UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

UTILISATIONS ET ABUS DE LA NOTE DE BAS DE PAGE EN FICTION

THÈSE

PRÉSENTÉE

COMME EXIGENCE PARTIELLE

DU DOCTORAT INTERDISCIPLINAIRE EN ÉTUDES SÉMIOTIQUES

PAR

JEAN-MICHEL BERTHIAUME-SIGOUIN

NOVEMBRE 2023

UNIVERSITÉ DU QUÉBEC À MONTRÉAL

USES AND ABUSES OF FOOTNOTES IN FICTION

THESIS

PRESENTED

AS A PARTIAL REQUIREMENT

FOR THE INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORATE IN SEMIOTIC STUDIES

BY

JEAN-MICHEL BERTHIAUME-SIGOUIN

NOVEMBER 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FIGURES

RÉSUMÉ

Cette thèse vise à explorer les nombreux effets provoqués par la présence de notes de bas de page dans les œuvres de fiction. Par le biais de la sémiotique, nous observerons comment la note de bas de page peut modifier la compréhension du contenu de la diégèse, soit comme un complément au corps principal du texte, soit comme une autre diégèse greffée au texte.

L'analyse qui suit a été séparée en cinq chapitres. L'introduction servira d'aperçu des travaux antérieurs sur les notes de bas de page ainsi qu'à établir les catégories qui seront utilisées pour décrire les différents types de notes de bas de page dans la fiction.

Le premier chapitre est une exploration de l'histoire des notes de bas de page, qui sera suivie d'indications sur la manière dont les notes de bas de page ont été décodées et décrites à travers l'histoire des pratiques textuelles.

Nous nous penchons ensuite, dans le chapitre deux, sur les notes de bas de page d'exégèse, un type de notes de bas de page qui est principalement utilisé comme une démonstration de connaissances supplémentaires et de clarification d'éléments dans la fiction. Ce chapitre est également une exploration de l'autorité présente dans les notes de bas de page et de la manière dont cette technique peut aider à la construction d'une histoire, notamment à la construction du monde fictionnel. Nous proposerons également la notion d'infrafiction pour décrire ce type de processus qui s'enfouit dans la fiction, par opposition à la métafiction qui se place au-dessus.

Le troisième chapitre porte sur les notes de bas de page éditoriales ; nous y analysons plusieurs œuvres qui utilisent cette technique pour créer des effets tels que l'illusion du manuscrit et la voix éditoriale dans la fiction.

Le quatrième chapitre décrit les notes de bas de page diégétiques, c'est-à-dire les notes utilisées comme un outil donnant l'impression d'une deuxième (ou plus) strate de fiction dans le même texte.

Le chapitre cinq porte sur les notes de bas de page lorsqu'elles se dans la bande dessinée nous proposons aussi une exploration de la similitude entre les notes de bas de page et les hyperliens afin d'explorer les nouveaux effets provoqués par cette technologie.

Mots-clés : Notes de bas de page, infrafiction, diégèse, sémiotique, exégèse, éditorial.

ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore the many effects caused by the presence of footnotes in works of fiction. Through semiotic theory, we will be observing how the footnote can alter one's understanding of the content of the diegesis either as a complement to the main body of text or as another diegesis grafted onto the text.

The following analysis has been separated into five chapters. The introduction will act as a survey of previous work on footnotes as well as the establishment of categories that will be used to describe the varying categories of footnotes within fiction.

The first chapter is an exploration of the history of footnotes, followed by pointers on the way footnotes have been decoded and described through the history of text.

Following this, in chapter two, we will be looking at the scholarly footnote, a type of footnote that is mainly used as a demonstration of further knowledge and clarification of elements within the fiction. This chapter is also an exploration of the authority present in footnotes and how this technique can aid in story crafting, notably worldbuilding. We will also be proposing the idea of infrafiction to describe this type of process that burrows within fiction.

Chapter three is about the editorial footnote; we will be analysing several works that use this technique to craft effects such as the illusion of manuscript and the editorial voice within fiction.

The fourth chapter will describe the diegetic footnote; this can be said of the footnote when it is used as a tool that gives the impression of a second (or more) strata of fiction within the same text.

Chapter five is about the footnote when it is present in comics and we will offer an exploration of the similitude between footnotes and the hyperlink as a way of exploring new effects caused by this technique.

Keywords: Footnotes, infrafiction, diegesis, semiotics, exegesis, editorial.

INTRODUCTION

THE NEED TO NOTE[1]

This is a work of fiction. Characters, corporations, institutions, and organizations in this novel are the product of the author's imagination, or if real, are used fictitiously without any intent to describe their actual conduct. However, references to real people, institutions, and organizations that are documented in footnotes are accurate. Footnotes are real.

-Michael Crichton, "State of Fear"

Footnotes can mean several things. To the erudite, they sometimes demonstrate the amount of scholarship still unknown to them. To the amateur, they're a sign of the unchallenged mountain of human knowledge. Footnotes are a presence that intimidates the worthy and unworthy alike. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that using footnotes is a peculiarly despised habit. Critics, including Neil Coward, denounced this habit as irritating, stating: "Having to read a footnote resembles having to go downstairs to answer the door while in the midst of making love."[2] Louis Menand of *The New Yorker* noted that "the decorum of citation is the arbitrary residue of ancient pedantries whose *raison d'être* are long past reconstructing."[3] Even J.D. Salinger, in his novel *Franny and Zooey* (1961), reverts to using them, even though they are described as "aesthetic evil."[4]

---

[1] The footnotes in the following paper will be presented in current Chicago style format. The first entries for each book will be presented in their longer format and other subsequent references will be done by using the abridged entry format. This decision was taken to ensure coherence with the subject at hand and to make sure that the impact caused by the presence of footnotes is maintained during the entire work.

[2] Chuck Zerby, *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes,* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2002), 14.

[3] Louis Menand, "The End Matter, The Nightmare of Citation", *The New Yorker,* 2006, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/06/the-end-matter

[4] J.D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1961), 72.

"This is one reason authors who use footnotes in their fiction are sometimes accused of showboating," adds Jeff Somers, who continues: "[T]he footnote can feel akin to a writer suddenly leaping into your room through a window and dancing around waving her arms, shouting 'look at me! LOOK AT ME!' The footnote purposefully plays up the artificiality of the reading experience, allowing the author to intrude on their own narrative."[5] It becomes quite obvious that all this hate towards a simple typographic sign must mean something.

On the other hand, something so reviled is obviously going to gather its fair share of defenders. Chuck Zerby, for example, who wrote one of the important essays on the history of footnotes, praises them as "one of the earliest and most ingenious inventions of humankind, the footnote has been for centuries an indispensable tool of the scholar and a source of endlessly varied delight for the layperson."[6] Defending his object of fascination, he explains that despite their potential disadvantages, footnotes remain the most effective typographical device for presenting the results of research. Biblical scholar Michael V. Fox expands on this: "Footnotes are not merely useful, they are intrinsically significant. Their presence signifies the dialectic of past and present, that is, the process of scholarship. While the body of the text presents the author's line of thought, the footnotes anchor the thought in the earlier scholarship from which it proceeded."[7] This scholarly mark allows readers to go back and check the sources of the statement, which in turn allows them to go back into the texts to verify the primary influences, providing all the opportunity to develop and explore human erudition. The footnote dominates when it comes to checking the quality of an argument and displaying, in general, depth of knowledge. Simply put, even though lambasted, no other technique has supplanted footnotes as a textual tool to deepen one's knowledge.

