

Period Styles

A Punctuated History

GREEK AND LATIN MANUSCRIPTS WERE USUALLY WRITTEN WITH NO SPACE BETWEEN WORDS UNTIL AROUND THE NINTH CENTURY AD ALTHOUGH ROMAN INSCRIPTIONS LIKE THE FAMOUS TRAJAN COLUMN SOMETIMES SEPARATED WORDS WITH A CENTERED DOT. EVEN AFTER SPACING BECAME COMMON IT REMAINED HAPHAZARD. FOR EXAMPLE OFTEN A PREPOSITION WAS LINKED TO ANOTHER WORD. EARLY GREEK WRITING RAN IN LINES ALTERNATING FROM LEFT TO RIGHT AND RIGHT TO LEFT. THIS CONVENTION WAS CALLED BOUSTREPHEDON MEANING AS THE OX PLOWS. IT WAS CONVENIENT FOR LARGE CARVED MONUMENTS BUT BOUSTREPHEDON HINDERED THE READING AND WRITING OF SMALLER TEXTS AND SO THE LEFT TO RIGHT DIRECTION BECAME DOMINANT. A CENTERED DOT DIVIDED WORDS WHICH SPLIT AT THE END OF A LINE IN EARLY GREEK AND LATIN MANUSCRIPTS. IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY A MARK SIMILAR TO THE MODERN HYPHEN WAS INTRODUCED. MEDIEVAL SCRIBES OFTEN FILLED SHORT LINES WITH MARKS AND ORNAMENTS. THE PERFECTLY JUSTIFIED LINE BECAME THE STANDARD AFTER THE INVENTION OF PRINTING. THE EARLIEST GREEK LITERARY TEXTS WERE DIVIDED INTO UNITS WITH A HORIZONTAL LINE CALLED A PARAGRAPHOS. PARAGRAPHING REMAINS OUR CENTRAL METHOD OF ORGANIZING PROSE AND YET ALTHOUGH PARAGRAPHS ARE ANCIENT THEY ARE NOT GRAMMATICALLY ESSENTIAL. THE CORRECTNESS OF A PARAGRAPH IS A MATTER OF STYLE HAVING NO STRICT RULES.

LATER GREEK DOCUMENTS SOMETIMES MARKED PARAGRAPHS BY PLACING THE FIRST LETTER OF THE NEW LINE IN THE MARGIN THIS LETTER COULD BE ENLARGED COLORED OR ORNATE

TODAY THE OUTDENT IS OFTEN USED FOR LISTS WHOSE ITEMS ARE IDENTIFIED ALPHABETICALLY AS IN DICTIONARIES OR BIBLIOGRAPHIES ¶ A MARK CALLED CAPITULUM WAS INTRODUCED IN EARLY LATIN MANUSCRIPTS ¶ IT FUNCTIONED VARIOUSLY AS A POINTER OR SEPARATOR ¶ IT USUALLY OCCURRED INSIDE A RUNNING BLOCK OF TEXT WHICH DID NOT BREAK ONTO A NEW LINE ¶ THIS TECHNIQUE SAVED SPACE ¶ IT ALSO PRESERVED THE VISUAL DENSITY OF THE PAGE WHICH EMULATED THE CONTINUOUS UNBROKEN FLOW OF SPEECH

BY THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY THE INDENT WAS THE STANDARD PARAGRAPH BREAK IN WESTERN PROSE THE RISE OF PRINTING ENCOURAGED THE USE OF SPACE TO ORGANIZE TEXTS A GAP IN A PRINTED PAGE FEELS MORE DELIBERATE THAN A GAP IN A MANUSCRIPT BECAUSE IT IS MADE BY A SLUG OF LEAD RATHER THAN A FLUX IN HANDWRITING

EVEN AFTER THE ASCENDENCE OF THE INDENT THE CAPITULUM REMAINED IN USE FOR IDENTIFYING SECTIONS AND CHAPTERS ALONG WITH OTHER MARKS LIKE THE SECTION § THE DAGGER † THE DOUBLE DAGGER ‡ THE ASTERISK * AND NUMEROUS LESS CONVENTIONAL ORNAMENTS ¶ SUCH MARKS HAVE BEEN USED SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES FOR CITING PASSAGES AND KEYING MARGINAL REFERENCES † THE INVENTION OF PRINTING MADE MORE ELABORATE AND PRECISE REFERENCING POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE PAGES OF A TEXT WERE CONSISTENT FROM ONE COPY TO THE NEXT ‡

ALL PUNCTUATION WAS USED IDIOSYNCRATICALLY UNTIL AFTER THE INVENTION OF PRINTING WHICH REVOLUTIONIZED WRITING BY DISSEMI-

