

CRAIG DWORKIN

## Textual Prostheses

"Prosthesis" belongs to a class of terms denoting arbitrary processes, whose intrusion into the realm of language should be viewed with suspicion.

—Thomas Le Marchant Douse

There are books in which the footnotes . . . are more interesting than the text.

—George Santayana

Nobody is going to believe that footnotes changed Writing and Reading. But they did.

—Heriberto Yépez

IN *SEUILS*, GÉRARD GENETTE inventories those genres on the threshold of a literary work: dedications and inscriptions, epigraphs and titles, prefaces, notes, and all manner of bibliographic accouterments—from jacket copy to format. Genette argues that "a text without a paratext does not exist," but he also mentions, in passing, that "paratexts without texts do exist, if only by accident" (3-4).<sup>1</sup> Paratexts without a text—paratexts *as* texts, one might put it—have also been written quite intentionally, however, and they constitute a remarkable trend in contemporary writing. While drawn from diverse contexts and written in apparent obliviousness to their precedents, these works all stage a related set of tensions: between literal and metaphoric language, between the etymological history of words and the amnesia of their colloquial usage, between the form of a work and its ostensible themes. By attending to the materials and rhetorics of these paratextual works, I hope to show that those tensions gesture toward the embodiedness of these literary works' bibliographic forms, and to the textual corporeality that all such paratexts sustain as they seek to supplement, support, and displace the body of the text.

On 17 October, 1961, at 3:47 p.m., Daniel Spoerri stopped what he was doing and made a map recording the location of all the objects that happened to be lying on his kitchen table. Each outlined shape was then numbered and described in a corresponding note with the mock precision of one of Robbe-Grillet's

---

<sup>1</sup> For slightly different formulations of the idea of the literary paratext, see Genette's *Palimpsestes*, Susan Vanderborg's *Paratextual Communities*, and Vincent Colonna's nicely titled "Fausses Notes."

*nouveaux romans*. Published as the *Topographie anecdotée du hasard* (*Anecdoted Topography of Chance*), subsequent editions included notes to the notes—as many as eight degrees of annotations by as many authors—in a self-reflexive network of emendation.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the sober, ostensibly scrupulous, dead-pan documentary that records details about the objects on the table—such as the fine-print on the labels of packages, the cost of items, and the date they were purchased—the notes include more discursive anecdotes about the circumstances under which objects were acquired and used, reminiscences and arguments among the writers, copies of their correspondence, transcripts of interviews, scholastic disputes, corrections and clarifications, obscure passages from literature and scrapbook clippings from contemporary newspapers, notes on translation, interlingual puns, dirty jokes, and, in some of the later editions, extraordinary, enthused passages from Dieter Roth that interrupt the expository tone of the original with hallucinatory extended metaphors and Steinian syntactic permutations.

The *Topographie* thus amplifies a long-standing tension between two competing and contradictory rhetorical traditions that have taken the genre of the note as their vehicle: the personally expressive and the objectively impersonal. On the one hand, the note has always been an anecdotal site that attracts speculative, conjectural, and incidental remarks; it is often the occasion for undocumented testimony or confidential asides—or even, too often, the irrepressible inclusion of material too dear to the writer to part with and yet not really germane to the topic under consideration. On the other hand, the note, and the footnote in particular, was seen to oppose those “particular, anecdotal traditions, whose original authority is unknown, or justly suspicious” (Bolingbroke 337). Accord-

---

<sup>2</sup> The proliferation of varied books under the same title pushes the distinction between different editions and entirely different books to the limit, as even the briefest bibliography will suggest. The first version of the *Topographie Anecdotee du hasard* was published as a catalogue of sorts for one of Spoerri's exhibitions (Paris: Editions Galerie Lawrence, 1962), with text by Spoerri and collaborative additions by Robert Filliou. The book was apparently translated into Dutch in 1964, although I have been unable to locate a copy. An expanded English edition, *an anecdoted topography of chance* (New York: Something Else Press, 1966), with sketched pen and ink illustrations by Roland Topor, was translated and annotated by Emmett Williams, with an excerpt appearing the same year in *The Paris Review*. A German edition, *Anekdoten zu einer Topographie des Zufalls* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1970), was expanded yet again, though with the illustrations omitted, and translated—from the text of the first French edition and the notes of the English edition—by Dieter Roth (then “Diter Rot”), who added his own annotations. A facsimile of the original French edition was published by the Archives of the Centre national d'art contemporaine (Paris, 1972), and that version of the book was subsequently reprinted in a new edition with a new introduction by Topor (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 1990). Most recently, a newly expanded and reannotated English edition, with the illustrations restored, was published in an oversized format as a sort of genetic text that brings all of the earlier variants together: *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*, Atlas Arkhive Four, Documents of the Avant-Garde (London: Atlas Press, 1995); all citations in this essay are to this edition. In addition to a trade edition Atlas also published a limited deluxe edition, and there was both a hard and soft cover version from Something Else Press. The map of the table was printed differently by each of the presses.

On the significance of the format of the Something Else edition, with implications for the reading of the new Atlas edition, see Silveira (169). Additionally, compare the new schematic layout of the Atlas edition with Thomas McFarland's description of Eduard Fraenkel's book on Horace as “one giant footnote of 460 pages, with footnotes to that footnote cascading magnificently down the bottoms of those pages” (159).

ingly, notes came to be understood as the proper repository for material beyond the writer's personal authority: recourse to the work of other writers, evidentiary and corroborative bulwark, the foundation of objective facts, and citations in a standardized—and often imposed—system. At the same time, the association of the footnote with scientific objectivity was “virulently contested in the early modern period,” and the tension could still be felt in the opposition in the early eighteenth century to designating the note as either “a vehicle for displaying the critic's taste and breeding” or “a quasi-scientific system for displaying the vicissitudes of textual transmission” (Tribble 229-30). Indeed, “even eighteenth-century empiricism was content with weaker positions than those adopted by the triumphant positivists of the following age” (Cosgrove 130-31).

To “note,” of course, is to observe closely, and the conceit of the *Topographie* is that it pays meticulous attention to objects that would otherwise go unnoticed: bread crumbs and grains of salt, a stray paperclip or rubber-band, an empty bottle, a torn carton, a cracked ashtray, and so on.<sup>3</sup> With its exhaustive and careful analysis of a depopulated mise-en-scène in which everyday objects are recorded at a certain moment, frozen wherever they happen to be, the *Topographie* has some kinship with the attention a detective gives to the disposition of clues in a crime novel. Indeed, the structure of the book—with the textual and typographical attention lavished on each individual entry—promises revelations about the significance of the noted objects, which are imbued with an aura of mysterious immanence. In the end, however, the anecdotes fail to divulge any especially interesting secret histories; the banal accounts of quotidian objects ultimately reveal them to be, in fact, rather ordinary. But the book sets in play a dynamic between everyday utility and detached observation that is nevertheless quite interesting. In a sense derived directly from the Old Icelandic *nota*, to “note” also means to make use of something, so it is ironic that the cartographic notes of the *Topographie* suspend the use of the objects noted. However, both the “useless” objects on the table top (spilled salt, burnt matches, torn paper bags, et cetera) and the utilitarian objects frozen in place and rendered unuseable are re-motivated by the project of mapping and anecdoting, activities in which they once again serve a definite purpose. The *Topographie* reflects explicitly on this cycle, both with its note that the word “floccinaucinilipilification” (the estimation of something as worthless) might be used in a way in which it was in fact considered worthless, and with Dieter Roth's series of speculations on the contest between “attention” and “use,” in which the objects in Spoerri's book oscillate between “artwork” and “commodity,” conservation and consumption (50; 61-62). Specifically, Roth argues that “one can call symbols discarded commodities, because commodities—so long as you need them—lead an unconscious or unseen life” (149). We will see this dynamic recast in yet another form, as the alternation between the literal and metaphoric comes to charge the artist's book with its distinctive character, and in which notation itself vacillates between symbolic use

<sup>3</sup> The recurrent dairy products mentioned in the *Topographie*—a “half-litre bottle of milk,” a “quarter of a pound of butter,” “the corner of a half-litre container of milk,” an empty milk carton—may not be incidental. “Note,” the English translator of the *Topography* might have noted, is a dialect term for cow's milk (*O.E.D.*).

and commodified referent, but for now I want to recall the similar logic of an artist's book from precisely the same moment. In Marcel Broodthaer's sculpture *Pense-bête* (1964), books of his early poetry, bound shut by being set in plaster, can either be the subject of *attention* (contemplated as sculpture) or of *use* (opened and read)—but not both.

