

# THE NEW YORKER

## THE CRITICS

### BOOKS

#### THE END MATTER

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The nightmare of citation.

Issue of 2003-10-06

Posted 2003-09-29

It is 2:30 A.M. of a Monday, spring semester, 1983. Things are looking extremely good. Forty-eight hours of high-intensity stack work and some inspired typing have produced the thirty-page final paper for Modern European History (Mr. Blague, MW 9-10) that you were supposed to be working on all semester but that an unfortunate dispute involving a car, which, as you have repeatedly pointed out, really wasn't in such good shape when you borrowed it, has prevented you from giving the time and attention you sincerely intended. Now, as you contemplate the pile of neatly typed 20-lb. Eaton non-corrasable bond on your desk, you are satisfied that you have turned out, in two days, the intellectual and moral equivalent of three months' steady application, a paper that Professor Blague will recognize as the work of a powerful and unexpectedly mature historical mind. Only the notes and the bibliography remain. You have scored an emergency supply of No-Doz, the collegian's friend. Your Smith-Corona portable electric typewriter, the high-school graduation gift of proud grandparents and a machine expressly designed to meet the exigencies of the all-nighter, shows every sign of being equal to its historic task. Two-thirty is by no means an unreasonable hour of the night. You anticipate a decent five or six hours of sleep before class time. And you are, of course, so wrong. You are not nearing the finish line at all. There is a signpost up ahead: you are about to enter The End Matter.

Annotation may seem a mindless and mechanical task. In fact, it calls both for superb fine-motor skills and for adherence to the most exiguous formal demands. Throw in sleep deprivation and a mild case of caffeine jitters, and the combination is guaranteed to produce flawed page after flawed page. In the world of End Matter, there is no such thing as a flyspeck. Every error is an error of substance, a betrayal of ignorance and inexperience, the academic equivalent of the double dribble. That the decorums of citation are the arbitrary residue of ancient pedantries whose *raison d'être* are long past reconstructing does not reduce the penalties for nonconformity. You are on page 3 of your endnotes before you remember that *ibid* is supposed to end with a period, since it is an abbreviation for *ibidem* ("in the same place"). What genius decided that it was worth saving a character by this practice no longer matters. What matters is that it is now three-thirty in the morning and you have to retype three pages of notes. Or perhaps it suddenly strikes you, with the force of panic, that maybe, as a foreign term, *ibid.* should be underlined. You quickly discover that, by continually hand-adjusting the typewriter's platen (the "roller," in layman's language), in order to superscript your endnote numbers, you have thrown the alignment out of whack, and when you roll the page back up to underline the *ibid.s* you type the line right through the word. You have to pull the paper out and start over.

You also need to remember that, even in the United States, the city in which Harvard University Press is situated is cited as Cambridge, Mass., while the city where Cambridge University Press is found is simply Cambridge. (Not that the British care; they happen to be complete slobes about citation.) And which is it: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, the Belknap Press, or Harvard University Press? What is the Belknap Press, exactly? The whole subfield of publishers' names is a thornbush of institutional idiosyncrasy. There is no such thing as the University of Mississippi Press. It is the

University Press of Mississippi (just as Indiana University must never be called the University of Indiana, even though that, in fact, is what it is). Once, there was Charles Scribner's Sons; now it is Scribner. Make sure you have the right one. Knopf is both cooler and more kosher than Alfred A. Knopf, but W. W. Norton is a publishing house and Norton is a character in "The Honeymooners." The student who types Macmillan & Co., Inc., instead of Macmillan & Co., is inviting a big red circle from the Blague marking pen, even though Macmillan & Co., Inc., is what it says on the title page. Little, Brown insists on its baffling comma (what's wrong with Little and Brown?); the comma-free Harcourt Brace Jovanovich is not a law firm but possibly hopes to be mistaken for one. Then there is the special hell of reprints—the Penguins and Plumes and HarperTorch books, the Bantams, the Dovers, and the Signets. It seems undignified to cite the publisher of a book that cost two dollars and ninety-five cents and was originally printed somewhere else. And if the pagination is different is it a new ed., or still a repr.? Is an "expanded edition" a rev. ed. or a 2nd ed.? You suspect that there are rules covering these things, but it is now 4 A.M. and you have no idea how to find out.

