full of pitch. He is leaden, a blockhead, wooden, a donkey, and whatever can be

I am sending you [Franciscus Barbarus] Silius Italicus, five books of Statius' *Silvae* and M. Manilius, the astronomer. The man who copied the books was the most ignorant of living men; one needs to use divination, not reading itself, and so it is very important that they be copied by a scholar. I have read as far as the thirteenth book of Silius and I corrected a lot, so that it might be easy for someone writing it correctly to avoid similar mistakes and to correct those in the later books, so see that they are copied and then send them to Nicolaus in Florence.

Because words were still like jumping beans and most scribes were not scholars, knowledge in chirographic days had a fluid quality, which the modern scholar—aided by access to abundant quantities of paper, to indexes, and retrieval systems—can scarcely appreciate. Strange to contemplate, the medieval library catalogue was inclined to poeticize its inventory. Mnemonic jingles activated the custodian, guiding him, and him alone, to the desired volumes, stored in cupboards and chests, or chained thereabout to desks. He had little incentive to arrange his records to international standards, for there were no such standards. Until the sixteenth century, even the alphabet did not suggest to all men a fixed order.⁷ A library was custom-collected and custom-organized to fit the wants of its proprietor. A single volume, for example, could (and the majority did) contain variously authored works put together between the same boards for reasons that seem irrelevant and even outlandish to the modern scholar. Often enough, those works were attributed erroneously to writers who were not even chronologically likely: a copyist, transcribing a manuscript that carried no author's name, would simply assign to it the author

mentioned that is duller and clumsier. Damn him. He is bound to me for two years; perhaps he will improve." Again, in a letter of 1428 (see page 126), he speaks irritably of Cicero's *Philippics*, which he has been correcting against an ancient codex. "It is so childishly written and so faulty that in the parts which I copied I needed not guesswork but absolute divination. There is no woman so stupid and uncultivated that she could not have written it better . . ." And finally (page 175) in a letter of 1431: "No one, believe me, will copy the Plautus well unless he is well educated; for it is the same writing as many old books, which I think must have been written by women with no separation between the words, so that one often has to guess".

7. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 89–90.

of an adjacent tract. Capriciousness of this sort pocked the entire range of medieval literature. "Almost every other book seems to be known habitually under a name which cannot possibly be that of its true author."⁸ To illustrate how such disorder might well have come about, the medievalist E. P. Goldschmidt hypothesized the following set of events.⁹

Imagine a monk or secular cleric (for before the founding of universities in the thirteenth century no other calling suggests a candidate) deciding to compose a book. As he collects his material, he accumulates notes on sheets of vellum, which he keeps in his cell to be made use of later. If he needs to consult books that are not in his own monastery, he writes to other abbeys reputed to have big libraries. Then, he waits. If, in the fullness of time, a library responds that, indeed, the wanted book is on the shelf but cannot go out on loan, then our author must apply to his abbot for the permission and wherewithal to travel; or, he must rely on a friend to copy the work for him—in either case, a risky enterprise, whose result will be some script-covered parchment quires. Once all the bits and pieces are accumulated, including a substantial supply of costly vellum cajoled from the monastery bursar, he can begin to set down his composition, using his notes from scraps and odd sheets, "copying his excerpts and quotations from other books, all of which . . . lie ready to hand in his cell in the shape of vellum leaves". If, in the middle of his *opus monumentale*, he conceives new insights or learns of some important book that requires consultation, the discarded beginning will remain in his cell in the shape of vellum leaves (too precious to throw out), covered with his writing.

Finished at last, the book is presented to the abbot, who admirably requests an additional copy so that this one may be sent to the bishop. The author sits down again, using the notes he had used before, to make a fresh copy for the generous abbot. But as he writes, new facts come to mind that he endeavors to incorporate into a better arrangement. That done, the 'same' book might be requested again. "Thus we may have two or even three redactions of the same book, all equally authentic, but often differing considerably."

8. Ernst Philip Goldschmidt, *Medieval Texts and Their First Appearance in Print* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1943), 86.

9. *Ibid.*, 89–93.

Finally, our author dies. His brethren, who have venerated him as a great scholar and writer, reverently enter his cell. Wishing to preserve every scrap of the learned man's work, they collect all those miscellaneous sheets that have accumulated on his shelves and bind them into volumes. One should remember that these volumes would be viewed as 'books', "books like any others in the library, to be studied, copied, transcribed, etc." In the light of such conditions it is easy to understand why so many of our medieval books contain "quite uncalled-for repetitions, whole inserted pieces recognizably taken from other authors, a chain of argument abruptly ending in the middle of a sentence, taken up again from its first premises thirty pages later, and so on".

Librarians and bookbinders put together many volumes of miscellaneous content, in numbers such that they probably constituted the majority of books in the library. They would assemble a number of pamphlet-length tracts of similar size or related topic, but practically never did they give consideration to authorship, nor did they disdain to juxtapose works from varying centuries. Once bound together, these separately written segments would be copied out in a uniform hand, which would render their heterogeneous origins less obvious still.¹⁰ How the librarian set about cataloguing the finished masterpiece seems to have been a matter of weather, as much as anything else. But before print, the accessibility of information was not a librarian's explicit goal. Indeed, the more unfathomable the retrieval procedures could be made to appear, the more agreeably could his ego sufflate.¹¹ But to give him his due, it was a difficult job to produce order and invite scholarship against the generally unsettled background of the middle Middle Ages. The coup in that campaign awaited the printer.

For the moment, certainty about authorship, provenance, and dates—not to mention the actual words of the text—continued to be elusive. Contributing to the phantom atmosphere was the practice of amending one's own copy of a work from another's, which itself might be riddled with error. This well-attested custom continued from antiquity through the chirographic era, despite the difficulties of travel, the scattered locations of manuscripts, and their scarcity. Often the ancient or medieval reader would, if given the chance,

10. Goldschmidt, *Medieval Texts*, 95.

11. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 90–96.

copy a text from a multiplicity of exemplars, intermingling his own best guesses with the hypotheses of scribes, whose primary characteristic seems to have been the inability to copy exactly from what lay before them.¹² Accordingly, despite the energetic scholarship of men like Poggio Bracciolini (and there were many in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries), a rich new vein of error-generating opportunity opened up, and the reader was left to ponder quite justifiably on the original form of ancient statements. With the passage of years the scholar-printer and the modern university medievalist would attempt with great earnestness to rescue their baffled publics by slog-ging back through swamps of textual red herrings to historical truth—generally a vain endeavor, given the irreverence that scribes had had for vintage manuscripts. For when, say, in the ninth century—a period of hectic transliterating activity—a manuscript of difficult uncial text (contaminated by variant readings, marginalia, and dubious interlinear glosses) was copied into readable Carolingian minuscule on pristine parchment, it was more customary than not to shred the mouldy original.¹³

And so we see how the medieval information seeker, not knowing in which direction accuracy lay, was more or less constantly kept off balance. Anxious to glean meaning and to arrive at the target of the communication, he sorted, sifted, and wrestled the written materials with a tenacity that cosseted readers today would not be willing to muster. His powers of empathy must have been enormous, his perceptions downright predacious.

THE STATE OF LITERACY IN THE FINAL PRE-PRINT YEARS

It was a jungle world before the exactions of print, but change was afoot. The human mind, if you will, was preparing for the reception of technology.¹⁴ If the twelfth century had been an age of romance—of troubadours, knights, feasts and battles, of pale ladies flicking their

12. L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), 27, 52–53, 83.

13. *Ibid.*, 51, 143–44, 150–51.