The *Topographie* belongs to what Johanna Drucker has identified as a documentary tradition of artist's books (335), but it can also be read in a broader literary context that includes both the ancient trope of the epic catalogue and the much more recent lists and inventories of conceptual writing. The *Topographie* has a place in the tradition of "literary" footnotes originating in Edmund Spenser's self-glossing apparatuses in the *Shepherd's Calendar* and stretching from eighteenth-century examples in the works of Pope, Swift, Fielding, and Sterne to the modernist notes of Eliot, Joyce, and Beckett, and later to books by Vladimir Nabakov, bp Nichol, Manuel Puig, Nicholson Baker, and Mark Danielewski, among many others.<sup>4</sup> The archæology of the tabletop is itself a recognizable literary motif. In George Perec's "Notes concernant des objets qui sont sur ma table de travail" (Notes Concerning the Objects that are on My Work-Table), for instance, Perec describes a table "cluttered almost to excess," which he documents with a combination of anecdotes and precise descriptions not unlike Spoerri's annotations. Similarly, the theme is the occasion for a tour-de-force paragraph early in Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. The passage begins with the

millions of tiny red and brown curls of rubber eraser, pencil shavings, dried tea or coffee stains, traces of sugar and Household Milk, much cigarette ash, very fine black debris picked and flung from typewriter ribbons, decomposing library paste, broken aspirins ground to powder . . .

and surfaces upward and outward to the *News of the World*—an expansive sound-ing terminus, although its actual presence, Pynchon suggests, is only speculative. And besides, he adds, it too might have "been thrown away" (18).

Discarded refuse, as it happens, is one of several inspirations Spoerri himself has claimed for the *Topographie* project. Fascinated with the idea that one "could retrace the history of every scrap" of garbage in a wastebasket, Spoerri acknowledges the precedent of the *poubelles* (trashcans) of Arman (Armand Fernandez), who created his *sculptures informes* by displaying the contents of various people's garbage cans in museum vitrines (*Anecdoted* 25). Or worse: for an infamous 1960 exhibit entitled *Le Plein* (Chock Full), Arman filled the entire Galerie Iris Clert with trash that he must have been saving—with a really rather touching sentimentality—for some time. The *Topographie* similarly salvages what, by 3:48 on that day in October, might well have been detritus. The book displays those disposable items as "the discrete heroes of a modern romance whose destiny leads to the dustbin" (21), so that "amidst this anecdotic mine/Thou labour'st hard to bid thy Hero shine" in this neo-epic catalogue of the transient and banal (qtd. in *O.E.D.*, at "anecdotic"). At the same time, the compositional procedure of the book is clearly related to Spoerri's contemporaneous *tableaux de piège* (snare paintings): sculptural collages in which the contents of a surface such as a tabletop are affixed with adhesive, so that the support can be rotated ninety degrees and hung on the wall. That rotation both defamiliarizes the generally ordinary ob-

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the literary footnote in Romantic poetry, see Labbe.

jects, which now jut outward just above eye level, and translates their sculptural forms from the horizontal ground of gravity to the easel painting's vertical plane.<sup>5</sup> A darker version of a carefully arranged tabletop presented as sculpture (although one that still maintains a healthy dash of the absurd) was assembled by Robert Watts at precisely the same time Spoerri was composing his topography. Watts' *Table for Suicide Event* (1961) consisted of a painted wooden folding table supporting a number of objects, from the chilling (assorted metal instruments in a leather case, a single latex glove) to the ominous (a drinking glass, an apothecary bottle, note paper, telephone, and some audio tape) to the cruelly campy (a Band-Aid box).

Comparisons with any of these various intertexts might be pursued productively, but one should not lose sight of the way in which the publication of *Topographie*, with its near rhyme of "typography," puts the format of the book into dialogue with its style. With individual items inventoried on separate pages as if they were each worthy of equal attention, the layout of the book emphasizes one of the denotations of "anecdote": a detached narrative of a single incident or event "told as being in itself interesting or striking" (*O.E.D.*). At the same time, *Topographie anecdotée* is a sort of etymological oxymoron; "anecdote," from the privative Greek *anekdota*, originally meant "secret histories" or "unpublished material" (*O.E.D.*). A similar historical pun also causes the subject and format of the *Topographie* to coincide: despite its record of chance, the tabletop is not a coincidental subject for a keyed reference map; in their bibliographic sense, "index" and "table" were initially "applied somewhat indiscriminately" (Wellisch 206).

With its notes keyed to the tracings of a topographic map, Spoerri's book is structured much like Andy Warhol's exactly contemporaneous simulation of a paint-by-numbers kit, *Do It Yourself Landscape* (1962), or Roni Horn's more recent *Still Water (the River Thames for Example)* (1999), a series of offset lithographs in which tiny numerals are overprinted on images of the surface of the water, with corresponding footnotes printed below. But even these image-based systems of annotation have their origins in the history of the book and the development of the footnote as the dominant form of annotation. Although "the practice of linking notes to text had already been employed in glossed books by the late eleventh century," the footnote has its roots in the early modern dawn of printing (Parkes 139). As the commentary incorporated into printed books increased over the course of the sixteenth century, these unkeyed marginal notes set more or less beside their relevant passages became increasingly crowded, confusing, and in need of differentiation, so "printers employed a series of letters in alphabetical sequence as *signes de renvoi* to link the notes to the text" (Parkes 57). Although the typical number of glosses actually began to decrease in the late seventeenth century, those keyed passages were also shifting from the sides of the page to the

<sup>5</sup> Compare this practice with Jackson Pollock's roughly contemporaneous "drip" paintings, as well as the reverse procedure of Marcel Duchamp's 1917 *trébuchet* (caltrop, literally a "stumbler"; the word is also *un terme de métier* in chess for placing a pawn in the opponent's path): a set of mounted coathooks taken off the wall and affixed to the floor to create a sort of sculptural trap.

bottom, so that “from a technical point of view, the great [codicological] innovation of about 1700 was the choice of the footnote to the virtual exclusion of other forms of printed annotation” (Jackson 55; see also Tribble 231 and Parkes 57).

Initially called “bottom notes” (the first entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, from William Savage’s 1841 *Dictionary of the Art of Printing*, implies that “Foot Note” was still a secondary term in the middle of the nineteenth century), the sequences of *notae* were repeated anew with each page, in contrast with our current practice of continuous numbering throughout a chapter or book (Parkes 57).<sup>6</sup> In either case, the footnote’s focus on the page indicates its debt to the history of the book and the shift from scroll to codex. Moreover, the increased use of the footnote “appears to have been part of the printers’ efforts to modernize layout as they increasingly distanced themselves from the original manuscript models” in which “comments surrounded the text, top, sides, and bottom, flowing from it like the decorative acanthus that adorned monastery capitals and liturgical mosaics” (Jackson 55-56; Cosgrove 139). Such designs carried over into early printed books, in which compositors—as John Smith put it in his 1755 *Printer’s Grammar*—“contrived to encompass the pages of the text, that they might have the resemblance of a Looking-glas in the frame” (qtd. in Tribble 232): the page, in other words, glossed to a reflective gloss. In contrast, the footnote was seen to “mime contemporary ideals of order, coherence, beauty, and hierarchy” in a neoclassical aesthetic of restrained elegance and an overall page design based on uniform typefaces, with sections of text distinguished by size rather than font (Tribble 232, 231, et seq). The footnote as we know it, then, is coeval with the modern principles of book design that emerged with the Enlightenment.

Inextricably bound with this history, the modern typographical conventions of annotation—following a section of text with the callout or indicator of a superscript numeral—are inevitably associated with scholarly publications. Indeed, the extent to which notes form the core of a critical text has recently been put to the test by Simon Morris in his artist’s book *Interpretation*, a bibliographic version of site-specific art. Taking two academic essays, Morris erases everything except the footnotes, which remain at the bottom of the page, their isolated call-out numbers still suspended in the space above, like star-charts illustrating Mallarmé’s “alphabet des astres” (98; “alphabet of stars”): writing’s negative image of blackened constellations on the bleached white sky of the page. Morris then gives the writer of each essay the other’s erased text, from which he or she attempts to reconstruct the original essay from only the evidence of the notes. The notes are thus the point of contact between the surfaces of the two—original and reconstructed—essays, and the resulting similarities between the essays indicate the extent to which notes are not merely isolated end points of reference; rather, they gesture to the textual spaces between each other, carrying information about their text as a whole.

