Modernism from Right to Left: Wallace Stevens, the Thirties, and Radicalism
   By Alan Filreis, Associate Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania

Adam Badeau’s “The Story of the Merrimac and the Monitor”
   By Robert J. Schneller, Jr., Historian, Naval Historical Center

A Marcel Breuer House Project of 1938–1939
   By Isabelle Hyman, Professor of Fine Arts, New York University

Traveler to Arcadia: Margaret Bourke-White in Italy, 1943–1944
   By Randall I. Bond, Art Librarian, Syracuse University Library

The Punctator’s World: A Discursion (Part Seven)
   By Gwen G. Robinson, Editor, Syracuse University Library Associates Courier

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Modernism from Right to Left: Wallace Stevens, the Thirties, and Radicalism

BY ALAN FILREIS

Author’s note: In writing the book from which the following essay is abstracted, I need have gone no further than the George Arents Research Library. Of course I did go further in researching the literary politics of the American 1930s—to archives, such as Willard Maas’s at the University of Texas, swelling with incoming letters left and right, as it were, papers and materials both literary and “ephemeral”—in my effort to study noncommunist modernists’ responses to the radicals’ challenge. But nowhere does one find, for this topic, so rich and varied an assortment of documents as at Syracuse, among them unpublished letters to and from Granville Hicks, Horace Gregory, Marya Zaturenska, Harry Roskolenko, Harold Rosenberg, Isidor Schneider, Stanley Burnshaw, Max Eastman, Jack Wheelwright, Ruth Lechlitner, Willard Maas, T. C. Wilson, Erskine Caldwell, Welldon Kees, Parker Tyler, Bryher, S. Foster Damon, Raymond Larsson, George Dillon, Robert Hillyer, K. T. Young, and Archibald MacLeish—to name only figures whose letters have advanced my work. Hardly less important are numbers of now-scarce leftist magazines such as Dynamo, Left Front, Cambridge Left, The Left, The Social Frontier, Vanguard, many of them acquired with the Granville Hicks Papers.—A. F.

In 1931, not quite a year into the Great Depression, Wallace Stevens and his publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, agreed that there ought to be a new edition of his first book, Harmonium (1923). Stevens decided to delete three poems and add fourteen. Most of these “new” poems had indeed been written after Stevens brought the manuscript of his first book to Knopf in December 1922, yet none had been written after 1924. But poetry, or rather the status of poetry, had changed a great deal during the seven years since Stevens had ceased to think of himself as a working poet. Imagining the
shock he felt when he realized what transformations had occurred is not difficult. While there is little hard evidence—no archival and slight textual—to support the point, it is reinforced by the very reticence of the poems with which Stevens began again in the early thirties after a long period of silence. I would contend that certain leftist uses of *Harmonium*, presuming he saw them, pushed him along. There were solemn radicalizations of “Sunday Morning”, such as Horace Gregory’s “Sunday Morning: Rotogravure Section”, which was obviously intended to show how far poets had come from wistful lingering over coffee and oranges, to anxious close reading of the Sunday supplements. Gregory’s imagined newspaper depicted one “inheritor of millions”, a scene that caused the speaker to contemplate

![Intangibles of power](image)

... written in ticker tape

on private yachts

and other such temporary contemporary defeats.\(^1\) Somewhat less harsh but not a bit less ill-tempered was Ettore Rella’s “Sunday Morning”. “[N]o pseudomartyr I”, Rella’s speaker declares, pondering ragged depression-struck charity collectors stationed on his city street, while he, meanwhile, sits aloft

![on the edge](image)

where an unknown bird with enormous wings

descends in anapests and iambic s unto “the dark place of Sunday”.\(^2\)

Even in the view of conservative poets like the agrarian George Marion O’Donnell, an editor might now justifiably be condemned merely because “Too many of his poets are still *back in the twenties, worrying about matters of technique*”\(^3\) (In this case the editor was Julian

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Symons, who would publish Stevens.) Glancing back from 1936—but recalling the recollection, in turn, in 1942—the German exile Klaus Mann found the American thirties’ sense of the twenties an odd but definitive phenomenon: “The same people who, ten years before, would have discussed the particularities of Picasso’s style or the images of James Joyce, and Proust, now tossed about . . . the names of union leaders, intricate statistics and cryptic abbreviations—CIO, WPA, CCC, SEC, AAA”. (Mann’s was itself, of course, typically a forties view of the thirties—a skepticism much easier to wield in wartime than earlier.)

A youthful but already well-established Malcolm Cowley, eyed by a still younger aspirant, Alfred Kazin, could seem editorially and personally to convey on one hand a “love of good writing” and on the other a tough “faith in revolution”. Cowley embodied the link between “the brilliant Twenties and the militant Thirties”. And for poets like Gregory, Cowley, William Carlos Williams, Archibald MacLeish, Edna Millay, Genevieve Taggard, Eda Lou Walton, Lola Ridge, Alfred Kreymborg, Gorham Munson, Maxwell Bodenheim, George Dillon—even Stevens’s old Harvard classmate Witter Bynner voted for William Z. Foster, the 1932 Communist candidate for president—to name only a few who in the thirties became attracted to the left after having written a very different kind of poetry earlier, October 1929 was a window through which one saw one’s earlier poetic self as narcissistic, over-anxious

4. As editor of Twentieth Century Verse. The works he published included two cantos from The Man with the Blue Guitar (3 [April–May 1937], [3]).
7. In the 1932 election Bynner eventually voted for Roosevelt, because, as he put it, the best way to move America toward socialism was to proceed “undercover” (Bynner to Arthur D. Ficke, 23 August 1932, Ficke Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University). For more on Stevens’s relationship with Bynner, see Glen MacLeod, Wallace Stevens and Company: The ‘Harmonium’ Years, 1913–1923 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 68; and Joan Richardson, Wallace Stevens: The Early Years (New York: William Morrow, 1986), 200–202, 336–40, 456–58. Bynner and Stevens were back in touch in the early thirties as letters at Harvard’s Houghton Library disclose.
about forms both traditional and broken, insufficiently prepared to “find an increased simplicity”, and thus incompletely aware of the extrinsic pressures that had been shaping—and sometimes distorting—poetry all along.

Stevens certainly had good reason for similar retrospection. But the difference between him and these other poets made all the difference, for they had continued writing and publishing through to the bitter end of the twenties. Their movements toward the new “engaged” position, some positively smooth (as with Kreymborg), some self-destructively herky-jerky (as with Bodenheim), might be judged by much younger doubters on the poetic left—poets who themselves had no twenties to look back on—as having given an “inevitable” shape to a modernist career.

Such a hopeful, evolutionist view, if applied to Stevens, seemed then, as now, to misread his career. From the perspective of 1931, he could not say that he came to the thirties either slowly or surely. The immediately preceding phase had been one of almost total poetic silence.


9. Stevens’s critics have indeed had much to say about his hiatus. As Harold Bloom put the question: “What ended the poetry of a man of forty-five, who had done magnificent work, and what began it again when he was fifty-one?” (The Poems of Our Climate [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1976], 68). Bloom argues that the last major effort of the twenties, “The Comedian as the Letter C”, was a crisis poem that failed to suggest a continuity for the “visionary capacity for response” (87). Thus, he argues, Stevens’s career was threatened until “the sun of March 1930 reillumined things for the master of evasions” (87). Refuting Bloom’s “Crossing of Solipsism” (2), Sidney Feshbach is typical of others who cite Holly Stevens’s explanation that the hiatus was caused by distractions in Stevens’s life: the birth of his first and only child, Holly, in 1924; the noise and limited space in the two-family house on Farmington Avenue, where the Stevenses lived until 1932; the fact that “his energy . . . went largely into his work at the insurance company” (Letters of Wallace Stevens, ed. Holly Stevens [New York: Knopf, 1966], 242; Feshbach, “Communications”, Wallace Stevens Journal 2 [Spring 1978]: 44–45). Of those who side with Holly Stevens’s view, and with Feshbach’s response to Bloom’s poetic thesis, Joan Richardson is most persuasive even as she adds four or five other reasons for the silence (see Wallace Stevens, A Biography: The Later Years, 1923–1955 [New York: William Morrow, 1988], espe
to remove and which possibly to revise, he must have been pain­fully aware of the distance between the acclaimed modernist past (from “Sunday Morning” of 1915 to the final Harmonium poems of 1921 and 1922) and the poetic dormancy of the present, 1931. What mixed impression would be conveyed by the addition to this new edition of the “new” poems that were nearly as old as the old? Did the fourteen addenda truly “update” Harmonium for the crisis thirties?

The serious risk of a 1931 Harmonium was readers’ perception of abiding anachronism fully realizable before the project got under­way. “New England Verses”, written in early 1922 and first pub­lished in The Measure in 1924 but left uncollected, would have to endure comparison, if mistaken as “new”, with Williams’s “mottled”, low (but stylish) “facts”—

an american papermatch packet
closed . . .
mottled crust of the stained blotter
by an oystershell smudged
with cigarette ash . . .
words printed on the backs of
two telephone directories . . .
the printing out of line: portrait
of all that which we have lost

10. That summer it was rejected by the New Republic. Letter from Ridgely Tor­rence, 14 July 1922, Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.: Wallace Stevens Papers, WAS2324.


—or with one of his proletarian portraits:

A tramp thawing out
on a doorstep
against an east wall[.]¹³

Compare these, Williams’s “Simplex Sigilum Veri: A Catalogue” and “The Sun Bathers”, to the following Stevensian stanza, outmoded from tone to foot—one of the “new” “New England Verses”:

Ballatta dozed in the cool on a straw divan
At home, a bit like the slenderest courtesan.¹⁴

“Dozed” conveyed comfortable indolence; “At home” an inwardness; “slenderest” not famished but elegant or well-toned; even “a bit like” is diffident of the merest force in simile. These contexts were, of course, controlled by Stevens, but nonetheless set off (six years belatedly) on their own politically incorrect course along a path of reception he could not guide.

Radicalized readers and poet-reviewers, Horace Gregory among them, might comprehend these aphoristic two-liners—“New England Verses” is composed of sixteen titled couplets—as twenties verse taking a deliberate crack at the thirties. And whereas “New England Verses” would neatly anticipate the epigrammatic style of Stevens’s “Like Decorations in a Nigger Cemetery” (written at the end of 1934), it is important to understand what the earlier aphoristic condensations do not say. What they do not say largely depended on the literary-political context provided them by publication in 1931. Most readers of the new edition could not have known of the seven-year-old Measure version of “New England Verses”; instead they would naturally assume a recent date of composition. One can read these couplets as having constructed a characteristic high-modern poem incidentally becoming an uncharacteristic depression poem; in so doing, one partially reconstructs how Stevens’s “new” work struck readers who were

themselves just then developing a keen collective sense of good and bad cultural timing.

The poem deliberately avoids the earnest tenor that Stevens at this point associated with social reference, and provides, provocatively, an alternative manner. If to any degree “New England Verses” manifests those conditions of its making about which, by 1931, it was obviously silent, the implication was that it carried on Stevens’s behalf some sign of knowing about conditions ignored. Take as an example couplet iv, the companion piece to another called “Soupe Aux Perles” (couplet iii):

**SOUPE SANS PERLES**

I crossed in ’38 in the Western Head
It depends on which way you crossed, the tea-belle said.

The tea-belle is obviously scrutinizing the credentials of an elder who tells her of a journey across the Atlantic many years earlier. Her opening “It” is contingent on whether the speaker, in first person, had crossed to or from the United States. The social standing of the elder will vary from one direction to the other, as the reasons for passage—for instance, immigration on one hand, American’s Old World sight-seeing on the other—might have differed.

To read this poem as, say, Horace Gregory or Eda Lou Walton would have read it in 1931, it helps to assume some vague caste-conscious critique of American life—one Stevens might have wanted to concede, to be sure: the culture was being commanded by a querulous new rich, a position embodied tonally in the sharp, upstart questioner. The title has helped place both the speaker and the tea-belle economically—both, it would seem, on the decline; the scene is set, after all, by soup without pearls. Judging only from two lines one cannot know if the elder’s remark is uttered as a matter of fact (to which the tea-belle would be responding pertly), or if his declaration conveys a fumbling attempt to impress her. In the latter case her retort exposes the crucial element of his story that he might hope to hide: he crossed the wrong way on the Western Head if he wishes now to qualify as impressive.
Looking backward through October 1929 to 1924 at the patrician companion to soup without pearls, with an eye to revising the poem, Stevens also would have re-read this:

**SOUPE AUX PERLES**

Health-o, when cheese and guava peels bewitch
The vile antithesis of poor and rich.

What Stevens did *not* do as he revised this poem for his new but belated edition is for me its only appealing aspect. The change he did make is one of just two slight (and evidently incidental) revisions for Knopf’s 1931 *Harmonium*. Certainly the irony of “vile antithesis” raised the new, powerful version of contingent value: if we may judge from contemporaries, especially Gorham Munson and John Gould Fletcher, who had put forward the thesis of Stevens's aestheticism, his verbal acuteness and emotional lassitude—a thesis that stuck—15—it is clear that the 1923 readership did not fail to appreciate the dandyist irony. For them the aphorism might have been paraphrased as follows: at the sort of occasion on which diners don pearls, delicacies serve (in a manner of speaking) to bridge that unfortunate gap between haves and have-nots; to such an American crossing, one toasts and salutes, Good health!

The irony was so strong that a deliberate liberal illogic of cause and effect—*when one culturally pleasant thing appears, another culturally unpleasant thing simply disappears*—is overcome by the extraordinary imperviousness of the statement’s maker. The thing made to disappear, moreover, is not a presence but a gap. As the speaker’s snobbery deliberately puts off a reader with the couplet’s excessive parading of devices—the French title, the archaism of “Health-o”, the comic tonal harmony of “bewitch” and “rich”—in order to understand what is *not* spoken about class difference, the reader must ignore the obvious fact that the “poor” remain unaffected by the consumption of “guava peels” by the “rich”. It perhaps needs

saying at this point that it was possible in the thirties to be thunderously denounced for using French, regardless of context or one’s revolutionary credentials: “Why don’t you speak in the language of the Mexican peasants and workers?” an editor of the Daily Worker shouted at Diego Rivera, who was trying to deliver a speech in French. “Why do you address us in the effete language of the effete European intellectuals?” Given this tense atmosphere, I read Stevens’s poem as a calculated counteroffense. Thus it carried certain risks. The irony could not function unless the reader could feel reasonably assured that most other contemporary readers—or, in other words, both “rich” and “poor”—could not possibly miss the rich irony of “vile”. If by 1931 the poem’s very deliberate act of estrangement, the obvious lack of concern for distinctions between “rich” and “poor”, would cause the reader fully appreciative of “rich” to be more than a little anxious about such a reflection of willful detachment from material conditions, the poem’s irony simply would not function as it once had.

For one thing, the twenties-style irony derived its strength from the totalizing urge of the couplet form. But in the thirties, verse was often said to repudiate such a closed, aphoristic design. Internal evidence surely suggests that as Stevens pondered Harmonium from this somewhat new perspective, he understood the formal outmoding of poetry like “New England Verse”, as such repudiation laid the footing for one of the counterarguments included in his improvised dialogue poem “The Man with the Blue Guitar” six years later. Not incidentally, the later poem is constructed of couplets so flexible and open, and so relentlessly enjambed, as to refute in itself claims of stanzaic limitation.

We do not know what immediate reasons Stevens had for revising “Soupe Aux Perles”. Here is the revised version:

Health-o, when ginger and fromage bewitch
The vile antithesis of poor and rich.

16. The scene was remembered by Albert Halper, and must thus be reckoned with a sense of Halper’s hatred of the communists by the time he wrote his memoir Good-bye, Union Square: A Writer’s Memoir of the Thirties (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1970), 95.
The difference between “ginger and fromage” and “cheese and guava peels” is extraordinarily slight, so slight that one wonders why Stevens bothered at all. Yet the change is telling, for it would be absurd to conclude that Stevens was not aware of the extraordinary insignificance of his alteration when he inked this revision—nearly as absurd as arguing that he did not know what line he was not altering: the only other line in the poem. The revision is so overtly small that it seems to call even greater attention to the idea left unrevised, the vile antithesis sustained. It upholds the sentiment conveyed originally by the speaker once profoundly ironic, once slightly wealthier. This particular utterance, however outmoded, remains silent about the rhetorical conditions that once made it tenable (twenties excess, economic as well as tonal). Insofar as it expresses cultural urges to close the space between poor and rich—one supposes it can be argued that “guava peels” suggests a luncheon more sumptuous than does “ginger”—then the distinction is so slight as to reinforce the poem’s willingness to leave the gap unbridged. In that case, it would have been better left alone. To the extent that all revisions of poems represent attempts to smooth over flaws, later seen as earlier unseen, this particular adjustment thematizes the desire to fill in social and aesthetic breaches exactly as in the poem—for, brought over into a depression edition, the gap remains wide as ever, its continued health toasted.

Perhaps when Stevens put together his new *Harmonium* the change in the atmosphere between 1924 and 1931 remained imperceptible, although I am arguing that he was well aware of the shift, even while proceeding poetically this little way into the depression as if unaware. In either case, the critical response to the book left no doubt about the changes. It was just then becoming feasible, in fact, to chart with accuracy such responses from left to right. Reviewers in this early-depression period sought incessantly to make clear which side they were on—to use the apt ideological phrase—often at the expense of the book under consideration. Reviewing the emended *Harmonium* for the *New York Herald Tribune* books section, under the ambiguous title “Highly Polished Poetry”, Horace Gregory assumed that the added poems were written “during the intervening eight years”, suggesting—how could
he have known otherwise?—continuity and productivity. Yet he found that “The general impression remains the same and the polished surfaces are still unbroken” (emphasis added). This was a powerful implication, and handy. When radical poets subsequently wrote about Stevens—even when, as in the hands of H. R. Hays, the analysis eventually confirmed Stevens as “among the two or three best poets which the 1920’s produced”—they almost always began with Horace Gregory’s assumption that one would always know precisely where to find and place Stevens: “[T]he consistent polish and unchanging viewpoint manifested throughout [Harmonium] indicate that it may be considered a definitive example of his work. Any subsequent writing may add to his output, but it will probably not indicate a change in his personality.”

To arrive at his view of Stevens’s sameness, Gregory first quoted a revision, the new, shorter version of “The Man Whose Pharynx Was Bad” (first published 1924), in such a way as to suggest that its author might become “less diffident”, but then again he might just as easily choose diffidence again. Gregory then suggested that Wallace Stevens will not allow himself to grow beyond the limitations which he has imposed upon his talents. He remains static. His world, a civilized world in which all voices fall to a whisper and the expression of the face is indicated by a lifting of the eyebrow, is complete.

18. Here are the lines Gregory quotes in the review:

One might in turn become less diffident,
Out of such mildew plucking neater mould
And spouting new orations of the cold.
One might. One might. But time will not relent.

Since his criticism presupposed the inadequacies of the "civilized world" to which Stevens belonged, Gregory did not by the word "complete" mean to commend the poet. Only a few years earlier this word, applied to verse, might have been high praise indeed. For now a poetic "world" depicted as sufficient unto itself—or as "Highly Polished", per Gregory's title—could not possibly be responsive to the broken, depressed, and chaotic world beyond.

But Gregory's nascent political thesis—that Stevens betrayed his talent by reserving it for a "world" where, in Gregory's words, "melodies are sweet . . . and modulate to a dying fall and disappear in a rustle of silk" and where one feels "the immaculate top hat and stick are always" present—did not yet yield the fully radicalized criticism of Gregory's own *New Masses* essay of 1937, by which time, as poetry editor of that weekly, Gregory seemed to one communist writer to hold "sole dominance in . . . the left-wing poetry movement" (an exaggeration, surely, but a telling one).19 By then, six years after Stevens's reemergence, Gregory—restored to good graces at the *New Masses* despite a drubbing received a few years earlier20—recognized that "political poetry as such cannot be divorced from other kinds of poetry" and, in a mood of revealing self-estrangement, quoted his own earlier judgment as having been largely mistaken. Given the abundant, comprehensive Horace Gregory Papers housed and precisely catalogued in the Arents Library at Syracuse University, it is now possible for scholars of the literary left to discern in Gregory's case, perhaps most suggestively of all, how such self-estrangement conditioned radical standing.

(Deviating from the accepted line in an essay, "One Writer's Position", Gregory nonetheless avowed that "the Communist Party has proved to me again and again that it is the only group retaining a hope for the future", and confessed that he stood "somewhere

20. Reading Gregory ideologically is an important and difficult task for the literary historian; popular-front communists supported him, while Trotskyites called him a "reactionary liberal" as Albert Halper did (*Good-bye, Union Square*, 136).
outside the circle of all groups”.21 One of several enraged replies, Meridel LeSueur’s “The Fetish of Being Outside” asked, “[W]hy want to be an outsider when you see and admit sight of the Promised Land as Gregory does?”22) Here, then, is part of Gregory’s 1931 judgment revised for 1937: “Wallace Stevens’s sensibilities in writing verse had made it possible for him to view the world about him with singular acuteness”. To Gregory, as editor of the New Masses, Stevens’s vision was “dimmed by the effort to explain his ‘position’ in a medium ill-suited” to the crisis.23 Indeed even the 1931 piece ended with a hopeful view. Precisely because Stevens knows so well the civilized world of whispers and raised eyebrows, because his poems are “impeccable arrangements”, Gregory’s early-thirties Stevens was capable of observing capitalism in crisis. In his poetry one saw the effects of “the civilized artist thrust head first into modern society”, the aptitude of a person with a sharp eye and ear and a compelling interest in small verities. This politically susceptible Stevens was indeed the poet who copied out Desmond McCarthy’s line on Arnold Bennett: “The mere habit of recording experience increases the chance of not having lived in vain”.24 It was a habit surely useful in time of cultural emergency, now that, as Gregory put it, the “trained observer who gazes with an intelligent eye upon the decadence that follows the rapid acquisition of wealth and power” might catch up to the times.25 As Jerre Mangione has noted in his memoir of the period—Mangione was writing of his close friend Kenneth Burke but the point nicely characterizes Gregory’s half-critical, half-hopeful sense of Stevens—it was nearly

enough to use one’s writing to “emphasize the negative aspects of life under capitalism, such as indolence [and] dissipation”. To notice this indolence was implicitly a political good. But what of representing it? That question was not yet being systematically asked of lyric poetry.

Other judgments of the 1931 edition bear similar marks of ideological confusion, a puzzlement created, I think, by the difference between general (though sometimes grudging) admiration for Stevens’s virtuosity in the early twenties on the one hand, and, on the other, a still-vague, emergent sense of critical discrimination appropriate to the grimmer times. Eda Lou Walton, a poet motivated by an urban liberalism that soon turned toward radicalism, whose companionship with Henry Roth brought her in contact with young proletarian novelists, was asked to review the new Stevens for the Nation. She could not keep from slipping into past tense (“here was a poet of the senses”) even as she was appraising a

26. Jerre Mangione, An Ethnic at Large: A Memoir of America in the Thirties and Forties (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983; first published 1978), 266. This supports the judgment of Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, who note that communists in the early thirties, working with the so-called “Third Period” sectarian policy, “strove to create a picture of a capitalist world infinitely worse than it already was”; interestingly, this left noncommunist writers with the opportunity of providing descriptions of social “sickness” to the right of the communist policy, “emphasiz[ing] negative aspects” of American life, and yet able to claim relative neutrality. Despite the communists’ “picture” of capitalism actually “worse than it already was”, Howe and Coser point out, “in 1930 and 1931 there could hardly be any point in exaggerating the sickness of American society” (The American Communist Party: A Critical History (1919–1957) [Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1957], 189).

27. In the late twenties Walton’s efforts to put together an anthology of poetry about urban existence—“a kind of symphony of city life”, she told Poetry magazine—gave her an extraordinary opportunity to meet an array of “poverty stricken” urban poets otherwise unknowable. She began urging editors like Harriet Monroe to publish poems by various proletarian protégés, such as one nineteen-year-old “factory girl with almost no training” whose “emotions are fairly clear” because “[s]he is poverty stricken” (letters from Eda Lou Walton to Harriet Monroe, 2 August 1928, 6 January 1932, 16 March 1932, Poetry Papers, Box 26, folder 7, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago).

poet known from a single book in two very similar versions. It was as if the revised edition of his only book signaled a position from which Stevens must have moved—along with so many others including the reviewer herself—despite Stevens’s having produced just the one volume. Saying nothing that would imply a politically unconscious development, then, Walton instinctively projected onto Stevens in 1931 a poetic self that would be judged wholly anew. She noticed that he had “grown slightly more autumnal”, even though in providing her readers such bibliographic information as she had at hand, she also remarked that the exclusions were largely incidental and the additions contributed more of the same old Stevens. Walton did notice that “The Silver Plough Boy” (1915) had been “repudiated” for the new edition, and speculated that this was because it typified the outmoded strain, “meaningless pretty imagistic verse”:

A black figure dances in a black field.
   It seizes a sheet, from the ground, from a bush, as if spread there by some wash-woman for the night
   It wraps the sheet around its body, until the black figure is silver. . . .29

The “repudiat[jon]” had not been complete, some “pretty” poems having survived to the thirties intact; Walton felt compelled to repeat the old saw about the poet’s cold exteriors, his self-protections. Still, in updating the Munson-Fletcher thesis to the depression, Walton, like Gregory, vaguely anticipated a criticism she seemed to expect would soon be leveled against Stevens: he ought to inveigh less equivocally against misery. She quoted him (out of context), in expectation of what would be, but was not quite yet, the liberal-left critique: Stevens “will not cry out in bitterness”, she concluded. She was using Stevens to argue against those to her left who insisted that poets “play the ‘flat historic scale’ of memory” and “take momentary delight in ‘doleful heroics’”. After defending Stevens against her own detractors who would have him exter-

nalize his bitterness, Walton then argued against calling Stevens a dandy on the grounds that indeed his poems portended "[h]is sincerity". He might, after all, play some "historic scale"—one that avoided historical flatness.30

Raymond Larsson, a poet who would soon become closely associated with communist writers,31 was at this point no less confounded about Stevens than Gregory and Walton. Reviewing the 1931 edition for *The Commonweal*, under the revealing title "The Beau as Poet", Larsson began with a definition of "objective" verse completely at odds with the growing use of the term for a new poetic -ism answering the altered world of much-depreciated things. If "Mr. Stevens's poems are objective" and "deal of objects [sic]", such objects do not quite convey the precise cultural currency of Kenneth Fearing's "pow, Sears Roebuck",32 Kenneth Patchen's "mile of Camel butts",33 Herman Spector's

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  tang of wrigley's gum:
  THE FLAVOR LASTS . . .
  an idea of vengeance
  THE FLAVOR LASTS34
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30. Eda Lou Walton, "Beyond the Wasteland", *Nation* 133 (9 September 1931): 263-64. She was quoting from Stevens's "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle": "I shall not play the flat historic scale" (*Collected Poems*, 14).

31. He and Horace Gregory, close friends, frankly discussed politics and poetry in their lively letters, although these discussions finally left Larsson unconvincing in 1933 that Gregory's "position as a man" cannot be reconciled with Gregory "as a member of the Communist party" (letter, 11 July 1933, Gregory Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University); Larsson nonetheless admired Gregory's communist poetry, while lamenting the "impurity" of some poems in *No Retreat*. Later he befriended Richard Wright (undated letter [1938?] to Willard Maas and Marie Menken, Maas Papers, John Hay Library, Brown University).


or Muriel Rukeyser's "billboard world of Chesterfields" (in a poem aptly called "Citation for Horace Gregory")—typical poetic borrowings strongly suggesting the new poetic desire to merge American poetry with the contemporary world of (as Stevens would somewhat misleadingly say of Williams) cheap bottles, newspapers, and soda ads. Stevens's "objects" were rather, to Larsson, a conservative's acquisitions, his "secure, certain, unchanging" holdings. Larsson's modernism still found "in the world of things something akin to security". His rock-solid Stevens, enviable insofar as he invested lyric energies in a world resistant to change, was nonetheless confused with the altogether different Stevens that Larsson clung to, a poet whose taste was no less "personal" in 1931 than before, and no less exotic—hardly "objective" even in Larsson's very broad sense.

Of several explicitly conservative reviews the new *Harmonium* received, Morton Zabel's is the one surely worth noting. This commentary revealed already the defensive antipolitical politics forced upon *Poetry* magazine in its last years under Harriet Monroe's editorship, a mainstream modernism defined by the new mode that would itself seek to challenge the aesthetic experiments Monroe had promoted since 1912. Through the end of the thirties Zabel defended modernism against materialist encroachments, such as Bernard Smith's radical literary history *Forces in American Criticism* (1939), which Zabel deemed guilty of a "crudity of sympathy that keeps [Smith] in petty fear of admitting . . . sensibility as a critical instrument of infinitely greater importance . . . than popular or political passions"—a view that was not itself, evidently, a popular passion of an earlier day. Zabel's evaluation of Stevens, published in *Poetry* in the December 1931 issue, made clear that from this point no praise of Wallace Stevens could be printed without sentences, even whole paragraphs, devoted to anticipating and

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disarming a dissenter’s voice—a voice, it is important to note, that had not yet been clearly or widely heard. For editor Zabel, defending Stevens against an easily imagined detractor was central to his own surprisingly uncertain situation at Poetry. If he was to maintain the stability Monroe had built for the journal—securing the publication of Stevens’s “Like Decorations”, for instance, shored up his position there in 1934—Zabel would have to imply in his editorial decisions and in his many reviews that the modernist revolution urged on American verse by Poetry was still a revolution and that its refuge remained Chicago.