14. For an interesting analysis of the reasons for the prolonged delay in mechanical invention and technological development *despite* ancient knowledge of mathematics, physics, and physiology, see Hanns Sachs, “The Delay of the Machine Age”, *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 2 (1933): 404–24.

hankies out turret windows—then the next was an age of reason, in which education, rapidly increasing, began its slow seep into the nether classes. Gatherings of scholars formalized into colleges and universities; Padova, Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge were all active centers of learning by the end of the thirteenth century. The vernaculars were acquiring a degree of social acceptability: for example, a complete French Bible, probably countenanced by the Sorbonne, was put out in 1235. A spirit of inquiry about canon law, current affairs, social conditions, and constitutional changes brought down the apparatus of epic romance poetry—with all its tedious repetitions designed for the sluggish ear—and replaced it with prose that needed to be clear when disputatious, and more quickly paced when recounting the feats and amours of heroes.¹⁵ Paper—because it was more pliable, more absorptive of ink, and more cheaply and abundantly available than parchment—was beginning to be manufactured to great effect for less expensive book production in Italy, from where it would proceed northwards.¹⁶ Adding energy to these printward gusts were: the growth of towns with their middle-class artisans and their commercial, often very small, scriptoria engaging in vernacular output; improved transportation; and in some monasteries, reforms that encouraged common folk to read for themselves parts of the Bible and devotional literature.¹⁷ In the fourteenth century more universities emerged: Vienna, Heidelberg, and Cologne. In general terms, as reading became more relevant to the successes and pleasures of the average man, so books multiplied. Copying became a sort of home industry, organized by stationers and booksellers. One was paid by the chunks (the *peciae*)¹⁸ doled out and duly returned. Professors had given up the practice of slow dictation in the university lecture hall

15. Chaytor, *Script to Print*, 84–85.

16. Rudolf Hirsch, *Printing, Selling and Reading: 1450–1550* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1967), 3.

17. *Ibid.*, 10.

18. Devised in Northern Italy during the thirteenth century, the *peciae* were units for estimating payment to the copyist. The standard form of a Bolognese *pecia* was eight pages of two columns, each containing sixty lines of thirty-two letters. *Pecciani* were appointed by the University of Bologna to oversee the system and to safeguard the accuracy of reproduction. Fines were imposed for imperfect renderings, and also for lost *peciae*. Scriptors got four *denarii* per *pecia* and correctors, two *denarii*. See Robert Steel, “The Pecia”, *The Library*, 4th ser., 11 (September 1930): 231.

and progressed now at a faster clip over greater ranges of material. A student no longer achieved a degree by slavishly composing a book from the spoken words of his teacher.¹⁹

Throughout the Middle Ages, aural attitudes increasingly altered in the direction of the visual. We learn from an admiring St. Augustine that the learned St. Ambrose (fourth century) could comfortably read without the necessity of wiggling his lips. “But when he was reading, he drew his eyes along over the leaves, and his heart searched into the sense, but his voice and tongue were silent.”²⁰ The Benedictine Rule (Chap. xlvi) suggests that by the sixth century reading to oneself was not at all rare: “Post sextam [horam] surgentes a mensa, pausent in lecta sua cum omni silentio; aut forte qui voluerit legere, sibi sic legat ut alium non inquietet”.²¹ Writing, which we think of today in conjunction with reading, was often taught separately, with the result that some priests could read but not write.²² By the twelfth century, when Abbé Ode described the scriptorium at Tournai, silent writing was an expectable activity, yet intriguing enough to write about: “Ita ut si claustrum ingredereris, videres plerumque xii monachos juvenes in cathedris sedentes et super tabulas diligenter et artificiose compositas cum silentio scribentes”.²³ It is interesting that there are so many of the *juvenes* and that they are so diligent, artistic, and quiet, for the youths in other monastic accounts seem more like brawling cubs than industrious scribes.

We see more *juvenes* in the “first region” of Abbot Johannes Trithemius’s fifteenth-century *Liber de triplici regione claustralium et spirituali exercicio monachorum*—a book giving advice to those progressing through the levels of monkhood—where their adolescent failings (described with gusto) sadly included: carnality, not being obedient to superiors, foolishness, whispering, squirming, contumely (so odious

19. McLuhan, *Gutenberg Galaxy*, 95.

20. William Watts’ English translation for the Loeb Classical Library edition of St. Augustine’s *Confessions* (London: William Heinemann, 1931), 1:273.

21. “After the sixth hour, having left the table, let them rest on their beds in perfect silence, or if by chance anyone should want to read, let him read to himself so that he does not disturb the others.”

22. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 127.

23. Chaytor, *Script to Print*, 18. “Thus, when you enter the cloister, you will generally see twelve young monks sitting on chairs at tables and writing compositions diligently and skillfully in silence.”

to God), detraction of others, inventions of wickedness, and sundry other high jinks. Such riotous spirits demanded suppression, and indeed, they got it; for by the time the novice entered the exalted atmosphere of the “third region”, a tamed and proper *religioso*, he is (between prayers) hitting the books and doing so selectively, lest “vana lectio” generate “vanas cogitationes”. Upon returning to the cell after meals, Tritemius enjoined, “Boni aliquid ad edificationem lege” (Read something good for edification). Then:²⁴

Take up some work that has not yet been mastered by you, or write. If it is a free day, go with your book of studies to your regular reading place, and sitting with the others, read what you want in silence. Indeed, a monk should always have “aliquid boni legere”. But not all reading is good for all monks, especially not for those who might be a little infirm in the spirit. So if you are one of those, stick to simple doctrines. Do not read to become more learned, nor to encounter curiosities that do not edify. But if you are one of the stronger, then read what you want, for true reading does not harm devotion. [To which may be added that not all abbots were so enlightened.]

By Tritemius’s time, visual attitudes had generously infected the moral imagination, and reading silently was often perceived to be more worthy than mumbling along in the wake of a pointing finger. Early in the thirteenth century the worried Cistercian abbot, Richalm of Schönthal, was already recounting:²⁵

Oftentimes, when I am reading straight from the book and in thought only, as I am wont, they [devils] make me read aloud word by word, that they may deprive me so much the more of the inward understanding thereof, and that I may the less penetrate into the interior force of the reading, the more I pour myself out in exterior speech.

24. Johannes Tritemius, *Liber de triplici regione claustralium et spirituali exercicio monachorum* (Paris: Anthony Bonnemer, 1507), iiiii, lxxii, lxxiii.

25. Chaytor, *Script to Print*, 14–15.

In modern times, though the scene is changing swiftly, what is merely heard does not hold the respect of serious folk. The late Philip Larkin represented this intellectual stand. He disdained poetry readings and the theatre on grounds of shallowness, for the words come too quickly and “receive an instant response, which tends to vulgarize”. With the ear alone, they cannot be savored for their potential multiplicity of connotation and innuendo.²⁶ Ironically, a more traditional poetic approach is that of Robert MacNeil, television reporter and commentator, who describes himself as follows: “I am a mover of lips and a public mumblor when reading words worth savouring. If I am to take them into my consciousness, have them move me, I must know what they sound like.”²⁷ This attitude to the spoken word is quite different from that of the passive listener to radio, or watcher and hearer of television. These latter activities smack of intellectual surrender. The thinking person should engage with books.

Unlike poor Poggio, today’s reader dives into text with the expectation of understanding what his author wishes to tell him. He knows where the index will lie and how to find the date of publication, the appendix, page numbers, preface, and chapter topics. He looks forward to a satisfying experience—and the easier the better, for he quite likes a quick jaunt through galactic spaces or murders that resolve in a hundred pages flat. Faced with a richly colloquial vocabulary and ‘impactful’ sentences where subject, verb, and object stand plainly posted by two not-very-far-apart periods, contemporary readers thrive in a state of tropical indolence. The market is theirs to debase as their lowest mood devises.

But, as has been shown, it was not always so. For the first two millennia of alphabet writing, the reader’s life was one of struggle. Nevertheless, by the intellectually fecund fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a vast literate audience was gathering in the dawn’s gloom—anxious, enthusiastic, and on the *qui vive* to comprehend what learned men had to say about what the world was, and how and why it ticked. Once literacy had been democratized, linguistic expression,

26. Philip Larkin interview in *Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews* (7th ser.), ed. George Plimpton (New York: Viking, 1986), 163.

27. Robert MacNeil, *Wordstruck: A Memoir* (New York: Viking, 1989), 185.

letter formation, and orthography straightened their wayward courses, moving always in the direction of uniformity.