---

[5] Jeffrey Somers, "Consider the Footnote: Why Don't More Authors Use This Powerful Tool?", Barnes and Noble, 2015, www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/consider-the-footnote-why-dont-more-authors-use-the-most-powerful-tool-in-fiction/#ref13

[6] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 1.

[7] Michael V. Fox, "On Footnotes", *Hebrew Studies,* Volume 28, 1987, 6.

It is my belief that these attacks on footnotes have nothing to do with annotation but are more precisely about the effect caused by the presence of footnotes. Zerby explains: "[F]ootnotes can represent a trait of the mind; in that sense, footnotes represent organized confusion."[8] It is apparent that this organized confusion does not reside in the statements contained in the main body and footnoted text but in their concomitance. The co-presence of text and footnote, information and ancillary, declaration and comment can befuddle, for they exist together and separately. To clarify, it becomes important to discuss the page: not the page as paper nor the page as a window into stories of the great and grand, but the page as space. To understand the idea of organized confusion, one first needs to understand the page as space.

For most, the blank page holds no secrets. As with the movie screen at the time of the presentation, it is when the page is full of signs that the show begins. In its beginning, the page is simply a blank sheet of paper waiting for a mark. It is when the word is affixed that the text appears. As readers, we are rarely given the opportunity to pay particular attention to the page since we probably prefer to immerse ourselves in the content represented rather than to think about the container. In this way, the page remains an ignored presence, a place of habitus that does not contain any surprises for the majority of readers. Despite this, it is still present, like a canvas on which colored spots are painted. A page is a place of art.

The usage of footnotes is akin to illustration as well as to writing, for they occupy a specific space to connote a certain type of information. The presence on the page of a straight line and line break signifies the presence of footnotes, a drawing supplemented to text that adds a nonlinear dimension. In this regard, footnotes sculpt the page; they are circumscribing a space on the page that is not the main body of the text but another body. By exposing the use of that space and its many different significations, the author is reminding us of the work of artists with their material: here, not simply the words but the page.

---

[8] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 141.

Keeping in mind Zerby's idea of organized confusion, the nonlinear function of footnotes appears to possess characteristics akin to what is often seen in the visual arts. Jean-Marie Klinkenberg explains:

> It will therefore seem normal that languages transiting through hearing will privilege a literary syntax (where information is processed one after the other), and that those transiting through sight can make use of tabular (or spatial) syntaxes, where a large amount of information is processed simultaneously. On the one hand, there are languages such as verbal language or music, which could be described as the arts of time; on the other hand, there is drawing or sculpture, the arts of space.[9]

By adding footnotes, the page becomes, as Klinkenberg explains, an art of space since spatial considerations must be taken into account in understanding the elements of narration. In this regard, the footnote is in opposition to the endnote. Although they both serve the same use, their posture as tools is massively different. There are clues of this difference hinted in their names: the foot in the footnote denotes the idea of a space, a lower space. On the other hand, the endnote, or the note at the end, hints at an idea of time as explained earlier. Even though most writings on footnotes include endnotes in their description, rarely discriminating between them, the footnote and endnote could not be more different. The fact that most scholarly work lumps them together without discriminating just amplifies the need for the work that will be done here. They are surely different, and in what follows, we will thoroughly take those differences into consideration.

The endnote is linked to time, especially when framing it in material terms. Rich Adin makes explicit a certain aspect of the endnote that is not present in footnotes when he explains that:

> Endnotes are worse than footnotes because they prevent the reader from easily scanning the note to see how worthwhile interrupting reading the text to read the notes would be. One needs to locate the endnote by physically turning to a new location in the book. How frustrating to get to the endnote to discover that in its entirety it reads: *Ibid.*

---

[9] Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, *Précis de sémiotique générale,* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000), 48. (my translation)

That bit of information was certainly worth interrupting concentration on the text! Noting distracts the reader, usually for no intellectual gain[10].

In opposition, the footnote is self-sufficient, an actor of the page, whereas the endnote is a purely textual element. It appears on its own at the end of the chapter or book. As G.W. Bowerstock clarifies: "[A] text is a continuous thing-everything in it has a context; but the footnote is more or less free [...] It is like a variation on a theme. The composer offers a new perspective on what he or someone else has already expressed."[11] This distinction is key not only to understanding the difference between both uses of marginalia but also to further confirm the fact that the footnote is, in addition to being a textual element, also an element of the page. This claim that the footnote is intrinsically linked to the page is principal in our research.

Furthermore, this use of space encountered when deciding to add footnotes to a work of fiction profoundly transforms the process of reading. As soon as they make their appearance, we feel a transition in the reader's exploration of the text from an act of progression to one of understanding, meaning that the appearance of footnotes in the text necessitates a moment to ponder why they were added there in the first place. The reader no longer concentrates uniquely on trying to follow through with the story but must interrupt the leisurely process of reading to reflect on certain questions about why the text is composed in such a manner. The footnote demands exploration, decoding and understanding to continue our reading in a coherent manner.

When following the bifurcation on the footnote in an attempt to understand why it is there in the first place, readers adapt their understanding of the text beyond the decoding of signs and discourse and now take into consideration the many variable ways in which signification is created by the disposition of the text on the page.

---

[10] Richard Adin, "Footnotes, Endnotes, & References: Uses & Abuses", *American Editor*, 2010, https://americaneditor.wordpress.com/2010/03/29/footnotes-endnotes-references-uses-abuses/)

[11] G.W. Bowersock, "The Art of the Footnote", *The American Scholar*, Vol. 53, No. 1, (1983/1984), 55.

The interruption caused by footnotes becomes an interesting example to illustrate this bifurcation because there is a clear difference between what the text asks of the reader and what the reader is allowed to do with that text. Let us not forget that one may read the footnotes at any moment (not simply when the call-to-footnote appears) or not read them at all, and each decision will effectively influence the understanding of the story. Some people may prefer to wait until they have finished the word, the sentence, the paragraph or the page to return to the lower part of the page. On the one hand, the page becomes poly-interpretable because of the varied textual elements it presents in its display; on the other hand, readers can interpret and absorb information in a different manner depending on the path of reading they decide to take.

It is therefore important to clarify that the note appears as such a poly-interpretable textual element because it is treated both as text and image. The footnote changes the disposition of the page and therefore demands to be understood as a graphic element. Were it uniquely a textual element, the decoding of the footnote would be done with regards to the story itself, in its unraveling at the time of reading.

As Gilles Thérien has explained in his work[12], reading is not simply an act of communication but one of decoding. It is a process of interpreting that can be applied to how we look at footnotes and which will enable us to understand the underlying message of the text. What does the footnote in fiction offer the writer that other tools simply cannot accomplish? Is the effect caused by the footnote unique? If so, what does the footnote do that is so special? Otherwise, why use it at all?