To a far greater extent than Walton’s, then, Zabel’s language at all points implied a response to the anticipated attack. Unless he was protesting too much, why, in praising Stevens’s “authority of instinctive symbolism and method”, would the editor allow that the poems might seem to some critics “in these calmer days” to be in hindsight merely “the trickery of a topical vaudeville”? What unrest was Poetry ignoring with Zabel’s these calmer days? Moreover, he insisted, such hindsight (whose hindsight?—the detractors are unnamed) only deformed the ten-year-old Florida poems from Harmonium, “Fabliau of Florida”, “Nomad Exquisite”, “O Florida, Venereal Soil”, “Floral Decorations for Bananas”, by cutting them to fit today’s (read passing) lean historicist fashions. In fact, Zabel argued—unnecessarily, it would seem, from his own point of view—that Stevens’s “style was not a conjuror’s garment but an expression for ideas of no given date”.

Zabel’s revision of Munson’s dandyism thesis, from Munson’s apparently definitive essay in the Dial of November 1925,39 merely served to give the indicted aestheticist Stevens yet another hearing, but now in the context of a conservative argument. Zabel did reserve special praise for Munson’s idea that Stevens’s poems offer the cure to “fear of decrepitude”.40 Going a significant step beyond

40. Zabel notes here that this “is his [Munson’s] important contribution to the elucidation of Mr. Stevens’s quality” (152). Zabel’s citation of Munson would seem, at least to Munson, to be especially ironic since Munson was chief among
Larsson, Zabel had trouble with Munson’s use of “dandy”, though not in the least with the presumption of Stevens’s self-sufficiency. This was unfortunately understood to be a “dubious corollary” to the misplaced invective against American acquisitiveness, the misleading “notion that ‘the American nation drives passionately toward comfort’.”

Zabel’s implication was that Stevens’s cure for the fear of cultural degeneration had nothing whatever to do with defending Americans’ addiction to consumerism before the crash. “Dandyism” unnecessarily suggested style without conviction. Despite the vigorous revision of the Stevens-as-dandy theory of the twenties, Zabel’s updated use of it merely reiterated the general view in terms that would apparently be more palatable to those whose objections to Stevens Zabel could only then imagine. Indeed, he went so far as to name “realism” as Stevens’s greatest strength. This was a shrewd move, since it placed Stevens squarely with others who were calling on poets, no less than novelists, to present themselves as “incarnation[s] of our Zeitgeist” (so one critic described Edna Millay).41 In this view, realism was the poetic -ism that could save Stevens’s images from excess, his wit from parading devices, and “his morality from the illusory intellectual casuistry which betrayed most of his [early modern] colleagues”. Zabel thus staked out for Stevens a middle ground between, on one hand, the poet expecting poems to induce social change and, on the other, the poet using imagination to order conceptual chaos and thus sustain the illusion that things were all right as they are. “Mr. Stevens never urged the idea of obliterating danger by opposing it.”42

Stevens’s response to Zabel, conveyed to Monroe, was courteous, but it was not quite the endorsement Monroe evidently thought it was, in view of her (and Zabel’s) need to please Stevens and, more important, to have Stevens stand by them in hard times. His handwritten note began: “I suppose that one ought to take no more notice of a good review than of a bad one”—not the most direct way of saying Zabel’s was indeed “a good review”:

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42. Zabel, “The Harmonium of Wallace Stevens”, 152.
[A]nd yet to be free to thank you for the fact that there was any review at all, or that the one in Poetry was of that character all round. I am really astonished that reviewers take so much pains, because my concern is not with my soul let alone with the grand soul which is often the field of analysis.

Looking past these elevated equivocations, Monroe scribbled on Stevens’s envelope and passed the letter along to Zabel: “Z read—W. S. likes your review—a great honor”.43

The Wallace Stevens who was partly reinvented for the thirties by a “high” modernism held over from boom to bust is the poetic figure against which the literary left would soon launch attack, to which, in turn, Stevens would react by, in his words, “heading left” himself—a remarkable and somewhat surprising turn of events, as it were, that led Stevens to his longest poem, “Owl’s Clover” (1936). This was by no means a counterproductive circle of reputation and response. Stevens’s radical readers reacted to his poetic claims as endorsed by conservative supporters—such as, aptly, Zabel in Willard Maas’s case and Monroe in Stanley Burnshaw’s, and (erroneously) Marianne Moore in T. C. (“Ted”) Wilson’s—no less than they reacted to those poetic claims as we generally read them several poetic epochs later, free now of many particular literary-political tensions long since dissipated (although, of course, bound by others).

My point is that the eminent noncommunist modernist—Stevens, I am arguing, is typical—sought and stood on the ground of political reception being cleared for him. Such a position defined the thinking and feeling aroused in and by poems Stevens wrote after the anachronism of the “new” Harmonium was made critically evident as such: poetry that he then claimed, not surprisingly, was originally responsive to contemporary trends and forms. When he began, at that very point, to take up writing again after a seven-year hiatus in which he wrote almost no verse, the “world” seemed as never before an inextricable combination of compelling

43. Letter (with envelope) from Stevens to Monroe, 4 January 1932, Morton Zabel Papers, Newberry Library, Chicago.
“actual” conditions, as discernible through newspapers and his work as surety and fidelity claims attorney at The Hartford Accident & Indemnity Company (the United States gone economically and perhaps morally bankrupt), and readily accessible critical construction (the new poetic left awaiting noncommunist modernist’s response to that bankruptcy). The productive interaction between Stevens’s poems and even his most reductive reviewers in the thirties was fuller and more complex than at any other period, principally because it served him and them as a precise homologue for the modernist collaboration with political fact.
“Every American schoolboy knows the story of the historic battle between the Merrimac and the Monitor”, wrote historian Bernard Brodie in his 1941 classic Sea Power in the Machine Age. General Adam Badeau played a significant part in telling American children about the battle by means of his article “The Story of the Merrimac and the Monitor”, published in the April 1887 issue of St. Nicholas magazine, the outstanding American juvenile periodical of its day. The original manuscript of this article, reprinted here, is preserved in the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University.

St. Nicholas, a product of Scribner & Company (later The Century Company), publishers of Scribner’s Monthly and The Century, was a well conceived, carefully edited, and lavishly produced monthly magazine with a circulation of approximately 70,000. It contained articles on travel, geography, biography, history, and science; historical fiction and fantasy; and stories about everyday life. Mary Mapes Dodge, who edited St. Nicholas from its founding in 1873 until her death in 1905, was the preeminent children’s editor of her time. She exercised absolute control over the magazine, from its content to its makeup, and was thus able to put into practice her ideas about children’s reading. Two of these ideas stand out. She thought that juvenile reading should be natural and entertaining. More significantly, she believed that a children’s magazine should convey a definite system of ideals and values. Under her direction, St. Nicholas strove to teach its young readers open-

mindedness, self-reliance, right from wrong, the value of industry, the benefits of fortitude, the importance of faith, and an appreciation for truth. *St. Nicholas* advanced a consistently genteel, conservative, upper-middle-class view of life, tacitly seeking to perpetuate the values and attitudes of this class in the next generation. Dodge attracted contributions from outstanding writers, including Laura E. Richards, Jack London, Theodore Roosevelt, Robert Louis Stevenson, Ring Lardner, Robert Benchley, and William Faulkner. Some of the best known serials in *St. Nicholas* were Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, Mark Twain’s *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, and Rudyard Kipling’s *The Jungle Book*.2

Adam Badeau (1831–1895) was an author, soldier, and diplomat. Before the Civil War, he worked as a journalist and at the State Department as a clerk. During the war he served on the staffs of Generals William T. Sherman, Quincy A. Gillmore, and Ulysses S. Grant. Grant made Badeau his military secretary on 8 April 1864. Henceforth Badeau’s fortunes rose and fell with those of Grant, on whose staff he served until May 1869, when he retired with the rank of brevet brigadier general. After Grant became president, Badeau received an appointment to the legation at London, where he rose to the position of consul general. In 1882 he accepted the position of consul general in Havana, but resigned two years later because of a disagreement over policy matters. Not long after his return to America, Badeau moved into Grant’s home to help him write his memoirs. After Grant died in 1885, Badeau spent the remainder of his own life writing articles and books on military and other subjects. He was a competent writer, known for his grasp of detail and for being overly sympathetic toward Grant and the Union cause. One of his better known works, *Grant in Peace*, is still being cited today.3


The map of Hampton Roads as it appeared in the St. Nicholas Magazine, April 1887.

The subject of Badeau’s piece in St. Nicholas, the battle of Hampton Roads, is of great historical interest. On 8 March 1862, the Confederate ironclad Virginia, converted from the wreck of the USS Merrimack and armed with a new type of gun that fired explosive shells instead of conventional solid shot, steamed from her base in Norfolk. Her mission was to disperse the Union blockading fleet in Peace: From Appomattox to Mount McGregor, A Personal Memoir (Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton and Co., 1887). Badeau’s best-known work is Military History of Ulysses S. Grant, from April 1861 to April 1865, 3 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1881).
at Hampton Roads, then to ascend the Potomac to Washington to affect the “public mind”, as the Confederate secretary of the navy put it. At 1:00 P.M., the Virginia emerged from the mouth of the Elizabeth River and proceeded to wreak havoc among the Union’s wooden fleet. She set the USS Congress afire (the Congress later sank), rammed and sank the USS Cumberland, and damaged the USS Minnesota. The Virginia’s shell-firing guns were brutally effective against the wooden ships. Federal return fire had little effect against the Confederate armor. The Virginia retired at 7:00. The Union ironclad Monitor arrived in Hampton Roads later that night.

When the Virginia appeared the next morning to finish off the wooden blockaders, the Monitor engaged her. For four hours the two ironclads fought, part of the time touching, without inflicting serious damage on each other. It was the first battle between armored vessels in history.

One bibliographer attempted “to list all that has been written about the battle [of Hampton Roads], with the exception of newspaper accounts and encyclopedia articles” and “privately printed volumes and articles in obscure periodicals”. The resulting bibliography, published in 1968, includes more than 250 books, chapters in books, pamphlets, articles, and government documents, and 23 unpublished sources on the battle. Interest in the subject has not since abated. Historians continue to write about the battle, underwater archaeologists have examined the wreck of the Monitor and retrieved her anchor and other artifacts, and TBS recently aired a made-for-television movie entitled “Ironclads”.


5. The ironclad converted from the USS Merrimack is properly known by her Confederate name, the Virginia.

Contemporary observers as well as historians have exaggerated the significance of the battle of Hampton Roads, raising it almost to the level of myth. John Taylor Wood, writing in *The Century* magazine in 1885, declared that the battle "revolutionized the navies of the world". "The day was March 9," wrote Bruce Catton in 1956, "memorable for the most momentous drawn battle in history—a battle that nobody won but that made the navies of the world obsolete". Others claim variously that the battle of Hampton Roads brought about the introduction of ironclad warships to the English and French fleets; that the battle was a great turning point in naval warfare; that the Monitor was a "model for the warship of the future".  

Historian James P. Baxter, writing almost sixty years ago, debunked many of these myths. "The legend that [the Monitor and Virginia] inaugurated the introduction of ironclads is preposterous," he noted, "for in March, 1862, nearly one hundred armored vessels were built or building in Europe".

Though the influence of the battles of Hampton Roads on the policy of European governments has been greatly exaggerated, few naval actions in history have made so profound an impression on the popular imagination. The combats of March 8 and 9 symbolized the passing of the old fleets and the coming of the new. Symbols they were, and not the cause, for they did not initiate the great revolution in naval architecture, they crowned it. They taught the man in the street what the naval constructors already knew: that shell guns had sounded the doom of the wooden navies of the world. On the chief problem confronting the naval constructors of Europe—the best design for seagoing ironclads—these battles threw little light. Nevertheless fate had

provided for the first fight of ironclads so incomparable a setting that the *Merrimack* and *Monitor* have monopolized public attention in the United States, to the exclusion of the scores of ironclads then already built or building in Europe.

His revisionist views notwithstanding, Baxter agreed that the battle was significant.\(^8\)

Where does Badeau’s article fit into the literature? Is it closer to myth, or to reality? A comparison of Badeau’s account with the historical record provides the answer.

One telling theme is Badeau’s portrayal of shipboard armor. He characterized the armored warship as an “enchanted vessel” which “could do infinite harm to others without receiving any damage in return”. He made armor seem sinister. In describing the *Virginia*’s attack on the wooden *Cumberland*, Badeau said that the men on the wooden vessel “stood up like targets, fighting against foes who were themselves unseen and completely shielded”. Against the iron sides of the *Monitor*, the *Virginia*’s gunfire “seemed to have no more effect than so many pebbles thrown by a child”. The *Virginia* withstood a “broadside that would have blown out of water any wooden ship in the world; but [she] was unharmed. It seemed like magic, and in other days would doubtless have been considered the effect of wicked enchantment.”

Eyewitness accounts verify this image. An officer on board the unarmored USS *Congress* described the effects of the *Virginia*’s gunfire:

One of her shells dismounted an eight-inch gun and either killed or wounded every one of the gun’s crew, while the slaughter at the other guns was fearful. There were comparatively few wounded, the fragments of the huge shells she threw killing outright as a general thing. Our clean and handsome gun deck was in an instant changed into a

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slaughter-pen, with lopped off legs and arms and bleeding, blackened bodies scattered about by the shells. . . . One poor fellow had his chest transfixed by a splinter of oak as thick as the wrist, but the shell wounds were even worse.

The Virginia's guns were brutally effective against the wooden ships. Of the 810 officers and men on board the Congress and Cumberland, 241 died.9

During the duel between the two ironclads, the concussion of projectiles striking the Virginia's sides proved distressing to her crew, causing bleeding from their noses and ears. Three men inside the turret of the Monitor who were leaning against the wall were stunned when a Confederate projectile struck the outside, but no one in the turret was seriously injured. No one on board either ironclad died during the duel, in stark contrast to the carnage on the Congress and the Cumberland. The duel vividly demonstrated that America's most powerful naval cannon, the 9-inch Dahlgren guns on the Virginia and the 11-inch Dahlgren guns on the Monitor, were virtually useless against armor. John A. Dahlgren, inventor of these guns, perceived the battle as a watershed. "Now comes the reign of iron", he observed.10 Bernard Brodie wrote:

The engagement in Hampton Roads on March 9, 1862 would never have gained so much renown had either the Merrimac or the Monitor sunk the other. It was the uselessness of their long and furious cannonade, contrasted with the signal victories of the Merrimac over unarmored ships on the previous day, that made the affair a landmark on the story of the warship.11

The battle of Hampton Roads was a victory of armor over the gun, as Badeau’s “enchanted warship” image suggests.

His picture of living conditions on board the Monitor also hits the mark: duty on the ship was “especially hazardous, the service difficult in the extreme; [and] the men must live in low, cramped quarters”. In fact, the Monitor was not very seaworthy and had nearly foundered in a storm on her voyage to Hampton Roads. Nevertheless, the battle between the Monitor and Virginia produced such an intense enthusiasm in the North that for the rest of the Civil War, the Union navy focused on building improved monitors. These vessels, like the original, were damp, smelly, dirty, cramped, dark, and poorly ventilated. Temperatures in the engine room rose as high as 130°F. The air in the living quarters resembled a thick fog. It was almost unbreathable. Everything was wet, both from condensation and from innumerable leaks. A monitor’s deck was awash while the ship was underway in anything but a flat calm, forcing the crew to remain below with hatches battened down. The only place where the men could find relief was atop the turret, and then only when out of range of Confederate weapons. Because of these conditions, monitor crews suffered excessively from illness.

But Badeau’s picture is not without flaws. “In the first year of the civil war,” he wrote, in reference to the Virginia and the Monitor in the opening paragraph of the St. Nicholas version: “there were two ships building unlike any that had ever been seen in this world”. Badeau ignored the scores of European ironclads in existence at that time. He also said that no ironclad vessel “had ever been used in actual battle”. If he meant ship versus ship, he was correct, but French-built ironclads had already seen combat in the Crimean War. On 16 October 1855, three French steam-powered armored vessels bombarded Kinburn, at the mouth of the Bug River, de-

12. “Monitor” became the generic word for turreted vessels with a low freeboard.

molishing heavy masonry works, while Russian round shot and shells bounced harmlessly off their iron plates at ranges of 1000 yards or less. Badeau might be forgiven for the first error on the basis of artistic license, but the second error suggests a pattern of misrepresentation. Whether he meant it to or not, his distortion of facts misleads his readers.

He misleads them in other ways as well. He wrote: “If the *Merrimac* proved a success, she could destroy any ship in the world, enter any harbor at the North, passing the forts, and fire directly into the heart of New York or Boston from the Bay”. Other of his statements also portended dire consequences for the Union, accurately reflecting the flood of emotions that the *Virginia*’s appearance had unleashed. William H. Parker, who had commanded the Confederate gunboat *Beaufort* during the battle of Hampton Roads, recalled:

> Upon our return to Norfolk, which was on Sunday, March 9th, the whole city was alive with joy and excitement. Nothing was talked of but the *Merrimac* and what she had accomplished. As to what she could do in the future, no limit was set to her powers. The papers indulged in the wildest speculations, and everybody went mad, as usual. At the North the same fever prevailed. No battle that was ever fought caused as great a sensation throughout the civilized world. The moral effect at the North was most marvelous; and even now I can scarcely realize it. The people of New York and Washington were in hourly expectation of the *Merrimac*’s appearance off those cities, and I suppose were ready to yield at the first summons. At the South it was expected that she would take Fortress Monroe when she again went out.\(^{14}\)

These popular expectations, however, proved false. Another Confederate authority recalled the *Virginia*’s actual capabilities:

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The truth was that the ship was not weatherly enough to move in Hampton Roads at all times with safety, and she never could have been moved more than three hours' sail from a machine shop. [She] was in every respect ill-proportioned and top heavy; and what with her immense length and wretched engines (than which a more ill-contrived, spindling, and unreliable pair were never made; failing on one occasion while the ship was under fire) she was little more navigable than a timber-raft. Her quarters for the crew were close, damp, ill-ventilated, and unhealthy; one-third of the men were always on the sick list and were most always transferred to the hospital, where they would convalesce immediately. She steered very badly and both her rudder and screw were wholly unprotected. Every man and officer well understood the utter feebleness of the ship.\footnote{Unnamed Confederate cited in William C. Church, \textit{The Life of John Ericsson}, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1890), 1:300.}

The \textit{Virginia} had wrought such havoc on the Union fleet because they had been unprepared for her. Badeau gave little indication of the \textit{Virginia}'s limitations, thereby leading his readers to believe that the inaccurate popular perceptions of the \textit{Virginia} reflected the reality.

Badeau's article is not only misleading, but also unbalanced. Several recurring themes reveal a strong pro-Union bias. Notice, for example, how he reverentially described the actions of the \textit{Cumberland}'s crew during her fight with the \textit{Virginia}, the death of Captain Joseph Smith, the "herculean" efforts of the \textit{Monitor} crew during the duel with the \textit{Virginia}, and the wounding of Union Captain John Worden. Badeau was neutral about the exploits of Confederate officers and men. Another recurring theme is the relative sizes of the \textit{Monitor} ("this little craft") and the \textit{Virginia} ("a huge steam frigate"). The rebel ironclad was an "iron monster", a "Confederate Leviathan", a "Titan". The Union vessel was a "mite", a "piggymy", a "dwarf", a "cheesebox on a raft", a "tin can on a shingle".
Badeau’s allusion to the biblical story of David and Goliath caps the image, implying that the Federals were good and the Confederates evil. Another comparison reinforces the impression of Southern strength and readiness. Badeau declared that on the eve of their battle with the Monitor, the crew of the Virginia had “slept and rested and eaten”. The Monitor’s men, however, were exhausted, for they had been awake all night while their ship completed its voyage to Hampton Roads, and they had not had time for a hot meal. Badeau pointed out that the “greatest battles on land are usually fought by soldiers, hungry, and after long and exhausting marches: always won at the end of furious fighting and tremendous excitement that in ordinary times would drain the strength and spirits of the bravest”. Badeau ended the article with the scuttling of the Virginia by her own crew to prevent her from falling into enemy hands. The Monitor is seen going up the James River to attack the batteries at Richmond. Badeau failed to mention that the Confederates repulsed the attack. He also failed to mention that the Monitor foundered off Cape Hatteras on 31 December 1862.

Badeau’s article is thus a mixture of truth and misrepresentation. Although the portrayal of life on board the Monitor is accurate and the images of its armor and strength appropriately derogatory, his errors of fact, his bias, and his failure to separate popular imagination from historical fact misguide his readers and help foster the myth surrounding the battle.

But the fact that Badeau was in part a mythmaker does not mean that his article is without value. As the maxim goes, every generation of historians reinterprets the past in terms of the problems and predilections of its own time. In this respect, Badeau’s article provides a framework for studying the motives and perspectives of different generations of historians. It also manifests the values (heroic self-sacrifice, perhaps, or distaste for the South, or uncritical admiration for technological innovation, or glorification of war) that an eminent man of his times wished, whether deliberately or unconsciously, to teach youthful readers. Additionally interesting is the material the article offers about why myths evolve and how they are perpetuated.

Last but not least, Badeau’s article is pleasurable to read. His ac-
count of the arrival of the *Monitor* in Hampton Roads on the night of 8–9 March captures the drama of the moment. His remarks on the death of Joseph Smith movingly reflect the tragedy of war. But now, after these few background remarks, it is time to introduce Badeau himself. The story that follows has been copied as it appeared in its original manuscript form.

**War Stories for Boys and Girls**

**BY GENERAL ADAM BADEAU**

**The Merrimac and the Monitor**

*In the first year* of the civil war, at Norfolk, in Virginia, and at the same time at Brooklyn, in the state of New York, there was building a ship unlike any that had ever been seen in this world. Up to that time the navies of every nation had been made of wood, and when a wooden ship is struck in battle, every child knows it may be set on fire, or so torn to pieces that unless the rush of water into her hole is instantly stopped, the ship must sink. This is what makes a sea-fight so terrible.

Now it occurred to the leaders on both sides in the great war that if they could cover a ship with iron which a cannon ball could not penetrate, that ship would be able to destroy all its enemies. It would be like some of the wonders of the Arabian Nights; whoever possessed this enchanted vessel could do infinite harm to others without receiving any damage in return. He could attack and demolish whole fleets, and not only fleets, but even forts, and the cities which the fleets and forts defended. So both sides set to work to try to build such a wonderful ship.

The Southerners got the start. They were blockaded from the world, and had neither means nor material to construct an ordinary vessel of war; but their energy was great and they possessed the American faculty of invention. (They raised a ship from the bottom
of a river where she had been sunk and determined to convert her into an iron-clad.)

If you look at the map you will see that the city of Norfolk stands on the Elizabeth river only a few miles south of the point where that stream empties into the James. It is, however, completely hidden from view at the mouth by the windings of the river. Here before the war the United States owned a large navy yard, which early in 1861 fell into the hands of the Confederates, but not until all the vessels had been either sunk or burned. Among the ships thus destroyed was a huge steam-frigate, called the Merrimac, carrying forty guns—one of the largest vessels in the American navy.

This wreck the Southerners thought would do for their purposes. They hoisted her out of her miry bed, and then cut her down till the deck was level with the water. Next they boarded over each end for more than seventy feet. Then, on the middle portion, 170 feet long, they built a wooden wall, rising on all sides seven feet from the water’s edge, and sloping inward like a roof, till the sides came within twenty feet of each other at the top. This wall, or roof, you may call it which you please, they completely covered with iron plates four inches thick, riveted into the wood. The vessel then looked like a huge iron box, or a long low fort with port holes in the sides through which the guns could be fired. There were ten of these guns, one on each end, bow and stern; the others at the sides. In front was an iron horn or ram that projected two feet and a half, intended to strike and pierce the vessels of the enemy. The top of the box was covered with an iron grating to keep off some of the mischief of shells falling from above, and when the ship was not in battle it served for a promenade. Through this grating came all the light and air the ship received. The vessel was worked with the old engines which of course had been greatly damaged by the burning and sinking they had undergone. Nothing at all like this structure had ever been known in war. One or two iron ships had been built in England and France, but none had ever been used in actual battle. The Merrimac was an experiment. She was indeed hardly a ship, but a floating fort.

The Southerners had no navy, and it was difficult to find a crew, but three hundred men who once had been sailors were finally re-
cruited from their army. The commander was Commodore Bu­chanan, and the next in rank was Lieutenant Jones, both formerly officers of the United States navy.

Every effort was made to keep the building of this new ship a se­cret from the North, but this proved impossible, and the Washing­ton Government at once set about preparing to meet so formidable an enemy. For if the Merrimac proved a success she could destroy any ship in the world, enter any harbor at the North, passing the forts and fire directly into the heart of New York or Boston from the bay. Nothing could withstand a ship whose armor was impene­trable.

Captain John Ericsson, a Swede by birth, but an American citi­zen, had long been planning an iron clad ship of his own, and his plans were now laid before the Government and accepted. He built in Brooklyn, New York harbor, what he called a fighting ma­chine. Instead of a great, floating fort, heavy and difficult to move, he designed a small battery of only two heavy guns, which was to be able to move in shallow water where the great ship could not go, to be itself as fully protected by its iron armor as the Merrimac, but being small, to be easily handled; to be able to turn more quickly, to approach the enemy at close quarters when it chose, and to escape every attack which it could not withstand. The great question, however, was the protection—the armor.

Ericsson contrived a structure, you could hardly call it a ship, 170 feet long and about forty wide, and reaching only eleven feet be­low the water: while the deck was only one foot above. There was nothing whatever above the deck but the pilot house and a revolv­ing iron tower with two guns inside: these were the only cannon aboard, but they fired shot weighing 180 pounds. The object of the revolving tower was to be able to get along with fewer guns. By turning the tower you could use the same gun in any direction; whereas, in a great unwieldy ship, the whole mass must turn, or you can only fire from one side. The tower or turret, was twenty feet across and nine feet high. The tops of the smoke pipes also rose six feet above the deck, and the blower pipes four and a half feet; but when the thing was fighting, these pipes were all removed, and the openings covered with iron gratings, so that there was nothing
to aim at, nothing to be struck or injured, but the turret and the pilot-house. The deck was plated with iron and hung over to guard the hull.

The pilot-house was extremely small, containing just space for three men and the wheel. It was built entirely of iron, in solid blocks twelve inches deep and nine inches thick. The only lookout was an opening left between the blocks, making a long and narrow sight hole all around the pilot house, five eighths of an inch in width. In battle the commanding officer must remain in the pilot-house and direct the action of the ship and of the guns, while the next in rank, the executive officer superintended the firing. A speaking trumpet connected the pilot-house and the turret and conveyed the commander’s orders. Everything else, engines, boilers, anchor, officers’ rooms, quarters for the men, all were below; all shielded from the enemy by the iron armor reaching over the deck on the outside. The whole thing looked like a cheese box on a raft or as one of the Southerners said when he saw it for his first time—like a tin can on a shingle. Ericsson called it the “Monitor”, because it was to admonish or warn the Southerners that they could not resist the Union.

As the news came that the Merrimac was nearly complete and might come out of her hiding place in the Elizabeth river any day, work was pressed on the Monitor night and day. For the whole result of the War might be changed if the Confederate monster got out of the James. Indeed, even if the Monitor met her, it was uncertain whether this strange invention of Ericsson could withstand the fighting machine. Still there was this chance, the only one. The little craft was begun in October 1861, and in less than a hundred days was launched. On the 25th of February she was handed over to the Government. She had a ship’s company in all of 58 souls, Lieutenant Worden commanding, and Lieutenant Greene, a boy of twenty-two, next in rank. The crew was composed of volunteers from other vessels of war in New York harbor. The duty was known to be especially hazardous, the service difficult in the extreme; the men must live in low cramped quarters; there was no sailing apparatus whatever; the strange little skiff must be worked altogether by steam, and the entire mechanism was unfamiliar to
seaman; but the crew was easily found; and on the 6th of March the Monitor was towed out of New York bay.

The next day there was a moderate breeze and it was soon seen that the Monitor was unfit to go to sea. Unless the wind had gone down she would have been wrecked on her first voyage. The deck leaked and the waves came down under the turret like a waterfall. They struck the pilot-house and penetrated the narrow eye-holes with such force as to knock the helmsman completely away from the wheel. They came down the blow-holes in the deck and the engines were stopped below, for the fires could not get air. When the men tried to check the inflow they were nearly choked with the escaping gas, and were dragged out more dead than alive, and carried to the top of the turret for air, which gradually revived them. But the water continued to pour down in such quantities that there was danger of sinking. The pumps did not work, and the water had to be handed up in buckets. All night long, the crew was fighting the leaks, and with an exhausted, anxious company, the Monitor plowed through the waves to Hampton Roads.

Those who wish to understand what follows must look at the map again. Hampton Roads is the name given to the broad sheet of water at the mouth of the James into which that river expands before it empties into Chesapeake Bay. On Saturday the 8th of March a Union fleet was moving about this harbor between Fortress Monroe at the entrance and Newport News, a point that juts out from the northern shore, about seven miles up the river. Off Newport News two sailing frigates were anchored, about three hundred yards from shore—the Cumberland of thirty guns, and the Congress carrying fifty cannon—both first class men of war. Further towards the sea was the Minnesota, a steam frigate of forty guns, and still beyond her lay the Roanoke, her sister ship, and the St. Lawrence, a sailing vessel of war—all of the largest size known in the American navy. There were besides several smaller steamers, armed tugs, floating about the Roads. This fleet was engaged in blockading the James—the only avenue between Richmond and the sea. Fortress Monroe, the great work at the entrance, and a land battery at Newport News were the only points on the James at that time in the possession of Northerners, but their naval strength en-
abled them to command the river and prevent all communication between the Southern capital and the outside world.