PUNCTUATION CROSSES THE BOUNDARY

During these changeover years, punctuation, too, began to pester for attention. The breaking up of text into chapters, subchapters, and paragraphs had long been seen to illuminate meaning for the inexpert reader. Now, it was plainly the season to address the minutiae. Accordingly, there erupted a seemingly spontaneous generation of analyses, codifications, and recommendations concerning the potency of the modest punct. Those literary sages who understood the craft urged would-be intellectuals to master its power. An example of the general concern is a three-page Latin tract, generally attributed to Petrarch (*pacete* Novati and Ullman, whose absten-tions, alas, afford sound reasons for doubt) and called *Ars punctandi*.

The only version of this *Ars punctandi* in early print dates from 1493 and is included in a ten-page volume (there is a copy in the Cornell University Library) of other punctating advisements. Petrarch (if it is indeed he) tells us that there are five points in use. The *suspensivus* is essentially a simple *virgula*, which one uses to produce a little quiet before the clausal sense is complete. The *colus* (or *colon*) is appropriate for the end of the clause where the sense is complete. The *coma* is useful for that indecisive terrain where the clause sense is complete but the writer wishes to add more. The *periodus* is more clear cut. It terminates a section, a chapter, or a whole work, and should appear when nothing more is to be said. The *interrogativus* is also discussed. These are the puncts that deal with time. But there are also other marks that can aid the writer in parceling out his text. The obelus and asterisk are both useful for condemning the authenticity of a line or word, and of drawing attention to it. The *semipunctus* (or hyphen) is used for the end of a line where the exactions of margin do not allow room for the word to be completed. The parenthesis is also described to be more or less as we know it today.

The next section of this little book is the *Alius compendiosus dialogus de arte punctandi* by Johannis de Lapide—a question-and-answer dialogue between an *amantissimus adolescens* and his teacher, in which all the ‘Petrarchan’ materials are meticulously gone over. Thereafter

follows an anonymous list of rules, part of which is interesting in that it deals with voice production. The *suspensivus*, *coma*, *interrogativus*, *colon*, and *periodus* are discussed in terms of *do*, *re*, *mi*, etc. In a case of *suspensivus*, it is advised that the voice continue on the same level after the pause. The *coma*, though previously described as having a line dot with a virgula floating above (/), is therewith printed as two dots (:), and given the duty of guiding the voice downwards from *sol* to *mi*: “descensus unius tertie”. The *interrogativus*, the most complex vocally of the four basic stops, is to be dealt with as follows: the antepenultimate syllable goes down from *fa* to *mi*, the penultimate from *mi* to *re*, and the ultimate back up to *mi*—enough, it might seem, to put anyone off asking a casual question. For the *colon* or *periodus* the voice sinks from *sol* to *ut*, a “descensus unius quinte”.

It is known that Guarino of Verona (1374–1460: professor of rhetoric and classical languages) taught interpunctuation—undoubtedly along Petrarchan lines—in Ferrara and that his pupils, scattering mostly to the north where humanistic erudition was not so advanced, continued to lecture on it.²⁸ A notice in Latin of such a lecture at Leipzig survives today. Dating from 1462, it advertises that Peter Luder (fl. 1410–1475?: student of Guarino and himself a visiting lecturer on poetry, metrics, rhetoric, epistolography, Horace, Ovid, Virgil, and Terence) would be explaining the art of punctuating “cum lucida declaracione”, so that anybody might understand. To appreciate the tenor of his appeal, it is necessary to realize that all during this period and indeed well into the eighteenth century, popular perception held punctuation to be a rather esoteric craft, requiring an exalted technical knowledge. The prescient Peter Luder, however, presented the subject quite casually as an obvious necessity for everyone, on the grounds that whatever idea is written, be it ever so lucid, it will need to be tidied up with commas, colons, periods, question marks, admiration marks, exclamation marks, asterisks, and obeli. *Without these tools, reader, no matter how clever you may be, you will founder in obscurities!* Promising talismans against rough passage, he invited the public to bring its money to his lodgings at three o’clock

28. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 136–38. Interestingly, Hirsch points out (page 137) that, in general, the “typical [Italian] humanist paid no or very little attention to the average reader”. But lesser intellects beyond the Alps, where writers were neither so autocratic nor so facile with the Latin language, both needed and supplied the textual help of punctuation.

on the following day. The whole business, he urged, would take only a little more than an hour.²⁹ Was the room, then, filled with jostling, wealthy pupils, jotting down their revelations? We are left uninformed. The time-frozen action is as provoking to the imagination as the scene on Keats' urn.

The Germans took to punctuation like ducks to water and for a few decades were exploring its reach in a progression of publications. In his 1473 translation of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus*, Heinrich Steinhöwel (1412–1483: humanist, doctor, and translator) offered the first known advice to the silent reader about punctuation. "To understand this book and others, which I translated from Latin into German, you must pay attention to the different signs of interpunctuation . . . three types having different meanings."³⁰ But his differentiations produced in fact four sense and pausal stops, which soon expanded to five, as he infixed subtle modifications between his original basic values and, like all the punctuation addicts of his time, confused his disciples by creating arbitrary symbols to represent them.³¹

Friedrich Riederer's elaborate system (consisting of ten symbols: five sense and pausal markers and five textual devices) was first mentioned in 1477, and then later (in 1505) described in the following way. We start with the five pauses.³²

The *virgula*, or punct, signifies a small pause (or stop) to the reader or the speaker: and it is used to differentiate the incomplete part of a speech [a vocative or phrase, one assumes], which can consist of one word or many words. The *gemipunctus* is used at the end of every complete part [a clause?]. The *koma* signifies a longer temporary silence than the *gemipunctus*. It too is used after a completed portion of the sentence and indicates that more parts are still to follow,

29. Ludwig Bertalot, "Humanistische Vorlesungsankündigungen in Deutschland im 15. Jahrhundert", *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der Erziehung und des Unterrichts* 5 (1915): 5–6, also 17.

30. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 137.

31. Johannes Müller, *Quellenschriften und Geschichte des deutschsprachlichen Unterrichtes bis zur Mitte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Gotha: E. F. Thienemann, 1882), 289. I would like to thank Karin D'Agostino for her indispensable assistance in translating for me the relevant and sometimes complicated passages from Müller's book.

32. Müller, *Quellenschriften*, 291–93.

and that they are important to the preceding part. A *kolon* signifies a more complete temporary silence than the previously mentioned *virgula*. It should be noted that its position lies between two complete speeches [short sentences? sentence fragments?], which sometimes serve together to combine or unite the other segments of the lines. The *periodus* has the most complete temporary silence, because it is put at the end of the entire speech where the following speech has no relationship to the previous part.

Amongst Riederer's five textual devices, two are rather intriguing. First, a regular question, if dispatched in its entirety, carries the symbol (?) to signal its finish; but if the question issues forth in pieces, then the following symbol (:) is placed between the pieces. Second, for spots where one might wish to mention "the first or last name of a person and does not know it", two dots (..) are recommended to fill the gap. This symbol he also calls the "gemipunctus", then, more disconcertingly: "though many use the *N* for it". He terminates his advice with a paragraph that, ironically, displays in its 1505 printed form absolutely no evidence of the puncting procedures so earnestly being propounded. In English, it reads:

The above mentioned symbols are named and drawn differently by many, and also mean something different that every reader should remember; this I announce, so that if the readers find it differently in other writings, they can adjust their basic knowledge and remember the reason for these symbols.

Nicholas von Wyle (friend of Steinhöwel, ambassador, notary, and teacher of writing style and orthography) printed his straightforward, essentially Donatian three-point system (see Part Two) in his *Translationen* (1478)³³—undoubtedly a pleasant relief to professional punctators. But most interesting, indeed, is a short anonymous tract in the Munich State Library, written about 1480, which outdoes all previously encountered punctating manuals in its overload of detail.

