Flailing Phrases

Grammarians reserve the term dangling modifier for a descriptive phrase flailing and flapping about within a sentence in a futile search for a noun or a pronoun it might fittingly describe. The tragedy is that the sentence lacks any noun or pronoun to which the phrase can fasten itself in a secure and conclusive way. (The whole sorry business is about as much fun as trying to pin the tail on the donkey when the donkey hasn't even bothered to show up.) The most that the hapless descriptive phrase can manage is to try cozying up to the nearest available noun or pronoun within the bounds of the sentence, but the two of them always turn out to be entirely incompatible and make no sense together at all. In fact, they often make for a laughable match, as in the beginning of this sentence by the late John Updike, arguably the most lyrically precise describer of American life in the past half-century:

Flying from Boston to New York, my habit is to take a seat on the right-hand side of the plane, but the other day I sat on the left, and was rewarded, at that hour of mid-morning, by the sun's reflections on the waters of Connecticut—not just the rivers and the Sound, but little ponds and pools and glittering threads of water that for a few seconds threw silver light skyward into my eyes. (*New Yorker*)

Maybe a hobbit could make the flight from Beantown to the Big Apple, but a habit?

The Updike sentence reveals the irreality common to many sentences incapacitated by a dangling modifier: human activity is reportedly taking place, but there's nobody present to perform it or even witness it. Such sentences are eerily *unpeopled*. To set things right, you need to introduce a member of the human race into the sentence, either as an actor or as a perceiver. There are two easy ways to do that—two methods that will do the trick for most dangling modifiers.

The first is to expand the descriptive phrase into an adverbial dependent clause—the sort of dependent clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction (a word such as *although*, *if*, *while*, *as*, or *because*) and that includes both a subject (in this case, of course, the subject had better well have a pulse) and a verb:

When I am flying from Boston to New York, my habit is to take a seat on the right-hand side of the plane....

The other way to correct the error is to let the descriptive phrase alone and do some major reconstructive work on the independent clause. You'll need to start the new independent clause with a subject that is logically compatible with the descriptive phrase at the outset of the sentence:

Flying from Boston to New York, I habitually take a seat on the right-hand side of the plane....

Dangling modifiers also derange sentences in which the noun that the writer has intended to serve as the subject of the independent clause is submerged within a possessive adjective—

an adjective formed either by the combination of a singular noun, an apostrophe, and the letter *s*, or by the combination of a plural noun ending in *s* and an apostrophe. The possessive adjective is then followed by a noun with which the introductory modifying phrase is logically unsuited.

Since the seventies, [Laurie] Simmons's photographs have been raising questions about identity and role play, and her new color pictures are no exception: most of them portray "dollers," people who dress up as the wide-eyed girls in Japanese anime. Wearing outsized heads, the figures' cloying cuteness is subverted by sexy outfits: mermaids, miniskirts, latex. (*New Yorker*)

In the second sentence of the excerpt, the writer wanted *figures* to serve as the subject, but that noun is stranded helplessly in the possessive adjective *figures'*. The result is that *cuteness* is forced against its will into the role of subject.

The cloying cuteness of the figures, who wear outsized heads, is subverted by sexy outfits: mermaids, miniskirts, latex. OR: Wearing outsized heads, the figures subvert their cloying cuteness with their sexy outfits: mermaids, miniskirts, latex. OR: Wearing outsized heads, the figures subvert their cloying cuteness by donning sexy outfits: mermaids, miniskirts, latex. (Some readers, of course, might still challenge the logic of the phrasing of the series that follows the colon; substituting *mermaid suits* for *mermaids* might help.)

Dangling modifiers often seem to arise from a writer's desire to be as concise as possible at any cost, as in the following sentence, from an article about a dancer who goes by the name Storyboard P.

Growing up, Storyboard's best friend was a kid named Nelson Adolphus, who wanted to be a scientist. (*New Yorker*)

The two-word participial phrase *growing up* is intended to modify *Storyboard*, but *Storyboard* has been demoted from nounal status to adjectival status by dint of the clipped-on apostrophe and *s*. The participial phrase ends up modifying *friend*—at odds with the writer's purpose. If we can assume that the best-friendship was reciprocated by Adolphus, it's possible to rework the seventeen-word sentence without lengthening it by as much as a single word.

Growing up, Storyboard was best friends with Nelson Adolphus, a kid who wanted to be a scientist.