On the southern side of the bay the Confederates had several batteries, the most important of which was at Sewall’s Point to protect the mouth of the Elizabeth and the approach to Norfolk.

About noon, on the 8th of March the Merrimac appeared. Steaming out from the Elizabeth river she came into the Roads and headed direct for Newport News, where the Cumberland and the Congress lay, unconscious of the approaching danger. The Cumberland was a little west of the peninsula, the Congress about two hundred yards to the east. The day was calm, the ships were swinging lazily by their anchors, the clothes were hanging in the rigging, the small boats fastened to the boom. But as the monstrous mass moved steadily on, all knew at once what the black-looking object must be. The boats were dropped astern, all hands were ordered to their places, and the Cumberland was swung across the channel so that her broadside would bear against the stranger.

As the Merrimac approached she looked like a huge crocodile floating on the surface of the water. Her iron sides rose slantingly like the roof of a house on the arched back of a tortoise, the ram projecting in front above the water’s edge. A flag was floating from one staff and a pennant at the stern; but not a man could be seen on the outside. She came at the rate of four or five miles an hour. When she got within half a mile the Cumberland opened fire, followed by the Congress, the gunboats and the batteries on shore. The Merrimac, however, made straight for the Cumberland, delivering a broadside into the Congress as she passed. The Congress returned the broadside and the Cumberland poured on another, but the balls bounced like india-rubber from her mailed sides, making not the slightest impression. The flagstaff was cut away, but no one could get out to replace it, and she fought for awhile with only the pennant at her stern.

Now the Congress and the Cumberland and all the shore batteries poured in their fire, and the Merrimac fired forward into the Cumberland, killing and wounding the crew of one of the guns. Two small vessels that had followed in her wake from Norfolk also took sides, and three Confederate gunboats came down the James
About noon on the 8th March the Merrimac appeared, steaming out from the Elizabeth River, she came into the Roads and headed direct for Newport News, where the Cumberland and the Monitor lay, unconscious of the approaching danger, the Cumberland was a little west of the residence, the Monitor about two hundred yards to the east.

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As the Merrimac approached, she looked like a huge crocodile floating on the surface of the water, her sides were slantingly, like the roof of a house. In the arched back of a tortoise, the ram projections in front about the water’s edge, a flag, floating from one staff and a periscope at the stern, but not a man could be seen on the outside. She came at the rate of four or five miles an hour. When she got
to participate, while the Minnesota the Roanoke and the St. Law­rence all started from their moorings for the battle.

But the Merrimac steered steadily for the Cumberland and crushed her iron horn into the vessel’s side, knocking a hole wide enough to drive in a horse and cart. The frigate was forced back upon her anchors with a tremendous shock, and the water at once went rushing into the hole. The Merrimac then drew off, but her ram was broken and she left it sticking in the Cumberland’s side. All the Union vessels now poured shot and shell into or rather at the Merrimac. Two of her guns had the muzzles blown off, one of her anchors and all the smoke pipes were shot away; ropes, railings, timber, everything that could be struck was swept clean off. The flag staffs were repeatedly shot away, and the colors after a while were hoisted to the smoke-stack; when that went, they were fastened to a boarding pike. One of the crew came out of a port hole to the outside, but a ball from the Cumberland instantly cut him in two. But the armor was hardly damaged, though a hundred heavy guns must have been turned on it at once from ship or shore.

The Merrimac herself kept up her fire on both the Cumberland and the Congress from her different sides. After a while she advanced again towards the Cumberland and shot one shell that killed nine men, following this up with a broadside that mowed down officers, sailors and gunners; for on the wooden ship there was no protection whatever. The men stood up like targets, fighting against foes themselves unseen, and completely shielded. Morris who commanded the Cumberland was summoned to surrender, but he replied, “Never! I’ll sink alongside.” The water was all this time rushing into the hole made by the ram, and the vessel had been set on fire in several places. The decks were covered with dead and dying men, fragments of legs and arms, and pools of blood in which the living slipped as they worked at the guns. The Merrimac was within three hundred yards, and from their safe iron walls her crew could send each ball to its mark. The water kept pouring in, not only at the great hole made by the ram, but after a while at the port-holes. As the ship sank lower and lower, the crew was driven from deck to deck upward, working the guns that were left unsubmerged.
At thirty minutes past three the water had risen to the gun deck, and the crew delivered a parting fire; each man then tried to save himself by jumping overboard; some scrambled through the port holes, others leaped from the rigging or the mast, but many went down with the ship which settled with a roar, the stars and stripes still waving. That flag was finally submerged, but even after the hull was grounded on the sands, the pennant was still flying from the topmast above the waves. None of the crew were captured, but nearly all the wounded were drowned. In all about a hundred were lost: small boats came out from shore and rescued the remainder under the Confederate fire.

The Merrimac now turned on the Congress, which seeing the fate of her comrade, had moved in toward shore and purposely got aground, where the Merrimac could not follow, without also getting aground. This would have been fatal to the heavy Confederate battery, so that there was no danger of the Merrimac ramming the Congress. Still the unhappy frigate was at the mercy of her enemy. The iron monster came up so close that her crew fired pistol shots into the port holes of the Congress. The Minnesota and her sister frigates had all got aground lower down the bay, and were unable to assist their struggling consort.

The Merrimac at last took a position astern and at a distance of only 150 yards, and raked her helpless antagonist from stern to stern. The other Confederate vessels all came up and poured shot and shell into the stranded ship. The commander was killed. There was no prospect of relief from the Minnesota. The men were knocked away from the guns as fast as they tried to fire, and at last not a single piece could be brought to bear on the enemy. The ship was on fire in several places, and at half past four the colors were lowered. It was the first time the American flag was ever struck on a vessel of war. When the father of Captain Jos. Smith who had been in command was told that the Congress had shown the white flag—he simply remarked: “Joe’s dead.”

Buchanan, the commander of the Merrimac sent a boarding party, and the flag as well as the sword of the dead commander was surrendered. The flag was found soaked in blood when it was opened two days after in Richmond. The second in rank on the
Congress was directed to transfer his wounded as quickly as possible: but the batteries on shore kept up their fire and would not permit the transfer of the prisoners, although the white flag was flying. “We have not surrendered”, said General Mansfield, in command at Newport News. As Buchanan was unable to take possession of his prize, he ordered hot shell to be fired at her and the Congress was soon in flames in every part. At the same moment he was himself shot and severely wounded. His brother was an officer on the Congress. The Confederates were driven off by the renewed fire, and the crew escaped in small boats, or swimming, to the shore; but thirty were captured and many lost.

The Merrimac now turned her attention to the Minnesota which was aground and at the mercy of the Confederates. It was only five o’clock and there were still two hours of daylight; but the tide was ebbing, and there was some dispute about the channel with the pilots. The Confederates supposed they had only to wait till morning to secure the remainder of the fleet. Rescue was impossible. The giant could dispatch whatever victim stood in his way. So the Merrimac retired to the entrance of the Elizabeth river and waited till morning to resume her task. She had lost twenty-one men killed and wounded.

During that terrible night the Minnesota lay within a mile and a half of Newport News, on the sandback where the ship seemed to have made a cradle for herself. At ten the tide turned to flood, and all hands were at work from that time till four in the morning with steam tugs and ropes endeavoring to haul the ship off the bank, but without avail. The St. Lawrence and the Roanoke were below in the harbor.

The moon was in her second quarter. The masthead of the Cumberland could be seen above the waves, with her colors still flying, while a little south of Newport News the Congress was in a blaze. As the flames crept up the rigging every mast and spar and rope glittered against the sky in lines of fire. The port-holes in the hull looked like the mouths of fiery furnaces; a shell or a loaded gun went off from time to time as the fire reached it, and at two o’clock the magazine exploded with a tremendous shock and sound. A mountain sheaf of flame went up, a flash seemed to divide the sky,
and the blazing fragments were scattered in every direction. When the glare subsided the rigging had vanished, and only the hull remained, charred and shattered. The port-holes were blown into one great gap where the conflagration blazed and smoldered till morning.

That night, there was consternation not only in the fleet and at Fortress Monroe, but farther yet, at Washington, and all over the North. It seemed as if nothing could prevent the complete success of the Merrimac. The anxious vessels lay in the Roads, the Minnesota waiting to be destroyed, like the Cumberland and the Congress, in the morning; the President and his Cabinet were discussing gloomily what might happen, and in every city in the North men lay awake, dreading the news of the morrow. For it was not only that the victory of the Union was delayed, that its forces were resisted, its ships destroyed, but disaster might be carried to any one of the harbors or cities of the Atlantic by this one vessel, which could find no opponent to withstand her, since she was herself invulnerable while able to inflict such terrible blows. It was like the fabled monster of antiquity that singly laid waste a kingdom.

At the South, on the other hand, the rejoicing was extravagant. The result itself was exaggerated; the wildest hopes were indulged. The blockade was to be raised, the war ended, the South to be made independent—all because of the Merrimac. On the spot the plan was to destroy the Minnesota in the morning and later the remainder of the fleet below Fortress Monroe. The crew of the Merrimac slept at their guns dreaming of other victories.

But neither side knew what was to happen in the morning. The Monitor had weathered the gale and the chances of wreck, and at four o’clock on Saturday afternoon the 8th of March, she passed Cape Henry, at the entrance of Chesapeake Bay. At that point the commander heard the booming of heavy guns twenty miles away, and guessed it must be from an engagement with the Merrimac. The Monitor must be put to trial at once.

He ordered the vessel stripped of her sea rig, and every preparation was made for battle. As they approached Hampton Roads they could see the fine old Congress burning brightly and soon a pilot came aboard and told the terrible story of disaster and dismay. At
9 o’clock in the night Worden reached the fleet and reported to the commanding officer. Every one was full of gloom, and the pigmy Monitor seemed no more of a champion than David with his sling after Goliah had defied the Israelites. Nevertheless Worden was ordered at once to the relief of the Minnesota, still hard aground. He arrived in time to see the explosion of the Congress, the powder tanks appearing to explode successively, each shower of sparks rivalling the other in height until they seemed to reach the zenith. Near, too, lay the gallant Cumberland, with her silent crew, at the bottom of the river, the colors still flying at the peak.

At daybreak the Merrimac was discovered at anchor with the Confederate gun boats, near Sewall’s Point. At half past seven she got under way, and steered in the direction of the Minnesota. At the same time the little Monitor came out from behind the frigate to guard her lofty consort. Worden took his station in the pilot house which projected only four feet above the deck. Greene, with sixteen brawny men, eight to each gun, was in the turret. The remainder of the crew were distributed in the engine and fire-rooms, or were in the powder division. The Monitor had barely escaped shipwreck twice within thirty-six hours; since leaving New York hardly a man aboard had closed his eyes in sleep; and there had been nothing to eat but hard bread, for cooking had been impossible. Wrecks and disaster surrounded the little craft, and her efficiency in a fight was yet to be proved. But in such condition men’s quality is tested, and the greatest battles on land are usually fought by soldiers, hungry, and after long and exhausting marches; always won at the end of furious fighting and tremendous excitement that in ordinary times would drain the strength and spirit of the bravest.

On the Merrimac all was elation. The crew had slept and rested and eaten; they had achieved a magnificent victory, and came out only to complete the success that was already they thought, secure. They saw the little Monitor covering and protecting with her diminutive proportions the mighty Minnesota, and had no fear of the result.

Worden steered directly for the enemy’s fleet to meet and engage them as far as possible from the Minnesota. As he approached with one or two shots he drove the wooden vessels at once out of
range. Then to the astonishment of all of the spectators on the ships around and on both shores, the tiny Monitor laid herself directly alongside the Merrimac and stopped her engines; the porthole was opened, the gun run out, and the dwarf attacked the monster. The Merrimac was quick to reply. Gun after gun was returned by rattling broadsides from the Merrimac, only sixty yards away. The Merrimac had ten guns to the Monitor’s two, and the turret and other parts of the little craft were struck again and again. But the shots did not penetrate, the tower was intact, and continued to revolve. A look of confidence passed over the faces of the men when this was sure, for they now believed the Merrimac could not repeat the performance of the day before. The Monitor was no longer an experiment. Her armor was proof. To the spectators the shots of the Merrimac seemed to have no more effect than as many pebbles thrown by a child.

The fight continued as fast as the guns could be served and at short range, Worden skillfully manoeuvering his quickly—turning his vessel, and trying to find some vulnerable point in his enemy. The little battery pointed her bow for her adversary’s in the hope of sending a shot through her port-hole; then she would fly by her and rake her through the stern. Once she made a dash at the stern hoping to disable the screw, the Merrimac pouring broadside after broadside all the while, and the reverberation of the shots on the inside was terrible. One man leaning against the turret within was disabled by the shock and forced to go below. The speaking tube between the pilot house and the turret was broken early in the action, and orders and replies after that were carried by messengers. The Captain, commanding and guiding all, was enclosed in the pilot house, and the executive officer, working and fighting the guns, was shut up in the turret, and all communication between them was difficult and uncertain. The turret, too, did not always revolve easily, and it required prodigious exertion to control its motion. Greene, who directed the firing, got his only view of the outside world through an opening of only a few inches over the muzzles of the guns. The moment the gun was run in to load, the hole was closed by an iron pendulum, to hoist which required the whole ship’s crew, so that the labor was immense every moment of the battle.
The tremendous guns were eleven inches across the muzzle, and the shock of the firing in this confined space was deafening, as well as the noise of the balls striking incessantly on the outside. The men became perfectly black with powder shut up in this dungeon; their underclothes to the skin were saturated as well as their bodies; they got nervous from the excitement; their muscles twitched as though electric shocks were passing through them and they were in danger of death every moment; but they kept at their work. It was difficult to aim. White marks had been made on the deck to indicate the position of the different sides of the ship; for as the tower revolved they could not know shut up in there, which was right and which was left; but the marks became obliterated in the action, and Greene had constantly to ask the captain where he was, and where the Merrimac. “On the starboard”, which is seamen’s word for the right of the ship; but “which was starboard?” Sometimes when the gun was ready to fire, the turret started on its revolving journey in search of the target, and finally when this was found, they had to fire without good aim, because the turret could not be controlled. But nearly all of the enemy’s shot flew over the submerged propeller: there was nothing for a mark; nothing to strike but the turret and the pilot-house; and when the shots struck the bomb proof tower, they glanced off without effect.

Finding she could accomplish nothing with the Monitor, the Merrimac turned upon the wooden ships, and put an enormous shot into the Minnesota, tearing four rooms into one, and setting the ship on fire. The fire was quickly extinguished and the Minnesota replied with a broadside that would have blown out of water any wooden ship in the world; but the Merrimac was unharmed. It seemed like magic, and in other days would doubtless have been considered the effect of wicked enchantment. Fifty solid shot struck on the slanting sides without any apparent result. The Merrimac fired three times, in return at the Minnesota, and would have soon destroyed her, but the little Monitor came dancing down to the rescue, placing herself directly between the two huge craft, and compelled the Merrimac to change her position. In doing this the monster grounded and then the Minnesota poured in all the guns that could be brought to bear. Nearly every shot of the Monitor
now struck home, while when the commander of the Merrimac said to an officer apparently idle: “Why do you not fire?” “Our ammunition is precious,” was the reply; “and after two hours, incessant firing, I find I can do her about as much damage by snapping my thumb at her.” But the Merrimac got off the bottom, and then the little Monitor chased her down the bay.

The Monitor could move in only eleven feet of water, and the Merrimac required twenty-three, and the depth of the water was constantly varying. For the bottom of the river is as uneven as the land; it has its hills and valleys; and every now and then the larger ship would strike one of these hill-tops below the water; and stick fast; so that for a while she could not move. It took the Merrimac thirty minutes to turn. Her officers declared she was as unwieldy as Noah’s Ark, and while she was turning, the Monitor fired at her from such points as she chose; running all around her to find a mark. The smoke stack of the Merrimac was gone and the engines consequently could hardly work: this also of course impeded her movements, and in this battle it was as important to be able to move as to fire; just as in a fight between men he who is alert and agile can avoid the enemy’s blows and then leap quickly and deliver a telling one himself. This fight indeed was almost human in its character, it was single-handed. The channel was narrow and the Monitor could move about where her enemy could not come, so that her diminutive size itself was an element in her favor.

After a while, however, the Merrimac was in motion again, determined now to use her strength and if possible crush her pigmy adversary. She turned and ran full tilt at the Monitor as she had done at the unlucky Cumberland the day before. For a moment, to the lookers-on it seemed as if the Monitor was doomed, and the hearts of the officers of the Minnesota were in their throats. But Worden saw what was coming and avoided the direct shock by a skillful use of the helm, and the Merrimac struck only a glancing blow with her disabled ram. The little craft went down under the tremendous headway, but came dancing up again, and at the instant of collision Greene planted a solid 180 pound shot fair and square in the Merrimac’s side; if she had been an ordinary ship it would have sent her to the bottom, never to rise again. As it was the ball forced
in the iron armor two or three inches; while all the crew on that side of the ship were knocked over and bled from the nose and ears. Another shot in the same place would have penetrated, said the Confederate commander. While the ships were alongside, the Merrimac called for men to board the Monitor and overwhelm her by numbers, but she dropped astern before they could get aboard.

After a while the supply of shot in the turret became exhausted; and Worden moved off for fifteen minutes to replenish. The hoisting of the heavy shot from below was a tedious operation: the turret had to remain stationary so that the scuttles in the floor and in the decks should be in a line with each other, in order to pass up the ammunition. Worden took advantage of this lull and crawled out through a port-hole to the deck, to get a better view of the situation. He remained a few minutes on the outside and returned unharmed.

Then the battle was renewed. Two things were most important to the Monitor; first to prevent the enemy’s shot entering the turret through the port-holes; for the explosion of a shell on the inside would have ended the fight at once, by disabling the men at the guns, as there were no others to take their place in the little craft. That was one of the disadvantages of its size. There was only room for so many men: the fifty-eight that composed the crew were crowded and cramped. The other point was not to fire into their own pilot-house. A careless hand in the confusion during the whirligig of the tower might let slip one of their big shot against the pilot house. For this reason Greene fired every shot.

Soon after noon the Merrimac determined to concentrate fire on the pilot-house; one of her shells from a gun not ten yards distant struck directly in the sight-hole or slit; and exploded, cracking the iron, and lifting the top. Worden received the full force of the blow in his face; it stunned him partially, and utterly blinded him for a while, filling his eyes with powder. The flood of light that poured in from the open top caused him, blind as he was, to suppose the pilot house destroyed; he gave orders to move off, and sent for Greene.

It was a ghastly sight that met the young officer. The blood rushed apparently from every pore in his commander’s face. The
wounded man was led to his cabin, and the boy took command. Blind and suffering, Worden’s spirit did not forsake him. He thought he was mortally hurt, but asked in his agony: “Is the Minnesota safe?” When assured of this, he exclaimed: “Then I can die happy.”

When Greene returned to the pilot-house he found the steering perfect, but in the confusion the Monitor had been drifting about without direction. Twenty minutes elapsed from the time of his shock before it was determined what course to pursue, and meanwhile the Merrimac had withdrawn. She was leaking badly, her engines could hardly work, and though doubtless she could have continued the fight, it was evident that she could accomplish nothing against her dwarf antagonist, who was able completely to defend the entire Northern fleet. Neither adversary had been able to destroy the other. The Monitor was now near shallow water where the Merrimac could not follow, and at two o’clock the great battery returned to Sewall’s Point, completely foiled in her object by Ericsson’s little machine. The Monitor fired a few shots after the retiring vessel but did not follow.

It required a month to repair the damages the Merrimac had received, and on the 11th of April, followed by six gunboats, she came into the Roads again. The Monitor was in sight with the Union fleet, but had received positive orders not to attack in the shore water where her consorts could not manoeuver; and the Merrimac returned without a battle. This proceeding was repeated a few days later: the Merrimac steamed out and then returned. Neither side had another iron clad, and neither wished to risk the destruction of the craft that protected so vast a stake. Thus the Monitor stayed the course of the Merrimac and prevented all the great results that were hoped by one side and feared by the other. For a while the issue of the war seemed to depend on the little champion, and she stood her ground. It was like the nursery stories in which the dwarf beat off the giant and saved the land.

In April the Confederates abandoned Norfolk. The Merrimac did not dare face her pigmy antagonist, and was run ashore by her own crew and burnt, exactly two months after the great battle in Hampton Roads. Thus the Modern Minotaur, that had threatened a nation, not only withdrew, but turned on itself and destroyed its
own huge form with the fires it had meant for its enemies, while the little Monitor passed up the James unscathed to attack the batteries at Richmond.
A Marcel Breuer House Project of 1938–1939

BY ISABELLE HYMAN

Marcel Breuer designed a house for a development community in Palm Springs, California in 1938, a year after he emigrated to the United States. The project was never realized, and an interesting house in terms both of Breuer's career and of the history of transplanted modernism was thereby forfeited. Among the Marcel Breuer Papers preserved at the Syracuse University Library are unpublished sketches, working drawings, correspondence, and specifications which make possible a reconstruction of the Palm Springs house and its program, and furnish new particulars about working procedures in the Gropius-Breuer partnership.*

THE COMMISSION

In the summer of 1938 a letter addressed simply to “Professor Marcel Breuer, Boston, Mass.” found its way to the architect. Breuer had been in this country for just a year, teaching at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design and practicing in partnership with Walter Gropius. The writer, Mrs. David Margolius, was a potential client with an exact program: “Dear Sir”, she began, “Having heard of you in Europe and in the States, I ask you whether you would be interested in drawing plans for a small mod-

*I am grateful to the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts for a grant in aid of my study of the architecture of Marcel Breuer.

I am equally indebted to the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for a 1988–89 fellowship. Above all I am indebted to Mrs. Constance L. Breuer for her help, and for her permission to publish material from the Marcel Breuer Papers. Most of the research was carried out in the George Arents Research Library at Syracuse University, to whose staff, particularly Kathleen Manwaring, I wish to express thanks. I also appreciate the assistance of the staff of the Archives of American Art and Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., and in their New York City Regional Office.

Some of this material was presented as a paper on 29 March 1990 at the Fiftieth Anniversary Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians, Boston, and will appear in my forthcoming book on Breuer’s architecture to be published by Harry N. Abrams, Inc.
ern home in Palm Springs, California. Before I go any further I must tell you that the restrictions call for a one story house, modern Spanish exterior. As my husband and myself want something especially beautiful and outstanding we turn to you.”

The “modern Spanish exterior” mentioned by Mrs. Margolius refers to the desired visual character of Las Palmas Estates, the development community in which the house was to be built, and to standards of design formulated by its architectural jury that oversaw plans for houses proposed by individual lot-owners. The importance of Spanish Colonial Revival style in Southern California, where “many communities adopted the style as the only image allowed” is underscored by Gebhard and Winter in their study of the architecture of Los Angeles, and is fully borne out by the letter to Breuer.

The summer of 1938 was a productive period for Breuer. In August he wrote to his friend and former collaborator in Zurich, architect Alfred Roth: “I am very busy and feel very good in America”. He was occupied with exploring possibilities for a variety of industrial designs and with efforts to patent, manufacture, and market his furniture. At the same time in partnership with Walter Gropius he was overseeing the construction of the Hagerty house, a spacious seaside residence in Cohasset, Massachusetts. In June a special exhibition of photographs, models, and drawings of Breuer’s work had been installed in Harvard’s Robinson Hall and

1. Hilde Margolius (Mrs. David Margolius) to Breuer, 10 August 1938, Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library. Unless otherwise indicated, all Breuer correspondence cited hereafter is from the Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library.

2. David Gebhard and Robert Winter, Architecture in Los Angeles, a Compleat Guide (Salt Lake City: G. M. Smith, 1985), 486. The authors also point out that “California architects and their clients have never been particularly precise as to what made a dwelling Mediterranean rather than Spanish, though there indeed was a difference” (485). At Las Palmas there seems to have been some flexibility with regard to “style” as long as the design conformed to the neat and orderly appearance of the community (garage doors, for example, were to open away from the principal approach to keep untidiness out of view).

was reviewed in an important essay by Henry-Russell Hitchcock. Breuer was to leave for Mexico City in August to attend, as a delegate, a Congress on Housing and Urban Planning. He was working on furniture designs for Rhoads Hall, a new dormitory at Bryn Mawr College. He and Gropius were planning the interior architecture of the Pennsylvania State Pavilion for the 1939 New York World's Fair, and they had accepted an invitation to participate in a competition for a Festival Theatre and Fine Arts Center at the College of William and Mary. In June Gropius and Breuer had learned that the design they had been invited to submit to a significant and well-publicized competition for an art center at Wheaton College, sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art and *Architectural Forum*, had taken only second prize (first prize went to a design by Richard Bennett and Caleb Hornbostel). Two hundred forty-three architects and firms entered the open competition, and four outstanding architects (or partnerships) were invited to participate (Gropius and Breuer, Cambridge; William Lescaze, New York; Lyndon and Smith, Detroit; and Richard Neutra, Los Angeles). Gropius and Breuer had invested in their design high hopes not only for the future of modern architecture on American college campuses, but also for their own careers. In a number of letters that summer Breuer was to describe the result as “depressing”. Writing on 9 June 1938 to Carl Maas, associate editor at *House Beautiful*, for example, Breuer said, “I was very depressed by the result of the competition, indeed; but we have to face that kind of thing if we go into competitions—and I think we will do it again and again”.


7. Marcel Breuer Papers, Correspondence, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Despite the demanding activities of his professional life, Breuer was interested in the proposal for a California residence and he responded to it quickly and enthusiastically: “Many thanks for your letter of August 10th and for your confidence asking me for the plans for a small modern home in Palm Springs, Calif. I would be delighted to do that and I would especially like to do a one story house which I think would give great charm to the relations between house and garden.”

The prestige of his appointment to the Harvard faculty and of his partnership with Walter Gropius notwithstanding, the request in 1938 for a California house design from Breuer, relatively unknown in the United States, was unusual. The joint practice was based in New England, and California had its own ample supply of modern architects. The residences undertaken by Gropius and Breuer since their recent arrivals in America had been located only on the East Coast or in Pennsylvania; besides, they were either still under construction or in design, not yet published and certainly not widely known.

The California proposal, however, was the kind of opportunity for building that Breuer had hoped to find in the United States even if the request for a “modern Spanish exterior” suggested a naive understanding of modern architecture on the part of the clients. Although he was in no position to turn down work, in his first response to them Breuer wrote: “I only hope that the ‘Spanish exterior’ isn’t taken too seriously by you. I would much prefer to do my plan independent of any outspoken style except my own feeling about modern aesthetic.” Breuer instructed them (politely) about the “modern aesthetic”, and concluded his remarks by writing: “I think a one story modern house with good relations to the garden, with a possible patio, etc. would look quite naturally rather Spanish even if it is not designed in the Spanish style”.

Within a short time Breuer reached an agreement with the Margoliuses. As he was about to depart for Mexico, he wrote that he

8. Breuer to H. Margolius, 11 August 1938. At this moment the Margoliuses were at a vacation resort in North Carolina.
9. Ibid.
10. Breuer went to Mexico City on 18 August as a delegate to the 16th Interna-
would “work out plans for you on my trip by boat, when I have plenty of time and concentration for that”, and requested a site plan, a detailed program for the house, and “the approximate sum you want to spend for the building itself”. Breuer dined with his clients in New York the evening before he sailed. It was a meeting that betokened the seriousness and enthusiasm of both parties.

Gropius, too, was keen about this job. Within days after Breuer’s departure Gropius sent the Margoliuses the agreement, already signed by Breuer (in New York) and Gropius (in Cambridge), for the drawing up of plans. In his accompanying letter Gropius wrote that “Mr. Breuer reported to me the meeting he had with you . . . regarding a small house to be designed by us for you in Palm Spring[s], California. We like the program for the house as you have outlined it and we shall be glad to provide you with the necessary plans and specifications.” David Margolius added his signature to the contract and returned it to the Gropius-Breuer office on 31 August 1938. He appended a letter with several pages of suggestions and requirements for the house; on the reverse of one of these sheets (fig. 1) Breuer later drew, in his distinctive manner, quick sketches of ground plans and an elevation with patterns of sun and shade, and he worked out preliminary dimensions, square footage, and costs. In its final version his design called for approximately 3000 square feet. In California at that time such a house could be constructed for about five dollars per square foot. Margolius also reported that Breuer had agreed to stop at Palm Springs on his way back from Mexico in order to examine the building site

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and that “Mr. Breuer is going to see Professor Neutra in Los Angeles; maybe he can talk with him about some architect who would be willing to supervise the erection of the building. We talked about that but did not state anything definitely.”  

The reference to Richard Neutra suggests it was he who proposed Breuer to the clients. The three architects had been together a few months earlier: in a letter of 11 March 1938 Neutra (“back again at the Pacific”), referring to a recent lecture he gave at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, thanks Breuer for his “friendliness” and says that he is also “just writing to Mr. and Mrs. Gropius”.  

Possibly in the East at that time to see his recently completed, 

15. D. Margolius to Gropius and Breuer, 31 August 1938. Gropius probably forwarded this letter to Breuer, who had it with him in California when he arrived on 14 September. On it Breuer jotted down his figures for the dimensions of the house and a rudimentary groundplan, names and addresses of apartment hotels in Palm Springs, Neutra’s home and office addresses with notes about hours to phone or visit. It appears that he followed Margolius’s suggestion that he confer with Neutra about the selection of a supervising architect.  

spectacular house for John Nicholas Brown on Fishers Island, Neutra in Cambridge undoubtedly had visited the Gropius-Breuer office and learned something of their work under construction and still developing.