Even without a network of notes as such, superscript still operates within its own textual economy. In Walter Abish’s short story “Ardor/Awe/Atrocity,” for example, the pages bristle with superscript constellations that spike and swirl

---

<sup>6</sup> Before the word “footnote” was coined, Samuel Johnson spoke of notes “subjoined to the text in the same page” (*Lives* 3.112; qtd. in H.J. Jackson 60).

over the alphabetic grid of the main text's larger lines—reminiscent of the numbering added to Honoré de Balzac's *Sarrasine* when it was reprinted in *S/Z*, Roland Barthes' limit-case of structuralism. The twenty-six sections of Abish's story are each titled with three headwords, grouped in alphabetized sets. Whenever one of those words appears in the story, it is marked with a superscript number indicating its place in the sequence of seventy-eight headwords, as in this sentence: "Without Mannix Southern California<sup>7</sup> would be bereft of the distinction between ardor,<sup>1</sup> awe<sup>2</sup>, and atrocity<sup>3</sup>" (45). The superscript numerals in Abish's story send the reader not to a note, but self-reflexively back to the tagged word in a circular relay. The numerals thus point to the status of the otherwise fairly conventional story *as text*,<sup>7</sup> and the erratic spacing of the superscript punctuates the prose and trips the reader's eye with its "roughened, impeded" surface (Shklovsky 22). An empty formal system disrupting the ostensible "meaning" of the story, these numerals are a perfect example of what Viktor Shklovsky termed *priyomi ostranennia* (devices of making strange): those techniques by which poetry slows the reader's habitual consumption of the communicative content. In Shklovsky's famous formulation:

The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (12)

Like Spoerri's patient notice of everyday objects, the superscript numerals in Abish's story focus the reader's attention on generally quotidian vocabulary. "Atrocity," to be sure, is rather charged, but the single most striking headword is "totemic," and in general the noted words are not particularly exceptional: "now," "open," "how," "color," and so on. Whereas an actual note might have either augmented the story or revealed something about the significance of a particular word, here the system merely prompts the reader to speculate about lexicon: why, in this idiosyncratic textual system, is any particular word a headword? What might be special about the chosen word? To what extent does vocabulary determine a story? Was this an exercise requiring the writer to use certain words, or were the headwords chosen after the story had been essentially written?<sup>8</sup> Whatever the answers (and none are forthcoming from the text), Abish's story is a good example of the potential of even the quasi-footnote to simultaneously interrupt and structure a text.

Whereas the text of "Atrocity" establishes a citational system without notes,

<sup>7</sup> In Shari Benstock's distinction, "critical" footnotes are essentially exophoric while "fictional" footnotes are anaphoric: pointing back to the text to which they are keyed rather than outward to another, cited work (209; cf. 205, 207-8, et passim). This schematization is useful to a point, but even "critical" footnotes are doubly articulated indices, hinged between the text they note and the one they cite, looking—Janus-faced—simultaneously at both. Further complications arise with cases such as the numbered endnotes to an essay by Jean-Marie Gleize, which are not keyed to any particular section of the article. The first note slyly explains that "les notes renvoient à n'importe quel endroit du texte" (29; "the notes refer to any place in the text"), and, doubling the stakes of his scholarly parlor-trick, "aussi bien à n'importe lequel de ses blancs" ("also to any of the white spaces as well"). I am grateful to Genette for bringing Gleize's essay to my attention.

<sup>8</sup> Abish's numbering was almost certainly not a strictly retrospective revision, since one suspects that a word such as "xenophile" was generated by the formal need to include at least three words beginning with the letter "x." The general principle, if not a strict procedure, is still indeterminate, however.

other books have enumerated notes without a text. The precedent for such works is Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener's satiric 1743 book *Hinkmars von Repkow Noten ohne Text* (Hinkmars von Repkow's Notes Without Text), which reasoned that since scholars acquire their cultural capital through footnotes that explicate other works rather than through writing "primary" works themselves, a book with only footnotes would be the fastest route to scholarly success (cf. Grafton 120).<sup>9</sup> Although the motivations have changed, the idea of a book of "notes without text" continues to be attractive to poets and artists. Like Phillip Gallo's artist's book *Captions from Animals Looking at You*, in which captions are reprinted without the illustrations they originally accompanied, books of notes without text isolate one element of the textual apparatus in order to lay bare and better understand the poetics of the note and its function as a device. The *note*, as I have indicated, has its etymological origins in denotations of "usefulness," but by obviating the intended value of the notes in their original context and frustrating their functional utility, a book can focus attention on what the Russian Formalists might have called "the note as such." Or, to put this in the terms of more recent linguistics, these works move the notes away from *use* and toward *mention*.

Indeed, when separated from the body of the text and taken by itself, even the most earnestly objective and utile system of notes can appear as a paratactic prose poem of "new sentences" that invite alogical connections—sometimes surrealist or absurdist, sometimes simply nonsensical.<sup>10</sup> David Antin's "Separation Meditations," which transforms the supplemental clarifications of an editor into evocative and gnomic statements, provides a perfect illustration. Related by compositional practice both to Antin's earlier *Novel Poem*, a collage of sentences transcribed from popular novels, and to the constraint-based writing of his earlier "Meditations," which were composed from pre-set lexicons of severely restricted vocabulary, the "Separation Meditations" were taken from some of the endnotes in P.E. Matheson's translation of Epictetus.<sup>11</sup> The opening stanza of the first "Separation

---

<sup>9</sup> The Reverend John Hodgson's *History of Northumberland*, a heavily anecdotal "topographical enquiry" (v), is one of the most infamous instances of the excessive use of annotations. While Zerby overstates the case when he claims that an entire volume is given over to a footnote on the Roman Wall, in the third volume of the second part of Hodgson's *History* (edited by James Raine), the subtitle "Roman Barriers in Britain" is followed by a footnote that runs for 264 pages. The main text continues to squeeze along at the top of the page in a trickle two or three lines wide for seventeen pages, but then gives over entirely to the note—and to the series of notes within that note—for the remainder of the volume. Grafton simply calls it "the longest footnote ever" (qtd. in Kevin Jackson 155).

The satiric impulse behind Rabener's book has more recently surfaced in a series of essays mocking the ossified conventions of law review articles. The main text of Erik Jensen's excessively footnoted "The Shortest Article in Law Review History" can easily be quoted in full: "This is it." Two responses, also fully footnoted, set the record straight: Grant H. Morris's rebuttal "Not so!" and Thomas H. Ohom's subsequent query "Why?" Beat at his own game, Jensen's "Comments in Reply" is simply a blank page, without notes.

<sup>10</sup> "Nonsense [is] the essential sense of the Marginal Note," as Edgar Allan Poe wrote (qtd. in Lipking 609). With a phrase that resonates with the works considered in this essay, Lipking argues that for Poe the ultimate attraction of marginalia was its "complete independence from the text," "glossing the white space of nothingness" (610, 611). For a discussion of the new sentence, see Silliman (63-93 et passim).

<sup>11</sup> Antin must have used Matheson's two-volume *Epictetus*. His procedure might be seen as a riff on Whitehead's often quoted (and rarely footnoted) remark that "the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato" (63).

Meditation," for example, is drawn from the notes to Chapter 24 of Book 3 of the *Discourses*.<sup>12</sup> The first five notes in the original volume's appendix read:

1. The places where you now are.
2. probably refers to the story that Nicocreon ordered Anaxarchus' tongue to be cut out, whereupon he bit it off himself and spat it in Nicocreon's face. Diog. Laert. ix. 59.
3. καρπιστής—*vindex* or *assertor*, the man by the touch of whose wand the slave became free, if his master made no counter claim. The word is used again in iv. 1 and iv. 7. For Epictetus' references to manumission cf ii., 1, note 3.
4. διαχυσίς here and later in the chapter, of pleasure as something diffused or expansive (opp. to συστολή).
5. i.e. "take my life." (186)

From which Antin takes:

1. The places where you are now
2. A man who wanted another's tongue cut out
3. By the touch of whose wand the slave became free
4. Here and later of pleasure as something diffused
5. Take my life (66)

Isolating the small six-point type of the original in this way "is an attempt to render the force of the diminutive" (*Meditations* 70). His procedure also illustrates the fact that the codexical articulation of footnotes and endnotes—their separation on the page and within the book—opens them up to reiteration. Ostensibly outside the text that both contains and is framed by it, with a subservient role that nonetheless possesses an authority to trump the text that would seem to master it, the note is a dangerous supplement that establishes "the problematic limit between an inside and an outside that is always threatened by graft and by parasite" (Derrida 196).

In the new context of Antin's page, for example, the excerpted lines take on a distinctly self-reflexive aspect, gesturing to their new context rather than to the body text of their original volume. Consider another line from the first "Separation Meditation," for instance: "The middle finger upraised" (68). The phrase describes a vulgar gesture, of course, but it is also—like the separated notes themselves—a sort of perverted index: the finger pointing with iconic significance but not, as the forefinger would, to any specific referent. Moreover, the reader of the poem's first line, "The places where you are now" (66), is indeed now in two places: the words of one writer transplanted to a new location. With those glosses cut out of the body of their original text, so that the reader is "reading/omitting" (70), the amputated tongue of the second line is far from gratuitous, as a gloss of the Greek γλωσσα (tongue) reminds us (an etymology all the more salient given the context of the classical text from which his separations are taken).

After the first two poems in the series, Antin works with much smaller fragments of found text, typically only one or two words, which he repeats and re-

---

Following Antin's slip of the tongue (a mis-placed *gloss*, as it were) that his volume of Epictetus was "open to the footnotes" (*Selected* 19), one scholar has also referred to the source of the separations as footnotes rather than endnotes (Glazier). I recognize that this is an exceedingly pedantic distinction, and what must sound like a lot of fuss over *Fussnoten*, but I hope that the small force of the difference will be clear by the end of this essay.