Another option, of course, is to enlarge the participial phrase into a dependent clause, which will add three words to the sentence.

When Storyboard was growing up, his best friend was a kid named Nelson Adolphus, who wanted to be a scientist.

Dangling modifiers come in at least ten distinct varieties. The first, the sort found in the three *New Yorker* excerpts exhibited above, is a present-participial phrase.

Walking along the Strand, the brim of his fedora curled at a stylish angle, his cigar sputtering like a tugboat, a trail of newspapermen listened open-mouthed to his criticism of his own country. (*Mencken: The American Iconoclast* [Oxford University Press], by Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, pp. 247-248)

Walking along the Strand, the brim of his fedora curled at a stylish angle, his cigar sputtering like a tugboat, he was trailed by newspapermen listening open-mouthed to his criticism of his own country.

Sitting at a pump organ with synthesizer playing behind him, the song was part lullaby, part hymn, totally musical, and going on for more than eight minutes, repeating again and again the words, "Dream, baby, dream." (*Runaway Dream*: Born to Run *and Bruce Springsteen's American Vision* [Bloomsbury], by Louis P. Masur, p. 177) (The sentence also needs to lose the comma after *words*, because the lyrics do not consist solely of "Dream, baby, dream" [see Chapter 67].)

Sitting at a pump organ with synthesizer playing behind him, he performed the song as part lullaby and part hymn, going on for more than eight minutes, repeating again and again the words "Dream, baby, dream."

The participle in such a dangling modifier often has a direct object.

Starring Liverpudlian actress Rita Tushingham, whose wide-eyed, plain-spoken persona briefly became a fixture of the UK screen industry, the film's wry vision of sentimental self-sufficiency appealed strongly to McCartney. (*Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* [Henry Holt], by Ian MacDonald, p. 50)

Starring Liverpudlian actress Rita Tushingham, whose wide-eyed, plain-spoken persona briefly became a fixture of the UK screen industry, the film appealed strongly to McCartney because of its wry vision of sentimental self-sufficiency.

She overhauled the autobiographical story about a mother and her adopted child that she had begun the previous summer as part of her novel. Having plundered a partial manuscript again, the novel no longer amounted to much. (*Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?* [Penguin], by Marion Meade, p. 172)

Having plundered a partial manuscript again, she felt that the novel no longer amounted to much.

The second type of dangling modifier takes the form of a past-participial phrase.

Heckled by men in the audience, [Jean] Malin's back would arch, his chin lift in defiance. (*Behind the Screen: How Gays and Lesbians Shaped Hollywood, 1910-1969* [Viking], by William J. Mann, p. 145)

When Malin was heckled by men in the audience, his back would arch, his chin lift in defiance.

'The Black Angel's Death Song' highlighted the more experimental leanings of the band. Distilled from a squealing [John] Cale viola riff, [Lou] Reed quickly spits out his vocal, with Cale hissing in the background. (*Seeing the Light: Inside the Velvet Underground* [St. Martin's Press], by Rob Jovanovic, p. 101)

[with Americanized punctuation]: "The Black Angel's Death Song," distilled from a squealing Cale viola riff, highlighted the more experimental leanings of the band: Reed quickly spits out his vocal, with Cale hissing in the background. OR [leaving the first sentence intact]: In a composition distilled from a squealing Cale viola riff, Reed quickly spits out his vocal, with Cale hissing in the background.

Picked by Sir Allen Lane, the founder of Penguin, to modernize Penguin's fiction line, Godwin's innovations astonished the London literary world and eventually led to a clash with Lane, who was alarmed by the far-reaching changes Godwin was making in one of Britain's most respected cultural institutions, and more than a little jealous of the younger man as well. (*Another Life: A Memoir of Other People* [Random House], by Michael Korda, p. 339)

Picked by Sir Allen Lane, the founder of Penguin, to modernize Penguin's fiction line, Godwin astonished the London literary world with his innovations, which eventually led to a clash with Lane.... OR: After Godwin was picked by Sir Allen Lane, the founder of Penguin, to modernize Penguin's fiction line, his innovations astonished the London literary world....

A subcategory is a dangling modifier consisting of a past-participial phrase formed from an irregular verb.