The invitation to plan the house came directly to Breuer, and it was conceived and designed by him in its entirety. As a result of an agreement with Gropius regarding credits after the dissolution of the joint practice they operated in Cambridge from 1937 to 1941, the house has taken its place in the list of partnership projects. The contract carried both signatures, and Breuer consulted Gropius with regard to the terms of agreement with the supervising architect. Once the project was launched, however, the responsibility for its design was completely in Breuer's hands. The perspective sketches (figs. 2, 3, 4) are penciled in as “Margolius Residence [or House] Breuer” in either the lower or upper right hand corner (fig. 5), and notes to and from Breuer are written over many of the sheets of drawings (fig. 6). All the correspondence regarding the program and the design flows exclusively between Breuer and the client, and between Breuer and the supervising architect. The working drawings were executed and signed (“L.J.C.”) by Leonard J. Currie, at that time draftsman in the Cambridge office. The

17. In June Breuer would be invited by Henry-Russell Hitchcock to meet him at Wesleyan University (where Frank Lloyd Wright was to receive an honorary degree) and accompany him to Fishers Island to see the Neutra house. Letters between Breuer and Hitchcock, 4 June 1938 and 6 June 1938.

18. Following a minor error in a Harvard undergraduate thesis on Gropius (David H. Wright, “The Architecture of Walter Gropius”, unpublished Thesis for Honors, Harvard College, April 1950), the project is usually identified incorrectly as the John Margolius house. The only publication of the design before the present study, as far as I know, is the Detroit drawing, identified as “Project: House for John Margoulis” [sic] in Winfried Nerdinger, Walter Gropius (Berlin and Cambridge: Bauhaus-Archiv and Busch-Reisinger Museum, 1985), 271, ill. W110.

19. See p. 64 of this article.

20. Currie, whose distinguished career includes the deanship of the College of Architecture and Art, University of Illinois at Chicago, had been a student of architecture at Harvard and then worked in the Gropius-Breuer office. He also made the drawings for the Hagerty house. Breuer had high regard for Currie,
Fig. 2. Marcel Breuer’s Margolius House project. Perspective drawing, southeast, with notes (Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library).

Fig. 3. Marcel Breuer’s Margolius House project, Perspective drawing, north (Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library).

Fig. 4. Marcel Breuer’s Margolius House project, Perspective drawing, southeast (Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library).
documents bear out the nature of the partnership as it was described by David Wright in his 1950 Harvard thesis on Gropius: "Each artist, working with a draftsman, would be primarily responsible for a given project in most cases, and the contribution of the other partner would vary considerably". In the case of the Margoliou house the responsibility was fully Breuer’s.

At least one more meeting took place between architect and clients in September 1938, this time in Chicago (their principal residence). Among other matters, the Margoliouises approved the proposal to ask John Porter Clark, a Palm Springs architect whom Breuer had contacted on his visit there, to supervise the construction of the house. Primarily a residential architect, Clark had probably been recommended to Breuer by Neutra. Neutra knew the Palm Springs architectural community; in 1937, just a year before Breuer’s project, he had built one of his most admired houses there, for Grace Lewis Miller. Breuer set out the terms of agreement in a letter of 28 September to Clark and requested a survey of the site; within a week the agreement was confirmed and the survey ordered.

As supervising architect, John Porter Clark was an excellent choice. Cornell-trained, California-based, and a few years younger than Breuer, Clark was unreservedly committed to the principles of the international architectural avant-garde. The house he was to build for himself a little later (1940) he described to Breuer as “along the lines of the Kocher and Frey week-end house on Long

about whom he later wrote that he “worked very closely with me during my first years in the United States and [I consider him] one of the most capable designers in America today”. Draft of letter of recommendation 6 July 1955, Marcel Breuer Papers, Correspondence, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

23. Neutra’s first visit to Palm Springs was in 1925, just after he had settled in California. On this and on the Miller House, see Hines, Richard Neutra, 57, 121-24.
24. Breuer to Clark, 28 September 1938; Clark to Breuer, 5 October 1938.
Island, using corrugated iron as an exterior surfacing".25 The so-called "Aluminaire House" near Huntington, Long Island, to which Clark refers was the three-story glazed and terraced cube raised on reed-thin pilotis in the Corbusian manner, first designed

25. Clark to Breuer, 4 April 1940.
in 1930–31 by Lawrence Kocher and Albert Frey as an experiment in mass-produced housing of aluminum construction.\textsuperscript{26} Also in 1940 Clark and Frey (who had begun his career in Europe in 1929 as a draftsman for Le Corbusier) were to establish an architectural firm of their own (Clark, Frey, and Chambers) in Palm Springs.

Clark, who admired Breuer’s design for the Margolius house ("your excellent design" he wrote),\textsuperscript{27} enthusiastically took on the job of supervising architect. During the project’s initial phase he proved invaluable in his responses to Breuer’s questions, in making practical suggestions, and in providing important information about such things as the California climate, water pressure figures, and local construction practices and building codes that determined the specifications and aspects of the design. For example,

\textsuperscript{26} The pilotis were of “Duralumin”. The house was designed and built for an exhibition in New York City in April 1931 sponsored by the New York Architectural League and was later (1934) re-erected near Huntington as a summer home for architect Wallace K. Harrison.

\textsuperscript{27} Clark to Breuer, 15 December 1938.
Breuer suspected and Clark confirmed that “exterior wooden parts are not very durable in Palm Springs”.28

Breuer wrote Clark on 19 October 1938 that “[I have] just finished all my sketches”.29 After a delay related to the completion of the property purchase,30 he sent the clients two ¼” scale drawings and four perspective sketches on 10 November. Towards the end of his accompanying letter he broke the news: “The only thing I am afraid of is that we will be unable to build the house for $12,000” (the original budget). Based on the Margolius’s program his estimate was $15,000 or $16,000.31 He gave them little recourse, saying that “I really do not know how to simplify the plan because I think you need the space and number of rooms that the plan contains. . . . I think it would be a mistake to cut down on the main features.”32 He closed the letter with a half-hearted suggestion: “One possibility would be to eliminate the greenhouse and shop, with the overhanging roof of the terrace, entirely. It would be a pity, but I should be glad if you will consider this possibility.”33

In an undated letter received by Breuer on 8 December 1938, Mrs. Margolius requested that he proceed with the working drawings. Accordingly, they were begun the next day,34 and six weeks later, on 20 January 1939, he posted to California three sets of working drawings and short-form specifications.35 As the project evolved, the clients chose to eliminate (or, as they thought at that point, to “postpone”) the greenhouse wing, the single economy Breuer had allowed himself to recommend. The design continued to develop steadily and rapidly for four months until, as the consequence of a personal crisis in the lives of Mr. and Mrs. Margolius, in April 1939 it came to an abrupt and unexpected halt.

28. Clark to Breuer, 16 January 1939. Mrs. Margolius, too, was satisfied with the choice of the supervising architect: in a letter of 7 February 1939 she wrote Breuer that “Mr. Clark has been a big help”.
29. Breuer to Clark, 19 October 1938.
30. H. Margolius to Breuer, 7 November 1939.
31. Breuer to H. Margolius, 10 November 1938.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Breuer to H. Margolius, 9 December 1938.
A Palm Springs newspaper carrying the story headlined it as “Resort Millionaire Sued for Divorce”. Breuer had in fact accurately assessed the financial capacity of his clients when he laid out the features and dimensions of the house according to the program that they had submitted. When Clark sent Breuer this clipping, he wrote drolly in the margin: “This probably would not have happened if he had proceeded with the building of his house”.36 While that is debatable at best, what is not at issue is that a house, interesting in terms of Breuer’s American career and as an early example of transplanted modernism, was forfeited. However, among the Marcel Breuer Papers at Syracuse University Library are thirty-three sketches and working drawings,37 short-form specifications, corre-

36. Clark to Breuer, 5 June 1939.
37. See pp. 82–84 of this article. This list accounts for 35 sketches and drawings that came to Syracuse from Breuer’s files (included are a topographical map and a drawing from the Yorke Safe and Lock Company for a wall safe requested by the clients). The Syracuse drawings do not represent the complete set since three remained with Gropius at Harvard: in his thesis on Gropius (see footnote no. 18) David Wright made observations from a working drawing (elevations) dated 12-23-38, only a copy of which is in Syracuse, and from a working drawing
spondence, and other unpublished material sources from which a little-known early Breuer house can be added to the catalogue of émigré architecture in America.

The design for the Margolius house was set down by Breuer quickly and with assurance, and from every square foot of space he extracted the maximum amount of comfort and rational livability. Perspectives and elevations (figs. 2, 3, 4, 12, 13) depict a one-story winged body of flat-roofed cubic blocks, without (apart from the covered porch) “elementalist” extrusions such as balconies, pergolas, overhangs, or sunscreens. Minimalist precedents of European early modernism were augmented by Breuer’s creative use of materials and by the idiosyncratic patterns of layout and circulation that always made his residential interiors complex and interesting. The house had none of the glamorous terracing and fully-glazed transparent planes that characterized Neutra’s structures, nor did it include the easy internal-external interpenetrations of other modern California houses of the period. Breuer did produce, however, a subtle response to the “contextual” requirements of the original proposal. By shaping the exterior margins and corners not with the sharply creased angles of modernism, but with slightly softened, barely rounded edges (figs. 12, 13), he sent out faint resonances of adobe construction.38 Along with the unpretentious aspect of the
house, its low massing, color accents made by hollow terra cotta tile (in the wall of the drying yard), in the opaque white stucco surfaces, those softened perimeters curved to a very small radius were all that was needed to effect what Breuer had predicted even before he put pencil to paper—that “the house would look quite naturally rather Spanish”. The successful fulfillment of the requirements of Las Palmas Estates is documented by Clark’s letter of 15 December 1938: “Dear Mr. Breuer, I have submitted your excellent design for the Margolius House and obtained approval from the architectural jury. . . . I am very happy to have the plans passed by a conservative jury in a tract consisting solely of traditional houses.”

THE HOUSE

During the months of planning that preceded the abrupt and un-

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Fig. 10. Marcel Breuer’s Margolius House project, elevation framing, drawing #10, 1-17-39 (Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library).

foreseen termination of the project, Breuer and Clark had invested in it substantial energy and ingenuity. For Clark it was an opportunity to work with a design he respected from the atelier of the most prestigious architectural émigrés of the period. For Breuer it offered a stimulating challenge in a new country, and an opportunity to use the modern Mediterranean villa features he had favored in the past, but this time in an appropriate climate with almost year-round suitability, instead of chilly northern locations such as Zurich, Wiesbaden, Sussex, and seaside Cohasset. An important aspect of the planning process for Breuer, therefore, was a series of solar studies to track patterns of sun and shade in different seasons and times of day. He limited the fenestration and the mural glass, and he welcomed Clark’s suggestions about window placement for the purpose of enhancing cross ventilation. Neither direct reception of the sun’s heat through large surfaces of glass nor expansive outdoor terracing were objectives in this, his first warm-climate house in an era before air-conditioning became a requisite feature in domestic architecture. He called for an exterior transparent wall only in the dining area, which was adjacent to a shaded terrace, and at the shel-
tered front entrance. Even apart from the matter of sun control, Breuer used fully glazed walls with great restraint. His views are made known in a letter (to another client) of 21 April 1939, advising against such a feature: “I must repeat my objection against the room which you would obtain this way, which would be I feel, not desirable at all, but something between a swimming pool and a showcase. (See worst examples of modern glass architecture).”

Plans and elevations (see list below) for the Palm Springs house show a longitudinal organization (precursor of the “long house” genre to which some of Breuer’s later residences would be assigned) with the major axis stretching north-south within the principal living block from which the two asymmetrical wings extend. These units form a lucid arrangement of collocated volumes representative of the best of Breuer’s houses: living spaces and a patio in the main block; a terrace-loggia/greenhouse/workshop with roof deck-sleeping porch in the south wing; to the north a walled drying yard, servants space, laundry, and garage.

Many of Breuer’s ideas for modern house design found their way into this Palm Springs project. Avoiding a traditional and predictable classical formula with its “announcement” of the main portal, he placed the entrance (fig. 3) not in the center of the long flank of the living block, but instead on the shorter north facade. It was obscurely nested within an alcove and reached by a ramp rising from the curving and perforated garden wall that surrounded the property (figs. 3, 7). Such an undramatic, underplayed entrance was basic to Breuer’s design “philosophy” not only for houses of this period, but also for his later work (the entrance to the monumental 1956–57 Staehehin Residence in Feldmeilen, near Zurich, is almost hidden). In a statement prepared for a section on modern American architecture in the April 1940 issue of House and Garden Breuer, speaking in the “humanistic” language of the American architectural press of that era, declared that behind the new architecture was a new generation with a desire for an informal and healthier life, and “that is why the orientation of [a] house towards the sun is

Fig. 11. Marcel Breuer’s Margolius House project, roof framing, drawing #9, 1-19-39 (Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library).

thoroughly studied; that is why the entrance is the least open and not the most representative; that is why the garden and the private views are more characteristic, the partition walls movable or replaced by curtains, and the furniture as much a part of the architecture as the walls".41

Breuer liked a creative variety of textures and unpretentious materials that blended aesthetically while maintaining a strong individual character. In the Margolius house he called for hollow terra cotta wall tiles, wood, painted stucco, painted plywood, painted

41. *House and Garden*, April 1940, 47. Regarding Breuer’s statement about “the least open” entrances, a quarter of a century later when many early modernist principles of design, and the architecture of Marcel Breuer particularly, were under heavy attack, Catherine Bauer Wurster in a Modern Architecture Symposium at Columbia University in May 1964 spoke of the ways in which 1930s German minimum standards in house design found their way into American examples. She cited Breuer’s Hagerty house at Cohasset (she thought it to be mostly by Gropius) saying that “it has one of the meanest entrances of any house I have ever been in . . . no house by . . . any Bay Region architect was ever that inhospitable”. See *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 24 (1965): 51.
concrete, painted steel pipe, and granite flagstones. By adding to these workaday substances such devices as Breuer-designed built-in furniture, interior plant beds, sliding glass skylight, greenhouse, and sleeping porch/roof terrace, he enriched the house to an almost luxurious degree of comfort.

The entrance at Palm Springs opened to a gallery that was neither living space nor vestibule but an indoor patio. The “experience” of the house began in the forty-eight feet of this granite-paved longitudinal atrium-courtyard that separated the areas for service and for living. Ingeniously roofed with a sliding glass skylight (and skylight screen) of approximately 9’ x 23’ through which the stars or clouds would be visible and light and air would enter, the patio became at once internal and exterior space, both private and public. Breuer imagined the skylight remaining open most of the time, making the room principally a protected outdoor area: there is “the possibility of closing it, in case of bad weather, or at night”, he wrote to Mrs. Margolius;\(^{42}\) the specifications called for securing its pavement with waterproof mortar. Concerned about the construction of the manually operated skylight, he arranged to have its steel framework built in Everett, Massachusetts, by the Knowlton Iron Works Company, then knocked down, marked for assembly, and shipped to Palm Springs, where the glass would be added. Shop drawings were prepared by Knowlton for a frame (with a 3” pitch, presumably for water to drain off) with ball-bearing tacks on rails operated by a rope through a sheave.\(^{43}\)

Walls and ceiling in the patio were surfaced with stucco painted white, the floor paved with random gray slabs of granite into which plant beds (water pipes specified) were inserted. Free-standing “semi-transparent” cedar grills concealed the doors to the kitchen on one side and coat room and guest bath on the other, and simultaneously intercepted a view into the house from outside. At night, floor reflectors would throw shadows of the plants across the walls. As he stretched this patio ten feet beyond the rooms aligned on the

\(^{42}\) Breuer to H. Margolius, 10 November 1938.
\(^{43}\) Breuer to Clark, 25 January 1939; letters of 29 November 1938 and 7 January 1939 from Knowlton Iron Works Co. to Breuer. Blueprints of the shop drawings are with the Breuer Papers in Syracuse.
east, Breuer transformed it into a small foyer-bar that met the living room at a transparent glass wall into which was set at the request of the clients a glazed door that was threshold-less so as not to break the continuity.44

Breuer's interpretation of the patio as transitional courtyard between public path and living space is one of the subtle ways in which he bore in mind the original injunction to design a “Spanish” house without compromising his commitment to style-less European modernism: he had proposed, we remember, that “a one story modern house . . . with . . . patio would look quite naturally rather Spanish”. By means of traditional accessories of courtyard architecture found in Latin regions—open roof, stone paving, plantings and water—Breuer suggested a place that was both public reception area and indoor garden. The genesis of his patio format can be traced to his 1936 Gane Pavilion in Bristol with its flagstone terrace partially roofed by an open-beamed pergola, a combination

44. The patio to foyer-bar sequence was at the clients’ request.
that appears to have been translated into the skylighted and granite-paved patio in California two years later.

In setting out her program Mrs. Margolius wrote that the “bedrooms should be accessible without entering the living room”. This accounts for the unexpected location—near the entrance—of two bedrooms and a study open to the living room, the latter a large area screened from a dining room that could either extend the living space or be independent. “The idea is to have a transparent connection between the patio, the living room, and the study, so as to have the space of these rooms flowing together, thereby increasing, in impression, the dimensions of these rooms”, wrote Breuer to Hilde Margolius.45 He contrasted the enclosed bedrooms to the open volumes of patio, study, and living room expanded and united by long diagonal views through transparent planes and across space.

The area for dining was a modest 10′ x 14′ but Breuer merged it with the living room on one side and, through a glass wall, the terrace-loggia on the other. To divide the living and dining areas, he contrived a floor-to-ceiling pivoting partition of painted plywood, slightly curved, 3½" thick and separated from floor and ceiling by a half inch. This may have been a unique design feature for an American house of the period; it had been used in modern Eu-

45. Breuer to H. Margolius, 28 November 1938.
ropean interiors of the late 1920s and early 1930s. The area for din­
ing in Mies’s Tugendhat House (1928–30), for example, was delin­
eated by the famous stationary curve of ebony veneer. Breuer him­
self in his “House for a Sportsman”, a sports club designed for the 1931 Berlin Bauhausausstellung, used a folding partition. In 1936, the year before he left London for the United States, he de­
vised what he called a “pivoting wall” as a backdrop for fashion photos in his interior for Motley’s Fashion Studio. Also in 1936 he would have known the houses Berthold Lubetkin built for himself and for Dr. Ida Mann at Whipsnade, Bedfordshire, in which the dining room was defined by a parabolic screen. Probably Lubet­
kin’s source,46 as well as everyone else’s, was the curved wall of the dining room (designed in 1927) in Le Corbusier’s Villa Stein/de Monzie. When Breuer’s mobile partition for the Margolius House was in position A, recorded in working drawings 1 and 5 (figs. 7, 8), it was a gentle arc that played against the angles and flat surfaces of the room and separated but did not isolate living and dining spaces; swung into position B, it united them in maximum spatial extension and at the same time screened the pantry door. And it provided formal or intimate alternatives for dining47 as illustrated by the furniture configurations in the preliminary sketches (fig. 7).

The south wing “narthex” (figs. 2, 4) was a covered, granite­
paved, elevated terrace reached on two sides by steps from the gar­
den. Some of the most interesting features of the house—ultimately sacrificed to economy—are to be found here. They include a cler­
estoried workshop beneath a roof deck, and a greenhouse, the glazed facade of which formed the west wall of the terrace and was a verdant counterpart to the plant-bedded patio. The terrace was bordered on the long dimension by a parapet wall with four stan­
dard steel pipe columns (3½” in diameter and painted white) and


47. Mrs. Margolius was enthusiastic about this feature of the design: “[I am] really delighted with the revolving screen. . . . I think it makes the dining room really cozy.” H. Margolius to Breuer, 28 November 1938.
partly sheltered by the roof they supported. The format of a single story house terrace overspread by a projecting roof with columns first appeared in Breuer’s work with the Berlin exhibition House for a Sportsman where the roof covered a wide “training terrace”. Within a decade after the device appeared in the Palm Springs sketches it evolved into the great pierced cantilever rising above the terrace of the 1946–47 Robinson House in Williamstown, Massachusetts—one of Breuer’s most acclaimed residences.

Breuer’s letter of 10 November 1938 to Mrs. Margolius, estimating construction costs, projected the area of the house to be about 2900 square feet; its volumes, without the covered terrace, service yard, and sleeping porch were to measure about 30,000 cubic feet. Breuer was ingenious in eliciting the sensation of copious space in this building of modest size with his long diagonal sight lines, interior transparencies, and the supplemental roof deck. After the bids had come in discouragingly high, causing the clients to postpone the construction of the south wing, Breuer had the groundplan redrawn in order to eliminate everything on the south except for the colonnaded terrace (fig. 9). To protect the now-exposed west, he invented a vertical grill of cypress finished with shellac and wax, a device that pleased Mrs. Margolius. Not willing to abandon such an agreeable element as a roof deck even to cut back the cost, Breuer relocated it above the kitchen, where it was to be reached (for outdoor dining as well as recreation and sleeping) by a stair near the kitchen’s back door. Ever since Le Corbusier decreed the rooftop solarium to be a life-enhancing ingredient, it had become a requisite feature of modern villa architecture in Europe. In no way reserved for the enlightened bourgeoisie, roof decks were adopted

48. The original specifications called for lally columns, but Clark wrote to Breuer (29 December 1938) that “they are practically unknown in this section and would probably involve greater expense”. Breuer followed Clark’s advice on this as he did on many other matters concerning use and availability of materials.
49. Breuer to H. Margolius, 10 November 1938. The bids from three builders came in at $17,995, $17,345, and $15,973. Clark to Breuer, 18 February 1939.
50. “I think you found an ideal solution.” H. Margolius to Breuer, 8 December 1938.
for low-cost housing developments such as that at Pessac and the Weissenhof Siedlung at Stuttgart. At about the same time (ca. 1926–27) in Southern California the two Europeans Schindler and Neutra developed a highly sophisticated version of this feature.
in their houses for the physical-culture authority, Phillip Lovell. The roof deck had already been assimilated by Breuer into some of his earliest architectural projects in Europe, for example the 1925 low-cost prefabricated *Kleinmetallhaus* with its partially covered solarium.

While much of the design of the Margolius house was a continuation of modes developed by Breuer in Europe—a neutral, flat-roofed, cubic encasement of volumes generated by a plan of great ingenuity and originality—its woodframe structure was essentially American. It was one of the best examples of Breuer’s early interest, first recorded by Henry-Russell Hitchcock, in the application of historical American light wooden construction to modern design.  51

Set above a concrete foundation, the framing was to be made of joists and 2 x 4 vertical studs between larger (4 x 4 and 4 x 6) posts of Douglas fir, with diagonal braces let into the studs. Some walls (terrace and roof-deck parapets) were of concrete reinforced with metal. The specifications also called for surfaces to be finished outside and inside with white-painted stucco. The modernist aesthetic of the house as discrete white object still dominated, and in this instance the effect was appropriate to climate and location. Currie even drew some tall cacti as background in the perspectives (fig. 4).

The California house was among the earliest of Breuer’s woodframe buildings (the Harnischmacher house and Doldertal flats had been constructed with steel frame and reinforced concrete; the Gane Pavilion was supported by bearing walls of masonry). Just before leaving England in the summer of 1937, Breuer had devised, in his unexecuted project for a ski resort hotel in Obergurgl, Austria, an original system of framing patterns with truss-like forms very close to those for Palm Springs. He sent out to California many sheets of carefully wrought drawings for elevation and roof framing (figs. 10, 11) attesting to his command of wood construction techniques.

Breuer had begun his sketches for the Margolius house in December 1938 and by late April 1939 the project was dead. Both he and Clark were deeply disappointed. To Hilde Margolius, Breuer

wrote: "I was greatly attached to these plans and hoped to see the house executed".\(^{52}\) Had it been built, his Palm Springs house would have been a residence of unpresuming but confident character, its volumes closed and inner-directed, its coherent plan organized with freshness and originality, suited in scale, in program, and in materials to its owners and to its location on a rather small lot in a well-to-do development community in the California desert.

**POSTSCRIPT**

In January 1941 the project was briefly resurrected. The Gropius-Breuer office received a letter from Detroit Steel Products Company (manufacturers of Fenestra windows) asking if there might be available "a set of small-house plans you'd be willing to sell us for, say, $50?"\(^{53}\) For promotional purposes they intended to have "a competent architectural delineator" make a perspective of the

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52. Breuer to H. Margolius, 28 April 1939.
53. Detroit Steel Products Co. to Breuer, 21 January 1941.
house and a detail of one of its windows. The windows would be “Fenestra Steel Residence Casements, irrespective of what type or make of windows were shown in the plans”.

Breuer answered the letter and Gropius initialed the carbon copy. The dormant plans of the Palm Springs project seemed appropriate, and the fee was not unwelcome. “We would be glad to furnish you with the plans of a house designed for Palm Springs, California”, Breuer wrote. “It is understood... that the perspectives, etc. which you intend to have drawn up, will be checked by us as to the true presentation of the house or to details.” When Breuer received the perspectives he chose to ignore the suggestion to substitute Fenestra casements for the original windows. Instead he furnished the company with a new and modern window design. “May I call your attention to the window divisions?” he began, and pointed out that the windows in the original design combined one or two vents and a fixed panel without vertical partitions. “This window solution is one of the characteristics of the design and we would appreciate it very much if you would revise the rendering... removing the vertical bars except where they are necessary for the vents.”

Breuer’s enduring interest in the design and mechanics of fenestration led to astute inventions in his residential and institutional buildings. In this case, to make certain that his formula for the Margolius window not be compromised, he “gave” it to Detroit Steel Products Company. “We believe that this arrangement of windows represents a perfectly feasible and desirable possibility for Fenestra as the fixed panel may also be supplied by you”, he wrote. The drawings were revised and Detroit wrote that they hoped “this will prove more in keeping with your design”. The new drawing was almost correct: “[It] is now satisfactory indeed with the exception of the extreme right window”, Breuer responded. “It gives the impression of being a so-called corner win-

54. Ibid.
55. Breuer to Detroit Steel Products Co., 29 January 1941.
56. Breuer to Detroit Steel Products Co., 26 March 1941. Breuer’s window design is included with the sketches and drawings for the house.
57. Ibid.
58. Detroit Steel Products Co. to Breuer, 2 April 1941.
dow, which it isn’t. You will note in the elevation that the thickness of the wall is shown at this corner. I imagine this correction can very easily be made.”

Breuer took exception to one additional feature of Detroit’s original drawing: “You will note that the perspective shows a much too high parapet wall under the windows in the east as well as the south elevation. This should be changed, and the hedges shown under the east windows and on both sides of the steps to the terrace should be removed as they are not the intention of our design.”

Detroit Steel Products Company made all the requested changes, Breuer gave his approval to the revised drawing, and eventually it was published as an advertisement for Fenestra Windows (fig. 14). By insisting on adjustments in the drawing until it remained more rather than less true to his design, he transformed Detroit’s version of the house from hedge-accented “American suburban” to unencumbered modern. Although the “artistic” foliage and the shadow-washed surfaces that remained in the Detroit drawing removed the adobe-modernist house from its desert resort “context”, it has been the only representation of Marcel Breuer’s 1938–39 Palm Springs design until this publication of the Syracuse material.

MAR GOLIUS HOUSE DRAWINGS

Following are sketches and working drawings for the Margolius House project, 1938–39 in the Marcel Breuer Papers, Syracuse University Library:

Perspective southeast; “Margolius House Breuer” on lower right.
Perspective southeast; bird’s-eye view, with notes; “Margolius House Breuer” on upper right.
Perspective north; “Margolius Residence Breuer” on lower right.

59. Breuer to Detroit Steel Products Co., 7 April 1941.
60. Breuer to Detroit Steel Products Co., 26 March 1941.
61. But now see an important new work: Joachim Driller, Marcel Breuer, Das Architektonische Frühwerk bis 1950, Dissertation for the University of Freiburg, 1990, which appeared after this article was submitted for publication in the Courier.
Perspective of north entrance; east elevation, with sketches and calculations; \(\frac{1}{4}''=1'\). "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

Two rudimentary perspectives of north entrance; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on upper right.

Perspective of south wing after revision (elimination of greenhouse/shop); "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

Groundplan with Breuer's original layout (later revised).

Groundplan; east elevation, notes and figures; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

Groundplan; "suggestion (alteration 28.11.38)" in Breuer's handwriting; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

Groundplan, with dimensions; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

Groundplan, with figures; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

North elevation; \(\frac{1}{4}''=1'\); "Margolius Residence Breuer" lower right.

Fenestration for living room, part casement, part fixed; designed by Breuer; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on upper right.

Roof framing and lally columns for south wing; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on upper right.

"Sun patterns at solstice: 2 P.M. (3 P.M. daylight time); June 21 3 P.M. (4 P.M. daylight time), summer sun; 2 P.M. December 21 winter sun; 11 A.M. December 21 winter sun."

Section with patterns (degrees) of sun and shadow at "11:00 A.M. (12 n. daylight), June 21; 2 P.M. December 21; 11 A.M. Dec. 21."

Electrical plan layout, with notes to Breuer; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on upper right.

Section of revolving partition for living room-dining area, 3" = 1'; elevation of revolving partition, \(\frac{1}{4}''=1'\); linen room shelf details, 1" = 1'; broom closet details, 1" = 1'; "Margolius Residence Breuer" on lower right.

Topographical map for Las Palmas Estates marked "void".

Shop drawing for wall safe from Yorke Safe and Lock Company.
NUMBERED WORKING DRAWINGS

#1. "Prelim. sketches"; ½" = 1'; 10-17-38.

#2. "Prelim. sketches"; ½" = 1'; 10-17-38.

#3. Site plan, marked "void", replaced by working drawing #4.

#4. Site and roof plan "replacing drawing #3 site plan"; ½" = 1'; 1-19-39.

#5. Floor plan; ¼" = 1'; 12-31-38.