<sup>12</sup> More pedantry, just for the record: in his introduction to the *Selected Poems*, Antin cites the origin of his first line as a verbatim transcription, but note the slight final inversion.

combines into spare lyrical permutations, so that the entire series is a recognition of poetic "pleasure as something diffused" (66). The formal integrity of those first two poems, however, is revealing and sustained; the stanzas almost always correspond to the chapter divisions of the original's notes, and one can trace Antin's reading through the endmatter of the original volume. While in the first poem, lines are taken from notes without regard to their order within a chapter, in the second poem, the lines more closely follow the order of the notes, beginning with the very first sentence of Matheson's first note to Chapter 1, and tending to move from chapter to chapter as well as from note to note within each chapter. Both poems follow the spatial logic of typography, which separates keyed material, rather than the associative logic of theme or tone; "the point is that the discourses are treated as matters of language without regard to their substance" (66).

Even when he transcribes sentences in their entirety and closely follows the sequence of the notes, Antin's procedure is never mechanical, however, and the small transformations of his transcriptions are telling. By replacing the original verbal phrase "setting up" with the more prosaic "planting," for instance, Antin alliterates the otherwise verbatim line "planting a palm tree seems to be mentioned as an acrobatic feat" and syncopates its rhythm accordingly. He also tends to edit lines so that their references are less specific. As the example above illustrates, Antin typically omits proper names and precise referents, rendering "Caesar" as "the king," for instance, and he thus transforms those original explanatory notes into lines of text which themselves might benefit from a further gloss. At the same time, this practice emphasizes the indexical force of the note and its status as a linguistic shifter by suggesting a wider range of referents for the reader to imagine ("Nicocreon," that is, indicates a more restricted set than those "who wanted another's tongue cut out," however small one hopes that latter category might be).

Separating the appropriated notes into small stanzas of two to six lines, Antin exploits what Ron Silliman has called the "parsimony principle": the strong habitual tendency by which readers try to incorporate even the most radically paratactic sentences into a coherent explanatory framework, imaginatively supplying any necessary logical connections in the process (109 et seq). Given that—according to Antin—readers have an instinctual desire for "freedom from logical error or a secure judgement" (68), and that "no step can be taken without logical process" (69), the separations' "governing principle/is rational/which makes knowledge articulate" (71), and they suggest that "truth is/of many alternatives/only a corner/where a fact happens to stand" (71). Moreover, Antin typically arranges his lines in numbered tercets to suggest a syllogism. In fact, one of the sections of the poem neatly describes and enacts its syllogistic form:

1. With one another
2. Or any two
3. With a third (68)

With a nice irony, Antin thus gives a scholastic form to material from a work that is explicitly concerned with the seriousness of reasoning and the careful analysis of syllogisms, which—it argues—must not be followed too blindly (see esp. *Dis-*

*courses* 1.7). In brief, his separations underscore the claim that "a convincing impression [...] is not a criterion of truth" (*Mediations* 67).

It is worth remembering that however convincing an impression the letterpress edition of Antin's *Meditations* might make, it is not, following Johanna Drucker's useful delineation, strictly speaking an "artist's book." According to Drucker, "an artist's book is a book created as an original work of art rather than a reproduction of a pre-existing work" (2). Although the "Separation Meditations" derive from the formal aspects of the book and demonstrate the poetic value of paying attention to the supposedly incidental and secondary bibliographic aspects of books, his work is ultimately published as a reproduction rather than an exploitation of bibliography. True to their name, the "separations" are in fact twice removed: first from the body of the texts to which they refer, and then again from the logic of the page on which they originated. This is certainly not to fault the poems, which gain their syllogistic logic, riddling tone, stanzaic form, and lyric rhythm from that double separation; but the difference between his book and similar works is, as I hope to show next, illuminating.

At the heart of Drucker's definition is the conceptualization of the artist's book as "a book which integrates the formal means of its realization and production with its thematic or aesthetic issues" (2). "Self-conscious about the structure and meaning of the book as a form," the artist's book, in short, "interrogates the conceptual or material form of the book as part of its intention, thematic interests, or production activities" (Drucker 4, 3).<sup>13</sup> Following this argument, I want to consider several works which might not readily be recognized as "artist's books" (because of their production values, distribution, and the social networks in which they were produced) but which nevertheless conform to Drucker's characterization. In these works, the most metaphoric *and* the most literal understanding of bibliographic apparatuses can be seen to underwrite the logic of their content as well as their form. As with the books by Antin and Spoerri, these books also take their place in a long literary tradition of incorporating paratextual apparatuses. Within poetry, for instance, one might think of the "Explanatory Notes" that appear, without indicators, on the lower half of the pages in Jack Spicer's "Homage to Creeley," or the similar diptych layout of Bruce Andrew's "Getting Ready to Have Been Frightened." Tyrone Williams's "Cold Calls" renders its appropriated, collaged, and recontextualized language as a citational system of footnotes hugging the bottom of the page and referencing endnotes; presented directly in this way, without introduction or the advance notice of contextualizing hypotaxis, these poems are indeed cold calls in the marketing sense, but they are also "called out" in the publishing sense of the phrase (as when a letter or numeral is used to

<sup>13</sup> Vincent Colonna argues that Georges Perec's use of notes "s'attaque à la matérialité du livre, à la dénégarion de son support matériel mais parce qu'en exploitant des possibilités paratextuelles inusitées dans les œuvres de fiction, ell déplace ce qui fait notre logique de la lecture, en particulier pour ce qui est de l'instanciation du discours littéraire" (108; "grapples with the materiality of the book, with the denial of its material support, but by taking advantage of the unexploited paratextual possibilities in fictional works, it displaces that which constitutes our logic of reading, specifically that which is the instantiation of literary discourse").

indicate relations within a larger design, such as the labeled parts of a diagram, or when a superscript asterisk indicates a note) and "cold" in the senses of the "detached" and "objective" of citation that they echo. Yet another example, from a quite different perspective, is the beautiful *Cronicas Brasileiras* by Critical Art Ensemble, an intricately structured book that backs its accordion-fold pages with *Annotations to Cronicas Brasileiras* in a play of sheet against page. Unlike any of these works, however, the books I want to examine here all explicitly thematize their structure.

The first of these books is Jennifer Martenson's *Xq28*<sup>1</sup>. Taking its eponymic title from the chromosomal location of the purported "gay gene," the work addresses the competing implications of developmental models of nature and nurture, or "the ratio of biological to cultural factors" (5), as she puts it. Indeed, the book balances genetic codes with codes of conduct, the code of the X-chromosome with the codex. The thirteen interior pages of this twenty-page stapled booklet are left largely blank, although they are set with headers and footers as if awaiting their contents. At the bottom of these pages a dozen cross-indexed footnotes appear to follow not so much from some erased text as from the superscript "1" of the book's title, and then to proceed from numbered note to numbered note as footnotes within footnotes direct the reader forward and backwards through the bottom of the chapbook's pages, looping back on themselves with humorous and telling coincidence. Both "probability" and "real," for instance, point to the same explanatory note: "Usually defined as statistically significant obedience to faulty premises. . ." (8). Likewise, following "the long, twisted strands" of Arachne's "spidery [. . .] threads" through the maze of notes leads readers from both "banned" and "normal development" to the same definition: "this process is known as *indoctrination*" (9, 8, 14, 13, 15). "Women" and "the popular imagination" are similarly both glossed by "a dense, fibrous tissue" (6, 17, 13). Three notes all return to the explanation that "while the spines are relatively durable, the information stored within can be banned at any time" (14): the "destruction of [. . .] manuscripts" (11); "perfectly average figures of speech" (16); and narratives banded "tightly with strands of DNA" (6-7). As with the genetic code in question, a limited vocabulary of building blocks proliferates into a variety of mutating sequences, folding back on itself in a literal replication. Moreover, the self-sustaining notes continue to function in a book that has, allegorically, questioned reproduction.

Recognizing how "numerous experiments have demonstrated that narratives have the ability to bond tightly" (6-7), Martenson grafts idiomatic phrases to sentences so that different themes and registers are spliced in a sort of intellectual surrealism. Best of all, her ear is attuned to fortuitous found phrases such as "to reside on the very tip of the long arm of the X chromosome" (7), in which the "long arm of the law" and the "tip of the tongue" recombine.<sup>14</sup> In this way, *Xq28*<sup>1</sup> bears a (family) resemblance to Rosmarie Waldrop's deft recasting of Wittgensteinian propositions in books such as *The Reproduction of Profiles* and *Lawn*

<sup>14</sup> The phrase appears in one of the concluding sentences to the research article that sparked the debate of *Xq28*: "Our experiments suggest that a locus (or loci) related to sexual orientation lies within approximately 4 million base pairs of DNA on the tip of the long arm of the X chromosome" (Hamer 327).

of the *Excluded Middle*, and like these works *Xq28'* hinges on its carefully modulated handling of *tone*, a subject wittily and obliquely invoked in the phrase "experts have long advised regular exercise of subtle forms of sexual dimorphism lest the muscle grow flaccid and lose its definition" (13).<sup>15</sup> With such sentences, Martenson reminds the reader of the powerful "side effects of perfectly average figures of speech," and, like the *Topographie anecdotée*, her investigation of the metaphoric force of even the most descriptive, objectively nominalist language of science exploits the tension between the footnote's two traditional rhetorical roles (16).