NATING GRAMMATICAL AND TYPOGRAPHICAL STANDARDS BEFORE PRINTING PUNCTUATION VARIED WILDLY FROM REGION TO REGION AND SCRIBE TO SCRIBE THE LIBRARIAN AT ALEXANDRIA WHO WAS NAMED ARISTOPHANES DESIGNED A GREEK PUNCTUATION SYSTEM CIRCA 260 BC HIS SYSTEM MARKED THE SHORTEST SEGMENTS OF DISCOURSE WITH A CENTERED DOT · CALLED A COMMA · AND MARKED THE LONGER SECTIONS WITH A LOW DOT CALLED A COLON . A HIGH DOT SET OFF THE LONGEST UNIT ' HE CALLED IT PERIODOS ' THE THREE DOTS WERE EASILY DISTINGUISHED FROM ONE ANOTHER BECAUSE ALL THE LETTERS WERE THE SAME HEIGHT · PROVIDING A CONSISTENT FRAME OF REFERENCE · LIKE A MUSICAL STAFF ·

ALTHOUGH THE TERMS COMMA · COLON · AND PERIOD PERSIST · THE SHAPE OF THE MARKS AND THEIR FUNCTION TODAY ARE DIFFERENT · DURING THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH CENTURIES NEW MARKS APPEARED IN SOME MANUSCRIPTS INCLUDING THE SEMICOLON ; THE INVERTED SEMICOLON † ; AND A QUESTION MARK THAT RAN HORIZONTALLY ~ A THIN DIAGONAL SLASH / CALLED A VIRGULE / WAS SOMETIMES USED LIKE A COMMA IN MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS AND EARLY PRINTED BOOKS . SUCH MARKS ARE THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN CUES FOR READING ALOUD ; THEY INDICATED A RISING , FALLING , OR LEVEL TONE OF VOICE . THE USE OF PUNCTUATION BY SCRIBES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION BY READERS WAS BY NO MEANS CONSISTENT , HOWEVER , AND MARKS MIGHT BE ADDED TO A MANUSCRIPT BY ANOTHER SCRIBE WELL AFTER IT WAS WRITTEN .

EARLY PUNCTUATION WAS LINKED TO ORAL DELIVERY. FOR EXAMPLE THE TERMS COMMA, COLON, AND PERIODOS, AS THEY WERE USED BY ARISTOPHANES, COME FROM THE THEORY OF RHETORIC, WHERE THEY REFER TO RHYTHMICAL UNITS OF SPEECH. AS A SOURCE OF RHETORICAL RATHER THAN

GRAMMATICAL CUES, PUNCTUATION SERVED TO REGULATE PACE AND GIVE EMPHASIS TO PARTICULAR PHRASES, RATHER THAN TO MARK THE LOGICAL STRUCTURE OF SENTENCES. MANY OF THE PAUSES IN RHETORICAL DELIVERY, HOWEVER, NATURALLY CORRESPOND WITH GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE: FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN A PAUSE FALLS BETWEEN TWO CLAUSES OR SENTENCES.

THE SYSTEM OF ARISTOPHANES WAS RARELY USED BY THE GREEKS, BUT IT WAS REVIVED BY THE LATIN GRAMMARIAN DONATUS IN THE FOURTH CENTURY A.D. ACCORDING TO DONATUS PUNCTUATION SHOULD FALL WHEREVER THE SPEAKER WOULD NEED A MOMENT'S REST; IT PROVIDED BREATHING CUES FOR READING ALOUD. SOME LATER WRITERS MODIFIED THE THEORIES OF DONATUS, RETURNING TO A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO PUNCTUATION, IN WHICH THE MARKS SERVED TO CONTROL RHYTHM AND EMPHASIS. AFTER THE INVENTION OF PRINTING, GRAMMARIANS BEGAN TO BASE PUNCTUATION ON STRUCTURE RATHER THAN ON SPOKEN SOUND: MARKS SUCH AS THE COMMA, COLON, AND PERIOD SIGNALLED SOME OF THE GRAMMATICAL PARTS OF A SENTENCE. THUS PUNCTUATION CAME TO BE DEFINED ARCHITECTURALLY RATHER THAN ORALLY. THE COMMA BECAME A MARK OF SEPARATION, AND THE SEMICOLON WORKED AS A JOINT BETWEEN INDEPENDENT CLAUSES; THE COLON INDICATED GRAMMATICAL DISCONTINUITY: WRITING WAS SLOWLY DISTANCED FROM SPEECH.

RHETORIC, STRUCTURE, AND PACE ARE ALL AT WORK IN MODERN ENGLISH PUNCTUATION, WHOSE RULES WERE ESTABLISHED BY THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. ALTHOUGH STRUCTURE IS THE STRONGEST RATIONALE TODAY, PUNCTUATION REMAINS A LARGELY INTUITIVE ART. A WRITER CAN OFTEN CHOOSE AMONG SEVERAL CORRECT WAYS TO PUNCTUATE A PASSAGE, EACH WITH A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT RHYTHM AND MEANING.