#7. Foundation plan; ¼" = 1'; 1-19-39.


#10. Elevation framing; ⅛" = 1'; 1-17-39.

#11. Wall section; 3" = 1'; 1-5-39.

#12. Wall sections including section at skylight; 3" = 1'; 1-5-39.

#13. Door schedule; ½" = 1'; 1-20-39.

#14. Details; 3" = 1'; 1-26-39.

Traveler to Arcadia: 
Margaret Bourke-White in Italy, 1943–1944 

BY RANDALL I. BOND

During the nineteenth century, American artists, writers, and intellectuals flocked to Italy, seeking an escape from the exigencies of the modern world. To them, Italy was a dream realm, a golden Arcadia. Some, however, like the painter Thomas Cole, saw through the dream and brought back to America a stark message about the displacement of nations and the fall of empires. In the 1830s, on the eve of America’s westward expansion, Cole painted his Course of Empire series, tracing the progress of Rome from an Arcadian State, to the Consummation of Empire, to Destruction, finally ending in Desolation. Cole was warning his countrymen not to follow in Rome’s disastrous path.¹

Again, in the mid-twentieth century, Americans who went to Italy (though not as tourists), would bring back messages of warning even more urgent because they were responses to the rise of the fascist Roman Empire of Benito Mussolini. At first, in the 1930s, Americans were impressed with the new Italy, its sense of order and cleanliness, and its success in industrialization and the utilization of technology. Increasingly, however, the dark side of Mussolini’s innovations became apparent, and with the outbreak of World War II, the fascist dream became the world’s nightmare.

In 1943, with the Allied invasion first of Sicily and then the Italian mainland, thousands of Americans were again to view Italy at first hand and discover there both an Arcadia and a charnel house. Although Italy soon surrendered and Mussolini was executed by the Italian people, the Allies still faced the formidable task of defeating the Germans who occupied the country in great strength.

The Allied campaign in Italy was to be long and drawn out, as the Americans and British struggled to dislodge the Germans from their nearly impregnable positions in the mountainous regions of southern Italy. In 1943–44, at the height of the effort, a number of journalists accompanied the American troops to Italy to report on the progress of the war in the Mediterranean theater. Among them was Margaret Bourke-White of Life magazine.

Margaret Bourke-White, one of the best-known American photojournalists, had begun her career in the 1920s as an industrial and advertising photographer. Her fame was enhanced after she joined Fortune in 1929 and helped to create the visual imagery of Life during the 1930s. Collaboration with Erskine Caldwell on You Have Seen Their Faces (1937), a study of the sufferings of the Southern sharecropper during the Depression, had deepened her interest in the plight of individuals caught up in the bad economic times. In 1941 when she and Caldwell traveled to Russia, she focused her camera on the Soviets’ struggle against German aggression for Shooting the Russian War, published in 1942.

After the United States entered the war, Bourke-White was assigned to the 97th Bomb Group in England; she recorded the activities of its assault on German targets in Europe. When the group was transferred to North Africa in late 1942, she followed it by boat, enduring the trauma of a torpedoing. Later she persuaded the military authorities to allow her to accompany one of the crews on a bombing mission against a German-held airbase in Tunisia. Her subsequent photo-essay of this experience in Life reinforced her fame and her reputation for risk-taking.

Back in the United States during the Allied invasion of Italy, she longed again for the excitement of battle and a chance to report this story for Life. Bourke-White left for Europe on a joint assignment for Life and the Pentagon in September 1943. She was accredited to the Army Service Forces, to “tell in photographs the great story of logistics”.

2. Margaret Bourke-White, They Called It “Purple Heart Valley” (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1944), 17.

86
Margaret Bourke-White among the ruins of a bombed-out building (Italy, winter 1943–44). Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.
medicine and ammunition “which girdled the world [and] reached
from our factories to the front lines”. Her assignment also included
photographing American combat engineers, artillery, and medical
corps personnel.

After a month spent in North Africa documenting the buildup
of supplies for the Italian Campaign, in early October Bourke­
White arrived in Naples, shortly after it had been liberated by the
Allies. She was to remain in Italy until 19 January 1944. Her stay
there resulted in a series of photo-essays in Life in the early part of
1944 and a book-length photo-text entitled They Called it “Purple
Heart Valley” published by Simon & Schuster at the end of 1944. The
title refers to the area around Cassino and the Liri Valley
where so many American soldiers were either killed or wounded
by German forces entrenched in the mountains. The original dedi­
cation of the book was to have read: “For those brave Americans
who have gone into Purple Heart Valley never to return”.

“Purple Heart Valley” comprises nineteen chapters of text and
seven sections of photographs. After providing an overview of the
photographic sections, I will discuss Bourke-White’s message,
drawing on selected illustrations and portions of the text, as well as
other materials held at Syracuse University Library: the manus­
cripts for “Purple Heart Valley”, a number of contact prints, and
 correspondence from the publisher.

Bourke-White worked on the book from February until the Fall
of 1944, when she returned to Italy to cover the “Forgotten Front”
one again for Life. An examination of her various drafts reveals
changes in the chronological order of the text. In the earliest ver­

4. Jerry Papurt to Bourke-White, 19 January 1944, Margaret Bourke-White
Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University, Box 35, and news
item in New York Times, 29 January 1944.
5. Essays in Life, 1944: “It’s a Big War”, 10 January: 35–42; “Naples”, 24 Janu­
ary: 17–33; “War in Italy”, 14 February: 21–27; and “Evacuation Hospital”, 21
February: 88–95.
6. Manuscript draft for “Purple Heart Valley”, Bourke-White Papers, Boxes
65–66 Writings.
A Piper L-H4 “Grasshopper” observation plane over “Purple Heart Valley” (winter 1943–44). Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.

greatest engineering story the world had ever seen”: the clearing and reconstruction of Naples harbor. In the published version both the text and the illustrations begin with a description of Purple Heart Valley from the air, although she did not make this flight until later in her stay in Italy. By this revision, Bourke-White was attempting to give her opening narrative the sense of an introductory overview to her chronicle of the war in Italy.

The first section of illustrations is entitled “Flight over Purple Heart Valley”. We are introduced to the reconnaissance pilots and planes that flew Bourke-White out into the Cassino Valley for an aerial view of the artillery battles between the Americans and Germans. Through their birdcage windows Bourke-White was able to get spectacular photographs of the war and destruction in Southern Italy.

The second section, “The Wreck of Naples”, shows Army engineers reconstructing the demolished harbor of that city. She marveled at how

we could use the rubble directly from a bombed building on the waterfront, load it into a dump truck, take it a few yards away, pour it into the quayside, and continue construction, basing it on a bed of destruction.8

The third section, “Combat Engineers”, illustrates the work of the men whose dangerous job it was to clear the roads and paths of mines and other explosives. She also observed the work of those responsible for planning the rebuilding of vital bridges demolished by the Germans on their movement northward. The replacement bridges themselves became the major focus of the fourth section, “Bailey Bridge”. These prefabricated structures developed by the British gave Bourke-White the opportunity to photograph the excitement of engineering projects in the field, often carried out under enemy fire, as was the case when a number of these shots were taken. The fifth section, “The Service Forces”, includes many of the images from Bourke-White’s assignment to publicize the logistical aspect of the war for the Pentagon.

Two chapters of “Purple Heart Valley” describe Bourke-White’s visits to medical units in Italy—the 38th Evacuation Hospital and the 11th Field Hospital. The illustrations for the medical chapters are in the sixth section, appropriately titled “The Quality of Mercy”. Here and in the related text Bourke-White introduces the reader to heroic doctors and nurses fighting to save the lives of American GIs. She records soldiers brought in from the battlefield in shock, the miracles of surgery under combat conditions, and the generous giving of blood and plasma. In addition to these moments of drama, Bourke-White gives us a detailed picture of the living and working conditions of the American nurses who cared for the wounded GIs delivered to these field hospitals in what Bourke-White describes in one manuscript as “practically a conveyor belt

system from litter to operating table”. Bourke-White’s feelings about these nurses are evident in the captions which she herself wrote: “They walk in beauty—every damned one of them”; and again, “Wherever there has been a frontier, American women have always been willing to undergo hardships to stand by their men”.

Unfortunately, all of the photographs taken at the 11th Field Hospital were lost at the Pentagon, where they were to be developed and censored. These included images of an attack on the field hospital in which some of the nurses were wounded. We know from Bourke-White’s “War Record” in the Syracuse University collection that this hospital was located at the front near Mignano not far from the fighting that was going on around San Pietro in the Cassino Valley region. I have been able to determine that Bourke-White was with the 11th Field Hospital in early December, at the time when the action in San Pietro was beginning. Bourke-White subsequently photographed the town’s destruction and these photographs were published in Life. The battle for San Pietro (December 1943) was a fiercely fought engagement involving the loss of many American lives. It was documented for the government by Hollywood director John Huston, then in Army service. His film, The Battle of San Pietro, was first banned and then censored before its release in 1945; the shots of the many Americans being placed in body bags too graphically depicted the battle’s high cost in human life. I suggest that the Pentagon’s “loss” of the Bourke-White hospital photographs and the banning and censoring of Huston’s film may both bear witness to the government’s concern to hide some of the horrors and bloodshed of the Italian campaign from the American public.

11. Richard Tregaskis, Invasion Diary (New York: Random House, 1944). From this we know that Bourke-White visited the wounded Tregaskis at the 38th Evacuation Hospital around 23 or 24 of November and then left for the 11th Field Hospital at the front near Mignano. The New York Times reports Tregaskis’ injury on 24 November 1943.
The final section, "Big Shoot", covers an American artillery unit mounting an attack on Mount Trocchio on 15 January 1944. This was the last major subject that Bourke-White photographed before
leaving Italy on 19 January. In addition to shots of the 105 mm artillery pieces being fired, she photographed the soldiers responsible for the mathematics and communications systems used to locate targets.

This brief survey of the illustrations of “Purple Heart Valley” and the themes that they represent indicates that during World War II
Margaret Bourke-White was able to bring together the strands of her previous concerns and preoccupations. Early in her career, she was an industrial romantic enamored of the machine aesthetic. During the later 1930s and World War II, she developed a greater social consciousness and became the “humanitarian photographer” who would subsequently record the birth of Gandhi’s India and the struggle for human rights in South Africa.

Among those who influenced the development of her social conscience was the novelist Erskine Caldwell. Their 1937 book, *You Have Seen Their Faces*, was meant to draw attention to the needs of the rural South. It is replete with images of poverty, hardship, oppression, and racism. Significantly, a number of the photographs and themes in *You Have Seen Their Faces* provide informative comparisons with illustrations from “Purple Heart Valley”. They indicate that Bourke-White was once again using photography as persuasion, and that her admiration for the machine was being tempered by her desire to record people. The photographs in both of these books represent individuals devastated by the influence of two interconnected crises: the economic depression of the 1930s and the global conflict of World War II. Both had roots in the industrial world that she had glorified in her earlier work. Families uprooted by the Depression and the war were captured by Bourke-White’s lens, whether they were on the road in Ringold, Georgia, or emerging from the ruins of Naples. How families make do after their homes have been destroyed also interested her. She was moved by domestic scenes of families trying desperately to stay together in the face of deprivation. Soldiers and civilians alike suffered from the crises of the twentieth century.

Portraits of the faces of people affected by hardship appear in both books and bring us close to the victims of an industrialized world. The men who appear in them are often unshaven and old beyond their years. For Bourke-White, these men became icons for hard work and hard times. In “Purple Heart Valley” she describes her encounter with veterans of sixty days of fighting in the mountains around Cassino:

> I thought I had never seen such tired faces. It was more than the stubble of beard that told the story; it was the
blank, staring eyes. The men were so tired it was like a liv­ing death. They had come from such a depth of weariness that I wondered if they would ever be able quite to make the return to the lives and thoughts they had known.13

Bourke-White’s desire to chronicle the human side of her sub­jects during World War II also places her within the tradition of the journalist Ernie Pyle, a favorite among the American GIs for his no-nonsense reporting of the war. He specialized in down-to-earth stories about the common soldiers whom he met in North

Africa, Italy, France, and finally in the Pacific where he was killed. His column, syndicated through newspapers all over the nation, had a folksy style that appealed greatly to those on the homefront.

Pyle and Bourke-White met several times during World War II. Their first meeting, which occurred in North Africa, was recorded in Pyle’s newspaper column of 27 January 1943. He described her as “pleasant and good looking, with prematurely graying hair. She makes quite a sight in Army trousers and wool-lined leather flying jacket.” He also recorded a rivalry over breakfast marmalade which led Bourke-White to say: “Your work and mine are so different nobody could ever imagine us as competitors, but from now on we’ll be bitter rivals for the general’s marmalade.”

Despite this statement, manuscript material in the Syracuse University collection suggests how much Bourke-White admired Pyle and how much she wanted to match the human quality of his style. First, there is an undated letter from Erskine Caldwell to Bourke-White in which he mentions that “Callahan addressed a book to Pyle. It probably went off, because everything like that was mailed before I left.” Internal evidence would suggest that the letter was written in the summer of 1942, while Caldwell was in Hollywood working on the film Mission to Moscow. If this date is correct, then the Bourke-White book sent to Pyle was most likely Shooting the Russian War, which had just been published. However, there is no Pyle correspondence in the Bourke-White collection to confirm this.

The most revealing evidence for Pyle’s influence on Bourke-White is contained in notes for a section on Ernie Pyle intended but never used for her 1963 autobiography, Portrait of Myself. These paragraphs were to be included in her chapter “I Go on a Bombing Raid”:

Re Ernie Pyle. Not quite correct to say we “knew him when” for he was already quite well known. But we knew him before his later great fame as the interpreter and chronicler of the G.I. at war. He was quiet, humble and incon-

15. Letter from Erskine Caldwell to Bourke-White, undated. Bourke-White Papers, Box 11 Correspondence.
spicuous. I always admired the way he manoeuvred to eat always in the enlisted men’s mess, not so easy to do when you’re visiting a post—this to get firsthand contact with the men. But only when I got back to America [before her trip to the Italian front in 1943] and realized how he plumbed the depths of each man’s day to day experiences, did I realize how great he was. These were experiences I heard about myself, just before leaving. For several running days his articles as they appeared dealt with episodes I know. And I marvelled at how deep he had gone, how he had gathered up the nubly thin threads, found the warmth, the heart aches, lived with it in his own inner self (made it his own) tucked it away in his own inner self so it came out filled with warmth, with hominess, with understanding. Although I ran into him often—later in Italy, I never spoke more words with him than hello goodbye. I could see this was the masticating of it, the tucking away inside, the making it his own—to pour it out in words and sentences at last—the result two-fold—the men of whom he writes so real, so recognizable yet with new stature they stand in dignity against a wide horizon.

Though I never really talked with him, never said more than hello, it’s a nice day, he taught me more than he will ever know, & now he has been killed. I can never tell him. Came at the right time for me; just beginning to write, just beginning to listen to the words people use; and with the people I photographed [to] probe them as human beings, not just as shapes and outlines on a photograph.

Same outward dress—but what he had made of it—deep, deep from the same but at a wider horizon, in a larger frame. Incidents I had seen or heard told, but so human & infused with meaning. The facts I recognized—but infused with such human feeling. . . . If words can do that, photos should too, I thought. I wish he were alive so I could tell him how much I learned from him.16

The Pyle–Bourke-White connection appears again in the manuscript files for "Purple Heart Valley". A memo from Maria Leiper (one of Bourke-White’s editors at Simon & Schuster) dated 23 March 1944 recommends that Bourke-White check “Pyle’s book” about descriptions of washing his face, using his helmet as a basin, to compare with what she had written on the same subject.17 The book that Leiper is referring to is probably Here is Your War (1943), since Pyle’s account of his experiences in Italy, Brave Men, was not published until the end of 1944.

In the 13 December 1944 Christian Science Monitor the reviewer states that in “Purple Heart Valley”, Bourke-White is “writing down her experience with a directness which is usually called feminine, but which is also the genius of Ernie Pyle”.18

Again, in a 1945 letter to Dick Simon of Simon & Schuster complaining about how few copies of “Purple Heart Valley” were to be found in New York City bookstores, Bourke-White argues:

I know the current idea about war books, but according to Albert [an editor at S & S] there were only 3 war books which held up, Pyle’s, Mauldin’s and mine. I know I am no Pyle or Mauldin, but I know plenty of servicemen are interested in my book, because they keep writing to me about it. And now with Christmas coming, and with so many soldiers on their way home—boys whose units are mentioned in the book—I would certainly think some effort would be justified, to keep the book in sight in the bookstores.19

Cartoonist Bill Mauldin’s book Up Front, recapitulating his experiences in the infantry in Italy, was published in 1945. Included in the Bourke-White correspondence files is a newspaper clipping

19. Letter from Bourke-White to Dick Simon, 10 November 1945, Bourke-White Papers, Box 45 Correspondence.
of a Mauldin cartoon sent to her by Major Jerry Papurt, who appears in “Purple Heart Valley” in the chapter on the Counter Intelligence Corps entitled “Cloak and Dagger Men”. Like Pyle, Mauldin was a favorite with the American GI. Bourke-White was obviously seeking to reach the same audience and liked being compared to them.

In Corporal Jess Padgitt of Des Moines, Iowa, Bourke-White found the means to express, as had Pyle and Mauldin in their own very different ways, the viewpoint of the common soldier. Padgitt was assigned to Bourke-White during the Italian campaign to help her with her cameras and other photographic equipment. He followed her around with a notebook, in which he recorded the names and home towns of the soldiers that she photographed, what jobs they had held before entering the army, and what they wished to do after the war.20 In the very earliest versions of “Purple Heart Valley”, Padgitt does not appear. In a later manuscript for chapter 5 he is described as “the little corporal who was assisting me”. Eventually, his name appeared in the manuscripts, and Bourke-White’s editors encouraged her to include more of him in the book.21 Padgitt becomes the subject of “One More Purple Heart”, the final chapter of the book. In the description of his wounding at Anzio, Bourke-White uses him to represent the American GI “who had what it takes”.

In addition to the influence of Caldwell and Pyle on Bourke-White’s creation of “Purple Heart Valley”, one other evidence of Bourke-White’s social involvement must be mentioned: her membership in the American Artists’ Congress, which first met in New York City in February 1936. The Congress, an offshoot of the Communist-inspired John Reed Club, put out a call to artists of all stylistic persuasions to struggle against the threat of war and fascism at home and abroad. Among its members were Stuart Davis, Ben Shahn, Max Weber, Meyer Schapiro, Rockwell Kent, Isamu No-

21. Memo to Bourke-White from Maria Leiper, 4 April 1944: “Plenty about Padgitt, from the very start; characterization of everyone you bring into the story”. Bourke-White Papers, Box 45 Correspondence.
Corporal Jess Padgitt, Margaret Bourke-White’s assistant (Italy, winter 1943–44). Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.

guchi, Milton Avery, and Paul Cadmus. Bourke-White was one of the early signers of the “call” and she presented a paper entitled “An Artist’s Experience in the Soviet Union” at the group’s first meeting. Other presentations at the Congress included: African-American artist Aaron Douglas on “The Negro in American Culture”, art historian Meyer Schapiro on “The Social Bases of Art, and illustrator Lynd Ward on “Race, Nationality, and Art”. The heavy emphasis upon racial subjects reflected the Congress's interest in supporting African-American and Asian-American artists whom the mainstream art world had marginalized. Bourke-
White’s involvement with the Congress at this time reinforced the social concern manifested in her work with Erskine Caldwell on *You Have Seen Their Faces*, which was taking shape at the time of the Congress’ early meetings. Bourke-White also contributed photographs such as *Chain Gang* to exhibits sponsored by the Congress.

Bourke-White together with Rockwell Kent was scheduled to speak about the Congress over CBS radio on 14 February 1936. The Bourke-White files include an unsigned letter dated 13 February 1936 and addressed to a Mr. Benson of CBS that summarizes the ideas she was working on at the time. They are central to an understanding of her future work in photography and are useful for understanding “*Purple Heart Valley*”. She makes three main points:

1. Why I believe that I, as an industrial photographer, have a part in this movement. I want to get more of a social viewpoint and background to do the work in which I am interested as part of the social structure.

2. The kind of thing that comes into advertising photography when, for example, I am called upon to present an automobile fitted with rubber tires that will stop short at the mere sight of a child playing in the street.

3. A group of sentences on how I as an artist was willing to do things as long as they developed my technique. Now I’m beginning to wonder if I am working as an artist or publicity agent. If as publicity agent, I want to be doing it for something in which I am interested.22

We can get some notion of the distance that Bourke-White traveled in the 1930s by comparing her 1933 advertisement for the La Salle Motor Company with her 1937 photograph of flood victims in Louisville, Kentucky. In both photographs she uses her camera as a tool of persuasion, but in the later photograph she was trying to create sympathy for people devastated by a force over which they had no control.

Central to the American Artists’ Congress was its strong anti-

22. Unsigned letter from American Artists’ Congress, 13 February 1936, Bourke-White Papers, Box 6 Correspondence.
fascist stand. The members of the Congress supported anti-fascist works of art, for example, the lithographs of William Gropper and the paintings of Peter Blume, which referred directly to the conditions of Italy under Mussolini. Overall, Bourke-White's contact with the work of the Congress would prove valuable when she encountered the reality of fascism in Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany.

When Bourke-White and other thinking Americans came into direct contact with European fascism after the Allied invasion of Italy, the experience led them to think deeply about the larger issues involved. The situation that the Allies found in Italy was a complex one. After Mussolini's execution and the Italian surrender, the Italians who were once our enemies became our allies, helping to drive the Germans from their land. Many of the American GIs invading Italy were Italian-Americans, some of whom, when they arrived on Italian soil, located relatives they had never met. Bourke-White includes portraits of some of these Italian-Americans in "Purple Heart Valley": grasshopper pilot Jack Marinelli, and salvage divers Salvatore Benelli and Patsy Desano, whose parents had regaled him with stories about the beauty of Naples.

But the Americans in Italy were not only liberators. They also formed an army of occupation, for the Allied Military Government was established in order to oversee Italy's transition from fascism to democracy. Historian H. Stuart Hughes has observed how significant it was that the American liberation of Italy started from the southern portion of the country:

It was from the impoverished, backward south rather than the more prosperous and progressive north that the American troops derived their first—and most lasting—impressions of Italy. These impressions, added to the mediocre record of the Italian armed forces, seemed to confirm the prejudices that Americans already entertained: that the Italians were a dark, dirty, and ignorant people, corrupt, thieving, and cowardly. And so the American soldiers usually behaved with arrogance and tactlessness—if not outright
brutality—toward the ‘Eyeties’ they frankly considered their inferiors. 23

For the 23 August 1943 issue of *Life*, novelist and war correspondent John Hersey wrote an article about the Allied Military Government that was later expanded into the best-selling novel, *A Bell for Adano*, which was published the same year as “*Purple Heart Valley*”. Hersey’s novel is a study of American democratic ideals being introduced into Italy under the supervision of Major Victor Joppolo, himself an Italian-American. His book explored the implications of the war beyond the battlefield—implications that also preoccupied Margaret Bourke-White in the pages of “*Purple Heart Valley*”. There, she quotes one officer: “Straightening up this Italian situation is like trying to put toothpaste back into tubes”. 24 She herself was moved by the Italian civilians whose homes and lives were now in ruins. Like many Americans in Italy, she was profoundly touched by the young children begging for candy, with the familiar cry “caramelle, caramelle”. 25 Encountering these children wherever she traveled, she remarked that:

It is easier to satisfy a child with a caramel than to answer some of the grownups who were frankly puzzled at the food situation.

It is not easy to administer justly an occupied city, to prevent the growth of a black market, and to see that our supplies are properly distributed. Still our failure to do this may have serious effects on the future. I observed that the

24. “*Purple Heart Valley*”, 68.
25. Ben Shahn, a fellow member of the American Artists’ Congress, captured this milieu in his contemporary painting *Remember this Wrapper*. A commentator in *Fortune*, where the painting was reproduced, sums it up best: “In *Remember this Wrapper* is all that followed liberation: the passionate joy and, six weeks later, the bitter recriminations. Here is our concern about the liberated peoples—half genuine desire to be helpful, half genuine fear of being taken for a sucker. In the background is a blasted Europe, infinitely remote from a life in terms of chewing gum.” Unsigned. “*Aftermath of War*”, *Fortune*, December 1945, 172.
friendship with which we were greeted when we landed in Naples rapidly cooled during my stay there.26

What she saw in her encounters with the civilian population of Naples convinced Bourke-White of the importance of inculcating the next generation of Italians with the values that foster a democratic way of life. She urged that as occupiers of the former fascist countries, the Americans endeavor to change the view of the peoples that they had liberated. In her opinion, the fault did not begin with our armies of occupation so much as it did with Americans at home. It is the Americans at home that she is mainly addressing in "Purple Heart Valley" when she says:

If we had a living political philosophy, if democracy were an articulate passion with us, we would be able to communicate it to others. There is no use fighting a war unless we leave behind us a better world, and to do that we must get the youth of Europe on our side.27

Bourke-White's concerns about American homefront attitudes were confirmed by the comments made by the young GIs whose exploits she was recording. In Chapter 8, "The Muddy Road to Rome" she asks the American GIs what they thought they were fighting for. The answers varied. "I was drafted." "To get home." "To protect our homes and our country."28 Although the simplicity and naivety of these answers bothered her, she recognized the fears and insecurity behind them. Mostly, it seemed that the GIs were angry with the labor unions and they resented those who had made fortunes from war profits. They were afraid that while they were overseas, women had taken their jobs and would not want to relinquish them after the war. Basically, they wanted to return to an unchanged America.29

In contrast to the Russians, British, and Chinese whom she had met earlier in the war, Bourke-White found that Americans

27. Ibid., 110.
28. Ibid., 73.
29. Ibid., 76.
“shrank from digging into the issues of this war”. For Bourke-White, the problem was exemplified by the racist attitudes of the white GIs toward the black soldiers fighting beside them. Again in Chapter 8, certainly the pivotal chapter in the book, she tells that watching a “colored ammo squad, under the competent direction of their young commanding officer” led her to reflect on the African-American contribution to the war effort despite the many inequalities that blacks were forced to endure at home and abroad. In Italy the situation was exacerbated by the presence of Italian and German propaganda that portrayed the African-American soldier as barbarian, rapist, and murderer. The section of photographs entitled the “Wreck of Naples” shows two blacks doing the backbreaking work in reconstructing the harbor. Her companion while watching the black troops was an ordnance officer, who remarked upon seeing an African-American officer: “It makes my blood boil to see a nigger with bars on his shoulders”. Later in the chapter, many of the GIs voice their opposition to blacks being enfranchised in the South: “If the Negroes are allowed the same vote as white people, it won’t be very many years until they’ll control the South, and in their present condition they have no business being in executive positions.”

Bourke-White’s discussion of the problems facing African-Americans encapsulated the greater issues of the war and had very definite implications for Americans on the home front. These sections about the African-American and the ordnance officer’s racist comment were removed from the first draft by the military censors who reviewed the manuscript prior to publication. They were re-instmted, however, and appear in the published version of the book.

That the problems of African-Americans and global racism were centrally important to Bourke-White’s understanding of the fascist menace that America was fighting is confirmed by the number of unpublished manuscript pages on this topic in the Bourke-White collection at Syracuse. Reading them, one sees her focusing on the

30. Ibid., 79.
32. Ibid., 70.
33. “Purple Heart Valley”, 74–75.
answer to the question she had addressed to the young American GIs she had met in Italy. The photograph of two black GIs in Naples foreshadows that famous image of two black South African miners which has since become a major example of Bourke-White’s humanitarian vision. The idea that she was exploring in 1944 while she was writing “Purple Heart Valley” also shows the steps along the way toward that vision. These pages were written in response to the ordnance officer’s racist remark that evidently cut deeply into Bourke-White’s psyche. A sampling follows:

As we drove on in our jeep I had a good deal of time to ponder over our reasons for fighting this war. “Isn’t this one of the things its supposed to be all about” I kept asking myself. Wasn’t it racial prejudice that inspired the burning of books. Wasn’t it racial injustice in Germany that grew into a whirlwind of oppression such as the world has never seen. In fighting the Nazis were we not fighting this racial prejudice, or weren’t we.

I could not blame my officer as an individual. If these conceptions had been made more clear, it would have been impossible for him to say such a thing. This was a canker that grew at home; that ate its way through the land in a time of peace. This was a festering sore from which Americans at home are not exempt. If we did nothing to conquer this at home, it could destroy the next peace.

A remark which I had heard just before I left America to start on this trip came back into my mind. I had been photographing a steel mill, and I was spending an evening at the home of the blast furnace foreman. His wife also worked in the factory. She had gone into defense work [and] learned to be a welder because her brother was in the army and she felt that she was needed in defense work. There had been race riots in a nearby city, and the steel foreman was expressing himself rather forcibly along the theme that if Negroes would stay in their place, and if Jews also would stay in their place, there would be no trouble.
“Why honey” said his wife. “You can’t hate both Negroes and Jews. You have to pick out one or another to hate.”

It was remarkable I thought, that from this bigoted woman could come such a succinct summing up of the question. In her groping way she realized that it was not the particular racial minority that was to blame, it was the need of man in his insecurity to find a scapegoat, an object of hate.

It is unfortunate when that object of hate is within the ranks of our own army, [which] is working and fighting for what should be a common democratic goal.

Racial prejudice is an insidious poison. It has been instilled through Germany until it has become one of the contributing factors of a philosophy which led to war. Democratic America must see the relation that this is a common problem. Just because we call ourselves a democracy, it does not mean that we have a natural immunity against the virus of racial injustice. 34

These impassioned statements did not find their way into print, nor do they appear in any of the formal manuscripts that Bourke-White submitted to either the government censors or Simon & Schuster, her publishers. As she was to do with the material on Ernie Pyle, she decided to keep these particular jottings to herself, although she did retain some of their flavor in the finished book.