That tension between metaphoric and literal language is replicated by the very form of her artist's book, which plays on the dynamic between its physical structure and that structure's metaphoric associations. The absent text in the body of Martenson's book recalls the absence of female subjects in the original studies of the so-called "gay gene," an omission wryly noted in the very first note: "if, as Wittig says, lesbians are not women, it [the failure to seek for a genetic basis for lesbianism] may have as much to do with the fact that no one knows exactly which population to study" (5-6; see also Hu et al.). Similarly, the typographically marginal position of the notes speaks to what one reviewer has termed "the long-standing argument regarding the marginalization of women in the study of gay culture" (Bazzett). Encouraging shifts of style and voice, footnotes foreground questions of expressive identity as they speak, quite literally, from the margin: always partially excluded from the central text and always subaltern.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, because footnotes establish "a spacing that assigns hierarchical relationships" and "relationships of authority," their hieratic form has proven especially well suited to books that thematize issues of social injustice and psychological trauma (Derrida 193). The recurrent motifs of slavery and political agency in Antin's *Meditations*, for example, are not unrelated to the dynamics of his book's form, just as the literal and metaphoric senses of the "repressed" motivate the psychological connotations of the notes in *Xq28'*. But there has always been an ambivalence about the role of the footnote and its place below the text; footnotes can be either subservient or subversive, with "the power to undermine or uphold" (Cosgrove 139).<sup>17</sup> Because footnotes are always permitted to speak, to speak back, and to have the last word, even in their traditionally subservient role they can both assert and challenge authority, so that, as Toril Moi has argued, we might in fact recognize "the marginal and the heterogeneous as that which can subvert the central structures of traditional linguistics" (qtd. in Labbe 79).

With the same dynamic negotiation between the symbolic and the spatial, the layout of Martenson's book—with the blank expanse of its pages emphasized by the division line of the footnotes and the running header—is all to the point in the context of the debate over the relative influence of genetics and environment,

<sup>15</sup> *Xq28'* is anticipated by Martenson's earlier poems such as "Gene Expression," which could serve as a poem of sorts to *Xq28'*, and "Cast," which has the visual form of a glossed text such as S.T. Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* or Lyn Hejinian's *Gesualdo*.

<sup>16</sup> Benstock makes this claim more strongly when she asserts that the discourse of the footnote is "inherently marginal" (204).

<sup>17</sup> Or as Grafton puts it, in rhyming sestets, the footnote has the power to "buttress and undermine, at one and the same time" (32).

gross anatomy and social psychology. In part, those pages are simply mirroring the notes' references to textual lacunæ and the destruction of manuscripts, but above the pseudoscientific mockery of claims for innate nature that runs through the notes, they also stand as magisterially silent reminders of both the Enlightenment empiricists' figure for the power of cultural formation and Sigmund Freud's figure for the mechanism of the modern psyche's perceptual apparatus: the *tabula rasa* and the mystic writing pad. We speak to each other through books, but books speak also to, and about, themselves.

When the prefigured "tip of the tongue" returns explicitly in the third note of Martenson's book and is recalled in a later reference to the ancient "oral form" of "female sexuality," its inclusion in a book of glosses enacts the etymological pun we saw in Antin's first "Separation Meditation." Nor is such paranomasia limited to the "gloss"; *Xq28'* repeatedly conflates the body of the text and the human body.<sup>18</sup> The ninth note, for example, states that "while the spines are relatively durable, the information stored within can be banned at any time," suggesting both the codex and the cortex. Indeed, the meninges, that protective layering of our "relatively durable" spines (13), is evoked in other notes by the phrases "dense, fibrous tissue" and "spidery mass" (8), which echo the standard anatomical definitions of the "dura mater" and the "arachnoid membrane," respectively. Moreover, in a book directly focused on gender roles and stereotypes of the nuclear family, the translation of the Latin *dura mater* (hard mother) and its meningeal counterpart the *pia mater* (soft mother) folds Martenson's anatomical lexicon back into her discussion of the stakes of science's social construction with a neat and chilling logic.

One precedent for the striking format of *Xq28'* can be found in Gérard Wajcman's 1986 novel *L'interdit*, in which the text is quite literally "interdit" (forbidden, suspended, but also spoken between), with only fragmentary notes remaining below the blank pages of what appears once to have been a biography. The unnamed protagonist of that biography suffers from both amnesia and an inexplicable silence so palpable it is taken as an act in itself.<sup>19</sup> The mostly blank pages of the book thus reenact his "trou" (gap in memory), which stares back at the reader like "une orbite vide" (114; "a vacant eye socket"). Or perhaps, the notes hint, the erased pages have actually somehow resulted from his mute attempt to "effacer cette monstrueuse vacuité dans laquelle il semblait dès que les regards se détournaient ou que cessaient les mots" (37-38; "rub out speech, to wear down that monstrous emptiness into which he would sink as soon as those around him diverted their gaze or stopped speaking"), because "les mots l'ont déserté" (170; "words had deserted him"). Over the course of the book, its blank pages inevitably appear to illustrate a range of themes mentioned in the notes—ruins, withheld secrets, sins of omission, the attentive search for evidence, and so on—and they remind the reader of the supposed illegibilities of their putative source, which the implied editor has catalogued in the notes with a scholarly

<sup>18</sup> The metaphoric association of the "body" of the text can also influence our understanding of the notes against which it is defined; "marginal notes," according to Valéry's Cartesian schema, "are part of the notes of pure *thought*" (Lipking 610).

<sup>19</sup> The phrasing is Wajcman's: "silence inexplicable" and "acte silencieux" (23).

punctiliousness: "tout un passage qui s'intercalait ici a été rayé et demeure illisible. *En marge*: 'Contradictoire'" (67; "An entire passage which is inserted here has been struck out and remains illegible. *In the margin*: 'contradictory'"); "Il avait d'abord écrit: 'fugitive,' puis l'a rayé" (204; "he had first written 'fugitive,' then crossed it out").

*L'interdit* could well be read as a graphic attempt to represent the sense of any "vie, avec ses ombres, ses dessous, ses jardins secrets, ses énigmes" (37; "life, with all its shadows, its hidden faces, its secret gardens, its mysteries"), but its increasingly theological narrative focuses more narrowly on the difficulty of narrating an event so traumatic that one must say "j'ai perdu la possibilité d'habiter dans un monde de paroles" (234; "I have lost the possibility of living in a world of spoken language"). Specifically, the novel suggests one response to the problem of representing the Shoah: namely, a book of blank pages as a non-representative monument in which, paradoxically, the "rôle des morts" ("catalogue of the dead") would be written invisibly and read off in silence, so that "la page elle-même" ("the page itself") would be not so much "derrière ces noms" ("behind the names") as the "fond blanc de la page que chaque nom qui s'inscrit montre en silence" (225; "white substrate of the page, which each name written upon it indicates in silence").

Intervening in the poststructural debate on presence and absence in language, the blank pages of *L'interdit* negotiate between the spoken and the written until the transience of speech comes to be confused with the blank page from which its record seems to have evaporated, at the same time that the physicality of writing comes to be aligned with the bodily presence associated with the breath of speech. Like the narrator's strange silence, the pages of *L'interdit* appear as willful acts, and part of the import of its footnoted format is to frame the blank of the page as a space not merely with the *potential* to bear writing but as a place still numinously immanent with the writing it had once borne and seems to carry, ghostly, still. The protagonist contrasts writing with "la parole elle-même qu'il regarde comme un mensonge qui vient brouiller son absence véritable" (50; "speech itself, which he understands as a lie that comes to be confused with its sheer absence"). In contrast with writing, he

oppose continuellement à la parole qui ne ferait que rappeler le souvenir des mots, tendre leur image, leur apparence dans un souffle. Parler lui semble une affaire de mémoire, on se souvient des mots, tandis qu'écrire, au contraire, ce serait prendre leur chair à bras-le-corps, une chair silencieuse, morte, une matière. (97)

continually opposes the spoken word, which can only recall the memory of words, can only hold out their image, their semblance in a sigh. Speaking seemed to him to be a matter of memory: we remember words, while with writing, in contrast, we grapple bodily with their flesh: their silent, dead, matter.