Born in Puducherry, India, Mr. Shyamalan's parents moved to the U.S. when he was a child. (*Wall Street Journal*)

Even the mildly attentive reader is likely to do a double take: who was born in Puducherry, India—Mr. Shyamalan's parents, as the sentence would have us believe, or Mr. Shyamalan himself? A minute's worth of online fact-checking will yield the clarifying information that it was Mr. Shyamalan who was born there.

Born in Puducherry, India, Mr. Shyamalan was a child when his parents moved their family to the U.S. OR: Born in Puducherry, India, Mr. Shyamalan moved to the U.S. with his parents when he was a child. OR: Mr. Shyamalan, who was born in Puducherry, India, moved to the U.S. with his parents when he was a child. OR: When he was a child, Mr. Shyamalan, who was born in Puducherry, India, moved to the U.S. with his parents.

Pamela Erens's new novel, *The Virgins* (Tin House Books, 288 pp., $15.95), is one explicitly concerned with narrative. Set in 1979 at a New Hampshire boarding school called Auburn, its narrator, Bruce Bennett-Jones, confesses up-front that the story he's unspooling—that of a highly visible and ultimately doomed romance between two students, a Korean-American man, Seung Jung, and a Jewish woman, Aviva Rossner—is largely one he has imagined. (*New York Observer*)

Pamela Erens's new novel, *The Virgins* (Tin House Books, 288 pp., $15.95), set in 1979 at a New Hampshire boarding school called Auburn, is one explicitly concerned with narrative. Its narrator, Bruce Bennett-Jones, confesses up front.... OR: Set in 1979 at a New Hampshire boarding school called Auburn, the novel is narrated by Bruce Bennett-Jones, who confesses up front....

Another subcategory consists of one or more past participles dangling all by their lonesome.

Depressed, her mood degenerated into morbidity. (*Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?* [Penguin], by Marion Meade, p. 151)

Depressed, she felt her mood degenerate into morbidity.

Tired, bored, life no longer remained an adventure. (*Mencken: The American Iconoclast* [Oxford University Press], by Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, p. 228)

Tired, bored, he no longer found life an adventure.

A third variety of dangling modifier consists of a subordinating conjunction (such as *while, when, after, once*, and *since*) followed by a present- or past-participial phrase. (An adverb sometimes appears between the subordinating conjunction and the participial phrase.)

While pretending to be the newlywed of her society-painter husband, Mercedes's emotional life was concentrated on Le Gallienne, who gave herself totally. (*The Sewing Circle: Hollywood's Greatest Secret—Female Stars Who Loved Other Women* [Birch Lane Press], by Axel Madsen, p. 45)

While Mercedes pretended to be the newlywed of her society-painter husband, her emotional life was concentrated on Le Gallienne....

After appearing last year as the gay heartthrob on "Glee," his career fell into place faster than you can say "Snooki." (*New York Times*)

After he appeared last year as the gay heartthrob on "Glee," his career fell into place faster than you can say "Snooki."

Once voted one of the "Left's Top Twenty-five Journalists" by *The Daily Beast* and called by *The Weekly Standard* someone who "expresses cold disapproval" towards conservatives, Solomon's own politics cloud her vision of Rockwell's later years. (*New Criterion*)

Although Solomon was once voted one of the "Left's Top Twenty-five Journalists" by *The Daily Beast* and dismissed by *The Weekly Standard* as a critic who "expresses cold disapproval" towards conservatives, her politics cloud her vision of Rockwell's later years.

When finally cornered by the press on boarding the *Kungsholm*, Garbo's simple dignity was moving: She was going to visit the grave of Mauritz Stiller, she said. (*Garbo: A Biography* [Knopf], by Barry Paris, p. 156)

When Garbo was finally cornered by the press on boarding the *Kungsholm*, her simple dignity was moving....

The participles in this subset of danglers may have direct objects.

When using in-network providers, her deductible would nearly triple; out of network, it would more than quintuple. (*Wall Street Journal*)

When she used in-network providers, her deductible would nearly triple....

While checking the proofs, a terrible suspicion crossed my mind. (*The Art of* The New Yorker, *1925-1995* [Knopf], by Lee Lorenz, p. 121)

While I was checking the proofs, a terrible suspicion crossed my mind. OR: While checking the proofs, I felt a terrible suspicion cross my mind.

A fourth sort of dangling modifier consists of a participial phrase preceded by an adverb, by one or more prepositional phrases functioning adverbially, by some other sort of phrase functioning adverbially, or by a coordinating conjunction such as *but, yet,* or *and*.