33. See Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 137; and Müller, *Quellenschriften*, 288.

Again, we are back in a kaleidoscopic world of pointing possibility. The values with their refreshing symbols are as follows:³⁴

- 1) *Punctus suspensivus planus* [✓];
- 2) *Semipunctus* [; or •];
- 3) *Punctus suspensivus currens sive pellens* [↙ or ↘] [because it runs from phrase to phrase, marking each one for the significance of meaning, and never stands alone, but only with company];
- 4) *Punctus admirativus* [!!];
- 5) *Punctus interrogativus* [§];
- 6) *Punctus interpositi*, i.e., for the parentheses [(·)];
- 7) *Punctus exclamativus* [W];
- 8) *Punctus lamenti or planctus* [R];
- 9) *Punctus gaudii cum honestate* [T] [cum dishonestate is not mentioned];
- 10) *Punctus conclusivus orationis perfecti* [† or †];
- 11) *Punctus orationis finalis* [∴].

The *Punctus orationis finalis* brings to mind the feelings of an anonymous medieval scribe, who climaxed his pious chore with the following words: “Here ends the second part of the *Summa* of the Dominican brother Thomas Aquinas, the longest, most verbose, and most tedious to write; thank God, thank God, and again thank God”.³⁵

The pedagogues seem to have gone mad with the thrill of distinguishing niceties. It is scarcely a wonder that printers, scrimmaging between solvency and bankruptcy, did not bother themselves over such detail. The more hectored they were, the more attractive was the lure of simple virgules and periods.

EARLY PRINTING

When the use of movable type was firmly established, attention trained on the communicating aspect of writing, which became, necessarily, the author’s genuine concern. He was no longer talking to a small, identifiable circle, but to a vast swell of strangers who wanted to understand, indeed, were *paying* to understand. Surely one’s own elucubrations, however unexalted, deserved safe conduct into those eager receiver brains. Given the natural inclination of a writer’s ego, it did not take long for the author and his team of compositors,

34. Müller, *Quellenschriften*, 293.

35. Israel Shenker, “The Greatest Sport”, Profile Series [on Christopher de Hamell], *The New Yorker* 65 (29 May 1989): 51.

correctors, and publishers to come to the view that the public was owed this pleasure. Together, they contrived a release from the mystique of scribal styles,³⁶ from choked texts and idiosyncratic spellings, punctuation, and page settings. Words would be pinned down at last; and once their source was proclaimed, accountability was inescapable.

Increasingly, the printer inserted himself into the author-reader relationship as middleman with ambitious ideas that embraced a mix of artistic and mechanical considerations. Ideally, he was a scholar of the ancient letter designs from Roman inscriptions, and of medieval scribal styles—the uncial, Carolingian, Gothic, Roman chancery, and English secretarial scripts—of which he selected the most appropriate for the genre of work to be printed. He had a practical ingenuity for the details of punchcutting and experience with metal strengths as well as the patience needed for those irritating moments when flourishing descenders collided with letters beneath. Though generally the urge was towards clarity, simple forms—like a perfect ‘O’, for example—were not at first technically feasible, and angled, intricate shapes were sometimes useful in concealing the weakness of a cut.³⁷

The first century of print (1450–1550) would see the multifarious type faces (copied initially from book hands) divide into two strains: the Teutonic Gothic and the Latinate humanistic—with the subsequent cross-hybridizations generating handsomely legible faces on both sides of the divide. But it is not the case, as is sometimes thought, that the incunable years saw every printer with his own homemade type.³⁸ Economy militated against variety, as it is inclined to do.

36. E. A. Havelock, *Origins of Western Literacy* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1976), 77.

37. Henry Graham Carter, *A View of Early Typography up to about 1600* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 42–43.

38. For example, the Italian gothic style known as ‘rotunda’ (which was cut by Wendelin de Spira in Venice in 1472 and constituted for some decades the Northerners’ longest incursion into humanistic terrain) was copied in Cologne in the same year and appeared in the Low Countries in 1475, at Basle and Lyons in 1477, Augsburg and Nuremberg in 1478, at Paris in 1479, at Leipzig in 1481, and in London in 1499. Between 1485 and 1501, at least fifty printers in Germany and Basle acquired fonts of the German Schwabacher, many identical from the same sets of punches. By 1490 the French *bâtardes* had become widespread. In the last decade of the fifteenth century, five or six printers in Paris were using types from a single

Gradually, small publishers were forced to adopt the styles of the big houses, for readers will not willingly plunge into a page of type that does not resemble in its major aspects those to which he is accustomed.³⁹ Italian humanism with its classical focus led the push for the general substitution of Roman for Gothic type. Accordingly, by the mid-sixteenth century the Roman faces had essentially gained the field in Western Europe, with the exception of Scandinavia and Germany, where resistance to it was absolute. The Roman is today “the international font of western books”.⁴⁰ In 1540 the Vulgate had been printed both in Gothic and in Roman at Paris and at Lyons, but thereafter always in Roman.⁴¹ To abbreviate a history, which, though appealing to book lovers and language zealots, is too sprawling to reconstruct here, let it be said simply that by the time of Garamond’s death in 1561, a range of his beautiful, clear, graceful Roman types was in frequent use, and that they included in their fonts a handsome array of commas, colons, brackets, and question marks.

The progress of book production was towards explicitness, towards method in hierarchical dispositions of phrases, clauses, paragraphs, chapters—all the steaks and chops of a punctator’s feast. For what does a punctator do, if not carve up the written line for intellectual consumption? To the assumed delight of the reading public, the new,

punch. England, under the Act of 1484, was importing foreign workmen, the majority probably from Rouen. Caxton in 1490 was using a type common also to Vérard and Leret of Paris; De Worde in 1493 owned a type being used by Dupré in Paris, and in 1499 both De Worde and Notary were in possession of another type from Morin’s of Rouen. Two of Pynson’s types were Higman’s and Hopyl’s (Paris). England itself was slow in putting out type. A virgule (/) followed by a ragged r, to deputize for *k* in several early London fonts, is evidence against the position that letters were in the beginning cut and struck there. See Carter, *Early Typography*, 75, 57–58, 64.

39. *Ibid.*, 49.

40. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 118. In its brevity this survey rather understates the complexity of the situation, for Italians in the fifteenth century often favored the Gothic types for theology, law, and even science. The classicists generally leaned to the *antiqua*, derived like the full Roman from the ancient letters. In the German-speaking North, some twenty-five presses owned and operated Roman-class fonts before the end of the century. France had many, mostly in Paris, and England had none. See pages 114–15.

41. Carter, *Early Typography*, 88.

evenly set print was easy to take in. The eye seemed able to do it alone. As it moved with unimpeded speed over the words, the lips shut firmly once and for all, and the intake became interiorized, a remove away from voice sounds. In this tranquil intellectuality, the structure of syntax became more apparent, and with it, the need for a new logical punctating method.