As you reach the far shores of the bibliography, and Phoebus rims the quad with reddening fire, questions such as where to put the name of the editor (after the title or before?); how to list an article in a collection (under the author of the article or under the editor of the collection, or both?); when you are supposed to include the issue number, as well as the volume number, of a journal; and when to precede page numbers by a colon and when by pp. assume an unbearable, almost an existential weight. The mistakes metastasize. As you are typing note 65, you realize, many pages too late, that you have two note 11s. You discover that you have been op-citing a work that you never cited. You curse yourself for not buying the corrasable bond. Flakes of whiteout litter the surface of the now unpleasantly hot Smith-Corona. You have started to make corrections with a pencil. You look at the page you just pulled out of the typewriter. It looks like a ransom note.

The worst part of the miserable ordeal is that, no matter how diligently you adhere to the conventions of one style of citation, Professor Blague will prefer a different one. If you use the "MLA Style Manual," he will use Turabian; if it is Turabian you have relied on, he will turn out to be a lifelong Chicagoan. (Whatever you do, incidentally, do not look for guidance in the pages of *The New Yorker*, where house style requires quotation marks for book titles and the insertion of commas in places where other periodicals don't even have places.)

Correct citation, like virtually every other aspect of academic writing, is a moving target. There is no uniform system. The natural sciences, and fields, like sociology, that pose as such, cite by last name and date of publication (Merton 1957a) and regard first names as a literary indulgence (R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* [hereafter *STSS* in text]). Law journals weirdly print article titles in italics (*Notes on Promissory Estoppel in Collective Bargaining Disputes*) and book titles all caps (SECOND RESTATEMENT OF CONTRACTS). They also precede page numbers, after the initial reference, with "at" (*Bush v. Gore*, at 7), an affectation that you would be shot for if you adopted it in an English paper. Recently, though, the humanities have been drifting in this hardhat, Men at Work direction by reducing titles to tech-speak ("*Cider House* subverts the conventions of monologism Irving elaborates in the texts after *Garp*") and by inserting page references in the text ("what Judith Butler has referred to as 'sex' [GT 87]"). Students using an older sister's edition of the "MLA Style Manual," published before these new forms became standard, had better hope that their literature professors are too old to know the difference.

The notion that the personal computer has eliminated the bone-crushing inefficiency of the typewriter, and turned composing The End Matter into a drive in the word-processing park, belongs to the myth that all work on a computer is "fun"—one of the Digital Age's cruellest jokes. It's true that typing a term paper no longer feels like working in a zinc quarry. You don't rely on No-Doz these days (*please*);

you use, thanks to a roommate's very obliging psychopharmacologist, Provigil, a med being considered for military pilots who want to stay alert for twenty-four hours at a stretch. Though your laptop may not have all the gigabytes that you deserve but that your chintzy grandparents, who lease a brand-new Lexus *every year*, declined to spring for, it does have a hard drive capable of storing the equivalent of eighty billion three-by-five file cards, probably enough to get you through college (after which you will need to upgrade). And, yes, your term paper for Sexing the Victorians: Gender and Transgression in European Modernity (Ms. Slick, M 2-5) is now sixty-five elegantly formatted laser-printed pages, including a four-color cover page and scanned-in illustrations of nineteenth-century dildos and the like. But The End Matter remains an interminable twilight struggle. The potential for rage and heartbreak is even greater, in fact, for the very technology that is supposed to speed the task of information-processing is now your most insidious foe.

First of all, it is time to speak some truth to power in this country: *Microsoft Word is a terrible program*. Its terribleness is of a piece with the terribleness of Windows generally, a system so overloaded with icons, menus, buttons, and incomprehensible Help windows that performing almost any function means entering a treacherous wilderness of pop-ups posing alternatives of terrifying starkness: Accept/Decline/Cancel; Logoff/Shut Down/Restart; and the mysterious Do Not Show This Warning Again. You often feel that you're not ready to make a decision so unalterable; but when you try to make the window go away your machine emits an angry beep. You double-click. You triple-click. *Beep beep beep beep beep*. You are being held for a fool by a chip.

When, in the old days, you hit the wrong key on your typewriter, you got one wrong character. Strike the wrong keys in Word and you are suddenly writing in Norwegian Bokmal (*Bokmal?*). And you have no idea how you got there; you can spend the rest of the night trying to get out. In the end, you stop the random clicking and dragging and pulling-down and have recourse to the solution of every computer moron: with a sob of relief, you press Ctrl/Alt/Del. (What do Control and Alt *mean*, by the way? Does anyone still know?) A message appears: "You will lose any unsaved information in all programs that are running." O.K.? Cancel? End task? End life? The whole reason for rebooting was that you didn't *have* access to your information, so how can you save it? You can always pull the plug out of the wall. That usually ends your "session" (a term borrowed—no accident—from psychoanalysis).