Now, glancing at the salmon head, it was nothing but the head of a dead fish. (*The Men's Club* [Farrar, Straus and Giroux], by Leonard Michaels, p. 69)

Now, as I glanced at the salmon head, it was nothing but the head of a dead fish. OR: Now, I glanced at the salmon head, and it was nothing but the head of a dead fish. OR: Now, glancing at the salmon head, I saw nothing but the head of a dead fish.

Even surrounded by people, her anxieties often overwhelmed her despite the Ativan that her doctors insisted she begin taking. (*Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son's Memoir* [Simon & Schuster], by David Rieff, p. 66)

Even when she was surrounded by people, her anxieties often overwhelmed her.... OR: Even surrounded by people, she was often overwhelmed by her anxieties....

Ten years later, sitting in a solicitor's office on a noisy main road in north London, my maternalism did indeed seem primitive to me, almost barbaric. (*Aftermath: On Marriage and Separation* [Farrar, Straus and Giroux], by Rachel Cusk, pp. 19-20)

Ten years later, while I was sitting in a solicitor's office on a noisy main road in north London, my maternalism did indeed seem primitive to me, almost barbaric.

One day, walking past the florist's with a friend, we stop. (*Aftermath: On Marriage and Separation* [Farrar, Straus and Giroux], by Rachel Cusk, p. 91)

The dangling modifier in this sentence is unusually disorienting, because the context makes it clear that only two persons are present. Only one of them can thus be walking past the florist's with a friend; the other person *is* the friend.

One day, as I'm walking past the florist's with a friend, we stop.

A similar error afflicts the following sentence, in which a man and a woman are walking, but the participial phrase *walking through the rustic streets of a nearby village* modifies only the name of the woman.

Later, walking through the rustic streets of a nearby village, Celine tells Jesse, "If you were meeting me for the first time today, you wouldn't notice me." (reason.com)

Later, as the couple are walking through the rustic streets of a nearby village, Celine tells Jesse, "If you were meeting me for the first time today, you wouldn't notice me."

Yet, reflecting on the episode, Thernstrom's main concern was not irate students, but the lack of support he received from Harvard. (*Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* [Vintage], by Dinesh D'Souza, p. 196)

Yet, reflecting on the episode, Thernstrom was concerned not so much with irate students as with the lack of support he received from Harvard. OR: Yet, as Thernstrom reflected on the episode, his main concern was not irate students but the lack of support he received from Harvard.

And yet, rereading the booklet some two years after my mother's death, these undoubted good intentions seem essentially compromised by the refusal to write as if bad news were bad news and despair despair. (*Swimming in a Sea of Death: A Son's Memoir* [Simon & Schuster], by David Rieff, p. 55)

And yet, as I reread the booklet some two years after my mother's death, these undoubted good intentions seem essentially compromised....

A fifth kind of dangling modifier consists of a participial phrase preceded by the combination of an adverb or an adverbial phrase and a subordinating conjunction.

Still, after seeing this film, it's hard not to want to work on your spin move. (*New York Times*)

Still, after seeing this film, you'll find it hard to resist working on your spin move. OR: Still, after seeing this film, you'll most likely want to work on your spin move.

One weekend, while still mulling over whether to stay close to home or set sail for distant malls, a bright fluorescent light went on in my head. (*Shoptimism: Why the American Consumer Will Keep on Buying No Matter What* [Free Press], by Lee Eisenberg, p. 16)

One weekend, while I was still mulling over whether to stay close to home or set sail for distant malls, a bright fluorescent light went on in my head.

A sixth type of dangling modifier consists of a simple prepositional phrase.

As a young man, his ramps starred in a cult video. Now he designs skateboard parks across the country. (*Wall Street Journal*)

When he was a young man, his ramps starred in a cult video. OR: He was still a young man when his ramps starred in a cult video.

The prepositional phrase will sometimes be preceded by an adverb or an adverbial phrase.

After all, at 16, the future can seem only so clear—and there's nothing wrong with just being a teenager. (*Time*)(Feeling uneasy about the placement of *just*? See Chapter 22.)

Since she is only 16, after all, the future can seem only so clear—and there's nothing wrong with being just a teenager.

