

*Valerie A. Muir*

## Macquarie University

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references

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"Alfred took immense pains in planning the house and in economising space, especially in the kitchen department. He was anxious to have his study on a higher floor as he thought that in Cambridge it was as well to live as far from the ground as possible". So Mary Paley Marshall, in her reminiscences, *What I Remember* (1947, p. 42), recalls the year 1885 when Alfred Marshall took over the Chair in Political Economy at Cambridge University.

The marriage of Mary Paley and Alfred

**Marshall was the first between academic economists. Mary Paley, in fact, appears to be the first woman lecturer in an English University. The couple married in 1877 after they had met at Cambridge where Alfred was a Fellow and Lecturer of St. John's College, and Mary Paley one of the first five women students who formed the nucleus of what was to become Newnham Hall, later Newnham College. At the time of the marriage Mary was twenty seven years of age, and Alfred thirty five. The marriage was conducted by the bride's father, the Reverend Thomas Paley, grandson of William Paley of the *Evidences*, in accordance with the rituals of the Church of England. The couple, however, contracted themselves out of the "obedience clause" when the Reverend refused to remove it from the order of service. What a promising start for a partnership of equals such as that, for example, of Sidney and Beatrice Webb! But although there were no children in the marriage, it was Alfred who had the brilliant career, and Mary who submerged her life in**

**his.**

**Alfred Marshall is considered to be the father of modern economics, and his main work, *Principles of Economics*, first published in 1890, and going to eight editions in his lifetime, became the leading text of the neoclassical school which has continued to dominate orthodox economics in the twentieth century. Mary Paley Marshall's contribution to economics includes lecturing and tutoring students (mainly women) at the three major universities where Marshall was employed – Oxford, Cambridge and Bristol –, as well as assisting and supporting her husband in his work. Her written work which is now available to us is, however, slight, although it is apparent from her reminiscences that her style of writing was both perceptive and engaging.**

**Mary Paley spent all her early life in a country rectory and, encouraged by her father, sat for the Cambridge Higher Local Examination for women over eighteen when it was first**

introduced in 1869. She says that she did this for want of something better to do after her sister married. Subsequently she was offered a scholarship conditional on her moving to Cambridge to live with Miss Clough and attending the Lectures for Women which had recently been started there. In *What I Remember* she recalls that her father "was proud and pleased, and his admiration for Miss Clough overcame his objections to sending his daughter to Cambridge (in those days an outrageous proceeding)" (p. 10). A chance happening led her to read economics. Unlike, for example, Beatrice Webb, she was not drawn to a cause for the reduction of poverty and the betterment of the working classes. She describes how she found her interest in economics in the following manner:

When I came to Cambridge it was not with the idea of reading for a Tripos. I wished for "general cultivation" and chose Latin, History, Literature, and Logic, which last my father advised as being such a safe subject [...]. In that first term [...] my chum Mary Kennedy insisted on my going with her to a Political Economy lecture. I resisted at first saying that it was only about wages and things which one knew all about, but she was firm and I went and went to stay [...]. There were only five or six of us [...]. Mr Marshall stood by the blackboard, rather nervous, bending a quill pen which took flight from between his fingers, very earnest and with shining eyes (p. 13).

Mary Paley Marshall's reminiscences were written in her later years and published three

years after her death. They give us the only first hand account of her early life and her subsequent partnership with Alfred Marshall. *What I Remember* finishes with Alfred's death in 1924 although the author lived on for another twenty years, working tirelessly in the Marshall cause, mainly in the Marshall Library at Cambridge.

Many economists and others have made their assessments and given points of view on this academic partnership, perhaps the most well known being the obituary articles in the *Economic Journal*, both written with sympathy and affection by John Maynard Keynes, and both republished in later editions of his *Essays in Biography* (1963). Recently the Marshalls are again attracting biographical attention by economists, in particular by Rita McWilliams Tullberg, who has also written about women at Cambridge, and Peter Groenewegen of Sydney University. There also exist notes, letters and memoranda held mainly in the Marshall Library at Cambridge. This is apart from the

**innumerable articles, essays and books on Alfred Marshall as economist. The Marshall industry is, interestingly, alive and well.**

**It is not my purpose in this paper to rework material already published. Rather, I want to look at the writing of Mary Paley Marshall herself to see if the discourse reveals an approach to economics which would give her authority in her own right, rather than merely being her husband's assistant. This is a task which involves a close reading of selected passages.**

**Mary Paley Marshall's published works consist of *What I Remember*, three short review pieces which appeared in the *Economic Journal* in its early years (1893, 1896 and 1902), and her contribution to a little text book titled *Economics of Industry* (1879) published two years after the marriage. After Mary Paley sat for and passed with distinction the Moral Sciences Tripos in 1874, she was asked to become a resident at the Old Hall at**