Bourke-White returned to Italy late in 1944 to work on another story for Life that was eventually called the “Forgotten Front”, a title which reflected the loss of public interest in the war in Italy after D-Day. She made a special effort to record some of the “forgotten men” of that campaign, the members of the all black 92nd Buffalo Division. These photographs were never published by Life. However, the contact prints and captions for some of them are in the Bourke-White collection at Syracuse University. In style and theme they are similar to photographs taken for “Purple Heart Valley”, and they reinforce Bourke-White’s underlying message of the

34. Manuscript material for “Purple Heart Valley”, Bourke-White Papers, Boxes 65–66 Writings.
Staff Sergeant Robert Wilson and Private First Class Wilbur Derrickson (92nd Buffalo Division) at an artillery outpost (Italy, winter 1944–45). Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.
equality between the contributions of black and white GIs in the war against fascism.

Bourke-White's plea for racial tolerance extended to the Japanese-Americans who were part of the highly decorated 442nd Combat Team, which had a casualty rate among the highest of the war. Her photograph of this unit in "Purple Heart Valley" is simply labeled "These are fighting Americans". This photograph and Bourke-White's advocacy of tolerance were part of a larger effort at this time on the part of most artists and photographers to connect the war abroad with issues at home. In the same year that "Purple Heart Valley" appeared, photographer Ansel Adams published his Born Free and Equal, a plea for tolerance toward the Japanese-Americans who after Pearl Harbor had been rounded up and unjustly interned in concentration camps such as the one at Manzanar, California.

Her assignments in Italy during World War II enabled Bourke-White to develop further her techniques of both photographic and textual advocacy. As a traveler to Arcadia, following in the footsteps of earlier Americans such as Thomas Cole, she brought back to her countrymen new insights about the meaning of democracy and America. In her meditations upon the ruins of fascist Italy and the prejudice and intolerance at their core, Bourke-White was reviving the views of those nineteenth-century Americans who saw in Italy's imperial ruins a foretaste of the death and destruction that would form the landscape of Civil War America.

It is significant that Bourke-White began "Purple Heart Valley" from an aerial point of view, which, as she says in her first chapter, allowed her an overview of the broader patterns of this war which was largely an industrial one. In her meditations upon the landscapes and events that were passing beneath her eyes, she connected the 1930s world of economic depression to the rise of fascism in the West, and realized how they resulted in the pattern of ruins that became symbolic of World War II. In Italy, flying over the great monuments of western civilization, such as Saint Benedict's abbey of Monte Cassino, she put into perspective the diverse elements of her experience. How did the GIs she had met and photographed on the ground fit into the complex drama of twentieth-
century history? In a paragraph among her manuscript notes for the book she reveals the core lesson of her travels to the bloodstained Arcadia of war-torn Italy: “Only one thing, I thought, that would make up for the muddy feet, for the constant peril, for the suspended action, lives held in abeyance—that thing was the knowledge of what they were fighting for. In private life, too, it is a blessed thing to see your part in the whole.”35

35. Manuscript material for “Purple Heart Valley”, Bourke-White Papers, Box 79 Writings.
Though eighteenth-century grammarians had brought light to the profundities of our subject, their erudition and philosophical remove more often than not disqualified their ideas for popular application. Nineteenth-century scholars were a more practical breed. Their goal was to preserve the integrity of English in a far-flung and diversifying Empire. A standardized language was imperative for perspicuity in communication: for the lingua communis of poets and philosophers, as well as for commerce, science, mass education, and government. In the drive for clarity and uniformity, discussions of the values of the stops and how they should be applied formed a part of virtually every nineteenth-century grammar textbook.

By the end of the eighteenth century, elocutionary and syntactical differences arising from the clash of aural and visual perceptions had been recognized by the philosopher-grammarians, and ways of dealing with them proposed, though not necessarily adopted. Out of the widely scattered, often wildly infeasible recommendations, the next generation of grammarians strove to gather a set of rules appropriate to the new commercial and democratizing atmosphere in which they found themselves. With some 270 published English grammars behind them, employing a spectrum of fifty-eight different categorizations for the parts of speech, nineteenth-century pedagogues, writers, and printers needed to settle on a workable system. In so far as punctuation had been deemed to be symbiotic with grammar, it comes as a surprise to learn how bogy the grammatical soils actually were in those times. Many elements still were not well enough defined to be teachable. Clause, for example, “until late in the nineteenth century, carried a wide
meaning, corresponding more to ‘expression’. A clause need not contain a finite verb; the term was applied to any group of words that possessed some semantic and syntactic unity.” Thus, phrase and clause had not by most been differentiated.\(^1\) One wonders how, in such a world, grammarians managed to deal with their subject.

In 1785, the affable American, Lindley Murray (see Part Six), had reached a compromise between learned theorists like Walker and the less finicky, practising public. Relying on ‘good taste’ to resolve the perplexities of grammar and punctuation, and hesitant to “embarrass and confuse” young minds by treating the subject in too “extensive and minute a manner”, Murray had struck a responsive tone: assured, not lofty; knowing, not pedantic; firm, yet flexible where reason required it. With minor changes, succeeding editions of Murray’s *English Grammar*, with its chapter on punctuation, remained in print in Britain until the 1860s and in America until the 1880s. It was the most popular and most quoted statement on ‘correct’ use of the language through the greater part of the nineteenth century. The 1808 edition, twice the size of the original, added a battery of improving practice exercises to the not-very-much-changed original text. For the 1808 preface Murray wrote:

> These improvements consist chiefly of a number of observations, calculated to illustrate and confirm particular rules and positions contained in the grammar; and of many critical discussions, in justification of some of its parts, against which objections had been advanced.\(^2\)

Thus we see that even Murray had his detractors. For as long as regional, educational, and class differences were marked, prescrip-

\(^1\) Ian Michael, *The Teaching of English from the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 333, 346. Also see pp. 325–27: The nineteenth century inherited an ample supply of ‘rules for syntax’. In John Kirkby’s 1746 grammar, 88 such rules are advanced for the student’s edification; Jane Gardiner’s grammar of 1799 gives 109.

tions for ‘proper’ language use would vie for acceptance. Indeed, by the time we are now considering, the divergence of punctuation instruction had got maddeningly out of hand. Almost every serious treatment for the first five decades of the 1800s laments the profusion of conflicting advice.³

Meanwhile the audience for all this pedagogical cacophony was becoming more sophisticated. By the beginning of the nineteenth century in England, popular literacy—that is, the ability to write English fluently, as well as to read it—was thriving. Literates were fast becoming the majority. Books were being published on the order of 8000 titles a year. While social and business correspondence kept the postal systems active and solvent, newsprint, chapbooks, broadsheets—ubiquitously available and selling for pennies—dispersed the day’s news and provided entertainment. Clear linguistic communication on a national basis was agreed to be both a pleasure and a necessity for the commercial dynamics of an expanding Empire. An educated worker class was most definitely a requirement. To that end public libraries, museums, schools for boys and men, schools for girls and women were started up. As the market for recreational reading widened, much ‘literature’ was pumped out to satisfy it. Bourgeois egalitarianism was on the rise; elitism was in decline.

With the craft of book printing already an established enterprise, publishers had begun to separate from printers and booksellers and to form large companies of influential businessmen, who quite rightly fixed their attention on the most efficient way to make money out of books. As the system of parish schools took hold, these cost-minded men responded to opportunity in the way they knew best. They streamlined the production of print.⁴ In paring down print-shop procedures, they came to discard variant spellings, alembicated sentence structures, and oddball pointing. Thus, in innocence, they brought about a simpler set of principles for punctuation.

Though the elocutionary traditions stayed alive, silent reading lent weight to the cause of visual punctuation, with its strong connection to grammar and its implication of exactitude. Gone, or at least speeding away, were the oral-aural days when a successful interchange of written ideas depended on the memory of voice sounds arousing the emotions. At ease with text, people now could retrieve the meaning of written words with their eyes alone. They admired the precision inherent in the notion of ‘perfectly’ conveyed ideas. Distance, space, solitude, the objectivity of print—all these contributing elements to visual absorption became the expectation. Donne’s sociable “No man is an island” was not so relevant to the ballooning egos that ushered in the Romantic Period in English literary history. During the opening years of the nineteenth century, the artistic personality best gratified itself by separation from the masses through some flamboyance or eccentricity.

Matters were not quite the same, however, in the pedagogical world. As time went on, grammatical voices seemed not so intellectual as John Walker’s or David Steel’s (see Part Six) had been. Pure delight in language analysis was transmogrifying rapidly into concerns about teachability. For the enormous body of learners, rules that governed the words on the page needed to be regular, thorough, clear-cut, and (in accordance with Murray’s principle) as simple as possible. Teacherly tendencies became less inclined to swing out into universal space or dive for ancient paradigm than to suppress irregular elements. Idiosyncracy was not desired. The nail that sticks up will be hammered down, as the Japanese like to remind us. Because previous grammarians had settled the boundaries of the topic, inspection of particulars could now become quite intense. It was a perfect field for punctating moles to scrabble around in.

“Divide, distingue, et impera”—said the witty Thomas Stackhouse, explaining how he had adjusted the famous motto “by an applicable insertion”. He, the author of *A New Essay on Punctuation: Being an Attempt to Reduce the Practice of Pointing to the government of Distinct and explicit Rules by Which Every Point may be Accounted for after the manner of Parsing* (1800), is typically a ‘grammar man’. As his subtitle promises, his book will attempt to make
pointing dependent on the governance of words. He will leave no nuance of meaning in limbo, nor allow moot sentence structures to live on undiscussed. All will be commented upon and made correct, so that young minds may be fortified with a set of directions for every contingency. Throughout the nineteenth century, students of English grammar will not suffer for want of advice.

CONDITIONS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY

As the century turned, pedagogical voices rose in dismay that the details of punctuation seemed so little settled. Says the mournful Caleb Alexander, “The proper use of [punctuation] marks is attended with some difficulty; and has been thought, by some, not reducible to any determinate rules”. ⁵

Prefaces to pointing and grammatical treatises are rich in gloom over the career of punctuation. Thomas Stackhouse has this to say:

It is an assertion too strongly supported by fact, and too easily proved by experiment, to be controverted, that our youth, however complete in other branches of grammar, know little or nothing of that part of it, which relates to punctuation, or the right use of points.

Though not complete by modern comparisons, his view of the “right use” was often illuminating. He wanted above all to achieve transparency for the conveyed statement—a goal that we today claim to share. For that, he noted, pointing is not only generally useful, but “in some particular cases indispensably necessary”. What the writer means, he must put down. He illustrated his argument as follows:

Happy is the man, who hath sown in his breast the seeds of benevolence.

This sentence is foolish, said Stackhouse, for it implies that the sowing of benevolent seeds was the speaker’s own act—an obvious

impossibility and quite the reverse of the intended meaning, which can only be:

Happy is the man, who hath, sown in his breast, the seeds of benevolence.

To perfect the handling of punctuation, Stackhouse furnished his reader with a wadge of verbose practice exercises. Though one “may apprehend, that Punctuation, on this plan, will demand more time and attention than can be appropriated to it”, the fact is, that it does not. For punctuation is indivisible from syntax, and plays in concert with it “to divide a subject into its component parts, and to distinguish their relations and connexions, or unconnectedness and integrity”.6 This thesis will be affirmed again and again in the writings of punctators, grammar-oriented as they increasingly are. At this juncture would-be punctators begin to pop up from all walks of life. The ensuing pages will introduce the punctuational cogitations of lawyers, gentlemen-scholars, teachers, and typographers—these last with an understandably aggressive interest in the effectiveness of written language. As the story unfolds, we will see how the ‘Is it an art or a science?’ quandary resolves. A successful punctating policy, it turns out, demands reason, but does not discard art. We will see ‘clause’ beginning to develop its distinct character. We will note both a microscopic interest in achieving perfect lucidity wherever possible and a simplifying of the language used to convey the instruction for doing so. With words locked into print and following the courses of a better understood grammar, elocutionary issues regressed in importance, though they were never wholly lost sight of.

SAMUEL ROUSSEAU

In the preface to his book Punctuation, published in London in 1816, Samuel Rousseau joined his colleagues in mourning the

6. Thomas Stackhouse, A New Essay on Punctuation: Being an Attempt to Reduce the Practice of Pointing to the government of Distinct and explicit Rules by Which Every Point may be Accounted for after the manner of Parsing (London: West and Hughes, 1800), iv, 2.
phlegmatic public response to the glamour of punctuation. He was astonished that so little attention was paid to it in the ‘seminaries of learning’ and that a pupil who was tolerably proficient in the classics could be so ‘extremely deficient’ in the art of punctuating. For even in his letters to his friends, a young man

either uses no points at all, or else places them all at random; so that it is almost impossible for any one but himself to understand fully the purport of his epistles: nay, even in his scholastic exercises the same negligence appears; and the inattention of the tutor suffers them to pass without animadversion on this important subject.7

Should the young man ever aspire to setting down his thoughts in print, says Rousseau, he will merely baffle his compositor, who will be obliged to guess at his sense and will in his ignorance more likely pervert it than not. If only the author would take the trouble to point his manuscript exactly as he wishes to have it appear before the public, what quandaries would be resolved! what labors saved! And how rewarding for the reader, who at last might garner the intended meaning.

We have known a learned work sent to the press, by one of the brightest geniuses of the present age, larded with Greek and Latin quotations, which made a large octavo volume, without a single Point from the beginning to the end of the manuscript; so that the Compositor has been under the necessity of using his own judgement, and of pointing the work accordingly in the best manner he was able: but surely the learned author could not imagine that the Compositor was sufficiently skilled in the Greek and Latin languages, to be able to point them properly, if he thought him capable of pointing the English part with correctness.8

8. Rousseau, Punctuation, xxiii.
To establish the credentials of punctuation, Rousseau began his text with a multi-paged parade of all the big guns in the history of pointing—Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Quintillian, Donatus, Aldus Manutius. No laggard student could help but be impressed. The deliberations and discoveries of these august punctuists constitute an important “branch of education”, says our author, adding that it is one which is best inculcated into tenderer intellects by example and drill. Teaching books of this period regularly include questions to be answered, sample illustrations, and materials to be reworked or memorized.

Rousseau’s treatise draws heavily on previous works and is itself a strange concoction of old muddle with what is new and valuable. He is an admirer of Lindley Murray. He lifts great chunks of material from John Walker and David Steel, but gives his attributions like a man of honor. The underlying principles of pointing must align with grammar, says he, as have already said his recent predecessors. Sentence construction is crucial to sense and to appropriate punctuation. With admonishments to maintain the connection of subject (however complex) with verb, verb with its accusative (however complex), and relative clause (however complex) with its antecedent, he confusingly urged “a liberal and proper use of the Comma”.

John Walker’s theories on the tensions between rhetorical (or elocutional) and syntactical (or logical, or grammatical) punctuation had been on the market for several decades by the time that Rousseau himself addressed the difficult interrelationship. Walker’s elaborate dual punctuation system was too demanding for actual practice. Said the pragmatic Rousseau: “Punctuation should lead to the sense; and the sense will guide to [not necessarily equate with] modulation and emphasis”. In this way, he both accepted the findings of eighteenth-century scholarship and eschewed its impracticable prescriptions. Certainly, he recognized the distinction between reading aloud, and reading or writing in silence. For oral reading, he noted that “a Semicolon requires a pause twice the length of that which is observed at a Comma”. Writers, in applying their stops, should realize that grammarians had merely adopted the rhetoricians’ names of divisions of sentences, i.e., the period, colon,
With the passage of years, confidence in the intuition of the reader—aloud—so new in the example of Rousseau—began to firm. As will have been realized, punctuation’s bumpy history was beginning to smooth out.

Since we propose to follow some of the less agreed upon punctuating elements throughout this first half of the century, let us see what Rousseau manages to come up with for juggling the troublesome middle points. It is an era of indecision about, and even disgust for, the use of the colon and semicolon. Rousseau instructs as follows: “When several Semicolons have preceded, and a still greater pause is necessary, in order to mark the connecting or concluding sentiment, a Colon may be used”. Again: “When one or more Colons have preceded, and the concluding sentiment is connected by a Conjunction, a Semicolon must be used before that Conjunction. . . . [However] when the Conjunction is not expressed, but understood, the Colon must be used.”

Parentheses make another much discussed grammatical topic. To what extent they participate in the grammar of a sentence is frequently held up for inspection. Additionally problematic is whether they reveal a certain lack of good taste on the part of the author. Much wordage is expended on these nebulous matters during the early nineteenth century. In Rousseau’s view (he follows Murray) the parenthesis requires the proper sentential points before and after, as well as its own points inside. “For the real and proper office of the Parenthesis is simply to denote, not a Point, but the Parenthetical clause.” How far away are the sounds of speech! As for the dash, a growing focus of controversy, Rousseau offers multiple differentiations. It is more or less up to the writer. Does he wish to leave the reader in suspense? to emphasize? be epigram-

9. Rousseau, Punctuation, 32–34, 39. We will see this thought crop up again later.

10. Ibid., 98, 100–101. Also, see pp. 103–5. Sometimes the colon is used for ungrammatical purposes (for example, in introducing a quotation), as well as for rhetorical purposes (for example, in chanted Psalms, where, if the lines are to be read, rather than sung, the colon will not be regarded unless it accords with the “rules of Punctuation”).
matic? lay the point? For all these purposes the dash may be properly introduced. In keeping with most grammarians of this time, he does not relish Lawrence Sterne’s fanciful use of the dash.\(^{11}\)

Here, then, is a man who worries about the most explicit way for setting down his thoughts. His thinking, so representative of all his punctating contemporaries, is that the points materially affect the sense of all literary compositions in the highest degree, and ... even a Comma may illuminate, or totally obscure, or entirely change the sense of the finest passage in the best and most classical writer. [Thus can] we see the absolute necessity of paying the strictest attention to this branch of erudition, in every species of composition.\(^{12}\)

WILLIAM COBBETT

Only two years after Rousseau’s appearance on the scene, William Cobbett, who had so much to say on so many vital matters, turned his attention to our topic. In *A Grammar of the English Language* (1815), he published his advice in a series of open letters to his son James and to all those “Young Persons, Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-boys” who, in their appetite for knowledge, were crowding at his shoulder. The tone of this book is lively, polemic, and frequently iconoclastic. Mr. Cobbett, though not himself conventionally educated, was unafraid to contest the opinions of those who were. He followed his reasoning mind where it led. Against the hum of contemporary stuffed shirts, his commonsensical voice is enormously refreshing. No one, however mighty or imbued with literary authority, is above the reach of his snapping commentary. He championed the causes of the common man, and among these, the mastery of grammar was a crucial one.

In general, says Cobbett, the points are things of much consequence in the matter of saying exactly what is meant. They are particularly useful to disambiguate the meanings of word clusters. He is oddly terse in his description of the four major stops, and simply,

\(^{11}\) Rousseau, *Punctuation*, 125–26, 130–42.
\(^{12}\) Ibid., xx.
like Rousseau, accepts their aural-visual duties. In the case of the comma, it simply “marks the shortest pause that we make in speaking”. In writing, it should be used to set off every part of a sentence that has a verb in it that is not in the “infinitive mode”. Generally, this is proper, but not always, he says, and leaves these intimations of a ‘defined clause’ at that. The comma should also set off phrases that are not part of the basic construction of a sentence. Recognizing that the comma will mislead if present equally for phrases and structural sentence members, he strangely, like Rousseau, exhorts us to its frequent use in so far as good taste will allow. Cobbett, who by dint of his own intelligence had learned to implant the points usefully—*If I can do it, why not you?*—wrote with a remarkable clarity. Indeed, his hobby was exposing failure in the presumed clarity of others.

Cobbett advised a sparing use of the parenthesis, whose task is to interrupt the regular course of the mind. About the dash, he became more voluble:

Who is to know what is intended by the use of these dashes? Those who have thought proper, like Mr. Lindley Murray, to place *the dash* amongst the *grammatical points*, ought to give us some rule relative to its different longitudinal dimensions in different cases. The *inch*, the *three quarter-inch*, the *half-inch*, the *quarter-inch*: these would be something determinate; but, “the dash,” without measure, must be a most perilous thing for a young grammarian to handle. In short, “the dash,” is a cover for ignorance as to the use of points, and it can answer no other purpose.¹³

**PHILIP WITHERS**

Throughout this period ‘perspicuity’ was the watchword. Did what was written actually make sense? Was the expression as found on the page a reasonable image of what could be thought? In short, how can you presume to mean something when in fact you are saying something else? Cobbett was immensely active in this area.

A fellow participant, though not so pleasant a one, was Philip Withers. In the opening pages of his *Aristarchus* (1822), he addressed his public: "Indulging the Hope that my Reader is fully convinced of the Dignity and Importance of Science, I proceed to demonstrate its Union with LANGUAGE". He thereupon discourses on the misconceived opinions of "illiterate rustics", foreigners, and Scots ("our friends north of the Tweed"). Though Withers does not write specifically about punctuation, his assured approach to the 'state of the language' is one so frequently found in grammar books of this period that it will be useful to include here a specimen of his thinking.

He is particularly scathing about authors who demonstrate an imperfect understanding of what they themselves are trying to say: Samuel Johnson, for example, that "polite and amiable Author", who had absurdly described the word "or" as being a "disjunctive conjunction". "Can mortal Imagination conceive what is meant" by such a phrase? Though he revered "Doctor Johnson as an able and elegant Defender of moral virtue", Johnson’s "skill as an Historian of Words was below Mediocrity". Poor Samuel Johnson. Cobbett, too, had enjoyed having a swing at Johnson.

But Withers had an especially wicked tongue. Steeped in science as well as the classics, his arrogance was as high as the sky. Thus, it is rather a pleasure to come across his complaint concerning the errata in the printed pages of his book. "The Author being in the Country, at a distance from the Press, many Errors in Punctuation . . . have unhappily escaped Correction."14

JOHN JOHNSON, PRINTER

As was previously remarked, the printers, coerced by the commercial concerns of the publishers, had a great deal to do with the settling down of punctuation, of what the points should signify and where their presence might disentangle text. In these specific respects, alas, John Johnson was no great intellectual. Nevertheless, his plea for simplicity and accuracy appears to have had an influence. In his instruction book for printers, *Typographia* (1824), he

spoke of the standard, basic six stops—the comma, semicolon, colon, period, and the two notes of interrogation and admiration—as being rather one too many. He lamented the suggestions of some “pedantic persons” that the stops should be increased in number by adding one below the comma and another between the comma and semicolon.

So far are we from imagining that such an introduction will meet with encouragement, that we confidently expect to see the present number diminished, by the total exclusion of the colon, a point long since considered unnecessary, and now but seldom used.\textsuperscript{15}

Johnson acknowledges that “there has never existed on any subject, among men of learning, a greater difference of opinion than on the true mode of punctuation”. Though the sense calls for only a comma, some will insist on a semicolon; where some prefer “stiff pointing”, others recommend altogether the reverse. The waste of time to the corrector is appalling. Either the writing is illegible and the spelling incorrect, or the punctuation is defective. “The compositor has often to read sentences of his copy more than once before he can ascertain what he conceives the meaning of the author, that he may not deviate from him in the punctuation; this retards him considerably.” But that is not the end of the matter, for the corrector will have other opinions and when these have been inserted and the proof goes to the author, he will dissent from them both.

It is John Johnson’s entreaty that compositors learn to punctuate, and that authors send in their manuscripts properly prepared, for he, the author, is the one most competent to judge “of the length and strength of his own sentence”, which the introduction of the wrong point will completely alter. Johnson suggests that unless the author undertake the responsibility to point the entire manuscript, he should not punctuate any of it. It will be easier for the composi-

tor to do it all in a uniform manner than to correct and shift about in a sea of undiscriminating, inappropriate points. The writer can advise to point loosely, or stiffly, and then let well enough alone until the proofs arrive, at which time he can detect "if a point or two do injury to his sentence".

As punctuation is so difficult, Johnson will not try to lay down any rules. "An uniform and correct mode of pointing must be acquired by the compositor from practice and attention." His description of the four major stops is given in terms of counting one for the comma, two for the semicolon, three for the colon, and four for the period and reveals his own unsophisticated perception of their emerging grammatical connections. Delightfully, however, his recipe conjures up the real-life image of a compositor, murmuring the phrases to himself as he plucks the letters from his type case and lays them along his composing stick.

Johnson's semicolon instructions give an insight into the unsatisfactory state of printerly enlightenment during the first quarter of the century. A semicolon, with a two-count pause, he says, "enforces what has been illustrated by the comma, and allows the reader an opportunity to acquire a perfect view of the sentence, before it is terminated by the full point". Of the comma he has not much more to say than that, though a junior stop, it requires a perfect understanding, for it governs the order of all the other stops. One feels sympathy for the compositors caught in this circuit of question begging. But John Johnson, we note, is more forthright about the colon (count three when you see it). As it has been superseded in practice by the comma, "ellipsis line", or "metal rule" (for none of which does he give a value), it is no longer useful.16 Having counted to three, you may throw it out.

LORD BYRON, A CULPRIT

Interestingly, Byron was a notorious non-punctator. Well-supported legend has it that, giving up entirely on the intricacies of pointing, he simply passed the tedious job on to the compositor at the press, who then presumably figured something out that seemed

to do. It will be appropriate here to compare a Byron original manuscript offering with the effects achieved in a first printing. It is difficult to guess how much influence Byron exerted over the several word-changes, but given his reputation for non-pointing he probably welcomed (or perhaps did not notice) the new commas and additional full stop.

The verse below, from the tenth stanza of Canto X of *Don Juan*, has been copied exactly from Byron’s manuscript version, dated 1822, in the British Library. It is followed by the same verse re-rendered in its first published form in 1823, by A. and W. Galignani, in Paris.

It is observed that ladies are litigious
   Upon all legal objects of possession
And not the less so when they are religious
   Which doubles what they think of the transgression
With suits and prosecutions they harass us
   As the tribunals show through many a session—
When they suspect that any one goes shares
In that to which the Law makes them sole Heiress.
   (British Library, Ashley 5163, folio 2v)

It is observed that ladies are litigious
   Upon all legal objects of possession,
And not the least so when they are religious,
   Which doubles what they think of the transgression.
With suits and prosecutions they besiege us,
   As the tribunals show through many a session,
When they suspect that any one goes shares
In that to which the law makes them sole heirs.
   (*Don Juan*, page 14)

**Charles James Addison**

Charles James Addison now joins our lachrymose chorus. What are we to do about punctuation? In the expansive subtitle to his *Complete System of Punctuation* (1826) he announces his position. He has established his punctating treatise “upon Fixed Principles: whereby
Albany July 8th, 1814

My dear Hodgson/I send this on the chance of your being still at Hastings—if so—pray answer by return of Post.—Will you take a house for me at Hastings—by the week will be best as my stay will be short—it must be good & tolerably large—as Mrs. Leigh—her 4 children—all three maids will be there also—besides my own Valet & footman.—my Coachman/ his horses/may be boarded out—I shall also want a housemaid & extempore & protempore cooks of the place—& wish all this to be settled as soon as you are disposed to take the trouble.
authors, literary men, and the heads of classical and Domestic es-

tablishments, may become proficients in an attainment which is in-
dispensable to secure elegance with perspicuity of language”. His

preface is equally unevasive:

At a time like the present, when every thing connected

with Literature has reached a perfection which is at once
demonstrative of the praise-worthy emulation and natural
talent of this great country; when improvements, generally
speaking, are continually perfecting the suggestions of earlier
times; when Printing, in particular, is brought, as one is led to
imagine, to its acme,—it does appear extraordinary, that a sci-
ence like Punctuation, which may be termed the very mar-
shalling and arranging of the words of a language, should
not only be comparatively so little understood, but that no
writer has yet appeared, who has ventured to fix such data
for the judicious employment of the several marks in estab-
lished usage, as might tend to the more general knowledge
of that which all allow to be of the greatest importance, but
which the bulk are confessedly so slightly acquainted. 17

For Addison, then, pointing is a science, not a matter of taste,
nor even an art, and its application must align with grammar. How,
he asks, can options of choice be allowed to prevail according to
the different impressions of speech, which is an arrangement of
sound and not of sense and leads foolishly to commas equaling
halves of semicolons and so on, when some speak monotonously,
some emphasize or speak hastily? There is, in short, no ad libitum
about the business. It is right or wrong. Printers, whose knowledge
comes only from hints in different grammars, are totally in the dark
about punctating principles, and their opinions change every hour.
As no work is considered by even the most scientific printer to be
authoritative for punctuation, Addison is rather hoping that his will
not only fill the bill there, but provide a tool for inculcating cor-
rectness in youths everywhere. 18


Bagster, 1826), iii.

127
Addison is well into the pleasures of remodeling unclear statements. He offers for our delectation such morsels as: If the comma were omitted in the sentence

A wager is half won, when well laid.

then the sense would be that the wager was half won at the very time of its being well laid: not, that after it had been well laid, it was half won.

As the century advances, samples of linguistic opacity come regularly under the grammatical microscope. Rules about the versatile comma are rife. Though the semicolon and colon have begun to relate more obviously to particular situations in sentence structures, they remain no less difficult for the average user. Addison, like John Johnson, is himself wary of the middle points and cannot bring himself to define their boundaries of control. About the semicolon, Addison warns us not to “expect anything positive of this sign”, for “judgement cannot be enforced by precept in the use of [it]”. However, he suggests, we can learn something of its powers by practice and study. For example, in the sentence

Those best adapted to the purpose are called 10 dram vials; for they are long in proportion to their diameter.

we are informed by the semicolon that the reason for these vials being best suited to the purpose intended has nothing to do with their shape; whereas with a comma the meaning would positively imply that it did. The colon he calculates to be the most confusing of all the signs, suggesting, as it does, only a greater remoteness of the parts it divides. Finally, he settles on a role for it. It is to be used, he says, when matter follows that is a continuance of the same subject (i.e., not a fresh subject). No news there.