Few features of Word can be responsible for more user meltdowns than Footnote and Endnote (which is saying a lot in the case of a program whose Thesaurus treats "information" as "in formation," offering "in order" and "in sequence" as possible synonyms, and whose spellcheck suggests that when you typed the unrecognized "decorums" you might have meant "deco rums"). To begin with, the designers of Word apparently believe that the conventional method of endnote numbering is with lowercase Roman numerals—i, ii, iii, etc. When was the last time you read anything that adhered to this style? It would lead to sentences like:

In the Gramscian paradigm, the "intellectual"lxxxvii is, by definition, always already a liminal status.lxxxviii

(Hmm. Not bad.) To make this into something recognizably human, you need to click your way into the relevant menu (View? Insert? Format?) and change the i, ii, iii, etc., to 1, 2, 3, etc. Even if you *wanted* to use lowercase Roman numerals somewhere, whenever you typed "i" Word would helpfully turn it into "I" as soon as you pressed the space bar. Similarly, if, God forbid, you ever begin a note or a bibliography entry with the letter "A.," when you hit Enter, Word automatically types "B." on the next line. Never, btw (which, unlike "poststructuralism," is a word in Word spellcheck), ask that androgynous paper clip anything. S/he is just a stooge for management, leading you down more rabbit holes of options for things called Wizards, Macros, Templates, and Cascading Style Sheets. Finally, there is the moment when you realize that your notes are starting to appear in 12-pt. Courier New. Word, it seems, has, at some arbitrary point in the proceedings, decided that although you have been typing happily away in Times New Roman, you really want to be in the default font of the original document. You are confident that you can lick this thing: you painstakingly position your cursor in the

Endnotes window (not the text!, where irreparable damage may occur) and click Edit, then the powerful Select All; you drag the arrow to Normal (praying that your finger doesn't lose contact with the mouse, in which case the window will disappear, and trying not to wonder what the difference between Normal and Clear Formatting might be) and then, in the little window to the right, to Times New Roman. You triumphantly click, and find that you are indeed back in Times New Roman but that all your italics have been removed. What about any of this can be considered "high-speed"?

The special difficulty that digitization presents to scholarship has to do with the Internet—specifically, how to cite sources from the Web. The editors of one of the long-standing authorities in the style game, "The Chicago Manual of Style," have arrived with some advice. This new "Chicago Manual" is the fifteenth edition of a work that made its publishing debut in 1906. (Before that, it served an incarnation as the in-house style sheet at the University of Chicago Press.) It is important to note at the outset that the new edition has nine hundred and fifty-six pages and retails for fifty-five dollars. The only reasons to buy it are (1) that you want to start up a press and (2) that you want it to be exactly like the University of Chicago Press. "The Chicago Manual of Style" is, fundamentally, the in-house authority for bookmaking at the Press. It explains things like half titles; CIP (Cataloguing-in-Publication) data; bound-in errata pages; and the distinctions between perfect, notch, and burst bindings—matters of no relevance to the average term-paper writer. The text is organized in the manner of the "Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus," with numbered points (1.1, 1.2 . . . 1.11, 1.12, and so on). Data are dispensed accordingly, in the ground-upward manner of logical positivism, and at ground level the points can be very elementary—e.g., "1.112 *Content of the jacket*. Hardcover books are often protected by a coated paper jacket (or dust jacket)." Useful information for the man from Mars.

Every style book has its idiosyncrasies (part of the moving-target syndrome). Chicago used to insist on rendering dates in the form 15 August 2003, and ordinals as 2d and 3d, in the legal style, rather than 2nd and 3rd (which Word is programmed to superscript for you without asking). The "Manual" has now abandoned the former style and made the latter optional. Its authors also join the rest of the civilized world in consigning the dreadful *op. cit.* (along with its cousin, that desiccated old *roué loc. cit.*) to the lexical dustbin. One major addition (besides what the preface tantalizingly describes as "more attention to Canadian terms and usage") is a ninety-page section on Grammar and Usage. For some reason—possibly for the convenience of our Martian friend—the authors felt it necessary to cover the field from scratch. Thus: "5.1 *Definition*. Grammar consists of the rules governing how words are put together." On the other hand, common sources of solecism receive less attention than they might. The College Board would still not have avoided the mistake it made on a recent P.S.A.T. exam, where it replaced the phrase "Toni Morrison's genius" with "her," if it had consulted the Chicago discussion of pronouns and antecedents.