**Newnham and take over from Marshall the lectures to women in economics. Shortly thereafter she was asked to write a textbook for the Cambridge Extension Lectures, and when she and Alfred became engaged in 1876 they worked on the book together. To quote again from *What I Remember*:**

It was published in our joint names in 1879. Alfred insisted on this, though as time went on I realised that it had to be really his book, the latter half being almost entirely his and containing the germs of much that appeared later in the *Principles*. He never liked the little book for it offended against his belief that "every dogma that is short and simple is false", and he said about it "you can't afford to tell the truth for half-a-crown" (p. 22).

**That appears to be all that Mary Paley Marshall said, publicly, about the book. The extent of her contribution to the text is uncertain, but I am going to make the hypothesis that alterations made between the first and second editions would have been Alfred's, as he was working toward the publication of the *Principles*, and becoming sensitive about his academic reputation, which at this stage had no substantial written works to back it. Looking at selected passages in the book I hope to prove my point by showing differences in the discourse of the two editions,**

**in both stylistics and content – "how" the work is written as well as "what" is written.**

**The "little book", as the Marshalls called it, has an interesting history. Originally intended as a text for schools to replace Millicent Garrett Fawcett's widely used *Political Economy for Beginners* (1870), it was reprinted several times in the following twelve years, with the 1881 reprint categorised as the "Second Revised Edition", as it contains some rewriting and a second preface. J.M. Keynes estimated that 15,000 copies of the book were sold in all(1). It was widely respected, and translated into other languages. However, Marshall suppressed further publication in 1892 although it was still in demand, and replaced it with a work entirely his own, but with a similar title, *Elements of Economics of Industry*. This latter work was an attempt to summarise for beginning students the matter contained in the *Principles*, a large treatise of some 850 pages. There was no apparent protest from the co-author of the original work.**



**Marshall apparently had an intense dislike for the "little book", and this raises interesting questions which have been assessed by Rita McWilliams Tullberg (1992) and Peter Groenewegen (1993, 1995). The conclusion seems to be that it is difficult to find a single compelling reason for Marshall's attitude. Nevertheless the withdrawal from publication has had its effects: *Economics of Industry* is now a comparatively rare book. There is not, for example, a copy in the Cambridge University library. My edition, obtained by chance from a deceased estate in Sydney, is dated 1885, third edition. But there was not a third rewriting, and it appears to be a reprint of the second edition of 1881. In comparing this with the first edition of 1879 textual differences are not at all obvious, since in pagination the two editions are exactly the same, to the extent that nearly all the pages begin and end with the same words. Thus if Marshall wanted to make anything other than a minimal alteration, he had to choose the beginning or end of a chapter where the**

**original text did not take up the whole page, the standard page consisting of forty seven lines(2).**

**The contents are as follows: prefaces to each edition, an index, and 230 pages divided into three books with 31 chapters in all. There are no apparent disjunctions in the style of the writing of any particular passages to indicate which sections were written by one or other of the authors. We only have Mary Paley's word, as in the quotation given above, that her contributions to the work are to be found mainly in the earlier part, although she was most likely involved in editing throughout, as this was her task with Marshall's later works. Changes in style which may be attributed to different authorship are, however, notable in the rewriting of the few passages altered for the second edition, and to these I now turn.**

**First it is necessary to consider the prefaces. The preface to the original and subsequent editions is as follows:**

This book was undertaken at the request of a meeting of Cambridge University Extension lecturers, and is designed to meet a want which they have felt. It is an attempt to construct on the lines laid down in Mill's *Political Economy* a theory of Value, Wages and Profits, which shall include the chief results of the work of the present generation of Economists. The main outlines of this theory have been tested during many years in lectures at Cambridge, and more recently at Bristol. An inquiry into the subjects of Banking, Foreign Trade and Taxation is deferred to a companion volume on the "Economics of Trade and Finance"<sup>(3)</sup>. The authors wish to acknowledge their obligations to Mr H. Sidgwick, Mr H.S. Foxwell and the Rev. W. Moore Ede for suggestions and aid in preparing the book for press.

**In the second edition and later reprints this small modest preface is supplemented by a four page preface which is an attempt to summarise and justify the book's contents. It will be recalled that by 1881 Marshall had no substantial publications in his own name, and this preface seems to show his anxiety about the need to construct a more general theory of economics. The opening paragraph is pure "Marshallese".**

The present volume contains an outline of the theory of Value, Wages and Profits. This theory, as it was left by English Economists of the last generation, made too great pretensions to finality; and by a natural reaction their work has been severely criticised. But on the whole the progress of inquiry has tended to vindicate it, and to show that while most of it is very incomplete, there is but little in the careful exposition of it given by John Stuart Mill which is not, when properly interpreted, true as far as it goes (p. v).