To quickly return to the idea presented earlier of reading as an act of progression as well as an act of understanding, Gervais[13] states that at the moment readers must interrupt the course of their reading to posit a question about a choice made by the author, we immediately transition from an exploratory type of reading to an exhaustive one, in terms of comprehension. The presence of footnotes in a text will always beg the question of why, and this is incrementally true

---

[12] Gilles Thérien, "Pour une sémiotique de la lecture", *Protée*, vol.18, no 2, (1990).

[13] Bertrand Gervais, *À l'écoute de la lecture*, (Québec: Nota bene, 2006), 294.

for a work of fiction. Most readers, if not the majority, have been initiated to novels with stories that do not include footnotes and may spend quite an amount of time as active readers before encountering the first work they've ever read that includes them. It is therefore natural that the first reaction would be along the line of questioning their inclusion and investigating until a convincing and satisfying hypothesis is found. Even a seasoned reader of works of footnoted fiction still might inquire, but this inquiry will probably activate something along the line of a reading strategy, informed by the several times the reader has encountered such a presence on the page. The simple fact of having a visual element that triggers inductions or abductions regarding their presence is quite important. These footnotes transform into a reflexive act, one that demands the reader to actively analyze choices made by the writer before continuing through the rest of the text.

Footnotes in fiction necessitate abductions to clarify their presence. This act of interpretation is explained by Deledalle as "hypotheses or general ideas developed by deduction and that inductions in a sense that's entirely different from the classical one, verifies or challenges."[14] This explanation provides a doubling-down on the effect of interruption ensconced in the footnote. First, there is the interruption as the break in the page necessitates that we, as readers, wander down to the footnote. Secondly, there is an interruption in time, a moment of musing demanded of us to understand where to store the information offered in the note and to validate its place in the scheme of reading.

The presence of footnotes immediately challenges readers to further pursue their understanding of the text. Perhaps even more than the text itself, the footnote challenges our presuppositions of the page, making it a pluri-interpretable canvas. These notes challenge the reader's habits when decoding the novel and expand the potentialities of interpretation by altering the disposition of the text on the page.

---

[14] Gérard Deledalle, *Lire Pierce aujourd'hui*. (Paris: De Boeck, 1992), 155. (my translation)

Crafting fiction with the aid of footnotes is an exercise akin to what Kenneth Goldsmith calls conceptual writing. He states that "[i]n conceptual writing the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an author uses a conceptual form of writing, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the text."[15] As is the case with footnotes in fiction, this approach can lead to a plethora of effects, the format of the text offering many opportunities to mold the interpretation in a variety of manners. "The format is not added to text but emanates from the conceived writing,"[16] as Keith A. Smith explains. Thus: "The writing is then revealed by the act of experiencing the book, and the book becomes part of the writing."[17] As the author must conceive of his story differently once the decision to use footnotes is confirmed, the same rethinking must be executed by the reader when faced with the footnote. The conceptual aspect of the story becomes a puzzle to elucidate, and the author must find how to make the use coherent and interesting, while the reader must decode the footnotes themselves to reach an understanding of why they are there in the first place. This decoding leads to a close reading of the effects, such as how they cause breaks in reading, in diegetic chronology, in authority and in the fabric of fiction.

These new conceptual texts that can twist and bend the traditional use of footnotes open up the field to new interpretations of this presence on the page. As previously claimed, many footnoted texts of fiction function in a variety of ways, and, as there is no convention linked to the effects they cause, the conceptual writer can innovate, explore and test new strategies around their use. A notable example of this could be *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames: The d'Antin Manuscript*, published in 1967 by Luis d'Antin van Rooten. In this book, a series of intriguing poems are reproduced and are generally accompanied by footnotes, which operate within three distinct functions: granting official status, in a heuristic manner and in order to puzzle the reader.

---

[15] Kenneth Goldsmith, "Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing", *Poetry Foundation*, 2007, www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/05/paragraphs-on-conceptual-writing

[16] Keith A. Smith, *Text in the Book Format*, (Rochester: Keith A. Smith books, 1995), 32.

[17] Keith A. Smith, *Structure of the Visual Book*, (Rochester: Keith A. Smith Books, 2003), 176.

On the surface, the presence of footnotes gives the book of poems a certain credibility. As footnotes are generally a sign of erudition and scholarly merit, we are led to believe that if such a paratext is made available, it is explicitly because what we are reading is worthy of scholarly attention in the first place. This function of officializing assures the reader that they are not just poems but poems explained with the veneer of classical form. As footnotes include erudition, one can see their use as something that adds extra value to the text, as an augmentation to the text. In fact, the whole book is presented in a very classical way, insisting on its authoritative dimension. Adding notes to almost every line increases the idea that each line deserves its proper explanation and interpretation as if a master class was needed to understand the profound hermeneutics of the text. As an example, here is an example of a poem from the Luis d'Antin van Rooten's book:

Figure 1.1 Luis d'Antin van Rooten, *Mots D'Heures: Gousses, Rames: The D'Antin Manuscript,* 1.

> Un petit d'un petit[1]
> S'étonne aux Halles[2]
> Un petit d'un petit
> Ah! degrés te fallent[3]
> Indolent qui ne sort cesse[4]
> Indolent qui ne se mène[5]
> Qu'importe un petit d'un petit
> Tout Gai de Reguennes.[6]
>
> [1] The inevitable result of a child marriage.
> [2] The subject of this epigrammatic poem is obviously from the provinces, since a native Parisian would take this famous old market for granted.
> [3] Since this personage bears no titles, we are led to believe that the poet writes of one of those unfortunate idiot-children that in olden days existed as a living skeleton in their family's closet. I am inclined to believe, however, that this is a fine piece of misdirection and that the poet is actually writing of some famous political prisoner, or the illegitimate offspring of some noble house. The Man in the Iron Mask, perhaps?
> [4,5] Another misdirection. Obviously it was not laziness that prevented this person's going out and taking himself places.
> [6] He was obviously prevented from fulfilling his destiny, since he is compared to Gai de Reguennes. This was a young squire (to one of his uncles, a Gaillard of Normandy) who died at the tender age of twelve of a surfeit of Saracen arrows before the walls of Acre in 1191.

(Transcript: [1] The inevitable result of child marriage.
[2] The subject of this epigrammatic poem is obviously from the povinces, since a native Parisian would take this famous old market for granted.

As shown, each page reproduces an autonomous and integral poem accompanied by a title and a number in-between two large ostentatious lines. It is only outside of these lines that the footnotes are introduced. They seem to offer an explanation to the non-bilingual reader. Therefore, the first footnote is used to explain that the youngling of a youngling is "the inevitable result of a child marriage." This first footnote offers a pretty straightforward explanation, seemingly to ease the reader toward this eclectic form. But by the second footnote, the accompanying text transforms itself into a commentary: the translator of the footnotes expertly explains that anyone surprised by the Halles is quite obviously not from the Parisian region. This shift from explanation to comment is created for its element of surprise, but it also clears the field for a diverse use of the footnote, for the third footnote, for instance, in which the author goes off on a wild interpretation, without a doubt to incite the reader to do the same. The authority represented in the footnote becomes somewhat contaminated with the amusing speculations offered by the author. For a reader that is used to trust footnotes, the third usage for this poem blatantly reverses this dynamic and plants the seed of doubt in the reader, who may become weary of the interpretations offered. This situation is quite obviously intentional on the author's part; an observant reader would be without a doubt tickled by this presentation and encouraged to read on if only to see how far this game will be played.