When out on a date, whether the first or fifth, there are certain laws of decorum that must be strictly adhered to. (*The Fabulous Girl's Guide to Decorum* [Broadway Books], by Kim Izzo and Ceri Marsh, p.145)

When you're out on a date, whether the first or fifth, there are certain laws of decorum to which you must strictly adhere.

A seventh kind of dangling modifier is a more complicated prepositional phrase, in which the preposition has a gerund as its object.

By going with Comcast for high-speed Internet, Ooma for phone and Dish for television, my bill could be as low as $200 a month with the promotional prices I have been quoted. (*New York Times*)

If I go with Comcast for high-speed Internet, Ooma for phone, and Dish for television, my bill could be as low as $200 a month.... OR: Going with Comcast for high-speed Internet, Ooma for phone, and Dish for television, I could reduce my bill to as little as $200 a month....

In writing about *Born to Run,* the photographs are almost as memorable as the music. (*Runaway Dream:* Born to Run *and Bruce Springsteen's American Vision* [Bloomsbury], by Louis P. Masur, p. 202)

In writing about *Born to Run*, I've found the photographs almost as memorable as the music.

Upon arriving at a restaurant where she'd made reservations, her infallible radar informed her whether the press had been alerted and, if so, she would immediately order her chauffeur to drive away. (*Garbo: A Biography* [Knopf], by Barry Paris, p. 206)

When she arrived at a restaurant where she'd made reservations, her infallible radar informed her....

The gerund sometimes has one or more direct objects.

Far from abandoning the fastidiousness of their parents, the new generation's fastidiousness is so acute that its members see through all established forms, understand how they fail, and find in their new freedoms a better way to preserve an exclusivity they continue to value. (*The Comic Worlds of Peter Arno, William Steig, Charles Addams, and Saul Steinberg* [Johns Hopkins University Press], by Iain Topliss, p. 28)

Far from abandoning the fastidiousness of their parents, the new generation has perfected a fastidiousness so acute that its members see through and understand the failure of every established form, and find in their new freedoms a better way to preserve an exclusivity they continue to value.

An eighth category of dangling modifiers consists of hybrid constructions in which a subordinating conjunction is followed by an adjectival phrase.

Though capable of being as forbiddingly arty as contemporaries Talking Heads, Patti Smith, and Television—early albums were entitled *The Modern Dance* and *Song of the Bailing Man,* and Thomas's liner notes for the 1994 album *Raygun Suitcase* include the sentence "We live in strange times wherein Order and Meaning are terror-osterized, reduced to grist for the post-modernist vacuumizer"—Pere Ubu's pretensions are mitigated by its primal rhythms, sense of humor, and Thomas's engaging fat-guy wail. (*The Rock Snob's Dictionary* [Broadway Books], by David Kamp and Steven Daly, p. 93) (The final independent clause of the sentence also suffers from faulty parallelism; see Chapter 41.)

This sentence demonstrates that the longer the distance from the subject, the more likely an introductory modifier will flail.

Though Pere Ubu was capable of being as forbiddingly arty as contemporaries Talking Heads, Patti Smith, and Television—early albums were entitled *The Modern Dance* and *Song of the Bailing Man*, and Thomas's liner notes for the 1994 album *Raygun Suitcase* include the sentence "We live in strange times wherein Order and Meaning are terror-osterized, reduced to grist for the post-modernist vacuumizer"—the band's pretensions were mitigated by its primal rhythms, its sense of humor, and Thomas's engaging fat-guy wail.

A ninth kind of dangling modifier is a nonparticipial adjectival phrase.

Already disdainful of literary critics, his opinion quickly turned to disgust. (*J. D. Salinger: A Life* [Random House], by Kenneth Slawenski, p. 218)

Because he was already disdainful of literary critics, his opinion quickly turned to disgust.

Sometimes the dangling adjectival phrase might be preceded by a prepositional phrase.

In 1919, young and unproved, their goal had been to have it all—love, money, fame, and happiness. (*Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?* [Penguin], by Marion Meade, p. 320)

In 1919, when they were still young and unproved, their goal had been to have it all—love, money, fame, and happiness. OR: In 1919, young and unproved, they set their sights on having it all—love, money, fame, and happiness.

And sometimes the dangling adjectival phrasing might comprise a mix of adjectival elements, such as stand-alone adjectives, lone participles, and adjectival prepositional phrases.