**Marshall is here developing the prose style which characterises the *Principles*. The syntax, in its use of compound sentences and juxtapositions, has an Augustan tone which gives an impression of authority, balance and reasonableness, an impression which is**

reinforced by the use of such phrases as "pretensions to", "progress of inquiry", "when properly interpreted", "careful exposition" and so on. A further quotation suggests Marshall's discomfort with the economic discourse of the *Economics of Industry*:

The first chapters were printed at a time when it was proposed to give the volume a more elementary character than was ultimately found advisable; and the difficulties which surround the definition of economic terms were ignored as far as possible; but in this edition some further discussion is given of the definitions... (p. vii).

A clue to Marshall's problems with the book may be seen here. There occurs a shift in the perception of the implied reader, which in turn is reflected in the stance of the implied author. The implied reader is now assumed to be more learned in economics and capable of discerning theoretical difficulties, for example in the definition of terms. This repositioning of the reader calls forth a more "scientific" authorial response which, in this passage, takes the form of the extensive use of the passive voice and consequent depersonalisation of the discourse. Subsequent examples in the text show the same uneasiness with defining the contract between

**reader and author.**

**The first of these is seen in the revision in chapter III which concerns the definition of the word "capital", a term which has probably never had a satisfactory, unanimously accepted definition in economics. In the first edition the relevant text is as follows:**

The land itself and natural agents, such as waterfalls, are not called capital; because they are not made by man, and they are not saved by him. We are not dependent on the labour and abstinence of our forefathers for our supply of land, or of water power. But all the improvements that are made in land are capital; for they are the result of labour and abstinence: the labour by which they were made was devoted not to producing the means of immediate enjoyment, but to doing things which will assist man in his future work of production. Thus canals are capital; but the Thames, which is a far more important source of wealth than any canal, is not capital. It may be a question whether capital should not be so defined as to include all those natural agents and resources for the production of wealth, which are capable of being appropriated. If we used the word in this sense, the capital of America would be immensely greater than that of England. But economists have agreed to define capital so as to exclude all things that are not made by man. And when thus defined the capital of America is probably less than that of England (1879 edition, p. 14).

**In the second edition the rewriting was carefully adjusted to the constraint imposed by keeping the alterations within the bounds of one page where possible, and the adjustment yielded the following:**

[...] capital may be regarded from a national point of view as that part of a nation's wealth which is destined to be employed productively. In estimating it we have not to inquire whether goods are in the hands of a trader or consumer, we have not to inquire how much command over capital each person has at his disposal in the shape of money or of any of the substitutes for money (except indeed when it becomes necessary to take account of the commercial relations with other countries). We have simply to consider what part of the nation's wealth, material and personal, is destined to be used in producing further wealth: the sum total of this wealth constitutes the national capital.

According to ordinary though not universal English usage the lands and water-power of a country are not counted in the capital of the country, because they have not been made by man; it is doubtful whether it is best to continue to exclude them (1885 edition, p. 14).

**Comparing the two passages we note a shift in the second edition towards an impersonal and more authoritative discourse. Gone are the use of specifics and easily understood examples such as "waterfalls", and the comparison of "canals" with the "Thames". In reading the first edition a beginner in political economy may not have a technically correct definition of "capital"; but she would have a very clear idea of capital as man-made resources, in contrast to the so called "gifts of nature" which economists have always called "land". A reader of the second version, however, would be unable to give a clear definition of capital (even a "wrong" one), as the terms are so hedged about with qualifications. In the first edition also the argument is made immediate and memorable, at least to the student beginner, by the logic of the conclusion: that given the definition, the capital of America is probably not as great as that of England (in the year 1879). If this is the writing of Mary Paley, as seems likely, it conveys a sense of enthusiasm for the practicalities of her subject.**

**Marshall, however, worried about unverifiable and speculative examples, revealing not only his passion for "truth", but also a greater concern for the reception of the text by a more learned, possibly academic, reader and critic.**

**A further example again shows these concerns. I reproduce this page (175) from both the texts ( [Plates 1](#) and [2](#) ) in order to show the extreme care with which a reconstruction was made for the second edition. The page comes from **Book III, Chapter III, which is titled "Local Variations of Prices and Wages. Influence of Customs". Although this is well on in the text, I am assuming that the original work in this section concerning the wages of women, was that of Mary Marshall, partly because of the style and also because a gendered discourse in economics was already developing. At first glance the layout of the two pages is identical, but the long paragraph designated figure 7 in the second half of the page is carefully reworded leaving the number of lines exactly the same. The heavy square bracket just****

before this is intended by the authors, and encloses one of several passages which they consider may be omitted by the beginning student. Other marking on the text is that of the original reader.