Figure 1.2 Luis d'Antin van Rooten, *Mots D'Heures: Gousses, Rames: The D'Antin Manuscript,* 9.

In the third poem, we notice that the footnotes take even more space on the page than the poem does, changing the equilibrium in the usual ratio text/notes that one would be used to. This imbalance hints at the fact that the notes are somehow more important than the poem, but all this disequilibrium functions through suggestions to the reader. Thirty-nine words compose the

poem, and there are one-hundred-and-seventy-three words (and one number) for the footnotes. Even though the font used in the poem is larger than that of the footnotes, there is no escaping the fact that due to their importance on the page and larger number, the footnotes dominate the page. One is made to feel as if the poem's importance becomes secondary, giving up space to the commentary that grows in importance.

Paired with this idea of adding gravitas to the page through a classic presentation, the footnote can also function heuristically. Footnotes can clarify the content of the verse, especially when presented with such confusing claptrap as what one can read in *Mots d'Heures*. In his introduction to the text Luis d'Antin van Rooten clarifies: "I present the « Mots d'Heures, » therefore, to the public, as fully annotated as careful research permits."[18] He thus reveals that several hours of work have been allotted to deciphering the cryptic messages of the poem in an effort to make the poetry more palatable. The reader can now consult the footnotes to better understand what the poem is trying to communicate. That promise is kept as the reader is brought to understand that the English footnotes were added to clarify the French poem. Each footnote is an explanation of the French verse for the non-bilingual reader.

But somehow the poem still intrigues. In his introduction d'Antin van Rooten adds: "Although my work on them has reached a dead end, I sincerely hope some more perceptive scholar, with the helps on my notes, will bring greater clarification to these esoteric fragments."[19] It seems clear to the editor as well as to the reader that the French verses do not seem to communicate with one another. Something is still afoot which gently nudges the reader to pass from a reading of progression to a reading of comprehension and, in doing so, reveals that the notes cannot be fully explained because they are in fact a red herring within the text, a screen that prevents the reader from further understanding what's going on.

---

[18] Luis d'Antin van Rooten, *Mots D'Heures: Gousses, Rames: The D'Antin Manuscript*, (London:Penguin books, 1967), 5.

[19] d'Antin van Rooten, *Mots D'Heures: Gousses, Rames*, 6.

This screen, we finally conclude, is put up to hide the true nature of the text. The notes participate in what we can understand as being macaronic, a text that needs a cypher to be revealed for what it is. In this example, the key is presented in the introduction when the editor explains that: "The most fascinating quality of these verses is found upon reading them aloud in the sonorous, measured classic style made famous by the Comédie Française at the turn of the century."[20] By doing so, we are finally brought to understand that:

> *Un petit d'un petit*
> *S'étonne aux Halles*
> *Un petit d'un petit*
> *Ah! degrés te fallent*

is none other than a French phonetic reading of

> *Humpty Dumpty*
> *Sat on a wall*
> *Humpty Dumpty*
> *Had a great fall*

After that revelation, the reader now understands that the footnote is none other than an obstacle to prevent the reader from understanding too quickly the game being played by the text. Since the reader's attention is focused on understanding the presence and content of the notes, the actual game of translation may be overlooked. *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames* is similar to a prestidigitators' trick, effecting a sleight of hand while distracting with the foot(note).

Furthermore, in the poems, what gives itself as visual — a printed text to be read, a careful layout that accentuates the visual dimension of what is experienced — is in fact sound or more specifically an acoustic play on sounds. On this Bertrand Gervais extrapolates:

> To understand the stanzas of *Mots d'heures: gousses, rames* requires not so much paying attention to the words, seemingly written by a scribe who has lost his marbles, but to listen to their musicality, to the acoustic images, to the traces of sounds and their aura that appear through the course of any reading. The poems demand to approach their reading as a game and demand of the reader to prioritise function (or the conceptual

---

[20] d'Antin van Rooten, *Mots D'Heures: Gousses, Rames*, 5.

design) of these poems and this to the detriment of the two others, which act as a screen on the text.[21]

There are many screens operating here, the footnotes distracting the reader from a clear understanding of the literary game and the English interpretation acting as a screen over the French language.

After such an example, our hopes are that the use of footnotes in fiction clearly appears as a worthwhile field of interest. While researchers have dedicated some articles to the field of study of "notology," the lack of interest in the effects of the fictional footnotes seems surprising. Although footnotes are popular with writers experimenting with the page, Peter Riess, in *Towards a Theory of the Footnote*, reminds us that their frequency of use "stands in striking contrast to the minimal amount of scholarly attention that footnotes as such have received."[22] However, this observation is all the more surprising given that we have seen a revival in fiction of the popularity of footnotes in recent years. Authors from around the globe have exploited their interpretational richness and pushed certain text boundaries. It is quite a fascinating phenomenon because although bookstores are housing more and more novels that include footnotes, we do not seem to have reached the peak of their use, and there are still novels published today that find new ways of being creative with them.

McGann openly criticizes the lack of research on the subject when he states that: "We must attend to textual materials which are not regularly studied by those interested in 'poetry': to type-face, bindings, book prices, page format, and all those textual phenomena usually regarded as (at best) peripheral to 'poetry' or 'the text as such.'"[23] Building on Genette's work in *Paratexts*, McGann adds: "[Editorial and bibliographical work] are fields which have for too long been frozen in positivist illusions about texts and the study of texts. It is the rare editor or bibliographer who

---

[21] Bertrand Gervais, *Figures, lectures. Logiques de l'imaginaire*, (Montréal: Le Quartanier, 2007), 53. (My translation)

[22] Peter Riess, *Towards a Theory of the Footnote,* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), (Tran. Anthony Grafton) in *The Footnote: A Curious History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 26.

[23] Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 13.

is conscious of the semiotic function of bibliographical materials, much less of their place in the autopoietic process of textuality as such."[24] After such a blatant statement denouncing the lack of research on paratexts and their influence on the main text, it seems imperative that we focus our attention on the influences of the note on the text and vice versa.

Although two works stand popular in the field of research on footnotes, Chuck Zerby's *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes* and Anthony Grafton's *The Footnote: A Curious History*, both works offer a historical view of the technique in nonfiction. In his allocution titled *L'ironie romantique chez Sade*, Andreas Pfersmann offers a succinct categorization of the type of footnotes found in fictional texts[25]. He presents five different types (the narrative hint, the political note, the erudite note, the pragmatic note and the esthetic), with the claimed objective of using them to highlight irony in Sade's writings. What Pfersmann presents is the method by which these types of footnotes can lead to one effect. This type of research is the first step in looking at the impact of footnotes.