Addison touches on a number of other subtleties concerning the colon, but without much gusto. As for the dash (which, like the parenthesis, he calls a “break”), he advocates (“though not all agree”) that the writer replace it with commas as the syntax demands. Breaks should be used only sparingly, so that writers are not encouraged to rely on them in place of the natural structure of the language. In sum (following Stackhouse, and again though less
explicitly, Rousseau), he believes that all punctuation should be aimed against the jumbling together of discordant associations, and towards preventing confusion in the dependence of the connective parts. A study of the points and how they can marshal a sentence will induce reflection and an arrangement of reasoning that can be satisfactorily transferred to paper.¹⁹

JOHN BRENAN

Compared with his contemporaries, Justin Brenan presented an astonishingly relaxed view. The subtitle to his *Composition and Punctuation* (1829)—*Familiarly Explained for Those who have Neglected the Study of Grammar*—augurs a welcome permissiveness to the novice punctator of those early years. Come, come, this gentle grammarian seems to say, life is too short. It is enough to steer clear of the parenthesis. Ah! and forget all the colon-semicolon nonsense. The job can be done well enough with dashes and commas. You’ll be quite safe if you use short sentences, without all those ‘althoughs’, ‘buts’, and ‘notwithstandings’. “Never torment yourself about the impropriety of dividing [a sentence], but make the separations, at once, according to your first impressions.” Put commas in wherever you “wish a momentary rest”, for the comma is the proper divisional mark “unless on those occasions where a kind of hiatus, or a fresh expression of force, might require the dash”. The introduction of the dash is a most important accession to the arsenal of points, for it “puts simplicity in the place of mystery, gives decision in lieu of hesitation, divests ignorance of its imposing mast, and strips artifice of its deceptious solemnities”. Paragraphs, this agreeable author suggests, should also be short, since shortness offers relief to thought as well as to attention. And don’t fret if you find yourself repeating a word, for it is much better to do that than to leave the sense weak or doubtful.²⁰

“What a quantity of useless controversial stuff has been written upon the ‘proper’ use of the semi-colon and colon!” Though the

public has thrown them overboard, the school-masters are still try­
ing to keep them afloat, teaching the dash “as another kind of colon, and semi-colon too!” While the semi-colon is barely gasp­ing above water, the colon is sinking fast—and good riddance! Al­though Brenan admires the tremendous clarity that Cobbett achieves with all his colons and semicolons, he chides him both for the cursory attention he gave to the points in his book on grammar, and for his extreme caution about the supple dash. “Cobbett for­gets that not all have his intellect.” It was, after all, the prestigious Mr. Lindley Murray who ‘legalized’ the dash (“if used with propri­ety”, he had said, and gave three rules). But, pray, why slow up the education of our youth with ponderous differentiation when the dash is so handy and so penetrative of the confusion surrounding the colon and semicolon? As the semicolon is being brought to ruin by the comma, so the colon is being “dashed to pieces”. It is only the printers who love colons and semicolons. I beg you, ex­amine with me the following sentence. How much more expres­sive has the substitution of dash for colon rendered it!

What a lamentable situation his! Wife, children, mother, sisters, friends—all desert this hapless victim of perfidy and ingratitude!21

Brenan’s comment here is worth pausing over. A printerly colon in the place of the dash would indeed have produced a sort of hic­cup in the visual flow of this emotional statement. Orally, it would have marked for the reader an extensive silence—ending at the count of four, or six, or whatever—and had no effect whatsoever on the listener. But for the silent reader, the space that a dash actu­ally creates on the page suggests a visually sustained commitment to the initial portion of the sentence and allows elasticity in interpret­ing what follows. Contrariwise, the stronger stops—that is, the colon or semicolon—rear up as barriers. To the eye they are without doubt more inhibiting and less given to subtlety.

Quite rightly, Brenan chides authors (a fair number, as a matter of fact—it being a hobby of his times) for “unmeaningful pointing”.

He deplores the finicky fashion of coupling a dash with a comma, colon, or semicolon. To what end? he complains. Even his beloved Lindley Murray is guilty of this. Again, why should grammarians of Murray’s distinction give twenty and more rules for the comma, when its function on the page is so simple? The rules of grammarians tend more “to mysterize than to elucidate”. Brenan feels justified in banning the use of the colon and semicolon, since even the “wisest heads cannot keep them under a wholesome subjection” and their powers are “not decisive but hypothetically assigned”. Punctuation cannot be considered a science as it is too deviating. It is better conceived as an art, in that it must be regulated by feelings, impressions, and the “discretionary pleasure” of the writer. Brenan’s advice to ambitious but untutored authors is to relax about sentential pointing. Put in your capital letters and your full stops and leave the rest to the compositor. He, a reliable fellow, “will correct your errors, and preserve more consistency and uniformity throughout”.22

Interestingly, Brenan offers an example of the improvement in clarity that simple punctuation and shortening of sentences will make over the turgid and misapplied pointing of the past. He uses for this purpose a sentence from Dryden’s dedication to the Marquess of Normanby of the Aeneid translation, taken from the first Tonson printing of it in 1697; and it is reasonable to suppose, despite the battles between them, that Dryden himself accepted the Tonson house rules for pointing.

Statius, who through his whole Poem, is noted for want of Conduct and Judgment; instead of staying, as he might have done, for the Death of Capaneus, Hippomedon, Tideus, or some other of his Seven Champions, (who are Heroes all alike) or more properly for the Tragical end of the two Brothers, whose Exequies the next Successor had leisure to perform, when the Seige was rais’d, and in the Interval between the Poets first Action, and his second; went out of his way, as it were on propense Malice to commit a Fault.23

22. Ibid., 85–96 passim, and III.
23. John Dryden, The Works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis (London: Jacob Tonson, 1697), 150 [(a)v].
Brenan reproduces this same sentence, “newly punctuated by Carey, who has managed splendidly to make sense of it”: 24

Statius—who, through his whole poem, is noted for want of conduct and judgement—instead of staying, as he might have done, for the death of Capaneus, Hippomedon, Tydeus, or some other of his seven champions (who are all heroes alike), or more properly for the tragical end of the two brothers, whose exequeies the next successor had leisure to perform when the siege was raised, and in the interval betwixt the poet’s first action and his second—went out of his way, as it were on prepense malice to commit a fault.

Without Mr. Carey’s judicious punctuation, says Brenan, “it would be a study to comprehend this sentence”. Still, as it is not completely lucid, Brenan himself has a go.

Statius, through his whole poem, is noted for want of conduct and judgement. Without any obvious necessity, he stays for the death of Capaneus, Hippomedon, Tydeus, or some other of his seven champions, who are all heroes alike. It may, indeed, be more properly said, that he waits for the tragical end of the two brothers, whose exequeies, the next successor had leisure to perform, when the siege was raised, and in the interval betwixt the poet’s first and second action. He therefore went out of his way, as it were on prepense malice, to commit a fault.

What, we ask, would Hemingway have made of it?

HUGH DOHERTY

Since the “confused methods of metaphysical grammarians [had] rendered [the principles of language] eminently repulsive to the young mind”, Hugh Doherty set about to rectify matters by writing a reformed explanation, free of the trappings of established ped-

agogy, for those who wished to learn their grammar without a mas-
er. The abstruse result was entitled An Introduction to English
Grammar on Universal Principles (1841). In reshuffling the tenets of
grammar for his “simple” system, Doherty proved himself quite as
exotic as were his eighteenth-century philosophical forebears. In
fact, the terms he uses to describe the complexities of his universal
rules assume a considerable experience on the higher levels of
grammar. Without previous study no self-teaching hodcarrier could
possibly have survived the mazes that Doherty had in store. Though
Doherty’s language is clear enough, the material he proffers is ex-
traordinary. It is hard to imagine how he intended to set any ‘emi-
nently repulsed’ mind to rights by means of his difficult (though
certainly cogent) treatise on the architecture of English grammar.

There is a mystique in numbers for Doherty. Everything he
touches divides immediately in order to redivide and be accounted
for as one item in a group of four. He models his grammatical cos-
mos by stacking his groups in biological tiers of class, order, genus,
and species. The body of his theories on punctuation, whose de-
scription of office arises as the second order of the fourth class of
“the signs of ideas”—the other classes being nouns, adnouns, and
subadnouns, and this fourth having to do with the marks and signs
that combine to elucidate numbers one, two, and three—is sadly
ensnared in difficulties beyond the scope of this survey.

As will be realized by the above whiff of content, the author
delves into his topic boldly. His enthusiasm for the subject leads
him (as it had earlier led Walker) to attempt a stretching of punc-
tuation to include both the oral-aural and visual aspects of lan-
guage—a course that leads his readers up some rather steep slopes.
Nevertheless, his idiosyncratic treatment of familiar materials does
throw light on a number of interesting aspects of basic sentence
formulation. Since his grammatical leadership was an honored fact
in the midcentury years, we will not be amiss in presenting here a
few of the less electrifying headlines from his thinking about punc-
tuation.

25. Hugh Doherty, An Introduction to English Grammar on Universal Principles
In Doherty’s view punctuation would ideally require “at least four shades of variety in each of the four points which are commonly used”. However, since “these very minute shades of distinction are more curious in theory than useful in practice”, he recommends instead a general lightening of the load. As it is, the colon is hardly ever used, and like John Johnson and Justin Brennan, he discards it forthwith. Ditto, the dash. Dashes, this author proclaims, have only one legitimate use, that is, “to indicate *paragragraphic* or *semi-paragraphic* separation, where we do not wish to waste space by commencing a new group of periods”. So much for that. The semicolon, which he renames the “semi-period”, represents a pause of “mixt signification”, as it marks the “external limit of a simple sentence, and the internal division or pause between the simple members of a compound sentence”—a succinct way of putting it. Unless the sentence is very long and complex, then the slim, swift comma is the one to reach for. He gives, yes, four functions for it: the first one deals with respiration in so far as will be helpful for reading aloud and the second with the pauses between groups of words that facilitate easy listening; the third “represents a longer pause than usual, at the end of very long and complex functions which do not individually form complete sense and therefore ought not to be separated by semi-periods”; and the fourth represents “a sort of paragraph separation”; or more simply—Use it in place of an introductory colon.26 All in all, with modest attention to oral-aural and visual needs, the Doherty comma can be made to settle intuitively.

Be assured, however, that despite his interest in oral-aural aspects of written language, Doherty’s points align entirely with his own redefined syntactical groupings of words. Grammar is crucial and in English, word order is the vital secret. If word groups are not immediately adjoined to the words they serve, they are necessarily thrown amongst others which they are not meant to serve. When that happens “we not only do not say what we meant to say, but it may happen that we express ideas which are in absolute contradiction with our meaning”. To avoid such misfortune, the student

should abstain from attaching loose auxiliary functions to the original concept, as in the following example:

Advertisement.—*Wanted*, a groom to take care of two horses, of a religious turn of mind.

The clarity of this sentence is not saved by the comma, whatever Cobbett might think. It will be better rendered as follows:

*Wanted*, a groom of a religious turn of mind, to take care of two horses.27

As we have just seen, ingenious punctuation cannot be counted on to put to rights irregular sorts of construction or the misarrangement of clauses. Yet with all his apparent enthusiasm for exactitude, Doherty does not come to grips with a precise meaning for the vagarious concept of clause. He is instead interestingly committed to the *sound* of language, to an invested sense of where pause, both grammatical and rhetorical, is called for. Like Rousseau, he accepts the differentiation between the written and spoken stops, but fails to deal with it appropriately in his own terms. Generally, he feels, punctuation is overused. “We ourselves, seldom use any other mark of internal separation than that of the comma, unless we wish to indicate a more formal pause than usual between the parts of a long sentence.” (Formal? He does not tell us what he means by this word.) Within the full grammatical sentence that has been marked off with a period, only a minor importance can attach to the distinct separation of its internal members and their functions. (From this meticulous investigator, here is a thought-provoking remark. Perhaps he never had occasion to dip into Tonson’s rendering of the dedication of the *Aeneis.*) The exception to the comma’s effectiveness, continues our Doherty, is the ambiguating situation where “an inferior function is placed exactly between two functions, to which it may belong with equal propriety”. In such a case the comma must do its best to separate the inferior function from the one to which it does not attach and group it positively with the one to which it does.

27. Ibid., 129, 136.
As for parentheses, they should be treated with great diffidence, for they divert our attention from the subject under consideration. Unless witty or interesting, they always emerge from the text, “clumsy and unwelcome”, as in the following example:

Every planet (as the Creator has made nothing in vain) is most probably inhabited.

which would be much better rendered:

As the Creator has made nothing in vain, every planet is most probably inhabited.

Disappointingly, he does not present us with examples of witty or interesting parentheses.

In his ambitious embrace of the noise side of language, Doherty is concerned that no mark does justice to emphasis, which is a legitimate dimension of the meaning intended by authors. Punctuation, italics, and bold print will not distinguish positively the degrees of importance that an author may attach to different words in a written sentence, nor will they delineate the integrity of a relative emphasis against an indicative one. The reader must use his native sharpness to draw forth from the page the full meaning, which is implicit in the intoning voice.

Thus we see that Doherty, more than most, has thought hard about the relationship of the dual strains in language communication. He is aware that the physiological coupling of vision and sound cannot be ignored when serious discussion of pointing priorities is in course, for the “organs through whose medium we become acquainted with each other’s thoughts are primarily the eye and the ear”.

28 His proposals for a marking system that would render upon the page all the subtleties of meaning that the voice can produce are ingenious and, like Walker’s of the previous century, impractically complex and elaborate for adept usage. Sadly, Doherty’s name must join the list of those highminded intellects who swung hard at that elusive target: an absolutely trouble-free connection from author’s inspiration to reader’s comprehension.

Modern writers hear voices in their heads quite as much as their predecessors used to. Modern readers gather their clues of authorial intent as best they can from the ‘received’ grammar rules and printing conventions about written word groups and how they should be demarked. By the middle of the nineteenth century, as will have been noticed, grammar rules had hardened into a rigid discipline. Doherty’s rethinking of their worth was useful to discerning grammarians, if not to ordinary folk. We must take leave of him now, still bustling amongst his universal principles as he evaluates the data on question and exclamation marks. Though used as full stops to a grammatically ‘completed’ period, they are notoriously footed in rhetorical soil and well worth hours and hours of scrutiny. Doherty, we are pleased to say, is not friendless in his white-coated world. France, the home of rational grammar, is full of similarly thorough and indefatigable types.

The two signs of intonation which are in common use, are the note of interrogation, ? and the note of admiration, !. These two signs are used to designate an incredible number of different intonations: more than five hundred, according to Professor Delsarte. A short time ago, we were introduced to that gentleman in Paris, and, in our presence, one of his pupils, a little girl of nine years of age, repeated one single sentence in one hundred and thirty different intonations. Professor Delsarte’s method of analysis is analogous to our own, and it gives us pleasure to know that that gentleman’s observations concerning the expression of ideas, confirm the opinions and conclusions which we had formed on the same subject.29

F. FRANCILLON

Punctuation is the art, said F. Francillon, solicitor, in his Essay on Punctuation with Incidental Remarks on Composition (1842), “whereby the author hopes to make his sentences more easily to be under-

29. Ibid., 83.
stood by his readers and their hearers; and consequently more correctly to convey his ideas to them”. Francillon noted how the grammarians had drawn their terms of comma, colon, and period from the rhetoricians and concluded, like Rousseau, that the office of the points is “to point out to the eye of the reader, the periods and members and fragments” of text—that is, the realities of which they are the indices. With this glance at punctuation’s ambivalent history, he proceeded without differentiation of rhetorical and grammatical needs to the contemporary problems of how best to point a text. In the manner of all his fellow pundits, he regretted the public’s unstable perception of punctuation. For in all of literature no department, while “so generally attempted to be practised, and so generally presumed to be of utility”, is yet so much ignored.30

Francillon deals with the comma, quoting both Bishop Lowth (see Part Six) and Lindley Murray, and recommends that high pointing (that is, the extravagant use of ‘comma-points’) be avoided on the grounds that it emphasizes phrases which have no verb and cannot therefore convey to the mind an intelligible idea. (We are coming close to a workable definition for clause here. The reader will be relieved that Rousseau’s confusing advocacy of frequent phrasal comma usage is being ignored.) Typically, Francillon is rather more verbose than clear on the matter of the semicolon-colon issue. “The colon takes more . . . the form of a period”; whereas “words of reference are more pro-semi-colon than colon”. The semicolon is used when one member contains words which lead the reader to expect another member and the second member has words of reference leading back to the contiguous former and when the latter member effects nothing without calling in the aid of the former. Wrestling with the notion of a period, Francillon manages to improve the definition of it to that date. Heretofore, generally, it had been described as merely a ‘completeness of sense’, a suspension of meaning, a grammatical construction that will not admit of a close before the end of it. To all these views Francillon adds a conclusive touch. The words in a period are so connected,

he says, and have such a mutual dependence, that “a reader or hearer, as he reads or listens, is aware, because he has not found those things expressed, which preceding words have led him to expect, that he has not arrived at the end”.

His discussion then turns, as might be expected from the title of his work, to the artistry required in deploying the points—to matters of taste and style in the presentation of meaning. The differing effects of the full period as opposed to the loose period make up a favorite topic. As elements of the seventeenth-century ‘loose period’ (see Part Four) revived in the so-called ‘decadent style’ of Walter Pater during the latter half of the nineteenth century, it will be useful to pause for a moment to see what Francillon (some decades before Pater) had to say on the subject. The following is his example of a simple loose sentence:

Lucius Mummius destroyed Corinth, because he was ignorant and illiterate.

In this sentence the mind comes to rest after “Corinth” and would quite willingly leave matters at that. Nevertheless, it is jarred to absorb fresh material before being allowed to relax. In the rounded period, the tacked-on bit is folded inside, so to speak, to produce a sort of energy that does not give out false premonitions of termination.

Lucius Mummius, because he was ignorant and illiterate, destroyed Corinth.

The variety of arrangement allowed by the inflections of ancient languages permitted an easy periodic structure. The mind would wait for the wanted case endings and the verb at the end. In English, however, we must rely more on those words whose almost sole duty it is to suspend the sense: ‘neither’, ‘both’, ‘while’, ‘although’, ‘so’, and the like, and whose presence or absence almost always entails subtleties of choice in punctuation. When these words are included, then some commas are likely to be appropriate; when they are omitted, English tends to compensate with a colon or semicolon.31

As for the use of parentheses, Francillon rather sides with those (Lindley Murray, most notably) who think the superaddition of colon or semicolon at the end looks nice. On no account (pace Addison) should the parenthetical marks be replaced by commas. Where ambiguity is manifest, the writer should reconstruct to make his intention perfectly clear. Dashes are useful where significant pauses are to be indicated, or where a sentence breaks off abruptly, or where there is an unexpected turn. Since Lindley Murray had already recommended their cautious use for those purposes, Francillon feels no risk in re-recommending them. He is disapproving of Brenan types who overrule tradition and use the dash to replace colons, semicolons, and parentheses. By Francillon’s time, grammarians could only anguish over the slipshod dash. It had by then become a common stylistic feature of everybody’s informal writing and was applied to demark more or less all the members of a sentence, to the great annoyance of precision seekers. The effect, they felt, was one of constant emphasis on insignificant matter. Francillon allows that the dash may be “lawfully” used in conjunction with other points to augment or qualify “their several powers in pointing out the different members and fragments of a period, and in denoting certain pauses”. Even then, he himself disdains it for anything but a sudden interruption.

Though he speaks of art and deals with effects in the arrangement of composition, this author is basically a grammar man. He propounds the prime rule about punctuation. It is ancillary to construction. To render a transparent view of an intended meaning, it is better to rearrange the sentence than to rely on punctuation. He has outgrown all patience with the pausal one, two, three representations of the various points—admittedly, a relief. Though some writers may wish to conceal their ignorance by regarding punctuation as merely a matter of taste, the fact is clear: it facilitates a quick absorption of written composition and to understand it one must be conversant with the sentence parts and their relationships.32

32. Francillon, Essay on Punctuation, 37–39, 44. On page 80 of the appendix, there is an item that will be interesting to devotees of this subject. Unfortunately, Francillon does not say where he found his own information.

In founts of letters, in which the number of the letter $m$ is 3000, and the
A major figure during the middle of the 1800s was John Wilson, typographer, who published three influential books on our topic: the first in 1844, *A Treatise on Grammatical Punctuation; Designed for Letter-writers, Authors, Printers, and Correctors of the Press*; the second in 1848 in conjunction with John Graham, entitled *The Compositor's Text-Book*; and the third in 1856, *A Treatise on English Punctuation Designed for Letter-writers, Authors, Printers, and Correctors of the Press: and for the Use of Schools and Academies*—this last being a new edition of the first, but with the special addendum on preparation of copy and proofreading. As was made explicit throughout them all, Wilson’s stance was emphatically grammatical. Punctuation—“that despised but useful art”—must be subservient to syntax. Wilson too will rail against popular resistance to honoring the points as they should be honored:

The mental philosopher and the philologist seem to regard [punctuation] as too trifling for attention, amid their grander researches into the internal operations of the mind, and its external workings by means of language. The grammarians passes it by altogether unheeded, or lays down a few general and abstract principles; leaving the difficulties of the art to be surmounted by the pupil as well he may. The lawyer engrosses in a legible character, which, however, by its deficiency in sentential marks, often proves, like the laws of which he is the expounder, “gloriously uncertain” as to the meaning intended to be conveyed. The painter, the en-

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number of the letter e is 12000, the proportions of the common points have been as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One Hundred Years ago</th>
<th>Fifty Years ago</th>
<th>At the present time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comma-points</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semicolon-points</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon-points</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-points</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative-Points</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes of Admiration,</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
graver, and the lithographer, appear to set all rules at defiance, by either omitting the points or by misplacing them, wherever punctuation is required. The letter-writer, with his incessant and indiscriminate dashes, puts his friend, his beloved one, his agent, or his employer, to a little more trouble, in conning over his epistle, than is absolutely necessary. Even the author—who, of all writers, ought to be the most accurate—puts his manuscript into the printer's hands, either altogether destitute of grammatical pauses, or so badly pointed as to create an unnecessary loss of time to the compositor. . . .

This is an age of authors, as well as readers. Young aspirants after fame, some of them of considerable merit, meet us at every step—in every department of literature. . . . [So] let them turn their attention to the elements of punctuation, trifling and undignified as the subject may appear to be. 33

Since compositors cannot “follow copy” (so defiled are the manuscripts by slovenly and erroneous orthography, by badly constructed sentences, deficient and undiscriminating points), professional correctors must be brought in to resolve the mess that compositors make and to reduce the tasteless mass to order. We treat the correctors as if they were geniuses, totally knowledgeable. It is an impossible situation. To rectify it, Wilson suggests that all printers set about immediately to give instruction to their overseers, compositors, apprentices, and journeymen. In that way will they be enabled to enter into the conceptions of their literary employers, to fill the gap between a confused manuscript and its properly printed transcription. 34 John Wilson set about helping printers towards this noble goal. Specifically, he designed his Compositor's Text-Book to enlighten the young compositor on the principles of pointing. A good idea, since punctating incompetency was not only tarnishing the reputation of the presses but souring tempers as well.

33. John Wilson, A Treatise on Grammatical Punctuation (Manchester: Printed and published by the author, 1844), 4, 6.
34. Ibid., 7–12.
A few years ago a very celebrated critic received from his printer, a proof-sheet on which were written, opposite a particular passage, the words, “There is some ambiguity here.” The critic replied, “There is no ambiguity here but what is caused by your profuse use of the comma, which you sprinkle over the page as from a dredge-box.”

Punctuation is in a state of great confusion, says Wilson. (No news to us.) One teacher “embarrasses the learner with an additional pause” (the semicomma); while another “discards the colon altogether as a useless point. Some grammarians would unfeelingly lop off the dash, as an excrescence on a printed page; but others again, are so partial to its form and use, as to call in its aid on every possible occasion.” Most interestingly, Wilson proclaims that there is room for choice in the matter of pointing. One can apply it for beauty, force, elegance. But that basic rule, never to violate grammar, must hold firm. In this two-tiered way, Wilson resolves the dilemma: Is it an art or a science? Simply, punctuation can embellish effects but is itself grounded in science. The aesthetic (often rhetorical) side is wingèd, the grammar side is fixed. (This two-tiered view will be more thoroughly pinned down by Huntington, a few pages along.)

Though there has been discord in the past caused by the imperfect understanding of rhetorical pointing, it should be clear, says Wilson, that one ought not to punctuate on the page in the same manner as one speaks, but only in accordance with the grammar of the sentences. That way, the meaning of the author can be retrieved easily and with little trouble by the reader. The reader, knowing what is meant by carefully structured and punctuated writing, will instinctively be able to give sound to it. In all respects, says Wilson, punctuation should minimize the exercise of judgement in interpretation. As had Rousseau, Addison, and the somewhat follow-along Francillon, this author succeeds in balanc-

ing by this useful means the authority of the oral pause with the vi-
sual ‘stop’. Concerning the practical application of punctuation, Wilson’s is the most definitive and clear statement to date.

In his first book (1844) Wilson gives twenty-five rules for the comma, four for the semicolon, and six for the colon, amongst which there is nothing very much new. Each rule is followed by a battery of examples, then remarks, then exceptions, and finally two sets of exercises—one for oral and the other for written practice. Among his pronouncements are instances of nineteenth-century quaintness. Strange contradictions also crop up, suggesting to the reader that though Wilson may deeply revere grammar, may indeed base his entire view of punctuation upon it, he is not all that firm about what exactly it is. Not to disappoint those who are interested, the most rattling sample of Wilsonian counsel is herewith offered. When the infinitive is used as a noun, it is wise to separate it from the rest by a comma:

The most obvious remedy is, to withdraw from all associa-
tions with bad men.

As will be realized, advice of this nature trespasses on the sacred integrity of a simple sentence and strangely divides what even the most casual had preferred to keep intact. After discussing the problems arising from restrictive and non-restrictive adjuncts, Wilson decided to allow commas between a long nominative and the verb, thus again breaking a fundamental rule (frequently broken by his contemporary fellow punctuists as well as by writers of today). Some very respectable grammarians and printers prefer, he explained, that no comma be inserted after the subject or nominative, unless it be accompanied with adjuncts which are put in a paren-
thetical form. In the sentence:

Inattention to business in hand, let it be what it will, is the sign of a frivolous mind.

Wilson baffles us again by suggesting that in this case the comma after “will” would be better left out. But, he is delightfully elastic about this little errancy, urging that the overall primary goal of the
printing house policy should be uniformity. What you make up your mind to do, do throughout. 37 Generally, however, Wilson’s view of punctuation is more sound than not.

He believes, like Rousseau, in the practice of using the semicolon in sentences already strewn with commas that divide the smaller portions, and between the several short sentences in a string of short sentences. The colon should be used in its place when there is no conjunction. 38 About the period, or full-point, he is unhappily vague. It serves [in the Treatise on Grammatical Punctuation, page 56] “to indicate the end of a sentence which is assertive in its nature, and independent of any following sentence”; and [in the Compositor’s Text-Book, page 17] to terminate a complete and independent sentence that cannot “be connected in construction with the following sentence”. Being a non-philosopher, he does not, as we see, torture himself about instinctual recognition of a sentential ending. He examines the ambivalent parenthesis, admiration mark and question mark for their hybrid rhetorical-grammatical applications, and brings up nothing new. The dash, continuing to be somewhat controversial, draws from him a cautious endorsement. The abuse of it, he says, has so annoyed some grammarians as to have caused them to question its utility and to desire its destruction as a functional grammatical point. As long, however, as modes of thought are different, and the

style of composition corresponds with the peculiarities of a writer’s mind, so long will it be necessary to use the dash occasionally, with the view to developing his meaning.

He thereupon lists eight rules for the dash. 39

Thus the kindly Wilson wobbles along the avenues laid out by more sophisticated intellects of his period, making it rather difficult to admire him in quite the way that he was admired in his time. He perpetuated the grace of Lindley Murray, who had also specialized in serving up established principles with wholesome human flaw.

37. Wilson, Compositor’s Text-Book, 10, 14.
39. Wilson, Grammatical Punctuation, 71; English Punctuation, 91.
Wilson's low-flying intelligence, decoupled from suspect philosophy and not too far in advance of his audience, seemed just the ticket for the democratized readers he was addressing. Perhaps too, his insider's knowledge of book production gave his voice particular weight. In any case, Wilson was enormously influential. His unqueried acceptance of the two kinds of punctuation, one for the laying out of written syntax and the other to mark those pauses "which are requisite for an accurate reading or delivery" reveals the emergent public perception of the differences between logical and rhetorical pointing. The time was ripe for simple good judgment to prevail. The reading eye was habituating to the retrieval of sense from strings of letters on the page and was no longer in need of elaborate cues to draw forth the subtleties of emphasis. Unlike the maverick rhetorician Hugh Doherty, Wilson was content to put up with that.40

Wilson's "Hints on the Preparation of 'Copy' and on Proofreading"—the new section in his 1856 *English Punctuation* volume—gives an interesting view of disturbance inside the printing house, where so much of punctuation's history was developed. As a typographer, Wilson was in a good position to notice things beyond the range of authors and professional grammarians. The writer, he advises—with an understandably adversarial air—must learn to undertake more responsibility for the end product. Since the writer is the producer of ideas, he must be the one to ensure the clarity of their presentation. He should see that his interlineations have been introduced with sufficient directness and if points have been omitted, he will supply them and if erroneously made, correct them. On no account should paragraphing be left to the compositor. Bad copy slows the compositor. And the corrector should not be left to root out the errors of the compositor nor to conceive the unexpressed thoughts of the author.