A careful reading of the passages reveals significant differences. The first edition delineates the problem of the mobility of labour in general – "man" as "mankind" – and then emphasises the particular lack of power of women. This emphasis is lost in the second edition with the rewriting of the paragraph. First, the order of the sentences is altered so that the argument is weakened. The "power" of woman to choose her place of employment is hedged about with the qualification "except when she goes out to service", and the assumption is that service may well lead to marriage. Then, the language itself is changed. Gone is the challenging statement that "she cannot seek her fortunes in the world as freely as he can". This spells out clearly the realities of the position of



women, and probably Marshall didn't like it, for in the second edition there is no question of women seeking fortunes, their lives are enclosed by the choices of service, factory work and marriage.

It is difficult to understand why this paragraph was altered, for the alteration is one which reduces the clarity of meaning with no gain in theoretical precision. And it was not an easy alteration to make within the given constraints of page construction. What we have here is a further example of the shift in syntactic choices favouring greater abstraction and generalisation. Possibly also Marshall wanted to distance himself from any suggestion of sympathy with the movement then becoming strong in England concerning the rights of women. In his earlier years Marshall sympathised with the movement for higher education for women, but when the crises came in Cambridge in the 1880s and 1890s regarding degrees for women he came down on the side of the conservatives. As John

**Maynard Keynes put it in his obituary of Mary Paley, "Marshall came increasingly to the conclusion that there was nothing useful to be made of women's intellects" (Keynes 1963, p. 335). So Alfred perceived a woman's "room to move" as limited indeed.**

**Overall, in the *Economics of Industry*, changes from the first edition are few and carefully constructed, and apart from the above examples I can cite only one more significant alteration. This occurs on page 26 and is at the end of a chapter so the number of words on the page mattered less, and there is room for more substantial alteration. The following page, which begins a new chapter on the growth of population and the theories of Malthus, is also altered, but only by the omission of one sentence. The significant change in discourse occurs on page 26 in Chapter IV titled the "Law of Diminishing Return". The last paragraph considers the possibility of reduced costs through mechanisation, rather than diminishing**

**returns and hence increasing costs as industry expands. The first edition reads as follows:**

While considering the influence of the Law of Diminishing Return on the difficulty of obtaining raw produce, it must not be forgotten that the arts of manufacture are constantly progressing; so that there may be a continual diminution in the difficulty of obtaining such things as lace, cutlery and watches, in the cost of which the price of the raw material is not an important element. But such commodities are consumed more by the rich than by the poor. "The wife of a common labourer may wear fabrics which would once have excited the admiration of a court. But after all the great bulk of the consumption of the labouring classes must be in coarse forms of agricultural produce simply prepared" (1879 edition, p. 26).

**So the chapter ends on a somewhat inconclusive note, and with an unacknowledged quotation. In the second edition, however, the much larger paragraph substituted does away with such specifics as "lace", "cutlery" and "fabrics", and allows Marshall the opportunity to generalise on more wide-ranging issues, that is, the effects of an increasing population upon a limited supply of land. The paragraph is as follows:**

But the sternest application of the Law of Diminishing Return is to space. An increased application of capital and labour will increase to some extent our supply of every other necessary: but it cannot increase at all the space afforded by one acre of ground, nor the sunlight and fresh air that is its natural endowment. The evils of overcrowding may be lessened by better drainage and better means of transport. But they still exist; and are a grievous hindrance to that growth of numbers and vigour which would otherwise be brought about by the increase of wealth and knowledge. London and other very large towns attract great numbers of the healthiest and most vigorous of the country population. They earn good wages; their children get abundant food and clothing; but they seldom have sufficient houseroom, scarcely ever any play that is really healthy and joyous, and never perfectly fresh air. So they grow up physically inferior to their parents; and their children in turn are inferior to them. The third generation of Londoners are with few exceptions weaker and less healthy than the average of Englishmen; and yet their ancestors are the very pick of the race, whose offspring would under favourable circumstances have done much to raise the quality of Englishmen (1885 edition, p. 26).