Research on footnotes reveals two types of works: the first and better known is the historiography of the footnote (Zerby, Grafton). The other type of research is a partial interpretation of the effects of footnotes: these essays will offer an exhaustive analysis of an influential text that contains footnotes (Mulaney, Benstock). A grand unified theory of the footnote is virtually impossible to enunciate when presented with the vast and varied use that has been made of them in the realm of fiction.

Furthermore, the impact of the presence of footnotes in fiction can sometimes surpass the scope of traditional literary studies. Some of these impacts, or effects, are aesthetic, others philosophical or interpretative. Although ideal for this subject, a survey of the effects of footnotes through the semiotic lens has not been done in a scholarly context yet.

---

[24] McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 15.

[25] Andreas Pfersmann, "L'ironie romantique chez Sade", *Sade: Écrire la crise*, (Belfond, Paris, 1983).

Another more completist effort in trying to comprehend and explore the use of footnotes in fiction was offered by Edward J. Maloney in his philosophy thesis, *Footnotes in fiction: A Rhetorical Approach.* Within his research, Maloney has crafted a typography of uses of footnotes. In his proposed model, he distinguishes between allographic speakers (editors and translators) and autographic speakers (authors and narrators), giving three different instances: Factual, Interpretive, and Discursive for each narrative voice.

Figure 1.3 Edward J. Maloney, *Footnotes in fiction: A Rhetorical Approach*, 28.

		SOURCES		
		ALLOGRAPHIC	*AUTOGRAPHIC*	
		Editor/Translator	Author	Narrator
TYPES	Factual	Bedford Edition of James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*	Ernesto Sabato, *On Heroes and Tombs*	J. D. Salinger, *Franny and Zooey*
	Interpretive	Introduction to *The Annotated Lolita*	Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground*	John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*
	Discursive	Introduction to the Norton Critical Edition of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*	Umberto Eco, Postscript to *The Name of the Rose*	Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*

Maloney reminds us that "the boundaries between [the sections] are porous and permeable,"[26] which is fundamental here since authors are often trying out different ways of experimenting with footnotes. In this manner, no category can be entirely closed since there are many ways to adjust information within the note. Maloney describes this when observing that "[i]n one case, the author's proxy takes on the appearance of the author and becomes one aspect of what narratology has called the implied author. In the other case, the proxy is a narrator, whether

---

[26] Edward. H. Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction: A Rhetorical Approach,* (Ohio: Ohio State University, 2005), 40.

homodiegetic or heterodiegetic, and speaks from a different representational consciousness. Of course, the distinction is not always so clear, as we will see."[27]

Where Maloney leaves space for footnotes not added by the author (or explicit author), we will be foregoing this type of distinction. All footnotes analyzed will be intentional additions by the author, whether in the original or later editing of the text. Furthermore, since the enunciation within footnotes is sometime indeterminate, I believe that the model should illustrate the overlap between works, illustrating the phenomena of footnotes that do not appear as fixed. On this, McGann adds :

> In a sense, the only reasonable theory [a theory of textuality] might propose would have to be a kind of anti-theory, a "theory" which would refuse to attempt either a definition or even a comprehensive description of the essential features of text. What is textually possible cannot be theoretically established. What can be done is to sketch, through close and highly particular case studies, the general framework within which textuality is constrained to exhibit its transformations [28].

To accomplish this, a model of footnotes should end up resembling a Venn diagram more than a table.

Figure 1.4 Diagram of footnote interconnectivity.

---
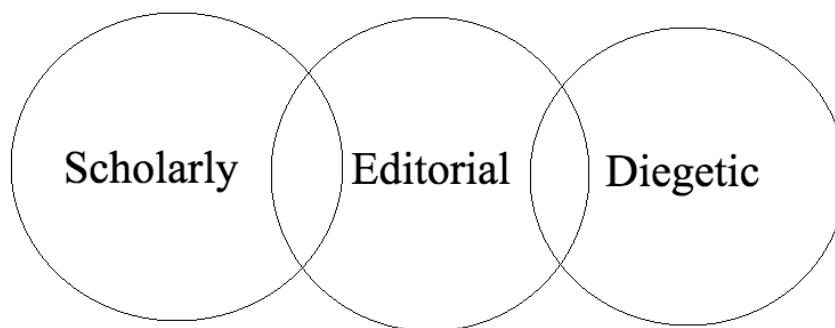
[27] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction: A Rhetorical Approach*, 40.

[28] Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 16.

In this model, the scholarly refers to the academic function of footnotes as an archive of knowledge. This function may be factual (as in James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*) or fictional (in Mathieu Poulin's *Des Explosions* or Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norell*). The same goes for the editorial footnote, which is an addendum to the text added by a diegetic editor (*Ruin of Kings*, by Jenn Lyons) or an extradiegetic one (Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*). The diegetic footnote is a second story written in the footnotes of the main story: *Icelander*, by Dustin Long, is an example of this type of fiction.

In this thesis, we will explore the many manifestations of this last type of footnotes. Our aim is not to offer a closed theory explaining the footnote's use, nor is it about what footnotes do but the resulting effects and how these are caused. Because the use of footnotes remains a fascinating writing habit, the aim from this point forward will be more about *how* they mean rather than *what* they mean. Maloney adds to this when commenting on the use of footnotes in fiction:

> In other words, our sense of the significance and coherence of any particular note or set of notes is often dependent on how the notes fit into our understanding of the narrative's goal of developing mimetic or thematic qualities while foregrounding to a greater or lesser degree the synthetic aspects of the text. Ultimately, meaning and progression occur in the dynamic between the author, the text, and the reader, and notes of the sort that I am discussing can have a significant impact on this dynamic.[29]

The following work will present a typology of footnotes and a mapping of possible effects (on the receiving, not the producing side) as occurring within these permeable categories. We will treat footnotes as signs, for signs are used to transmit information or to indicate something we know and want others to know. As Eco points out: "[T]he sign is not only an element that enters into a process of communication [...] it is also an entity that participates in a process of signification."[30] The footnote is very well a sign, one that can be interpretated in different ways depending on the interpreter and the context.

---

[29] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction: A Rhetorical Approach,* 78-79.

[30] Umberto Eco, *Le Signe*, (Paris: Grasset, 1992), 33. (my translation)

To understand the vast array of effects caused by the presence of footnotes in fiction, we will begin in Chapter One with an overview of the history of the use of footnotes, focusing especially on their use in texts of fiction. It is primordial to establish where the footnote came from, and we must do this to fully understand how its use has been transformed through the years. In this way, we will offer a clearer understanding of the urge to extend this seemingly scholarly technique to the realm of fiction. Chapter One will expand on the definition of footnotes, their uses, theories about their presence, how they affect the process of decoding, elements of visual semiotics that can help in further understanding the relation between the footnote and the page, as well as how they effect a fragmentation in the reading process. This chapter will conclude with a proposition about infrafiction that, in opposition to metafiction, does not situate itself above fiction as if commentating on it but burrows within it as if carving a space for a counter-diegesis within the main story. By adding this quality, footnotes take on a different interpretative result that we will allow ourselves to call centripetal or centrifugal to distinguish between footnotes that continuously burrow into the fabric of fiction and the ones that seemingly crawl out of their respective stories to contaminate the reader's reality.