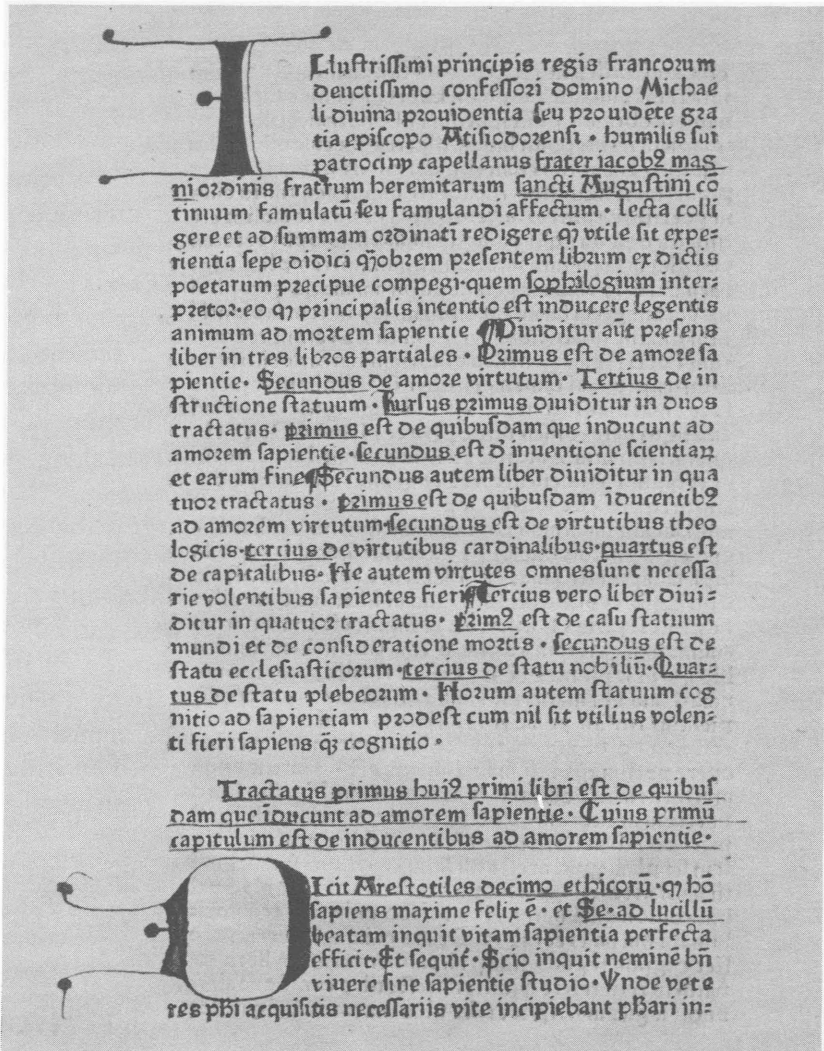
Chirographic culture could not survive the invention of the printing press, but its demise was slow. For several decades after Gutenberg, there was tremendous freedom in the not-as-yet regulated book trade, and printers and scribes busily copied each other's texts for the same sorts of markets.⁴² Men from the most diverse backgrounds entered the field to work alongside those who were already acquainted with one or another of the bookmaking crafts. As economic opportunities opened out or closed up, so scribes became printers, and printers went back to scribing, or wool trading, or cheesemaking, or whatever.⁴³ There was room for both script and print, and for a time they seemed willing to share the market. In the 1450s (at the very time that Gutenberg's forty-two-line Bible was being printed) the scriptorium of Vespasiano da Bisticci in Florence, with its forty-five working scribes, was putting out "as many books as were desired".⁴⁴ But the handcrafted volume was indeed special. It carried a cachet of luxury, of uniqueness and importance. In full dress it was magnificently bound and illuminated, calligraphed on choice vellum—an object so desired in ducal libraries that it was often prepared by scribes from already printed materials.⁴⁵ To acquire bookshelf space amongst

42. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 33, 49.

43. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 21. Here Hirsch presents an extensive list of the previous activities of printers and their staffs. In Germany, for example, we find: a priest, several woodcutters, an illuminator, some letter writers, an astronomer, a Franciscan monk, a professor of medicine, a former proofreader, a painter, a book-binder. In Italy we find: a composer of music, a number of Greek and Cretan scholars, authors, type designers, and an architect. There were real-estate dealers in Paris; and in Britain, merchants and judges.

44. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 14–18.

45. Eisenstein, *Printing Press*, 51. It is interesting that English renaissance courtiers were still unable to bring themselves to convert their scribbles to print, so distasteful did they find the new invention (p. 64). Even today, in social notes, one comes across the occasional apology for having written with a typewriter or word processor, instead of with pen. See also: Sandra Hindman, *Pen to Press: Illuminated Manuscripts and Printed Books in the First Century of Printing* ([College Park]: Art Department, University of Maryland, 1977), 101–3.



The opening page (leaf [a3r]) of the text of the *Sophologium* of Jacobus Magni (Strasbourg, ca. 1476), showing the printed text with hand-painted (rubricated) initials, and red-inked paragraph signs, capitals, and underlinings of the listing ordinals. Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.

all those arrogant big-hitters, typographers continued obsequiously to imitate the uncial, Carolingian, and Gothic scripts—printing them, upon request, on parchment with rubricated capitals and hand-colored ornaments.

“Ill.^{ma} Ex.^{ma} Madama”, wrote Aldus Manutius to the Marchesa of Mantova in June 1505. “Me scrive V.S. li mande tutti quelli libretti io habia in membrana de lettera cursiva . . .” (Your Ladyship has written me to send all the little books that I have in italics on parchment . . .) wherewith, only eleven days after the date of her initial inquiry, he sent by porter for inspection: Horatio and Juvenal and Persius bound together for six ducats; Martial for four; Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius for three; and Lucan for three—all presumably on parchment in the “picol forma” (that is, the octavo) that she had requested he pull for her expressly.⁴⁶ Undoubtedly, like Grolier’s own octavo copy of the Manutius edition of Pliny the Younger’s letters in the British Museum, the Marchesa’s books would have carried the titles gold-stamped on leather bindings and been embellished inside by gilded Aldine dolphin-and-anchor pressmarks, gilded capitals, and hand-applied, red initial letters.

But despite this homage to personalized warmth, letters from type revealed their mechanical nature and carried their information aloofly, a step apart from the animal warmth of re-dipped pens, varying descenders, and inserted corrections—from the intimacy of touch and voice memories. As print objectified wordage, so new traditions developed in response to the aroused visual sense, which engages the passions less lustily and deals in terms of distance, isolation, silence, and surfaces. Printed text encouraged man to be exact for a democratic and critical public; it allowed perfect duplication so that new findings might accumulate and corrections adhere. It provided the precision necessary for modern scientific discovery and brought coherence to scholarly effort across Europe. For the first time ever, strangers could spar intellectually across spatial and temporal distances.

Printers began to regularize their in-house punctuation and orthography, to seek type with justified lettering, to eliminate dialectal expressions—in short, to do everything conceivable to provide an

46. Aldus Manutius, *Aldo Manuzio: Lettres et Documents, 1495–1515*, ed. Armand Baschet (Venice: Antonio Antonelli, 1867), 23–26.

'easy read' for the most people; for general readability was crucial to the mass consumption upon which profit depended. As production put more and more books before the public, so the reader freed himself of the impedimenta so passively put up with by his oppressed ancestor. Words were clearly separated; abbreviations increasingly opened up. Colophon and *explicit* materials transferred to an opening title page (an expected feature by the 1480s), where the bookshop browser could locate them with ease and be enticed to a purchase by the august names of author and editor, by the insignia of the printer (printers' and publishers' marks were common by the 1490s), and by the succeeding authorial letter of presentation to pope or royalty. Here was the flavor of authority and responsibility. And it sold. Accordingly, printers moved towards a consistency of integrity, and acquired 'privileges' to protect the turf they were now assiduously cultivating. They also gave thought to the disbursal of their wares. Bookselling, previously the sideline activity of teachers, scribes, and merchants of all sorts, centered now in printing houses and stationers' shops.

Year by year the book itself continued to open up to daylight. Woodblock illustrations were used to alleviate dense text and encourage the irresolute reader. The first author's portrait in a printed book was that of Paulus Attavanti Florentinus in 1479. Pagination, that is, the numbering of leaves on both recto and verso, firmly ousted the less informative signature lettering and made it possible for accurate references to be given.⁴⁷ Running heads proved useful, and stayed; as did tables of contents and indexes (at last possible in great detail because of the immutability of print). The more easily comprehensible, the more wide-reaching a book became; and the more wide-reaching, the more implacable, inert, disengaged. Faced with the gap between reader and producer, the book arts pressed for the universal denominator of man's intellectual comfort, for what he would most enjoyably understand.