That mingling of our bodies with the body of the text is further figured by Wajcman as the form of the book itself, which rethinks the grounding of corporeal identity in terms of a negative ontology by grounding the presence of the former in the latter's absence. At various points, *L'interdit* equates the codex with the biographical narrative of a life (36-37), and with memory in general (cf. 122):

les archives de la mémoire ressemblent à ces livres de l'Extrême-Orient qu'on lit à rebours et dont les feuillets peu à peu s'oblitérent et se décolorent à mesure qu'on s'enfonce à travers les niveaux

multipliés jusqu'au titre à jamais illisible. (52)

the archives of memory are like those Asian books which one reads backwards, and in which the pages are canceled bit by bit and faded to the extent that one penetrates through the multiple levels all the way to the forever unreadable title.<sup>20</sup>

The conflation of the codexical and biological body is made explicit in *L'interdit*. The key to the logic of its form is the concept of a textual prosthesis; the novel pivots on a note near the middle of the book: "sans doute involontairement (mais pas tout à fait par hasard) on retrouve ici la pensée kabbaliste d'un corps dont la chair même serait faite de letters" (140; "no doubt involuntarily [but not quite entirely by chance] one finds here the kabbalistic concept of a body, the very flesh of which would be made of letters"). By the end of *L'interdit* this conflation is so complete that an allusion to Shakespeare's "livre de chair" hangs indeterminately between its two possible denotations: a pound of flesh, but also, always equally, a book of flesh (188).

Ranged at the bottom of otherwise blank pages, the amputated references in these books line the back wall of the page like stacks of artificial limbs: legs with feet that note (in the archaic sense of the contraction "I know not") and arms with fingers pointing stiffly into space. Even without the kabbalistic concept of a body made of letters, footnotes are the prostheses of the textual argument, and in the case of *Xq28*<sup>1</sup> and *L'interdit* the absent textual body comes to be defined and structured by its appendages and supports so that the core of these books is like the body of Edgar Allan Poe's Brevet Brigadier General John A.B.C. Smith, whose various prostheses are removed one by one, like the layers of an onion, until nothing remains. The corporealization of the text precedes these books, of course, as the lexicon of paratexts suggests: the *footnote* and the index (with its etymological origins in the forefinger). However, even without that anatomical terminology, the footnote would be related to the body by its deictic, indexical nature. Like the set of non-descriptive signs that defines the grammatical index, the functioning of the paratextual indices—including not only notes, but also the table of contents, the index and the bibliography—requires a spatial and physical context. For the writer, that context is the spatial and material logic of collage; the footnote, as Hugh Kenner suggests, "is a step in the direction of discontinuity: of organizing blocks of discourse simultaneously in space rather than consecutively in time" (40).<sup>21</sup> The same is true for readers: in the acts of reading provoked by the paratextual index, not only are the spatial coordinates of the page and the volume of the volume evoked, but the reader's body is put into motion: the eye moves, the head tilts, the hands and fingers work the pages, the arms and torso shift as the book is handled and manipulated. Drawing on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's dynamic *schéma corporel* (bodily field), William F. Hanks has made a similar point in grammatical terms:

<sup>20</sup> The note is a quote from Paul Claudel's *Le philosophie du livre*, which itself echoes Freud's description of psychic disturbances: "one way [to resolve such disturbances] would be for the offending passages to be thickly crossed through so that they were . . . best of all, the whole passage would be erased. . . ." (*Standard* 236).

<sup>21</sup> In Genette's typology, the essence of the note is its always local character; unlike a preface, for instance, notes refer to only a portion of a text. Moreover, there is a social aspect to this logic of collage: notes tend to be addressed to a more specific audience and to anticipate only certain readers (*Seuils* 319).

In acts of deictic reference, speakers integrate schematic with local knowledge. It is critical to an understanding of deixis to recall that even very "local" elements of context, such as a speaker's own corporeal experience and perceptual field, are susceptible of schematization. (19)

Or, in short: a relational predicate is necessary for a full analysis of the indexical phrase.

Jenny Bouilly's *The Body*, another book with the layout of *Xq28'* and *L'interdit*, figures its formal structure of notes without referents in terms of an explicitly linguistic context. Not only does the book mask the identity of its characters with the pseudonymic conventions of a *roman à clef*, but dramatic irony is also one of its recurrent themes, with examples, explicit mentions, and the incorporation of what appears to be a definition of irony from a handbook of literary terms (see Kennedy and Gioia). But the reader soon realizes that irony would still have been a theme without these passages; the notes refer to a context which the reader cannot know, and material is quoted without citation so that "we are unable to determine whether the exact wording has a source" (59). Moreover, the ironic nature of the notes in this text are *mise en abyme*: footnotes speak in a dramatic aside, commenting knowingly beyond the purview of the body text. As its title underscores, *The Body* literalizes the metaphoric printing term of the "body" of the text, but whereas Martenson's pamphlet eliminates that body in order to sharply question the physiological grounding of social categories, and Wajcman's solemn philosophical novel displays its pages in an act of mourning, Bouilly's *Body* more casually figures the eroticized human body of an absent lover.

Understanding that the withheld referent can be an adventure as well as a frustration, and picking up on the idiomatic sense in which information is "buried" in footnotes, Bouilly further narrativizes this structure of knowing and unknowing with the thematic thread of hunting for hidden treasure. This buried treasure metamorphoses during the quest from a bodily scene of two sisters who "became brave and decided to look for our holes" to a cartographic scene in which the mapmaker "purposely placed the 'X' in an obvious, yet incorrect location" (18, 26)—perhaps at 62° 17' 20", 19° 2' 40", an angle which cryptically appears, with the addition "37.29 N, 79.52 W" in one of the later notes (75). Following a good enough hunch, the reader may recognize the first point not as "a mere entry of latitude and longitude" but as the location of the buried treasure in Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and with a sufficiently detailed map the reader can discover that the second set indicates a location just outside of Roanoke, Virginia—Hollins College, to be precise, where Bouilly happened to be an undergraduate. But which set is the "obvious, yet incorrect location" and which is the treasure?<sup>22</sup> Is the first merely another clue to the fact that the unattributed quotation in the subsequent note is in fact from the fourth chapter of Stevenson's novel?

I felt in his pockets, one after another. A few small coins, a thimble, and some thread and big needles, a piece of pigtail tobacco bitten away at the end, his gully with the cracked handle, a pocket compass, and a tinder box were all that they contained, and I began to despair.

The passage colors the note that follows it, a nostalgic vignette about a girl and her father (27), but it may also prompt the reader to recall a similar catalogue from one of Bouilly's much earlier notes:

<sup>22</sup> The quotation is from Chapter 6 of Stevenson's *Treasure Island*.

In the prop room, she found the collection of butterflies, fossilized bones, her mother's hairbrush, bedsheets, belonging to a past love, an earring she lost when she was ten, and a box containing letters which X would compose to her until her death. (45)

Is the return of that pseudonymous "X" marking the spot of discovered treasure—a treasure that in this case might in fact be the hidden associative logic of the book's cryptic notes (as when the inclusion of quotations from Stevenson in footnotes recalls the title of his 1892 book *A Footnote to History*)—or is it merely another purposely misplaced lead? In the end, the answers to such questions remain indeterminate, but provoking and permitting their asking may be the ultimate point. Boully confesses in her notes that she desires "someone who would pay close attention to details" (36): someone, in other words, who *notes*.

With its story of buried treasure and its references to an absent origin, *The Body* reenacts the history of the footnote's evolution. Not only is the original first footnote lost to us, but the ancestor of the footnote itself also was used to indicate an absence; the asterisk, one of the critical marks that survived the translation from manuscript to print, appears in early printed books "with its original function, to mark omissions" (Parkes 57). And I can note, without giving anything away, that at the root of the index is a mystery as well.