Following, in Chapter Two, we will be offering our first exploration of footnotes in fiction with the scholarly footnote. The scholarly footnote is citational: it is used as a trace of research. This will allow us to interrogate the footnotes underlying authority and how deduction becomes important when decoding it. We will spend some time exploring Susanna Clarke's *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004) to illustrate how the scholarly footnote has a complex appearance especially in fiction. This type of footnote is also prevalent in cases of worldbuilding, which we will be exploring.

This will lead into Chapter Three, which concerns itself with the editorial footnote and the presence of a diegetic or extradiegetic editor in the usage of this type of footnote. The first observation will focus on the notion of authorship that is paradoxical within this form of fiction. Keeping this in mind, we will show how *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor* (1996),

Barney's Version (1997), *Exit Strategy* (2001) and *Blackout* (1968) present this variety of footnotes with completely different effects. In several of these novels, footnotes create what we have called the manuscript effect, the impression that we are not reading the final book but a copy-edited one, unpolished, still showing signs of the editorial process. How this presentation affects our understanding of the book in our hands is a very interesting question, as is interrogating the objective of such presence and witnessing the consequences of the use of footnotes.

Skipping ahead, we will then ponder the use of footnotes when they are presented in a text with no body. Using as examples Brice Matthieussent's *Revenge of the Translator* (2009) and Jenny Boulley's *The Body* (2002), we will show how the absence of the main body of text implies a type of authority different from the one found in the scholarly footnote. We will confront this idea of authority by also looking at texts with no footnotes (where they blatantly should be) and one with a plethora of footnotes, to observe how readers must alter their general preconceptions of discourse when presented with these non-conforming texts.

Chapter Four will offer an analysis of the diegetic footnote. The diegetic footnote creates a second stratum of fiction which only exists in footnotes. This type of fiction cumulates different stories that may or may not interact with each other. In this chapter, we will discuss dueling editors present in *The Athenean Murders* (2001), explore an understanding of footnotes as footholds in *Accordéon* (2016), *Cyclopedia* (2009), *Book: A Novel* (1992) and *The Well of Lost Plots* (2004), to finally conclude with a look at *House of Leaves* (2000).

Our final chapter is a further exploration of the effects of footnotes but this time in graphic literature. If, as we have stated earlier, the footnote belongs as much to the realm of illustration as to writing, how does it fair in comic books and graphic novels? Can the already accepted graphic dimension of the footnote transform our understanding of the footnote in illustrated literature? And, if so, does this alter the effects of reading? This question will be central to this final chapter, which we will conclude with a close look at Matt Kindt's *Mind MGMT* (2012) and its distinctive treatment of footnotes. Following this, we will present some final thoughts on the enduring

presence of footnotes in new media and how hyperlinks have changed their use and consumption. So, let us commence our exploration of the erudite, intimate, experimental field at the bottom of the page. There will be surprises and chaos and treasures that will be excavated and brought to light. For, as we shall see, the footnote, as its name entails, has walked many miles since it began its travels.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING FOOTNOTES

The mind is refrigerated by interruption; the thoughts are diverted from the principal subject; the reader is weary, he suspects not why; and at last throws away the book, which he has too diligently studied.
-Samuel Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare

1.1   A history of footnotes

As is often the case with inventions, inventors can never predict how the general population will use their discovery. In this way, dynamite, x-rays and footnotes share the same characteristic: no one could have predicted how innovative they would become nor how their use might change the course of history.

An exhaustive and complete history of footnotes is hard to pin down. Chuck Zerby, one of the most quoted scholars on the subject, explains, "The first footnote drifts somewhere in a universe of manuscripts and books, eluding our discovery the way the original bright star of the skies eludes astronomers."[31] And so, with it's origins uncertain, footnotes are free to drift as a technique from creative mind to creative mind. Therefore, footnotes have historically been used in a wide variety of manners. One may imagine that without an authoritative source concerning the manner of their origins, authors have allowed themselves to experiment freely with this annotation.

Although stable in form, footnotes in literature are replete with twists and turns. Authors will think up particular ways to use them, and this choice may or may not be replicated to find its way

---

[31] Zerby, *The Devil's Details,* 17.

into general usage. A fixed use might become one that provokes other authors to look at the footnote differently. As much as we relish using the term "evolution" when talking about art, the process of slowly moving in an unknown direction through transformations others may adopt is an apt description when trying to explain the history of footnotes. Footnotes are the result of a long process of innovation and adaptation, and because of this, a definitive history is somewhat lost to us although some milestones in the history of footnotes still prevail.

1.2   How footnotes developed

As far as historical accounts are concerned, we can trace footnotes all the way back to the 4th century in the practice of midrash, the traditional act of comparing passages of the Torah and the annotation of sacred Judaic texts. In midrash, rabbis from different epochs inscribe their wisdom into columns next to or under the main body of text. Comments are added to other comments, forming a chain of knowledge that spans history. On the page, the space surrounding the main body of text is reserved for interpretation passed down through generations, enriching the text with scholarly reading of it.

Figure 2.1 Midrash Rabbah: Kleinman edition, 2014.

In the practice of midrash, the margins of the Torah encroach on the body of the text, allowing for the thoughts of many to be attached to this sacred text. The Torah's main text occupies the center space, and the surrounding text is reserved for midrash. A consequence of presenting the combined erudition of rabbinic studies in this manner adds a semblance of non-linearity to the text, for one may choose to read the commentary at any given time. Lieve M. Teugels, in *Bible and Midrash: The Story of 'The Wooing of Rebekah,'* indicates that midrash refers to the literary genre used in rabbinic commentaries on the Hebrew Bible. Chan and Venter expand on this by

saying: "Jewish commentaries or midrash do not only contain clarifications of difficulties on a linguistic or textual level," [32] to which Douglas Rushkoff adds that midrash is also "a collection of commentaries and subplots devised by rabbis over subsequent centuries."[33] This type of writing that includes and exposes traces of erudition was adopted by several renowned rabbis such as Rabbi Ishmael and Akiba. In this manner, midrash became a precursor of what we now call marginalia, and the fact that we have aligned its use with commentary and subplot functions very well with our idea of footnotes as if somehow this original use held within itself the traces of what would become the extensive use of footnotes. However, what was originally a sacred practice would gradually be used for more scholarly purposes, notably by illuminators who made their first appearance during the Middle Ages when:

> Marginalia and other notes were a standard practice of manuscript illuminators and scribes. Prior to the printing press, manuscripts illuminated by scribes and monks all followed the rough format of their predecessors, but notes, marginalia, and illustrations varied widely and tended to follow the whims of the scribe and the availability of space.[34]

Illuminated manuscripts are yet another step in the development of the footnote as we know it. In *Books before Print*, Erik Kwakkel explains that "in the thirteenth century, when universities were established all over Europe, the [footnote]truly came into popular use. In this scholastic age, the footnote also changed appearance to create a more efficient linkage system of text and marginal notation."[35] In the Middle Ages, it was common for words to be added manually in between other words to clarify or correct statements made in the text. However, as this practice became more common, the result was that "the page became a messy place, a labyrinth in which

---

[32] Man Ki Chan and Pieter M. Venter, "Midrash as Exegetical Approach of Early Jewish Exegesis, with some Examples from the Book of Ruth*, Scielo,* 2010, http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222010000100037

[33] Douglas Rushkoff, *Nothing Sacred, The Truth about Judaism*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2003), 15.