Small, rail-thin, sharp-featured, with an engaging smile, a full head of wiry gray hair—a kind of Anglo-Welsh "afro"—and bright, sparkling eyes, Godwin's greatest asset was his charm. (*Another Life: A Memoir of Other People* [Random House], by Michael Korda, p. 339)

Small, rail-thin, sharp-featured, with an engaging smile, a full head of wiry gray hair—a kind of Anglo-Welsh "afro"—and bright, sparkling eyes, Godwin had charm, and that was his greatest asset.

Comfortable, well-fed, and obviously intelligent, their conspicuous embitterment with and alienation from American society were hard to comprehend. (*Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus* [Vintage], by Dinesh D'Souza, p. 210)

It was hard to comprehend that these comfortable, well-fed, and obviously intelligent students were conspicuously embittered with and alienated from American society.

A tenth variety of dangling modifiers consists of miscellaneous hybrid constructions.

All but written off as a has-been a few years ago, [Tom] Cruise's career has rebounded. (*Forbes*)

All but written off as a has-been a few years ago, Cruise has enjoyed a career resurgence.

Instead of building a tight plot, neatly placing before us the fate of each character, a faceless crowd of individuals pass through the pages. (Introduction to Oxford [University Press] World Classics edition of Virginia Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, p. xv)

Instead of building a tight plot, neatly placing before us the fate of each character, Woolf releases a faceless crowd of individuals to pass through the pages.

Desperately uncertain which suitor she should ultimately choose, Marion's letter to Estelle revealed the extent of her anguish: "I never pretended to cease loving him...." (*Mencken: The American Iconoclast* [Oxford University Press], by Marion Elizabeth Rodgers, p. 250)

Desperately uncertain of which suitor she should ultimately choose, Marion revealed the extent of her anguish in a letter to Estelle....

The summer of 1975, home from college, my father would ask, "What do you want to be?" (*Runaway Dream:* Born to Run *and Bruce Springsteen's American Vision* [Bloomsbury], by Louis P. Masur, p. 193)

The summer of 1975, when I was home from college, my father would ask, "What do you want to be?"

Two years younger than O'Hara and a member of the Harvard class of 1929, Outerbridge's great interest was sailing. (*The O'Hara Concern: A Biography of John O'Hara* [Random House], by Matthew J. Bruccoli, p. 203)

In this hybrid, the dangler consists of two nonparallel elements: an adjectival phrase and a noun phrase.

Two years younger than O'Hara, Outerbridge, a member of the Harvard class of 1929, had no greater interest than in sailing.

A dangling modifier most often appears at the start of a sentence, but it might also show up midway.

She brushes him off abruptly; but then, driving home, her thoughts go back to their meeting. (*John O'Hara: A Study of the Short Fiction* [Twayne], by Steven Goldleaf, p. 166)

She brushes him off abruptly; but then, as she drives home, her thoughts go back to their meeting. OR: She brushes him off abruptly; but then, driving home, she thinks back to their meeting.

One evening Ed Landberg heard Pauline broadcasting on KPFA, and after telephoning to compliment her on the program, they arranged to meet. (*Pauline Kael: A Life in the Dark* [Viking], by Brian Kellow, p. 51)

One evening, Ed Landberg heard Pauline broadcasting on KPFA, and after he telephoned to compliment her on the program, they arranged to meet.

Finally, a dangling modifier might appear at the end of a sentence.

Yet there is no further mention [in the book] of anything done by Straus that can be called editing, leaving to others in the firm the "care and feeding" of chosen FSG authors. (*New Republic*)

Yet there is no further mention of anything Straus did that can be called editing, the "care and feeding" of chosen FSG authors having been left to others in the firm. OR: Yet there is no further mention of anything Straus did that can be called editing, because the "care and feeding" of chosen FSG authors was left to others in the firm.

Lanza took her son to shooting ranges so they could hone their skills together. She was Adam Lanza's first victim on Friday, fatally shooting her before continuing the bloodshed at Sandy Hook Elementary. (*New York Post*)

She was Adam Lanza's first victim on Friday, shot fatally before the bloodshed at Sandy Hook Elementary.

The days when people snapped open the daily paper to find out the things they should care about were long past, replaced by a cacophony of information sources, many of them far more driven by ideology than The Washington Post. (*New York Times*)

People no longer snapped open the daily paper to find out the things they should care about, but instead were assaulted by a cacophony of information sources....