Briefly, the process of copy preparation during the decade in which Wilson writes is as follows. The corrector is given first proof and copy. He checks to assure that page lengths and margins are equal, and that the folios and signatures are all in place. Then a boy

reads aloud to him from the manuscript. While that is in progress, the corrector’s chief aim

is to make the print an accurate representation of the author’s writing, or mode of expression: but his attention is also devoted to the spelling of the words, in accordance with some authorized standard; and to the punctuation, that it may develop the construction of the sentences, and the meaning intended.

The corrector ordinarily does not change ideas, improve style, or correct grammatical blunders. He can, however, mark them for query. Following that, the second proof is given to the proofreader. The proofreader places the two proofs side by side and minutely compares them. The author too attacks the proof sheets and [unless distance prevents him] brings his changes and complaints to bear. Before the job is done, third proofs will be forthcoming.\(^{41}\)

Obviously, the effort required for a perfect rendering into print of original authorial insight was immense. A few presses (most notably in Scotland) made a fetish of meticulousness, as the following publisher’s advertisement illustrates:

The correction of the press has been conducted with the most sedulous attention, each sheet having been read several times, by three different Correctors.

Given that the necessary training for a reliable corrector would be expensive, it is not startling to learn that the fees paid for learned correcting in the period of the above advertisement (1812) were very heavy, “as the Oxford ledgers show”.\(^{42}\) It is again no surprise to discover that commercial pressures in succeeding decades tended to shortcut expenses of this nature, on the grounds no doubt that the reading public was now quite adept at skirting the various obstacles in a lax and mediocre text. But slack tolerance of this sort disquieted serious book lovers. Wilson stood with them. The hammering home of grammatical and punctuational dogma continued to be a mission.


A GLIMPSE OF THE CREATING MIND

As it is always informative to enter into an admired author’s private moment of creation and to see him draft his composition at the very strike of inspiration, we will pause briefly to inspect a British Library prose manuscript from this first half of the nineteenth century. As was found to have been the case in almost every examined holograph specimen up to the middle of the nineteenth century, Dickens too placed his quotation marks directly above the finishing stop or dash. The exigencies of type face eventually brought this reasonable custom to an end, and forced the comma or period to one or the other side—frequently without regard for meaning—causing a displacement, which in itself makes an interesting story. The following episode from The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, dated 1836-37 is herewith transcribed exactly from Charles Dickens’ racing script. The version beneath it, with the replacement of commas for dashes and the insertion of standard quotation marks, comes from its first printing (in serial form), shortly after.

“So he is”—said Mr. Pickwick, lightening up “Good boy, that. I’ll give him a shilling presently. Now then Sam, wheel away.”

“Hold on Sir”—replied Mr. Weller invigorated with the prospect of refreshments “Out o’ the vay young leathers. If you walley my precious life don’t upset me, as the gen’lm’n said to the driver when they was a carryin’ him to Tyburn.” And quickening his pace to a sharp run, Mr. Weller wheeled his master nimbly to the green hill, shot him dextrously out, by the very side of the basket, and proceeded to unpack it with the utmost dispatch.

“Weal pie”—said Mr. Weller soliloquizing as he arrayed the tables on the grass. “Wery good thing is a weal pie when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it an’t kittens; and arter all though, where’s the odds, when theyre so like weal, that the very piemen theirselves, don’t know the difference?”

(British Library 39182)
The first printing of *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1836) was in serial form. The above is a photograph of the cover of the initial number. Courtesy of the Syracuse University Library.
“So he is,” said Mr. Pickwick, brightening up. “Good boy, that. I’ll give him a shilling, presently. Now, then, Sam, wheel away.”

“Hold on, Sir,” said Mr. Weller, invigorated with the prospect of refreshments. “Out of the vay, young leathers. If you walley my precious life don’t upset me, as the gen’l’man said to the driver, when they was a carryin’ him to Tyburn.” And quickening his pace to a sharp run, Mr. Weller wheeled his master nimbly to the green hill, shot him dexterously out by the very side of the basket, and proceeded to unpack it with the utmost dispatch.

“Weal pie,” said Mr. Weller, soliloquising, as he arranged the eatables on the grass. “Wery good thing is a weal pie, when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it an’t kittens; and arter all though, where’s the odds, when they’re so like weal that the wery piemen themselves don’t know the difference?”


THE FRENCH RESOLUTION

In 1849 a learned rationale for punctuation by J. H. Chauvier, a Frenchman, was translated into English. Its publication in London marked, for the Englishman at least, a victory in mankind’s two-millennial struggle to come to grips with punctuation. By this time continental opinion on pointing matters—always in advance of “our friends beyond the channel” (as Philip Withers might have put it, had he not been a “goddam” himself)—had attained a sophistication worthy of twentieth-century approval. The Anglo-Saxon north simply adopted what was useful from the probings of the so-called logical French mind, and wisely let the rest go.

By the time now under discussion, the philosopher-grammarians had sufficiently sorted matters out between the two basic pointing styles (elocutionary or rhetorical, and syntactical, logical, or grammatical) to instruct, more or less consensually, an army of practising pedagogical-grammarians. The grammar of English was
better understood now and better taught; the instruments for dis­tinquishing the grammatical segments of a written sentence were also better understood. The printing press was in place to imple­ment and to popularize in the schools the style decreed by pundits to be ‘correct’. Through this confluence of inducements, the long rambling statements of Dryden’s time were gradually brought to heel—as were also, capital letter usage, comma usage, spellings, and vocabulary. Nevertheless, not all was at peace. Throughout the nineteenth century, grammarians of all ranks would continue to re­define what they already knew and to fiddle with recalcitrant inexp­licable—always in the interests of greater perspicuity; while teachers boxed the ears of their dull pupils.

The translation of J. H. Chauvier’s thesis, complete with neces­sary changes and additions for an English audience, was made by J. B. Huntington and entitled, A Treatise on Punctuation: in which is explained, and demonstrated clearly what is a sentence, or its member, a period, or its member; what signs must follow these elements of discourse; and the only law which governs the use of the signs, leaving very little doubt about the pointing politics of the Chauvier-Huntington team. And indeed, before so much as leafing through the Preface, we are steeling ourselves for a vigorous read.

... and even when the sentences are written in a true gram­matical style, we not infrequently find, nay almost invariably, that punctuation has been neglected, or performed in a very slovenly manner.43

What is that interesting little mark after the word “find”? Suspen­sively, Huntington (we will refer to the authors hereafter simply as ‘Huntington’) saves that for later in his discourse, preferring meanwhile to keep us anxiously on the edges of our chairs.

First, we must be assured that he intends rigor. He will seek out the “rules that unalterably determine the proper use” of punctuation and set forth distinctly the grammatical nature of the signs used “and how each has its proper place unchangeable, and fixed”. Ad­

mittedly severe and in no way a barrel of fun, he nevertheless mani-
manifests a knowledge sufficiently imposing to hold an audience. His
will be a book for authors. In written matter punctuation should
not be oratorical (that is, related to pauses coming from sound), but
instead locked with grammar, where words are the “signs of thought”
and precision and consistency are paramount. It is stupid to leave
such a task to the printer’s discretion, for he, being habituated to ar-
bitrary rules, frequently misapprehends and punctuates accord-
ingly, to the ruination of both grammar and meaning.

Much confusion, Huntington tells us, has arisen from an inexact
understanding of these two (the elocutionary and grammatical)
ways of pointing. (Interesting in this regard is the fact that the
French Academy publication of 1835 discarded all reference to
the oratorical implications of punctuation, and beyond the com-
ment that a comma is used to denote a slight pause in reading, its
dictionary does not discuss values in oratory.) The quintessential
punctuation should relate solely to written thought and render
comprehension easy by permitting the reader to see the compo-
nents of an entire sentence at a glance.

The genius, the nature, the principle of punctuation rests
on [the following] double foundation laid by the meta-
physicians, and deep-thinkers of all ages, [to wit]: We must
not separate any words which express a connection of ideas neces-
sarily continued, but we must separate words when they cease to
express such connection.44

This position, so familiar to us by now (cf. Stackhouse, Addison,
and Doherty), represents the groundswell of mid-nineteenth-cen-
tury opinion about the points.

Huntington continues: the only true stops that remain contro-
versial and whose “false use swarms in our books”—that is, the
comma, the semicolon, and the colon—have nothing to do with
“pulmonic weakness” or “the reader’s repose”. Since the marks of
interrogation and admiration, along with the dash (that ‘coverup’

44. Huntington, Treatise on Punctuation, x, xvii, 5, 17, 28.
for lack of grammatical knowledge), are all steeped in oratorical impurities, he does not consider their grammatical worth. Their use in clarifying written matter would be vastly improved if the true stops (the comma, the semicolon, and the colon) were placed beneath them to indicate what portion of the sentence they bear upon. Naturally, such fastidiousness was not destined to survive. Huntington concludes (as had Rousseau, Francillon, and Wilson) that the art of oral reading can merely draw upon the values of true stops (that is, cannot be not bound to them slavishly) for guidance to the necessary pauses and voice inflexions required by the context of the passage. "As long as grammarians wander between the art of reading and that of punctuating, there will be obscure rules and arbitrary application."45

Huntington, like Wilson, remarks also on the two-tiered (fixed and floating) aspects of punctuation. All punctuation (whose domain by now is perceived to be only the visual one) must seek to bring out the grammatical elements—that is its fixed and scientific dimension. Thus, the signs of punctuation should be placed so as to mark the boundaries of the sentence divisions and not to intrude within those boundaries, where they will do nothing but destroy the integrity of the content they were meant to preserve. Only when the delineation of the grammatical parts is assured, may the secondary and variable artistic elements be addressed. These are the "undecided cases where custom and rules are at variance"—most noticeably in the rhetorical aspects of the dash, parenthesis, and question and admiration marks, but also, for example, in the use of capital or lowercase letters, the comma for the last of a series or for conjunctive expressions like 'however' and 'indeed', etc. Artistic pointing will reflect the tone and accent of the passion that inspires them, by which the author "throws a sudden and unforeseen movement into the sentence and renders his style dramatic in effect". Contrary to some opinion (Rousseau’s and Wilson’s), the length of a sentence should play no part in whether a comma or semicolon is set in. As Huntington is not proposing to deal in elegance

45. Ibid., xv, 17–19, 23–24, 73, 100.
of style in this book, he offers no advice on a preferred length or frequency of parenthesis—only that of itself it be properly punctuated.

To support his thesis about the connection of necessarily continued ideas, Huntington must wrestle with the notion of a period. Quite rightly, he complains that dictionaries inadequately define the word in more or less the following way: “The period is a sentence compounded of several propositions, or of several members whose connection forms a perfect meaning”. But when is the meaning complete? Confusingly for the modern ear, he himself uses the word ‘sentence’ interchangeably with ‘member’, and means by it either a member of a string of members making up a period, or a member which can stand alone as complete. The verb is the mainstay of his sentence (and/or member) and constitutes the skeleton of a thought. (As the necessary verb may be simply ‘understood’, it should be remarked that this definition does not satisfy the modern conventional notion of a clause.) Thus, a single thought in grammatical terms constitutes only a simple sentence, or member of a sentence; and vice versa, every sentence (and/or member) represents a single and only a single thought. By that formula each word is an idea supporting the fulfillment of that thought, that is, individual words flesh out the verb skeleton, giving it the qualifications and aspects necessary to making it complete. The sentence, then, is understood to be fulfilled when a verb (present or implied) is sufficiently supported to convey some thought. Huntington does not enter into discussions of how additions to sentence members of adverbial conjunctions like ‘since’ or ‘when’, or the adverbial ‘both . . . and’ detract from that sense of sentence member fulfillment.46

When the verb has been dropped, the sentence will be represented elliptically, that is, by showing only some portion of itself. This prefiguring of twentieth-century deep-structure grammar is illustrated by the following example:

46. Huntington, Treatise on Punctuation, 7, 21, 102.
Before, during and after this affair you have acted like an honourable man.

which is, in fact, three sentences:

Before this affair you have acted like an honourable man.
During this affair you have acted like an honourable man.
After this affair you have acted like an honourable man.

Since we are dealing then with three sentences of equal weight (no one of the instances of honourable behavior being more critical than the others, as is illustrated by the compound structure selected to convey the group), we must separate each from the others, by commas or their equivalent ‘and’. Similar elliptic sentences are evident in series of adjectives, or series of nouns, or verbs. They are also inherent in opening prepositional phrases which modify the action of the subject rather than the main verb. All of these instances will participate in the compounded nature of sentences and require inflexibly to be separated by means of the comma, whose writ, Huntington stresses, lies only in separating compound structures. Every compound sentence should have only as many commas as there are members or thoughts expressed. The popular, much over-used comma should not, as it so often does, mark the spot where elision has excised a verb. One should beware of sentences like the following, which demonstrates the prevailing error of applying two commas to break two thoughts into three parts.

The love of glory excites great minds, the love of money, vulgar minds.

Nor should the comma ever be used to separate a verb from its nominative or subject, a verb from its adverb, a verb from the object it governs, nor be placed between two words “whose connection forms a simple sentence [and/or member], a single proposition, or a connection of necessarily continued ideas. Irrational practice of this sort merely contributes to a career of ‘endless amphibologies’.” So please avoid it.

There must be no punctuation to separate words which compose a single sentence, i.e., member. Each word, being an idea, will
adhere to others in order to transmit a thought; and each of these thoughts, being an aggregate of ideas necessarily continued, must maintain its integrity. Together, these two tenets—marking the boundaries between thoughts, and maintaining the integrity of the thoughts themselves—must be considered inviolable, for they both augment and insure the intelligibility of the written line. This so often repeated entreaty brings to mind the sins of the heretic Wilson, who advocated the comma before an infinitive used nominatively and so uncontritely relished the division of a long subject from its predicate.

Where the comma separates those members of sentences “in which a common idea prevails”, the semicolon separates from each other those members of a period “in which a ruling ‘thought’ prevails” by logical connection over the various member divisions. In the sentence, for example:

To be noble is to prefer honour to interest; to be vile is to prefer interest to honour.

the logical thought connection is the word ‘prefer’. Therefore, the semicolon is applicable.

Huntington does not approve of those grammarians who advise a semicolon before the conjunctions ‘but’, ‘because’, ‘since’, etc., or use it when they grow weary at the sight of too many commas breaking up subdivisions. Though he did not mention Rousseau’s suggestion that a string of semicolons be relieved by a colon, he would certainly not have approved of that either. For punctuation is nothing if it does not distinguish the sentences and members of a period. Ideally, it springs only from grammatical meaning, and not necessarily from the idea that arises in the mind of the reader, nor even from that idea which the author probably intended to express. Huntington’s prescription for the colon is the standard one, a sturdy survivor of all the preceding years of dissidence and muddle. “A colon terminates every member of a period of which the next member is an elucidation, or explanation”; and, turning the tables: a colon terminates every member which is the development, ex-

47. Huntington, Treatise on Punctuation, 38–53 passim.
planation or elucidation of some following recapitulatory member. Also it may be used in introducing speech on the page.\textsuperscript{48}

To keep the members within the period separated without risk of confusion, Huntington recommends the use of two new stops. The ‘reverse comma’, whose unexplained appearance in the preface so puzzled us, and the ‘straight comma’. The reverse comma, the author informs us, is useful to mark a member which is incidental to and explanatory of a principal member. Any incidental sentence or expression, whether interjectory, apostrophic, or of any other kind intended as incidental, must be placed between two commas—that is, so that the incidental unit may itself be seen as a thought. However, if there are many such incidentals, then a reader will be obliged to devote full attention to collecting them up as he goes along. Most assuredly, the ordinary reader will confound them with the principal. The reverse comma will rescue him from unseemly floundering and help him to “follow the original thoughts of the author with facilities afforded by punctuation”. Thus, every incidental or explanatory sentence should be enclosed by two commas “of opposite curvature, which assume the value of a semi-paranthesis (\texttt{~_,})”.\textsuperscript{49}

To avoid the massing up of look-alike commas in a long compound sentence and also to avoid the conspicuousness and wrong usage of the semicolon, whose legitimate application is for complex sentences only—though you would not know it by the exultant use that others make of it—Huntington offers us the ‘straight comma’, that is, a comma “without curvature”. In dividing the members of compound sentences, where other grammarians have advised the arbitrary insertion of a semicolon merely for balance, we can more properly deploy the more appropriate ‘straight comma’. Watch how expertly it advances the clarity:

\textsuperscript{48} Huntington, Ibid., 28, 60–62, 65–73 passim. Women of today will appreciate the following. Huntington frowns upon “the propriety of scattering with a discreet variety among the sentences commas, semi-colons, and colons so as not to offend the eyes of the reader by a too frequent repetition of the same sign. Ladies without meaning to displease them, seem generally to adopt this rule as their model.”

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 54–55.
The clear, pure, and cool atmosphere, the fresh, varied, and undulating landscape, the rippling, expansive, and transparent waters of the lake, the light, warm, and refreshing breeze, the genial, unclouded, and declining rays of an autumnal sun unite to cheer the careworn student.50

With Huntington we bring to a close the study of this half-century. As has been seen, the unflagging analysis of oral-aural and visual conflict in language both simplified punctuation and rendered it teachable to average folk. The push and pull between favorite and despised doctrines had brought interesting results, though at the stage under inspection here, conclusive opinion was never totally brought together within a single volume. The victorious view discarded rhetorical pointing in general, and in particular refused the elaborate offerings of Walker and Doherty for special all-inclusive marks to extract nuance of meaning from voice sounds. As the public became progressively more comfortable with the experience of rapid visual intake, so it was happy enough to risk misinterpretation without rescue by Huntington-style fastidiousness. To an acceptable extent intuition came to be relied upon in written communication.

Although, in subsequent years, there would always be forays into the thickets of muddle, the huge war was over. Despite the still dispersing mother language, a freer, more lucid global exchange of ideas was at last in place. Punctuation, which had lain for so many centuries snubbed by the exalted, misunderstood by the commoner, and relegated by all to obscurity and confusion, was now of sufficient scientific and artistic standing to be discussed in nearly every publication having to do with language, grammar, composition, or style.

POST-STANDARD AWARD CITATION, 1992
For Phyllis Freeman Poushter
and David L. Poushter

Phyllis Freeman Poushter and David L. Poushter: We honor you today for your generous gift of fore-edge paintings to the Syracuse University Library.

Natives of Syracuse, graduates of Nottingham High School and of Syracuse University—Phyllis as an illustration major in the College of Art and David as a physician trained in the College of Medicine—you have both contributed much to this community since your return in 1953. Your gifts are best known by those closest to you: your family and friends, those in your synagogue, and your professional colleagues and patients. Your passion for books and particularly for those exotic specimens possessed of paintings hidden under the gilt on their fore-edges sprang from Phyllis’s childhood love of such books in her own family’s library. Book collecting soon, if not immediately, became a shared passion after a visit, more than thirty years ago, to the rare book department of J. L Hudson Department Store where you acquired a copy of Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, the first of what was to become a collection numbering one hundred thirty-five volumes containing more than one hundred fifty painted scenes.

Your fascination with fore-edge paintings took you back to Hudson’s and to such other fine establishments as Witherspoon’s, Totteridge’s, Hartfield’s, and Bartfield’s. In your search for books so uniquely embellished you traveled both widely and close to home. Your book collecting expeditions not only brightened up many medical conferences but also, after nearly thirty years of focused and discriminating collecting, yielded one of the finest collections of fore-edge paintings ever assembled.
Phyllis and David Poushter, recipients of the 1992 Post-Standard Award, with David Starn at the Library Associates December 1991 Chancellor’s Holiday Reception.

In presenting this valuable collection to the Syracuse University Library you make available to present and future generations of students an extraordinary gathering of beautifully painted books. It is most fitting that you should jointly receive the 1992 Post-Standard Award for Distinguished Service to the Syracuse University Library.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Noted below are selected additions to the historical and graphic arts collections in the George Arents Research Library.

DePol, John
In 1959, wood engraver John DePol presented the Library with a collection of his work and designated Syracuse University as the repository for his papers. Mr. DePol’s engraving of three eighteenth-century men examining a book in a library appeared on the caption title of the first number of this journal in April
1958 and has been employed as the Library Associates emblem for thirty-four years. Recently, Mr. DePol, a Life Member of Library Associates, contributed an extensive collection of books, pamphlets, and keepsakes, together with a large number of his original prints. These materials join the DePol Collection of prints, books, proofs, sketches, and wood blocks first established by the artist more than thirty years ago. The collection now provides an extensive record of the career of one of America’s pre-eminent wood engravers. Gift of John DePol.

Fore-edge Paintings
With a recent gift of 128 volumes, the Library now has one of the world’s largest collections of fore-edge paintings, an art form that dates from mid-seventeenth-century England. The paintings on these books, typically portraits of literary figures, landscapes or buildings, are revealed by fanning the edges opposite the bindings. In this collection the oldest volume, dated 1728, is a copy of *De Structura Orationis*, a book of literary composition and rhetoric by the ancient Greek writer Dionysius. The edition marks the first publication of this work in England. It contains text in the original Greek with Latin translations on the facing pages. Also included are works by Samuel Johnson, Milton, and Cervantes. Gift of David L. and Phyllis Freeman Poushter.

Munsell Collection
In 1984 Henry S. Bannister gave the Library his extensive collection of books and pamphlets printed by Joel Munsell (1808–1880) of Albany. An exceptional printer and discriminating publisher, Munsell produced some of the finest books in mid-nineteenth-century America. Munsell’s scholarly and antiquarian interests, his concern for typography and design, and his passion to preserve historical documents through print were uncharacteristic of the majority of nineteenth-century American printers. Towards the end of his career, Munsell published his *Bibliotheca Munselliana* (1872). A fascinating document, it catalogs the products of the press for the period 1828 to 1870. However, many items were omitted, and there is no record of the work is-
sued by the press for the years after 1871. Munsell continued to produce books until his death on 15 January 1880. The press was carried on by his son Frank until 1895 when, because of declining business, the presses were sold. Other members of the Munsell family continued to issue occasional pieces, until the last known work carrying the Joel Munsell’s Sons imprint was issued in 1950.

Since the mid-1950s Mr. Bannister, assisted by his wife Olive until her death, has collected Munsell imprints; and beginning in 1980, the Bannisters began systematically to compile a bibliographical record of the Munsell firm’s output. Their bibliography now includes 3694 entries for the period 1825 to 1950, which is a 61 percent increase over the 2280 entries in Munsell’s own Bibliotheca. Over the last eight years, as a result of Mr. Bannister’s many gifts and of purchases made possible by Library Associates, the Syracuse collection of Munsell imprints now numbers 525 titles and represents one of the major collections in the country. Recently, Munsell’s biographer, David S. Edelstein, and Professor David Tatham presented the Library with additional Munsell imprints.

These Munsell books and pamphlets are listed below. It should be noted that the Library also has received a large number of minor Munsell imprints, including almanacs, city directories, school and college catalogs, church and fraternal constitutions, membership lists and by-laws, none of which are individually listed here. Unless otherwise noted, the following publications bear Munsell’s Albany imprint.


Bleeker, Leonard. *The Order Book of Capt. Leonard Bleeker, Major*


Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi by Cavelier, St. Cosme, Le Sueur, Gravier, and Guignas with an Introduction, Notes, and an Index by John Gilmary Shea (1861). Purchased with Library Associates funds.


Hyde, Alvan. A Sermon, Delivered at the Funeral of Mr. Nathan Ball, Who Departed this Life December 29th 1797 in the 62nd Year of His Age (1862). Purchased with Library Associates funds.


Neill, Edward Duffield. *Biographical Sketch of Doctor Jonathan Potts, Director General of the Hospitals of the Northern and Middle Department in the War of the Revolution, With Extracts from His Correspondence* (1863). Purchased with Library Associates funds.


Read, John Meredith. *A Historical Inquiry Concerning Henry Hud- son, His Friends, Relatives and Early Life, His Connection with the Muscovy Company and Discovery of Delaware Bay* (1866). Gift of David S. Edelstein.


Wallace, John William. *An Address Delivered at the Celebration by the New York Historical Society, May 20, 1863, of the Two Hun-
Official device of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.

dredth Birth Day of Mr. William Bradford, Who Introduced the Art of Printing into the Middle Colonies of British America (1863). Gift of David S. Edelstein.


New York Society for the Suppression of Vice
Annual Report. Vols. 1–53 (1875–1926). The New York Society for the Suppression of Vice was founded in 1873 by Anthony Comstock, its leader for forty years until his death in 1915. The
first such organization in the country, the Society enjoyed considerable support throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, though it was not universally popular. The tighter postal obscenity law, passed by Congress in 1873, and similar state statutes came about through Comstock’s vigorous lobbying efforts, and the resultant body of law became known as “Comstock laws”. The work of the Society is summarized in these annual reports, which include statistics on activities such as the following: “Indecent playing cards destroyed”; “Obscene pictures, framed, on walls of saloons seized and destroyed”; “Miles traveled by Agent outside N.Y. City”; “Microscopic Pictures for charms, knives, etc. seized and destroyed”; and “Obscene plays stopped, or Places of Amusement closed”. Purchased with Library Associates funds.

Onondaga County

Map of Onondaga County, New York, from Actual Surveys. By
L. Fagan under the Direction of Sidney & Neff (Syracuse: E. H. Babcock & Co., 1852). A hand-colored wall map detailing land ownership in the county and showing buildings, names of occupants, roads and toll gates, canals, waterways, and railroads. This is perhaps the first printed land-ownership map of Onondaga County. Purchased with Library Associates funds.

Mark F. Weimer
Curator of Special Collections
PROGRAM FOR 1992–93

The Syracuse University Library Associates program for the academic year 1992–93 will be as follows:

September 25, 1992
Friday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library

October 23, 1992
Friday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library

November 5–7, 1992
Thursday–Saturday
1916 Room, Bird Library
(times to be announced)

November 10, 1992
Tuesday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library

December 11, 1992
Friday, 5 p.m.
Chancellor’s Residence
300 Comstock Avenue

December 12, 1992
Saturday, 12:00 noon
600 Bird Library
(Exhibition closes 3/31/93)

February 11, 1993
Thursday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library

Thomas Pinney
Professor of English, Pomona College
Editor, *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*
*KIPLING AT SYRACUSE*

Paul R. Dolan
Director, ABC News, NewsOne Services
*WILLOWBROOK: TWENTY YEARS AFTER*

Book Sale
Co-sponsored by the Library Associates and the Syracuse University Library

Ian Willison
Editor, *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*
*ASPECTS OF PRINTING AND PUBLISHING IN GREAT BRITAIN*

Chancellor’s Holiday Reception
(By invitation to members only)

“SAY! DIS IS GRATE STUFF”:
*THE YELLOW KID AND THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN COMIC*
Exhibition opening

Amanda Porterfield
Professor of Religion
Syracuse University
*RECURRING TENDENCIES IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN CHRISTIAN WOMEN*
March 25, 1993
Thursday, 4 p.m.
1916 Room, Bird Library

Richard D. Olson
Research Professor of Psychology
University of New Orleans
Keynote Address to The Yellow Kid Exhibition
THE YELLOW KID AND THE BIRTH OF THE AMERICAN COMIC

May 14, 1993
Friday, 12 noon
Goldstein Student Center
South Campus

Spring Luncheon and Annual Meeting
Dr. Patricia Donlon
Director, National Library of Ireland
IN MEMORIAM

After a courageous battle with cancer, EILEEN SNYDER died on November 23, 1991. Not long before, in a Courier essay on nineteenth-century explorer-naturalists, she had observed that the questing spirit is irrepressible. Now, in sadness, we reflect on how well these words also apply to her. She was a remarkable person—warm-hearted, generous, blessed with wide-ranging intellectual and artistic interests—a person who never lacked the determination and willingness to undertake what others could not or would not tackle. As Geology and Physics Librarian, she served the Syracuse University community with unusual understanding and energy. All who knew her remember her smile and her friendly good cheer. In particular, the Library Associates, for whom she worked hard as author of Courier articles, Program Chairman for six years, and instigator of and laborer for our annual Book Fair, are affectionately and sorely missing her.
THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES, founded in 1953, is a society whose efforts are devoted to the enrichment of the Syracuse University Library and especially the rare book and manuscript collections. The Associates make it possible to strengthen these collections through the acquisition of unusual books, manuscripts, and other research materials that are rare and often of such value that the Library would not otherwise be able to acquire them.

Those with an interest in history, literature, book collecting, and the graphic arts are welcome to join the Associates. Perquisites of membership include general use of the Syracuse University Library’s facilities, as well as invitations to exhibitions, Associates-sponsored lectures, and special events of the University Library. Members at the patron level may borrow books. In addition, all members will receive our incidental publications, typographic keepsakes, and the Syracuse University Library Associates Courier, a semiannual publication that contains articles related to unusual and interesting aspects of the Library’s holdings and, in particular, to rare books, manuscripts, and archival collections in the George Argets Research Library.

SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS are as follows: Benefactor, $500; Sustaining member, $200; Patron, $100; Individual member, $50; Faculty and Staff of Syracuse University, $35; Senior citizen, $25; Students, $15. Checks, made payable to Syracuse University Library Associates, should be sent to the Secretary, 600 E. S. Bird Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. 13244-2010. For further information about the programs and activities of the Library Associates, telephone (315) 443-2697.

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