The chapter on Punctuation (separate from Grammar and Usage) notes that Chicago has finally dispensed with the practice of italicizing punctuation following a title (e.g., "*The Chicago Manual of Style*, a leading authority"), which is a welcome change, since Word's click-and-drag highlighting feature has problems performing this function. (If you wiggle the mouse a millimetre too far, trying to get that comma in, you highlight the entire line.) The authors are straightforward on two matters that many students are apparently hardwired at birth to find boggling: whether periods and commas belong inside or outside quotation marks, and whether inverted commas (sometimes called "single quotation marks") are an appropriate way to indicate an "ironic" usage. (Inside and no.) Some of the advice is frankly a matter of taste. "An exclamation point added in brackets to quoted material to indicate editorial protest or amusement is strongly discouraged, since it appears contemptuous," the authors counsel. "The Latin expression *sic* (thus) is preferred." First of all, the reason the bracketed exclamation point appears contemptuous is that you use it when you wish to express contempt. There is nothing wrong with contempt. Second (which Chicago insists on, although generations of pedants have believed

“secondly” to be the proper usage), *sic* is a far more damning interpolation, combining ordinary, garden-variety contempt with pedantic condescension. Elsewhere in Punctuation, the instructions are sometimes the reverse of enlightened. What could the authors possibly have been thinking when they committed the following sentence to print: “The semicolon, stronger than a comma but weaker than a period, can assume either role [!]” ?

On the aggravating business of citing a Web page, Chicago recommends giving the entire URL, usually in addition to any print data (journal volume number, year, page range, and so on), plus a “descriptive locator” (where to find the quotation on the screen, since electronic editions sometimes do not paginate), plus the date accessed. This can make for a very long note. Here is one of the samples the “Manual” offers, as it would appear if you reproduced it in Word:

Hlatky, M. A., D. Boothroyd, E. Vittinghoff, P. Sharp, and M. A. Whooley. 2002. Quality-of-life and depressive symptoms in postmenopausal women after receiving hormone therapy: Results from the Heart and Estrogen/Progestin Replacement Study (HERS) trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 287, no. 5 (February 6), <http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v287n5/full/joc10108.html#aainfo> (accessed January 7, 2002).

Try to prevent Word from doing that blue thing to whatever it recognizes as a hyperlink. There is undoubtedly a way to reset this, but it is deep within the bowels of the machine, guarded by dozens of angry pop-ups. Microsoft *wants* you to go on the Internet.

Attention to the new demands of electronic media informs almost every chapter of the new “Manual.” There are discussions about (besides citation) preparing electronic publications, editing and proofreading onscreen, and electronic-publishing rights and permissions. The authors are sensible about these matters; they’re aware that this is an area very much “under construction.” In all departments, in fact, the authors allow themselves plenty of wiggle room, quoting a passage from the 1906 edition: “Rules and regulations such as these, in the nature of the case, cannot be endowed with the fixity of rock-ribbed law. They are meant for the average case, and must be applied with a certain degree of elasticity.” This is modest and becoming, but it is beside the point. The problem isn’t that there are cases that fall outside the rules. The problem is that *there is a rule for every case*, and no style manual can hope to list them all. But we want the rules anyway. What we don’t want to be told is “Be flexible,” or “You have choices.” “Choice” is another of modern life’s false friends. Too many choices is precisely what makes Word such a nightmare to use, and what makes a hell of, for example, shopping for orange juice: Original, Grovestand, Home Style, Low Acid, Orange Banana, Extra Calcium, PulpFree, Lotsa Pulp, and so on.

The “Manual” does have lotsa lists, it’s true. Still, it can be oddly silent about common usage mistakes. Sixty-seven pages are devoted to Names and Terms. Writers are instructed, in the subsection on Titles and Offices, to lowercase offices (pope, rabbi, ayatollah) and uppercase titles (Pope John Paul II, Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak ha-Kohen Kuk, Ayatollah Khomeini). The authors do not, however, warn against the frequent and well-meaning substitution of “Dr.” for “Professor.” Contrary to the assumption informing this practice, “doctor” is not the higher-status term; virtually all professors are doctors, but by no means are all doctors professors.