**Here we have a characteristically Marshallian**

**discourse which combines economic theory and social Darwinism. The implied author now has greater scientific pretensions, and the implied reader is assumed to be complicit in certain value judgements with respect to class and race. This we see in the use of words and phrases such as "inferior", "vigour", "pick of the race" and so on. The syntax with its extensive use of conjunctions and co-ordinating clauses propels the reader forward, and this combines with Marshall's ethical stance to give the discourse its weighty, authoritative tone. The discourse of this passage foreshadows Marshall's writing in the *Principles*, as may be seen from the following passage taken from the chapter on increasing and diminishing returns:**

We may now sum up provisionally the relations of industrial expansion to social well-being. A rapid growth of population has often been accompanied by unhealthy and enervating habits of life in overcrowded towns. And sometimes it has started badly, outrunning the material resources of the people, causing them with imperfect appliances to make excessive demand on the soil; and so to call forth the stern action of the law of diminishing return as regards raw produce, without having the power of minimizing its effects. Having thus begun with poverty, an increase in numbers may go on to its too frequent consequences in that weakness of character which unfits a people for developing a highly organized industry (1920 edition, p. 320).

**There is a striking similarity in the two passages, not only in content, but also in the language, such as the word "stern" to describe**

the "law of diminishing return". This gives a clear indication of Marshall's hand in the revisions made for the second edition of *Economics of Industry*. One must assume that Mary Paley, the co-author, who learnt all her economics from Alfred, and based her lectures on his teaching, did not argue with his late Victorian morality.

After the *Economics of Industry*, Mary Paley Marshall's academic authorship was restricted to the three review articles published in the *Economic Journal*. All three are concerned with "women's" issues: one reviews the Official Report of the Conference of Women Workers held in 1895, and the other two review books concerning working women. After that there was literary silence until *What I Remember* was published after her death. The *Economic Journal* was established by Marshall and others as the Journal of the Royal Economic Society in 1891. In the early issues articles by women were not infrequent, and were typically concerned with issues such as

wages and social conditions. In contrast, one hundred years later, the articles written by women, and they are very infrequent, are indistinguishable in style and content from those written by men. Most of the articles are not readable by the lay person, being coded in mathematics; and this is true of most other journals of orthodox economics. If a gendered discourse did develop in economics in the 19th century it has since disappeared from mainstream economics. Without making a value judgement on this development it is interesting to consider what has been lost, and this may be seen in the analysis I have given in my paper of the rewriting of the text of the *Economics of Industry*. A close reading of the discourse of the two editions shows how the fresh, pragmatic, possibly more humanitarian, lexis of the passages in the first edition was replaced with depersonalised abstractions in the cause of "economics as science". It is possible to see here how the writing of nineteenth century women economists was able to be subsumed or marginalised. This is a

**much larger issue, but one which is clearly assuming more significance with the present general disillusionment with economic orthodoxy. It awaits, however, another story.**

**In conclusion I would like to quote two points of view. One current point of view on the work of Mary Paley Marshall, and her partnership with Alfred, is expressed as follows in *The New Palgrave: A Dictionary of Economics* (1987). The entry on her, written by G. Becattini, concludes:**

Had it not been for the suffocating influence of Alfred, Mary Paley, with her clear mind, earnestness and strong will, would have become herself, we can confidently guess, an economist of repute and not, as is the case, a minor figure in the shadow of Alfred Marshall (vol. 3, p. 364).

**I make only two comments on this quotation. First, where would Alfred and the history of economics have been without her lifelong support and loyalty, and second, could this point of view have been incorporated into the canon one hundred, fifty, or even twenty years ago? In contrast, an assessment of *Economics of Industry* given one hundred years ago in 1893 by Professor Luigi Cossa, states:**

Not until 1879 did he [Marshall] bring himself to summarise the result of his studies in that remarkable elementary book, prepared with the aid of his wife, Mrs Mary Paley Marshall, which has practically displaced another school compendium called *Political Economy for Beginners* (1870) written by Mrs. Millicent Garrett Fawcett on the lines of her husband's manual (1893, p. 358).

**Comment on this opinion is, I think, unnecessary. However, it is refreshing to be reminded by both these quotations of the extent to which every text is a product of its time and place.**

## Notes

\*. An earlier version of this paper was presented at a conference of the Australasian Victorian Studies Association held in Hobart, Tasmania, in February 1994. The present version is reprinted with permission from the editors of the *Proceedings* of that conference. Minor alterations have been made to accommodate recent publications, in particular Groenewegen (1995), and Whitaker (1996).

1. See *Memorials*, p. 500.

2. The publishing constraint to which Marshall was subjected is recorded in a letter from Marshall to his publisher Alexander Macmillan, dated 30 July 1881 (Whitaker 1996, letter 101).

3. The companion volume was never produced.

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