Indices have also been written to nonexistent books, as if taking the notorious late-sixteenth century Catholic indices—the *Index librorum prohibitorum* (List of Banned Books) and the *Index expurgatorius* (List of Expurgated Books)—to literal extremes. James Ballard's "The Index," for instance, purports to be "the index to the unpublished and perhaps suppressed autobiography" of one Henry Rhodes Hamilton. Part science fiction, part picaresque, and part burlesque, its alphabetized entries gesture provocatively, giving glimpses of their source's unattainable body. Hamilton seems to have been a cross between Forrest Gump, Albert Schweitzer, and Don Juan. Working backward from the index, one can infer the range of his mid-century exploits: he is on the beach on D-Day and then with Churchill at Yalta; he pilots Chian Kai-shek, is invited to Dallas by Lee Harvey Oswald, and warns John F. Kennedy of danger; he receives the confidences of Einstein, Fermi, Ghandi, and so on. At the same time, the index incongruously contains the names of modernist writers and entertainment celebrities, suggestions of sexual escapades and messianic religious cults, the recurrence of psychiatric illness, and a single hilarious reference to Burl Ives. Part of the fun of such a work comes from trying, like one of the participants in Simon Morris's *Interpretation* project, to imaginatively reconstruct a single coherent narrative to which the fragmented references might possibly obtain. The success of such works depends, accordingly, on their ability to both invite and ultimately resist integration, as individual entries gesture towards a text into which they cannot be entirely absorbed. Ballard's "Index" trades on such incongruity, but it also betrays a linear narrative that emerges from the list of headwords despite their alphabetization, which would lead one to expect a random distribution of references. However, as the entries progress alphabetically, they also tend to reference sequentially higher page numbers in the missing autobiography, which in turn

appears to have been organized chronologically. A more-or-less linear narrative thus develops in "The Index," with its dénouement following the takeover of the United Nations by Hamilton's cult and his call for world war against both the United States and the USSR (all revealed in section "U"). The final sections record his arrest by the Special Branch and incarceration on the Isle of Wight (W) and the government's denial of a Star Chamber trial or any knowledge of Hamilton's whereabouts (Y). The final entry suggests the ominous finale from which the document itself is born:

Zielinski, Bronislaw, suggests autobiography to HRH, 742; commissioned to prepare index, 748; warns of suppression threats, 751; disappears, 761. (87)

This narrative of threatened indictment, betrayal, and discovery aligns the form and content of Ballard's "Index," returning the work to the etymology of its title, which derives from *indicare* (disclose, divulge, betray, give away, inform on).

With its simultaneously ominous and comic narrative, science fiction tinged surrealism, and alphabetic structure, "The Index" anticipates both Peter Greenaway's novel *The Falls* and Charles Finlay's short story "Footnotes."<sup>23</sup> The former, based on the author's eponymous film, purports to be one of the volumes in a biographical dictionary, recording the victims of a "violent unknown event." The volume at hand contains those victims whose last names begin with the letters "Fall," and Greenaway slyly works in the meanings of all of the English words beginning with "fall," as well as thematizing questions of probability and chance so that the story and its structure coincide. With a bewildering multiplication of possibilities that loop reflexively from entry to entry, with a nested structure of films within films, Greenaway constructs a mirrored hallway of fictions and conspiracies engulfing one another so that every ground is at risk of being found to be illusory, and every apparent illusion is documented in detached, objective, scientific reports.

Finlay's work (2001), which takes the form of bibliographic citations presented as footnotes, is set about fifteen years in the future and is also the fragment of an account of some lethal unknown event. As in *The Falls*, victim lists are compiled, concerns over fictitious symptoms surface (88), and "anecdotal" evidence suggests that the event has linguistic consequences (86). From the notes one can adduce that the disaster was some sort of biological epidemic, apparently with neurological symptoms, and perhaps with evolutionary consequences. However, even after a congressional "Investigating Committee" has been convened, private emails requisitioned, and "special reports" issued, details about the event "remain difficult to explain," debates continue about "what really happened," and key witnesses disappear without being questioned (85; 87). As with Ballard's "Index," the genre of suspense and the form of the index coincide in these works, with their references to undivulged stories of indictment and disclosure.

<sup>23</sup> In addition to Paul Violi's poem "Index," one might note two other books in this context. Niels Nielsen's *Biografisk Skygge Leksikon* is a work of mad genius that purports to be the volume covering "Pedersen" to "Poulsen" in a fictitious biographical dictionary. *The Dictionary of Traumatic Signs*, an alphabetized reverse dictionary of Freudian dream symbolism, appears as the appendix to Stefan Themerson's *Cardinal Pölatüo*; a reference work intended to prove the Cardinal's innocence. If the Freudian system interprets the most innocuous everyday images as ciphers for secret sexual desires, then sexual desires—in the Cardinal's logic—must merely be signs of innocuous everyday objects.

Footnotes, indices, and bibliographies are not the only paratextual conventions of the book, and all such devices can be exploited for conceptual ends. The traces of social and institutional contexts in the details of bibliography, for example, is the subject of Terrence Gower and Mónica de la Torre's wickedly parodic artist's book *Appendices Illustrations & Notes*, which recreates ephemera to nonexistent books and exhibitions. Their book teases out the cynical social networks and intellectual laziness disguised by the clichés and formulæ of genres such as the review, the jacket blurb, and the author bio. Paul Fournel's novel *Banlieue* (*Suburbia*) gives a similar treatment to a single book. Although once again the body of the text is entirely absent, leaving the centers of the book's small pages blank, *Banlieue* is replete with a surplus of bibliographic accouterments: those elements which entail what Hugh Kenner has called "the book as book" and the mechanization of its codexical discourse (39). The book includes legal disclaimers and a copyright notice, epigraphs, margins, headers and numbered footers, a dedication, table of contents, index, errata, title page, allographic foreword and afterword, introductory notes from both the publisher and the author, a pedagogic supplement, back-cover blurbs, a bio-line—even a suggested price and universal product code. And, of course, footnotes. The edition advertises that it has been specially annotated by the Inspector of the Ministry of Education "for use in schools." Once again, the metaphoric valence of a hieratic bibliographic structure suggests a context for the content of the book. The cartography of *Banlieue* maps the suburbs of the book: those outlying regions of the page (the footer and header) and the neighboring sprawl of commercial puff and commentary that crop up around the supposedly central text like bedroom communities of the mind—*arrondissements* just beyond the *terrain vague* at the edges of the book's recognizable sections.

Part of *Banlieue*'s conceit is that its form withholds a titillating content, hints of which the reader can only deduce. Suggesting a novel of class violence somewhere between Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner* and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, the supplementary texts imply that the "provocation" of the "incendiary" main story (vi)—a narrative containing prurient scenes of "violent eroticism" (5)—was originally a "scandal" that led to legal action (9 et passim). The reader's imagination, of course, creates more lurid scenes than even the most explicit prose Fournel could have furnished, and this fiction of a scandalous story contrasts with, or perhaps ironically underscores, the metaphoric implications of the book's form. At the same time, the pages of the chapbook are to some extent simply the punch-line to a conceptual one-liner. Despite the hints of racy content, and the book's opening disclaimer that "ce texte est une pure fiction. Toute ressemblance avec des personnages existant ou ayant existé serait fortuite et indépendante de la volonté de l'auteur" ("this is a work of pure fiction. Any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental and unintentional on the part of the author"), the vacant pages of the fictional (*fiction*) *Suburbia* are indeed an accurate representation of one of the stereotypical accounts of postwar "suburbia": a social space that is vacuous, uniform, and devoid of narrative interest.

Despite its publication under the imprint of the OuLiPo, *Banlieue* is not a

procedural text, and its constraints, such as they are, do not present much of a hindrance. Indeed, one should keep in mind that the formal conceit of all of these works permits the comfort of the *impression* of a system, while freeing the author from the demands of actually having to adhere to a rigorous formal structure. This dynamic explains, in part, why most of the works considered here tend toward a rather sloppy, indulgent eclecticism; without the constraints of a genuinely fixed form, these works clothe what is at heart freely composed expressive writing in the guise of disjunction and artifice, or the post-Cagean procedures' ready-made found material sifted together by the rule of happy chance. From this perspective, one might compare the visual poetics of these books to structurally similar but conceptually very different works such as Vito Acconci's "Drop (on the side, over the side)" or Alastair Johnston's *Heath's German Dictionary*, both of which present much more austere versions of the evacuated page by appropriating and erasing reference books, leaving only the framing elements of typographic layout. In contrast, the annotating impulse evident in Spoerri's *Topographie* and mimed by the other works I have considered illustrates the way in which *gloss* is suspended, depending: in its excess, threatening glossolalia, and always, with an omission, the threat of loss. That loss is the exclusionary rule proven by these works, and which this essay has tried, futilely, to avoid for itself: "any interpretation," as Wittgenstein enumerated this first law of the paratext, "still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support" (198).<sup>24</sup>

*University of Utah*

### Works Cited

- Abish, Walter. "Ardor, Awe, Atrocity." *New Directions* 35 (1977): 57-73. Rpt. in *In The Future Perfect*. London: Faber and Faber, 1984. 42-57.
- Andrews, Bruce. *Getting Ready To Have Been Frightened*. New York: Roof, 1988.
- Antin, David. *Meditations*. Los Angeles: Black Sparrow, 1971.
- . *Selected Poems: 1963-1973*. Los Angeles: Sun & Moon Press, 1991.
- Baker, Nicholson. *The Mezzanine: A Novel*. New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988.
- Ballard, James G. "The Index." *Bananas*, 1977. *Re/Search* 8/9 (1984): 84-87.
- Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. 1970. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.
- Bazzett, Denise. Rev. of *The Body* by Jenny Bouilly. *New Pages Reviews*. <http://www.newpages.com>.
- Beckett, Samuel. *Watt*. Paris: Olympia, 1955.
- Benstock, Shari. "At the Margins of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text." *PMLA* 98.2 (1983): 204-25.
- Bolingbroke, Henry St. John (Lord Viscount). "A Letter Addressed to Alexander Pope, Esq." *A Letter To Sir William Windham* [...]. London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1787. 281-355.
- Bouilly, Jenny. *The Body*. Raymond: Slope Editions, 2002.
- Bowersock, G.W. "The Art of the Footnote." *The American Scholar* 53 (Winter 1983/84): 54-62.
- Colonna, Vincent. "Fausses Notes." *Cahiers Georges Perec* I. Colloque de Cerisy: juillet 1984. POL, 1985.