Chicago prefers a “down” style for the names of political and cultural movements (anarchist, mugwump, abstract expressionism), but this is possibly due to the desire to have a sleeker and more modern-looking page, for the rule runs into hard cases rather quickly. The authors concede right at the outset of the subsection on Names of Organizations that efforts to distinguish, by upper- and lowercase, between communism as an ideology and Communism as a political party are usually hopeless (was John F. Kennedy an anti-communist or an anti-Communist, or both?), and that Communist and Communism might as well be uppercased everywhere they appear. On the other hand, they countenance “nazi” as an adjective (“nazi tactics,” as opposed to “the Nazis’ tactics”)—but what about “marxist”? The “Manual” does not propose this as an option.

The authors declare for pop art but do not mention popism (or Popism) and for conceptualism without mentioning conceptual art (or Conceptual Art). They have heard of structuralism and postmodernism (both lowercase) but (like Microsoft) do not recognize poststructuralism (this from one of Derrida's American publishers). Pragmatism (the philosophy) is unlisted, but it can create problems; George W. Bush is (arguably) a pragmatist, but he is no Pragmatist. "Classicism" is lowercased, but "romanticism" is "sometimes capitalized to avoid ambiguity"—though if you were capitalizing "Romanticism" it would look silly to lowercase "classicism" in the same paragraph. The authors scoff, delightfully, at brand-name and trademark shibboleths. Despite corporate bluster, they point out, there is no legal requirement to use ® or ™; the Motion Picture Academy wants you to do with Oscar, or to write "Kleenex facial tissue" instead of "Kleenex," as the makers of Kleenex would like you to do when referring to their fine product. Less helpfully, the authors offer "photocopier" as a generic alternative to "Xerox machine," but do not explain whether you Xerox or xerox a piece of paper.

The section on Ellipses is seven pages. The authors distinguish between a three-dot method, a three-or-four-dot method, and what they designate "the rigorous method" (with the unfortunate implication that the other methods are for scholarly lightweights). For some reason, they do not address, even in the "rigorous" section, the problem of quoting a passage that includes ellipses in the original. Does placing brackets around the ellipsis imply that the ellipsis was interpolated or that it was not? The "Manual" authors now recommend disposing of the periods in the abbreviation of academic degrees (PhD instead of Ph.D.). On the important matter of the correct abbreviation of United States, though, the authors strike a note that recurs, all too disturbingly, in other places in the "Manual." It is the note of permissiveness. "U.S. traditionally appears with periods," they advise. And then—it's almost a non sequitur—"Periods may nonetheless be omitted in most contexts. Writers and editors need to weigh tradition against consistency." The mental fuse is shorted. You had always thought that tradition *was* consistency. Also, as long as the authors are into lists, would it not have been helpful to list that small number of proper names which must, in all circumstances, be preceded by Mr.?

Mr. Rogers  
Mr. Shawn  
Mr. T  
Mr. Tambourine Man  
Mr. Tibbs

The sections that people who are not operating a printing press will consult most often are the two devoted to Documentation. But Documentation is where the "Manual"'s ecumenism starts to shade into anarchism (the condition, not the party). Consider the subsection on Series (that is, books published in a series with, usually, a general editor). The editor of the series, the "Manual" says, is "usually omitted, but see 17.92-93." Abbreviations for volume and number "may be omitted." The series title "may be omitted to save space." Some works "may be treated bibliographically either as multivolume works or as a series of volumes," depending on "the emphasis." And when a series has gone on so long that the editors re-start the numbering as "new series" or "second series," we learn that "books in the old series are identified by *o.s.*, *1st ser.*, or whatever fits." At which point the sleep-deprived might decide that, on due and balanced consideration, *nothing* is what fits, and move on.

Some people will complain that the new "Chicago Manual" is too long. These people do not understand the nature of style. There is, if not a right way, a best way to do every single thing, down to the proverbial dotting of the "i." Relativism is fine for the big moral questions, where we can never know for sure; but in arbitrary realms like form and usage even small doses of relativism are lethal. The "Manual" is not too long. It is not long enough. It will never be long enough. The perfect manual of style would be like the perfect map of the world: exactly coterminous with its subject, containing a rule for every word of every sentence. We would need an extra universe to accommodate it. It would be worth it. †