THERE WAS NO CONSISTENT MARK FOR QUOTATIONS BEFORE THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY. DIRECT SPEECH WAS USUALLY ANNOUNCED ONLY BY PHRASES LIKE HE SAID. „SOMETIMES A DOUBLE COMMA WAS USED IN MANUSCRIPTS TO POINT OUT IMPORTANT SENTENCES AND WAS LATER USED TO ENCLOSE “QUOTATIONS.” ENGLISH PRINTERS BEFORE THE NINETEENTH CENTURY OFTEN EDGED ONE MARGIN OF A QUOTE WITH DOUBLE COMMAS. THIS CONVENTION PRESENTED TEXT AS A SPATIAL PLANE RATHER THAN A TEMPORAL LINE, FRAMING THE QUOTED PASSAGE LIKE A PICTURE. PRINTING, BY PRODUCING IDENTICAL COPIES OF A TEXT, ENCOURAGED THE STANDARDIZATION OF QUOTATION MARKS. PRINTED BOOKS COMMONLY INCORPORATED MATERIAL FROM OTHER SOURCES.

BOTH THE GREEK AND ROMAN ALPHABETS WERE ORIGINALLY MAJUSCULE: ALL LETTERS WERE THE SAME HEIGHT. greek and roman minuscule letters developed out of rapidly written scripts called cursive, which were used for business correspondence. minuscule characters have limbs extending above and below a uniform body. alcuin, advisor to charlemagne, introduced the “carolingian” minuscule, which spread rapidly through europe between the eighth and twelfth centuries. during the dissemination of the carolingian script, condensed, black minuscule styles of handwriting, now called “gothic,” were also developing; they eventually replaced the classical carolingian.

A carolingian manuscript sometimes marked the beginning of a sentence with an enlarged letter. This character was often a majuscule, presaging the modern use of minuscule and majuscule as double features of the same alphabet. Both scripts were still considered separate manners of writing, however.

"As he Sets on, he [the printer] considers
 how to Point his Work,
 viz. when to Set, where; where. where to make () where []
 and when to make a Break....
 When he meets with proper Names of Persons or Places
 he Sets them in Italick...
 and Sets the first Letter with a Capital,
 or as the Person or Place he finds
 the purpose of the Author to dignifie, all Capitals;
 but then, if he conveniently can,
 he will Set a Space between every Letter...
 to make it shew more Graceful and Stately."

JOSEPH MOXON 1683

In the fifteenth century, the Carolingian script was revived by the Italian humanists. The new script, called "lettera antica," was paired with classical roman capitals. It became the basis of the roman typefaces, which were established as a European norm by the mid-sixteenth century. The terms "uppercase" and "lowercase" refer to the drawers in a printing shop that hold the two fonts. Until recently, Punctuation was an Intuitive Art, ruled by convenience and Intuition. A Printer could Liberally Capitalize the Initial of Any word She deemed worthy of Distinction, as well as Proper Names. The printer was Free to set some Words entirely in C A P I T A L S and to add further emphasis with extra S P A C E S.

The roman typefaces were based on a formal script used for books. *The cursive, rapidly written version of the Carolingian minuscule was employed for business and also for books sold in the less expensive writing shops. Called "antica corsiva" or "cancelleresca," this style of handwriting was the model for the italic typefaces cut for Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1500. Aldus Manutius was a scholar, printer, and businessman. Italic script conserved space, and Aldus developed it for his internationally distributed series of small, inexpensive books. The Aldine italic was paired with Roman capitals. The Italian typo-*

grapher Tagliente advocated *Italic Capitals* in the early sixteenth century. Aldus set entire books in *italic*; it was an autonomous type style, unrelated to roman. In France, however, the roman style was becoming the neutral, generic norm, with *italic* played against it for *contrast*. The pairs UPPER-CASE/lowercase and roman/*italic* each add an inaudible, non-phonetic dimension to the alphabet. Before *italic* became the official auxiliary of roman, scribes and printers had other techniques for marking emphasis, including enlarged, **heavy**, colored, or **gothic** letters. Underlining appeared in some medieval manuscripts, and today it is the conventional substitute for italics in handwritten and typewritten texts. S p a c e is sometimes inserted between letters to declare e m p h a s i s in German and Eastern European book t y p o g r a p h y . **Boldface** fonts were not common until the nineteenth century, when display advertising created a demand for **big, black** types. Most book faces designed since the early twentieth century belong to families of four: roman, *italic*, **bold roman**, and **bold italic**. These are used for systematically marking different kinds of copy, such as headings, captions, body text, notes, and references.

Since the rise of digital production, printed texts have become more visually elaborate—typographic variations are now routinely available to writers and designers. Some recent fonts contain only ornaments and symbols; Carlos Segura's typeface Dingura (ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ ㄨᄃ) consists of mysterious runes that recall the era of manuscript production. During the e-mail incunabula, writers and designers have been using punctuation marks for expressive ends. Punctuated portraits found in electronic correspondence range from the simple "smiley" :-) to such subtle constructions as \$-) [yuppie] or :-I [indifferent].