[34] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction,* 36.

[35] Erik Kwakkel, "Footnotes Before Print*", Books Before Print*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 55.

it became impossible for readers to find specific pieces of information."[36] Certain *signes de renvoi* or signs of return were then adopted as precursors to what we know today as proper footnotes.

Even though footnotes have some historical precursors, scholars agree that the footnote in its most recognizable form first appeared in Richard Jugge's 1550 version of the Bishop's Bible, which was written under the supervision of Queen Elizabeth's Archbishop, Matthew Parker. Jugge's Bible borrows from midrash by allowing comments to be inscribed in the margins. Jugge would insert comments in the margins from the top of the page to the lower part of the text. To mark the notes, he chose alphabetical symbols as breaks to indicate that the note would be extended on the side of the text. The letters A to E were reserved for the margins and at the bottom of the page (where, today, we would generally see footnotes) and in the F and G sections. The F section would then be seen as the first footnote (and the F may be an indicator of the [F]ootnote). The F section is therefore understood to be the ancestor of the footnote, the first officially recognized space for erudite commentary.[37]

Figure 2.2 Richard Jugge's Bishop's Bible.

---

[36] Kwakkel, "Footnotes Before Print", 56.

[37] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 28.

Footnotes continued to be used in this manner until three major authors introduced innovations that persist to this day. The first innovation comes from Pierre Bayle, a French provocateur who envisioned a project around the 1690s. The project explained by Zerby is as follows:

> Bayle thought of the dictionary originally as a compilation of other writer's errors, a reference work in which one could find out everything that had been misstated about Aristotle, Rome, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden, or any of the other figures, places, and events that stocked the mind of a well-educated seventeen-century reader.[38]

After consultations with his peers, Bayle was encouraged to modify his original proposition slightly to offer a first compendium of human knowledge: a repertory based on erudition on a given subject. This became the *Dictionnaire historique et critique de 1697,* which, according to Grafton, "largely consists of footnotes and even footnotes to the footnotes,"[39] and which offers the reader only a "fragile crust of a text on which to cross the deep, dark swamp of commentary,"[40] whose undertaking is now quoted as a precursor to the encyclopedia. Zerby describes Bayle's proficiency eulogistically:

> Bayle is the Mozart of the footnote. He first recognized the full potential of the form and explored it as deftly and exhaustively as Mozart explored the piano sonata, the string quintet, and, most important, the opera. Bayle opened its riches like a mother lode to the miners and toilers who came after him. What in lesser hands could be simply interruptions and diversions became in Bayle's part of the drama of his prose.[41]

And just like that, footnotes had their champion, Pierre Bayle, who revealed the potential of the footnote as a tool for creativity and exploration. What comes afterwards is of much importance to the history footnotes and, in general, to us.

---

[38] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 63.

[39] Anthony Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 191.

[40] Grafton, *The Footnote*, 191

[41] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 77.

Edward Gibbon, a parliamentarian, had originally placed the notes of his book *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* at the end of the volume. By doing so, he created the sense that the notes were a simple index of authorities: this is how they were perceived. After observing this conventional use, David Hume, the famous philosopher, who shared an editor with Gibbon, aptly suggested that the notes be placed throughout the book.[42] He unintentionally sparked the idea in Gibbon of using that space not simply as a section for clarification but for commentary and digression. Zerby explains:

> A historian like Gibbon felt he had as much right to lay down the law about derivations as about the succession of royalty; he pronounced with equal confidence on military strategy and on an ostrich's anatomy. Footnotes encouraged this expansiveness; the bottom of the page becomes a long, winding corridor where the scholar pops out of his office to stretch his legs and, meeting colleagues, gossips, tells jokes, rants about politics and society, and feels free to offer opinions based on nothing but his prejudices and whims.[43]

With his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon offered quite a substantive innovation: "No Enlightenment historian archived a work of more epic scale or more classic style and […] nothing in that work did more than its footnotes to amuse his friends or enrage his enemies."[44] With this, the uncertainty principle appeared in footnotes: a characteristic often exploited in fictional texts that include footnotes. Alongside, appeared the suggestion that what is written in a note is no longer held as being tried and true but rather revelatory of a choice made by the author. With Gibbon, the note loses its aura of objective scholarly erudition but gains the potential of playing with authority. This characteristic will become very important once applied to fictional texts.

---

[42] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 79.

[43] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 83-84.

[44] Grafton, *The Footnote*, 1.

Then there is Leopold von Ranke, a man whose name, Zerby writes, "deserves to be affixed to the footnote's decline."[45] Ranke's works stand as "a new theory of history and [he] wrote with cosmopolitanism that would not be rivalled for a century."[46] Peter Gay in *Style in History* explains that "Ranke's free employment of dramatic devices places him in the camp of those historians who treat their craft as a branch of storytelling art."[47] Ranke's practice, as genius as it may have been and as equally praised, opened the possibility of including the subjective voice in footnotes, an opportunity that later will be seized upon time and time again by artists in the following centuries. Ranke's use of footnotes opens the possibility of using footnotes outside of scholarly texts. If one can fictionalize knowledge through commentary, what would a technique of commentary do to a fictional text?

As for fiction, we can see the addition of footnotes in a small number of works, such as Christopher Marlowe's *Faustus*, but their use is primarily for shorthand notes, nothing of importance that could be decoded by the reader, and certainly not something of importance to deepen the understanding of the story.

Zerby claims in his history of the footnote that the author Aphra Behn can be considered the first to have made footnotes "a fully functioning actor in a poem."[48] Aphra Behn is generally thought of as "the first female professional writer to produce a substantial body of work in English."[49] In her poem *A letter to a Brother of the Pen in Tribulation* (dated around 1640), we can read an ornated stanza, with a footnote that explains her allusion to the Tabernacle, the temporary churches after the Fire of London.

---

[45] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 90.

[46] Grafton, *The Footnote*, 5.

[47] Peter Gay, *Style in History*, (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 64.

[48] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 49.

[49] Zerby, *The Devil's Details*, 49.

Figure 2.3 Aphra Behn, Selected poems of Aphra Behn, 30.