THE POST-PRINT SURGE IN LITERACY

The proletariat of western Europe was plainly becoming literate. By 1470 some thirty German presses were providing training for ap-

47. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 9, 60–61, 119.

prentices and journeymen in the printing trade. Independent print shops had increased, and there were now four in Rome, four in Venice, three in Strasbourg, three in Cologne, two each in Basle, Augsburg, and Nuremberg. Many towns had single presses. The Latin classics—Cicero, Apuleius, Gellius, Caesar, Pliny, Lucan, Virgil, Livy, Sallust, Juvenal, Persius, Quintilian, Suetonius, Terence, Valerius Maximus, and Tacitus—were in print, to be followed within the decade by Latin translations of the Greek—Strabo, Lucian, Plato, Plutarch, Hesiod, Homer, Polybius, Herodotus, Hierocles, Pythagoras, Ptolemy, Xenophon, and Aristotle. The end of the century saw about 40,000 titles (books and broadsides) produced, and “even at the low average of 250 copies per title, this amounts to an impressive total, 10,000,000 pieces, of which the great majority was produced during the last quarter of the xvth century”.⁴⁸ The enormous expense of setting up a full-fledged printing establishment led to unscrupulous competition and such cost-cutting practices as the use of smaller formats and thinner paper no longer gathered between boards. Pamphlets and broadsheets, which required no binding expenses, made cheap vehicles for the political polemics, religious treatises, counsels on medical, culinary, herbal, and agricultural matters that poured from contemporary authors. The profusion of these short tracts attests to the reduced costs of reading materials, brought about by the enlarged market as well as by the thirty-percent drop in paper prices between the years 1450 to 1480. In 1468 Cardinal de’ Bussi (patron to and editor for Sweynheim and Pannartz, the first typographers in Italy) wrote that volumes which had formerly sold for one hundred guilders could then be bought for twenty. By some fifty to eighty percent, print had reduced the cost of an identical text in manuscript and in each passing year one could buy more pages for the same money. By 1480 skills and expanding market outlets encouraged presses to produce editions of 2000 at affordable prices. The 1490s saw two guilders (about a week’s wage for a professor of classics) purchase between 800 and 900 folio leaves (or double that in quarto).⁴⁹ Thus, in civilized Europe within a single generation, literary output had jumped from a limited number of single-copy manuscripts to titles put out in editions of vast numbers of increasingly ambitious size.

48. *Ibid.*, 17, 31, 15.

49. *Ibid.*, 42, 34–35, 69–72.

Soon the written word would touch the very dregs of society, for in 1543 Henry VIII was to ban the reading of the English Bible by women and the lower classes, lest heresies be spread.⁵⁰

To appreciate the ‘blessings’ that now showered on the reader’s head, let us look at the Venice of 1503. Figuring an artisan’s wage at 24–30 lire per month, the standard price of 1.5 lire per octavo did not represent an outrageous luxury.⁵¹ (A few more decades would make the recreational reading of illustrated books affordable by common working men throughout Western Europe.⁵²) By the end of the fifteenth century, Venetian presses had turned out more than 4000 editions. Suddenly, the city was “stuffed with books”, and ranks of bookstalls lined the major streets to tempt the passerby. Rather more than one hundred printing companies have been identified in Venice up to 1490, of which only ten survived the turn of the century—proof that a converted cheese press, a commonplace manuscript, and some pounds of paper bought on credit did not make up a sound prescription for achieving wealth. The successful printer acquired a firm contract with highly placed partners who were willing to underwrite the long-term commitments necessary to set up shop and to pay for the repair of type, for top-quality manuscripts, and for professional scholars to edit them. It was risky business to overproduce popular authors like Cicero or Virgil. Materials needed to be put before the public in a mannerly way, with an eye to what would sell in quantity yet not compete with the printer next door. As for the market, university and church connections were most useful, for the bulk of printed reading matter was essentially aimed at the upper levels of society and the established sections of the reading public—priests, school and university teachers, lawyers, doctors, secretaries, and clerks.

Despite the evidence of a literary ground swell, the popular attitude towards books was for a time ambivalent. Although cheaper books might induce a general spread of enlightenment and a better, more God-loving society, so might they also debase the purity of learning and generate confusion and heresy.⁵³ On the one hand, we

50. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 94, 126.

51. Martin Lowry, *The World of Aldus Manutius: Business and Scholarship in Renaissance Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1979), 100.

52. Hindman, *Pen to Press*, 198–99.

53. The materials for this and the preceding paragraph have been drawn from Lowry, *Aldus Manutius*, 7–24.

find Cardinal de' Bussi championing affordable books for the "poor scholar"; on the other, there is Fra Filippo of San Cipriano inveighing against the drunken, filthy, vagabond printers, who with their ambitions to rise above themselves were vulgarizing intellectual life.⁵⁴

The city was so full of books that it was hardly possible to walk down a street without finding armfuls of them thrust at you, "like cats in a bag", for two or three coppers. The texts were hopelessly inaccurate, since they had been prepared by ignorant oafs and then never corrected: but they still drove valuable manuscripts out of the market, and tempted uneducated fools to give themselves the airs of learned doctors.

Furthermore, growled Fra Filippo, profuse quantities of cheap books could be got hold of by youngsters. One could be sure the loathsome printers would take advantage of that by publishing all the pagan mythology and love poetry they could lay their hands on.⁵⁵ And everybody knows what *that* can lead to.

ALDUS MANUTIUS, ACCURATISSIMUS?

Indeed, in the early years there was much dissatisfaction with printers, not only their vulgar way of life—all ink stains and liquor—but also the low quality of their work. Those printers who strove to break out of the despised circle advertised their products as being *accuratissimi*. But most accurate to which manuscript? And who could assure its provenance? No clear idea prevailed of the relative antiquity of various available manuscripts. Accepted practice, under the circumstances, permitted editorial conjecture to 'fix' punctuational, syntactical, and philological imperfections in the text. With every half-educated man warbling about the meaning of this or that textual discrepancy, learning took on the agitations of commerce, an atmosphere far removed from the princely ambience and monastic tranquility it had known before.⁵⁶ By skimming through abridgements and commentaries of all the classical texts, an ambitious young scholar might think of refining himself for a superior social level. Though

54. *Ibid.*, 26.

55. *Ibid.*, 27.

56. *Ibid.*, 30–31.

the genuine intellectual, who had devoted his quiet life to scholarship, was enabled now to examine printed 'original texts' and was presumably grateful, he nevertheless mistrusted the push and shove of worldly ambition and stood apart, reserving his leadership; for the business of bookmaking was a crude one.

In this period of book standardization and reader proliferation, the scholar-printer Aldus Manutius (1450–1515) set up his soon-to-be famous press in Venice and began, with an inspired sense of saving the past, to print his own edited renderings of classical manuscripts—most conspicuously the Greek ones, which were increasingly available in Western Europe after the fall of Constantinople. His approach to the page was intellectual in that he concerned himself with accuracy and appropriate ways of breaking up text for easy retrieval of information. The *Noctes Atticae* (*Attic Nights*) of Aulus Gellius was the last publication he organized—he died while it was still in press—and it shows his art in full flower. The reader is presented a handy octavo (written in Latin, printed in italic) with a title page bearing the Aldine pressmark of dolphin and anchor, the visual enactment of the house dictum: *festina lente* (hasten slowly). The title page is followed by a two-page advisement about the importance of learning and sound friendship, written by Joannes Baptista Egnatius (1478–1553: a literary Venetian). He was the very man, he says, who, when his other occupations allowed him the time, watched over the printing of the Gellius text in Aldus's workshop and did so in order to assure that the reproductions would be "castigatissimae" (most controlled); "haberent etiam mancipem omnium et accuratissimum, et ad hanc artem instructissimum" (for they will have a dealer [Aldus] who is the most accurate of all men and the most instructed about this art).⁵⁷ This short treatise is dedicated to his friend, a man of rare probity, Antonius Marsilius. Thereafter come: a thirty-two page index, listing with page numbers the names, places, words, and topics discussed by Aulus Gellius; and an alter-index to provide the lector with page references for topics dealt with, such as natural philosophy, grammar, and rhetoric. At last we are ready for the text. It arrives, neatly divided into the books and chapters inherited, one guesses, through the example of previous editions, and constitutes the major portion of the book. In turn, that is suc-

57. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* (Venice: Aldus Manutius, 1515), leaf AA2r.

ceeded by small resués of the contents of each chapter—to assure our being able to remember it all. The last major section is a glossary of the Greek phrases, words, paragraphs within the Latin Gellius text, arranged by quaternions, alphabetized first in lower case (with astonishing omissions and repetitions) and continuing on through a partial run-through of the alphabet in capitals. The penultimate page carries the imprint and specimen alphabet (minus the as yet un-invented ‘J’ and ‘W’) both in Roman capitals and lowercase italics. On the final page the dolphin and anchor repeat their wordless oxymoron. The whole book is imbued with a reverential cognizance of the value of learning. The words of the ancients were precious.