---

<sup>24</sup> This essay is dedicated to Johanna Drucker, who taught me how to read books.

- Cosgrove, Peter W. "Undermining the Text: Edward Gibbon, Alexander Pope, and the Anti-Authenticating Footnote." *Annotation and Its Texts*. Ed. Stephen A. Barney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. 130-51.
- Critical Art Ensemble. *Cronicas Brasileiras/Annotations To Cronicas Brasileiras*. np., 1989.
- Danielewski, Mark. *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves, by Zampano*. 2nd ed. New York: Pantheon, 2000.
- Derrida, Jacques. "This Is Not An Oral Footnote." *Annotation and Its Texts*. Ed. Stephen A. Barney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. 192-205.
- Dodds, M.H. "Footnotes." *Notes & Queries* 19 (October, 1910).
- Drucker, Johanna. *The Century of Artists' Books*. New York: Granary, 1995.
- Fielding, Henry. *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*. Edinburgh: J. Dickson and P. Hill, 1792.
- Finlay, Charles. "Footnotes." *Fantasy and Science Fiction* 101.2 (August 2001): 85-88.
- Fournel, Paul. *Banlieue (Bibliothèque Oulipienne 46)*. Rpt. in *La Bibliothèque oulipienne*, vol. 3 (Seghers, 1990): 183-214. Trans. by Harry Mathews as *Suburbia*, in *OuLiPo Laboratory: Texts from the Bibliothèque oulipienne*. London: Atlas, 1995.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Notiz über den 'Wunderblock.'" *Int. Z. Psychoanal.* 11.1. 1-5; Trans. by James Strachey as "A Note upon the 'Mystic Writing Pad.'" *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 21.4 (1950): 469-74. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud*. Vol. 19. 227-32.
- . *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Ed. James Strachey. Vol. 23. London: The Hogarth Press, 1959.
- Gallo, Phillip. *Captions from Animals Looking at You*. Minneapolis: Hermetic Press, 1981.
- Genette, Gérard. *Seuils*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1987. Trans. by Jane E. Lewin as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Series in Literature, Culture, Theory. Vol. 20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Glazier, Loss Pequeno. "Our Words Were the Form We Entered." *Witz* 4.2 (Summer 1996): 15-29.
- Gleize, Jean-Marie. "Il n'y a pas un instant à perdre." *TXT* 17 (1984): 27-29.
- Gower, Terrence, and Mónica de la Torre. *Appendices, Illustrations, & Notes*. Los Angeles: Smart Art Press, 1999.
- Grafton, Anthony. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Greenaway, Peter. *The Falls*. Paris: Editions Dis Voir, 1983.
- Hamer, D.H., S. Hu, V.L. Magnuson, N. Hu, & A.M.L. Pattatucci. "A Linkage between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation." *Science* 261 (1993): 321-27.
- Hanks, William. *Intertexts: Writings on Language, Utterance, and Context*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
- Hejinian, Lyn. *Gesualdo*. Berkeley: Tuumba, 1978.
- Hu, S., et al. "Linkage Between Sexual Orientation and Chromosome Xq28 in Males but Not in Females." *Natural Genetics* 11 (1995): 248-56.
- Jackson, H.J. *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- Jackson, Kevin. *Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Jensen, Erik M. "The Shortest Article in Law Review History." *The Journal of Legal Education* 50.1 (March 2000): 156.
- . "Comments in Reply." *The Journal of Legal Education* 50.2 (June 2000): 312.
- Johnson, Samuel. *The Lives of the English Poets: And a Criticism on their Works*. Dublin: Whitestone, et al., 1779-81.
- Johnston, Alastair. *Heath's German Dictionary*. Minneapolis: Poltroon, 1975.
- Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber and Faber, 1939.
- Kennedy, X.J., and Dana Gioia, eds. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. 5th ed. New York: Longman, 1999.
- Kenner, Hugh. *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians*. London: W.H. Allen, 1964.

- Labbe, Jacqueline. "Transplanted into More Congenial Soil': Footnoting the Self in the Poetry of Charlotte Smith." *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*. Ed. Joe Bray, Miriam Handley, Anne C. Henry. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000. 71-86.
- Lipking, Lawrence. "The Marginal Gloss." *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 609-55.
- Locke, John. "The Mind as White Paper." *Ideas in Context*. Ed. Joseph Satin. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958. 103-108.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane. "Variations sur un sujet: L'Action." *La Revue Blanch* 7.40 (Février, 1895): 97-101.
- Martenson, Jennifer. "Cast." *How2* 1.2 (September, 1999): n.p.
- . "Gene Expression." *How2* 1: 2 (September, 1999): n.p.
- . *Xq28!*. Provincetown: Burning Deck, 2001.
- Matheson, P.E. *Epictetus: The Discourses and Manual: Together With Fragments of His Writings*. 2 vols. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1916.
- McFarland, Thomas. "Who Was Benjamin Whichcote? Or, The Myth of Annotation." *Annotation and Its Texts*. Ed. Stephen A. Barney. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Morris, Grant H. "Reply." *The Journal of Legal Education* 50.2 (June 2000): 310.
- Morris, Simon, with Forbes Morlock, Liz Dalton, Tim Brennan, and Cindy Smith. *Interpretation*. 2 vols. York: Information As Material, 2002.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- Nielsen, Niels Hrnrik Svarre. *Biografisk Skygge Leksikon: "Pedersen"—"Poulsen"*. København: Biblioteket Øverste Kirurgiske, 2000.
- Ohom, Thomas H. "Reply." *The Journal of Legal Education*. 50.2 (June 2000): 311.
- The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. Ed. Simpson, J.A. and E.S.C. Weiner. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Parkes, Malcom Beckwith. *Pause and Effect: Punctuation in the West*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Perec, Georges. "Notes concernant des objets qui sont sur ma table de travail." *Les Nouvelles Littéraires*. February 1976. Trans. by John Sturrock as "Notes Concerning the Objects that Are on My Work-Table." *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London, 1997. 140-43.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Man That Was Used Up: A Tale of the Late Bugaboo and Kickapoo Campaign." *The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe*. Philadelphia: Running Press, 1983. 522-31.
- Pope, Alexander. *The Dunciad* [. . .] *variorum*. London: M. Cooper, 1743.
- Puig, Manuel. *El beso de la mujer araña*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1976.
- Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*. New York: Penguin, 1995.
- Shklovsky, Viktor, "Art as Technique." *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Ed. L.T. Lemon and M.J. Reis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965. 3-57.
- Silliman, Ron. *The New Sentence*. New York: Roof, 1987.
- Silveira, Paulo, *A página violada: da ternura à injúria na construção do livro de artista*. Porto Alegre: Editora da Universidade do Rio Grande do Sul, 2001.
- Spoerri, Daniel, and Robert Filiou. *Topographie Anecdote du hasard*. Paris: Editions Galerie Lawrence, 1962.
- , Robert Filiou, Roland Topor, Emmett Williams, Dieter Roth, and Alastair Brotchie, *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*. Atlas Arkhive Four, Documents of the Avant-Garde. London: Atlas Press, 1995.
- Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. 2nd ed. Dublin: Henry Saunders, 1765-1767.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Treasure Island*. London: Cassell & Company, 1883.
- Themerson, Stefan. *Cardinal Pölättö*. London: Gaberbocchus, 1954.
- Tribble, Evelyn B. "'Like a Looking-Glas in the Frame': From the Marginal Note to the Footnote." *The Margins of the Text*. Ed. D.C. Greetham. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997. 229-44.

- Vanderborg, Susan. *Paratextual Communities: American Avant-Garde Poetry Since 1950*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002.
- Violi, Paul. "Index." *None of the Above: New Poets of the USA*. Ed. Michael Lally. New York: Crossing Press, 1976. 208-209.
- Wajcman, Gérard. *L'Interdit: roman*. Paris: Denoël, 1986.
- Waldrop, Rosmarie. *Lawn of the Excluded Middle*. Providence: Tender Buttons, 1993.
- . *The Reproduction of Profiles*. New York: New Directions, 1987.
- Wellisch, Hans H. *Indexing from A to Z*. 2nd ed. New York: H.W. Wilson, 1995.
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. The Gifford Lectures. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929.
- Williams, Tyrone. *c.c.* San Francisco: Krupskaya, 2002.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1997.
- Zerby, Chuck. *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*. Montpelier: Invisible Cities, 2002.

Copyright of Comparative Literature is the property of Comparative Literature and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.