By way of comparison it is interesting to see how the modern 1984 Loeb Classical Library edition has handled the same basic matter for reader assimilation. Most noticeably, the accompanying English translation has forced the materials into three small volumes. Thereafter, similarities abound—but, with interesting differences to aid the modern reader. After the customary title page, table of contents, and prefatory dedication to the deceased previous editor, there follow:

- 1) An introduction by the final editor G. P. Goold (giving the background of Gellius, a summary of his life, writing style, and literary importance, along with a list of extant manuscripts which have been consulted for the publication).

- 2) A preface (not found in the Aldine edition) written by Gellius himself, describing how he came to write his *Noctes Atticae*.

- 3) A list of chapter recapitulations for the volume at hand (each volume opens with such a list). This quaint feature is most surprising—as well as unnecessary, since each is presented again, verbatim, at the beginning of every chapter; whereas they appear only once (which is quite enough) in the Aldine edition, viz., in a collection at the end.

- 4) The text, divided (as was the Aldine) into books, and then into chapters.

- 5) The index, giving brief explanations of some of the proper names in volume 1 (volumes 2 and 3 carry their own). No references are given to page numbers where the names occur. The modern reader is counted upon to survive without this particular redundancy.

- 6) At the end of volume 3 all these names are presented

again with page references to the text, but without the explanatory detail.

The Aldine edition, despite its age and its very small print, is cozily user-friendly. The breaking up of a single textual entity has been handled with an empathetic concern for the ingesting reader. The actual puncts are clear, varied, and, though not uniformly deployed, useful to a proper comprehension.

In view of his enormous influence on printed text, one should be aware that Aldus Manutius took the matter of pointing seriously enough to include terse statements about it in various of the prefaces to his studies on grammar, the most elaborate being *De distinctione scripturae, hoc est arte punctandi*, on folio x of the 1517 printing of his *Rudimenta grammatices Latinae linguae*.⁵⁸ His grandson, Aldus Manutius II, would in time take a full swing at the subject. Part Four of “The Punctator’s World” will deal extensively with his *Interpungendi ratio*.

In the Pierpont Morgan Library there is a manuscript text of Pliny the Younger, which offers a splendid view of the four-way junction of chirography with print, and theory with practice. The six-page remnant has been analyzed and extensively discussed by the eminent paleographers E. A. Lowe and E. K. Rand, who date it from the late fifth to the early sixth centuries and incline strongly to the belief that it was a portion of the complete manuscript originally used by Aldus Manutius in publishing his own edition of the Pliny letters.⁵⁹ If this is true, as appears to be the case, then we are in the advantageous position of being able to compare the transformation of an ancient, unpointed, textual lump into a passage thoughtfully laid out and panoplied with rhetorical and syntactical markers—commas, colons, capitals, periods—to aid quick intake by a modern eye. One cannot be certain that Manutius devised the punctuation out of the blue, so to speak, as there are intervening texts that vary extensively in pointing techniques, which he might well have seen or by which he might in roundabout ways have been influenced.⁶⁰

58. Hirsch, *Printing, Selling*, 137.

59. E. A. Lowe and E. K. Rand, *A Sixth-Century Fragment of the Letters of Pliny the Younger: A Study of Six Leaves of an Uncial Manuscript Preserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1922), 26.

60. There has in fact been argument about the Lowe and Rand attribution. Arthur E. Case, for example, in “More about the Aldine Pliny of 1508”, *The Library*, 4th

Let us take for our sample the opening lines from the first letter of Book III, "C. Plinius to Calvisius", presenting first the selected passage as it appears in the Loeb Classical Library edition of the Plinius Secundus letters, followed by the Loeb translation made by Betty Radice.

C. Plinius Calvisio Rufo Suo S.

NESCIO an ullum iucundius tempus exegerim, quam quo nuper apud Spurrinam fui, adeo quidem ut neminem magis in senectute, si modo senescere datum est, aemulari velim; nihil est enim illo vitae genere distinctius. Me autem ut certus siderum cursus ita vita hominum disposita delectat. Senum praesertim: nam iuvenes confusa adhuc quaedam et quasi turbata non indecent, senibus placida omnia et ordinata conveniunt, quibus industria sera turpis ambitio est. Hanc regulam Spurrinna constantissime servat; quin etiam parva haec—parva si non cotidie fiant—ordine quodam et velut orbe circumagitur. Mane lectulo continetur, hora secunda calceos poscit, ambulat milia passuum tria nec minus animum quam corpus exercet. Si adsunt amici, honestissimi sermones explicantur; si non, liber legitur, interdum etiam praesentibus amicis, si tamen illi non gravantur. Deinde considit, et liber rursus aut sermo libro potior; mox vehiculum . . .

To Calvisius Rufus

I can't remember ever passing the time so pleasantly as I did on my recent visit to Spurrinna; and, indeed, there is no one whom I would rather take for an example in my old age, if I am spared to live so long, for no way of living is better planned than his. A well-ordered life, especially where the old are concerned, gives me the same pleasure as the fixed course of the planets. A certain amount of irregularity and excitement is not unsuitable for the young, but their elders should lead a quiet and orderly existence; their time of public

ser., 16 (September 1936): 185–87, presents an argument in support of an unknown ninth-century Carolingian manuscript interceding in the succession between the Morgan uncial and the Aldine italic.

C. Plinius Calvisio suo salutem
Nescio an illi uicini diu te tempus
exceperio quia quoniam per lapidum
rimas uiuax deo quidem ut ne amine
maxime sine ne tutes in modo senesce
redimus est ex omni uariis uel in nihil
est enim illi uicini te ce nere dist in
ctius in ex amite miter certus siderum
cursus ita uita hominum disposita
delectat senum praesertim nam
iuuenes ad hoc conatus aqua edam
et quia situr batan non inde centise
nibus placidam omnia et or nata con
ueniunt quibus industriae raturpis
ambitio est hanc regulam pur in
na constantis sine seruata quin et in
parum hanc parum sinone cotidiana
ordine quod am et uel uel uel uel uel
ac ipse uel lectulo continetur hora
secunda calceos poscit ambulat om
lia passu uel triane conuictus animam
quam corpore uel uel uel uel uel uel
honestissimas sermones explicatur
simon liber lectur in te edum et uel uel
sentibus uel uel uel uel uel uel uel
tur de inde consideret liber rursus
aut ser uel uel uel uel uel uel uel

Pliny's letter to Calvisius Rufus in the sixth-century fragment, The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York. M 462, f. 2v.

C. PLINII SECUNDI EPISTOLA
RVM LIBER TERTIVS.C. PLINIVS CALVISIO
SVO SALVTEM.

E scio, an ullū iucundius tempus exe-
 gerim, quam quo nuper apud spu-
 rinnam fui, adeo quidem, ut neminē
 magis i senectute, (si modo senescere
 datum est,) emulari uelim. nihil est
 enim illo uitæ genere distinctius. me
 autem ut certus siderum cursus, ita uita hominum di-
 sposta delectat, senum præsertim. Nam iuuenes ad-
 huc confusa quædam, et quasi turbata non indecent,
 senibus placida omnia et ordinata conueniunt, quibus
 industria sera, turpis ambitio est. hanc regulam spu-
 rinna constantissime seruat. quin etiam parua hæc,
 parua, si non quotidie fiant, ordine quodam, et ue-
 lut orbe circumagat. mane lectulo continetur, hora se-
 cunda calceos poscit, ambulat millia passuum tria. nec
 minus animum, quam corpus exercet. si ad sunt ami-
 ci honestissimi sermones explicantur. si non, liber le-
 gitur, interdum etiam presentibus amicis, si tamen il-
 li nõ grauantur. deinde cõsudet, et liber rursum, aut
 sermo libro potior. mox uehiculum ascēdit, adsumit
 uxore singularis exēpli, uel aliquē amicorū, ut me
 proxime. Quā pulchrū illud, quam dulce secretū,
 quātū ibi antiquitatis, quæ facta, quos uiros audias,
 quibus præceptis ibuare. Quamuis ille hoc tempore

The same text rendered by Aldus Manutius in his 1508 edition of the letters of Plinius Secundus. Interestingly, this is the first book in which he used page numbers. Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.

activity is over, and ambition only brings them into dispute.

This is the rule strictly observed by Spurrina, and he even maintains a due order and succession in matters which would be trivial were they not part of a daily routine. Every morning he stays in bed for an hour after dawn, then calls for his shoes and takes a three-mile walk to exercise mind and body. If he has friends with him he carries on a serious conversation, if he is alone a book is read aloud, and this is sometimes done when there are friends present, so long as they do not object. Then he sits down, the book is continued, or preferably the conversation; after which he goes out in his carriage . . .

Following is a type facsimile of the same passage from the sixth-century Pierpont Morgan Library manuscript as it appears in *A Sixth-Century Fragment* by Professors Lowe and Rand. (See above, page 84 for the photograph of the manuscript itself.)

·C·PLINIUS·CALUISIO SUO SALUTEM
NESCIO AN ULLUM IUCUNDIUS TEMPUS
EXEGERIM QUAM QUO NUPER APUD SPU
RINNAM FUI ADEO QUIDEM UT NEMINEM
MAGIS IN SENECTUTE SI MODO SENESCE
RE DATUM EST AEMULARI UELIM NIHIL
EST ENIM ILLO UITAE GENERE DISTIN
CTIUS ME AUTEM UT CERTUS SIDERUM
CURSUS ITA UITA HOMINUM DISPOSITA
DELECTAT SENUM PRAESERTIM NAM
IUUENES ADHUC CONFUSA QUAEDAM
ET QUASI TURBATA NON INDECENT SE
NIBUS PLACIDA OMNIA ET OR^DINATA CON
UENIUNT QUIBUS INDUSTRIA SER^UA TURPIS
AMBITIO EST HANC REGULAM SPURIN
NA CONSTANTISSIME SERUAT·QUIN ETIAM
PARUA HAEC PARUA·SI NON COTIDIE FIANT
ORDINE QUODAM ET UELUT ORBE CIRCUM
AGIT MANE LECTULO CONTINETUR HORA
SECUNDA CALCEOS POSCIT AMBULAT MI
LIA PASSUUM TRIA NEC MINUS ANIMUM
QUAM CORPUS EXERCET SI ADSUNT AMICI
HONESTISSIMI SERMONES EXPLICANTUR
SI NON LIBER LEGITUR INTERDUM ETIAM PRAE
SENTIBUS AMICIS SI TAMEN ILLI NON GRAUAN
TUR DEINDE CONSIDIT ET LIBER RURSUS
AUT SERMO LIBRO POTIOR·MOX UEHICULUM

As can be readily seen from the photograph (page 85), Aldus Manutius chose to relieve the monstrous monotony of his exemplar with bestowings of puncts, parentheses, and capital letters. The result is a sequence of comprehensible tidbits, not at all repugnant to modern sensibilities. In the push for standardization, Aldus Manutius set a strong example, for which he was much admired. On the 1511 and 1518 title pages of the Egid de Gourmont (Paris) edition of the Plinius Secundus letters, appears the following proud statement: “Omnia haec per fidelissimum aldinum exemplar . . .” By that, the sagacious punctator, of course, will understand “most faithful *in intention* to the Aldine exemplar”.

Interestingly, this same sample passage from Pliny can be traced through a handful of books during the first century of printing. Out of a number of volumes inspected, the following five will suffice to illustrate the punctuational indecision of the era. As will be seen, a side-by-side comparison renders surprising variety both in the evaluation of pausal-stop hierarchies and in the perception of word groups. To aid the reader in overviewing the five texts, the abbreviations (which tend to cram the line) have been opened up. Also the variations in spellings have been modified. The cited lines from the Loeb text appear first at the head of each block.

Nescio an ullum iucundius tempus exegerim, quam quo nuper apud Spurinnam fui, adeo quidem ut neminem magis in senectute,

<u>Date</u>	<u>Printer</u>	
1483	Joannes	Nescio exegerim: spurinam fui: quidem: senectute:
Treviso	Vercellius	
1500	Albertinus	Nescio Spurinnam fui:
Venice	Vercellensis	
1506	Alexandrus	Nescio exegerim: Spurinnam fui: quidem:
Milan	Minutianus	
1521	Andreas	Nescio, exegerim, Spurinnam fui, quidem,
Basle	Cratander	
1527	Anthony	Nescio exegerim, Spurinnam fui, quidem,
London	Blanchard	

si modo senescere datum est, aemulari velim; nihil est enim illo vitae genere distinctius. Me autem ut certus siderum cursus ita vita hominum disposita delectat. Senum praesertim:

1483	si est: velim: distinctius: cursus: delectat: praesertim.
1500	(si est) velim. Nihil distinctius. Me cursus: delectat: praesertim.

- 1506 (si . . . est) velim. Nihil distinctius. Me cursus: delectat: praesertim.
 1521 (si . . . est) velim. Nihil distinctius: cursus, delectat, praesertim.
 1527 (si . . . est) aemulari velim. Nihil distinctius: cursus, delectat, praesertim.

nam iuvenes confusa adhuc quaedam et quasi turbata non indecent, senibus placida omnia et ordinata conveniunt, quibus industria sera turpis ambitio est.

- 1483 Nam indecent: conveniunt: sera: est:
 1500 Nam indecent: Senibus conveniunt: sera: est.
 1506 Nam. quaedam, indecent: Senibus omnia: conveniunt: est.
 1521 Nam. quaedam, indecent, conveniunt, sera, est.
 1527 Nam. conveniunt: sera, est.

Hanc regulam Spurinna constantissime servat; quin etiam parva haec—parva si non cotidie fiant—ordine quodam et velut orbe circumagit.

- 1483 servat: etiam: haec: fiant: quodam: circumagit:
 1500 hanc servat: haec; circumagit.
 1506 hanc servat: (parva fiant) circumagit.
 1521 Hanc servat, haec, parva, si fiant, quodam, circumagit.
 1527 Hancregulum servat, haec, parva, si fiant, quodam, orbecircumagit.

Mane lectulo continetur, hora secunda calceos poscit, ambulat milia passuum tria nec minus animum quam corpus exercet. Si adsunt amici, honestissimi sermones explicantur;

- 1483 Mane continetur: poscit: tria: exercet: explicantur.
 1500 Mane continetur.hora poscit: pas.nec exercet: explicantur:
 1506 Mane continetur: poscit: animum: exercet: amici: explicantur:
 1521 Mane continetur, poscit, tria Nec animum, exercet. Si amici, explicantur:
 1527 Mane continetur, poscit, ambulatmilia tria: animum, exercet. Si amici, explicantur:

si non, liber legitur, interdum etiam praesentibus amicis, si tamen illi non gravantur. Deinde considit, et liber rursus aut sermo libro potior; mox vehiculum

- 1483 Si non: amicis: gravantur. deinde considet: potior libro: mox vehiculum
 1500 legitur: amicis: gravantur: rursus: potior: mox vehiculum
 1506 si non: legitur: amicis: gravantur: considet: rursus: potior: mox vehiculum
 1521 si non, legitur, amicis: gravantur. Deinde considet, rursus, potior. Mox vehiculum
 1527 si non, legitur, amicis, gravantur. Deinde considet, rursus, potior: mox vehiculum

As time passed, the virgule, comma, colon, and period became increasingly sensitive to syntactical considerations. Nevertheless, throughout the years under discussion, and indeed for a while beyond, euphuistic punctating, which was corresponsive to the rise and fall of the speaking voice, continued to cast its spell over written materials.