A letter to a Brother of the Pen in Tribulation

Poor Damon! Art thou caught? Is't even so?
Art thou become a *tabernacler too?
Where sure thou dost not mean to preach or pray,
Unless it be the clean contrary way:
This holy time[a] I little thought thy sin
Deserved a tub to do its penance in.
O how you'll for th' Egyptian flesh-pots wish,
When you're half-famished with your Lenten-dish,
Your almonds, currants, biscuits hard and dry,
Food that will soul and body mortify: 10
Damned penitential drink, that will infuse
Dull principles into thy grateful Muse.
– Pox on't that you must needs be fooling now,
Just when the Wits had greatest need[b] of you.
Was Summer then so long a coming on,
That you must make an artificial one?
Much good may't do thee; but 'tis thought thy brain
Ere long will wish for cooler days again.
For honesty no more will I engage:
I durst have sworn thou'dst had thy pusillage.   20
Thy looks the whole cabal have cheated too;
But thou wilt say, most of the Wits do so.
Is this thy writing[c] plays? who thought thy wit
An interlude of whoring would admit?
To poetry no more thou'lt be inclined,
Unless in verse to damn all woman-kind:
And 'tis but just thou shouldst in rancour grow
Against that sex that has confined thee so.
  All things in nature now are brisk and gay
At the approaches of the blooming May: 30
The new-fletched birds do in our arbours sing
A thousand airs to welcome in the Spring;
Whilst ev'ry swain is like a bridegroom dressed,

* So he called a sweating-tub.
(a) Lent.   (b) I wanted a prologue to a play.   (c) He pretended to retire to write.

30

(Transcript: * So he called a sweating-tub)

The feminist perspective has often been expressed in footnotes. In terms of having a space of one's own, the footnote occupies a vital presence in Mary Hays' *Female Biography* (1803). The presence of footnotes becomes a way of avoiding direct confrontation with the ideas of the time. Andrew McInnes explains,

> Hays' deployment of footnotes is central to her feminist project in *Female Biography*, as their extensive use allows her to channel her critiques of gender roles and social

prejudices, while allowing the main body of her biographical entries to appear deceptively neutral. This method allows an articulation of her feminist philosophy through a series of 'deliberately provocative footnotes.'[50]

The spaces in the text are obviously unique for particular authors and allow the authors to express a wide variety of opinions or make available a new way of presenting ideas. With these compiled moments in history, we can further explore the effects of footnotes on the text, on the reader and on our comprehension of the fabric of fiction. Before that, however, we should clarify certain essential characteristics of the footnote.

1.3   What are footnotes?

Despised by some, overused by others, footnotes have waxed and waned in academic favour. In their most basic understanding: "The crux of our footnote system is the presence of a symbol that connects the note to the relevant location in the text."[51] (Erik Kwakkel 2018).

In *Paratexts*, one of the seminal works on literary material that surrounds the main text, Gerard Genette defines the footnote as

> a statement of variable length (one word is enough) connected to a more or less definite segment of text and either placed opposite or keyed to this segment. The always partial character of the text being referred to, and therefore the always local character of the statement conveyed in a note, seems to me the most distinctive formal feature of this paratextual element [...]. Our most common practice consists of putting "callouts" in the text, using one or another system (numbers, letters, or symbols) and pegging each note to the text by repeating the identifying marker or mentioning one of the text's words or lines.[52]

---

[50] Andrew McInnes, *Feminism in the Footnotes: Wollstonecraft's Ghost in Mary Hays' Female Biography*, (Abingdon-on-Thames: Life Writings, 2011), 8.

[51] Kwakkel, *Books Before Print*, 55.

[52] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 319. (Tran. by Jane E. Lewin.)

Such a definition explicitly shows the potential of experimentation within the use of footnotes. Genette is very clear in showing that there is no fixed use, and the use of "more or less," "seem" and "most common practice" encourages one to understand that there is a wide berth of usage when manipulating information through the footnote. This is also what makes footnotes such a rich subject to explore. Even though their form is set, there is still enough space to play with them, especially in fiction. To further distinguish between types of paratexts, Genette creates two different categories of notes: 1) "peritexts," which include every type of addition to the main text as long as they are placed inside the book and 2) "epitexts," which describe everything that is said about the book but exists on the outside of its pages. Edward J. Maloney adds that "Genette's distinction, however, does not fit the phenomenon of [foot]notes very well, since notes are both internal and not part of the body of the text."[53]

In hopes of restoring balance to footnotes, Maloney suggests the idea of "fictional paratext," describing footnotes as a narrative device. This idea of fictional paratext is an important one, explored thoroughly by Maloney in his thesis dedicated to the idea that footnotes can extend the boundaries of narrative fiction. He writes that they "frequently play a significant role in the progression of narrative fiction, often extending the boundaries of the narrative frame, introducing new heuristic models for interpretation, and offering alternative narrative threads for the reader to unravel."[54] This idea will be essential for us moving forward since the significance of footnotes far surpasses their function and becomes wholly coherent with Barthesian semiotics, whose ideal was "to invest every moment and event in a culture with a significance beyond the simply functional."[55] Although originally thought of as a complement to the main text, footnotes can now be seen as intrinsically necessary to the diegesis.

---

[53] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction*, 15.

[54] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction*, 14.

[55] John Sturrock, *Structuralism*, (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003), 93.

In a novel, footnotes actively participate in blurring the distinction between what is specific to the fiction and what belongs to the readers' encyclopedia, capturing their attention and offering them a different way of thinking about the information they are being exposed to.[56] On this, Christophe Martin underlines in *Notes: Études sur l'annotation en littérature* that "the ancillary role of the note, its absence of autonomy, and its subordination to the main text as well as its hierarchical dependence can manifest on the syntactic as well as the semantic or logical level."[57] This aspect gives it a particular function, both as a tool for analyzing the text and as discourse, since footnotes cannot be understood without their context, even though it is quite possible to read the main text without being distracted by their presence.

Grasping the meaning of a footnote in a fictional text requires a complex decoding operation. As we have shown in the introduction, conceptualizing reading as an active operation of decoding is relevant to an understanding of footnotes in fiction, for they necessitate decoding to understand their reason and function. A reader must use the given contextual information (often in the footnotes themselves, hints of *parole* within the text) to work towards a coherent understanding of decoding the footnotes. These hypotheses can also alter as the reader progresses through the text. With more occurrences, readers cautiously tunes their understanding of the presence of footnotes and thus emerges with a convincing thesis concerning the voice, the context and the reasoning behind the notes.

Furthermore, when faced with a footnote, readers must make a choice, either to initiate a process of reflection that leads them to understand both usage and foundation—the use of the note and the reason for its presence in the text—to continue reading as the author intended or to ignore the whole situation and experience their understanding of the text as overtaken by an incomplete reading. Michel Butor spoke of this choice when expressing that, " this divide, between two zones

---

[56] Just think of a scientific text that would freely quote texts without giving the source. No doubt this behaviour would lay the seeds of doubt as to the rigour exercised by the author.

[57] Charles Martin, "Les notes auctoriales dans l'Émile de Rousseau" in *Notes: études sur l'annotation en littérature*, ed. Claudine Poulouin, Jean-Claude Arnould (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publication des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2008), 75. (my translation)

of the text, one optional, the other mandatory, often expresses the divide between two zones in which the public is distinctly adressed ".[58] This choice is unavoidable, and therein lies the frustration expressed toward footnotes. What can seem like a distraction for some can be a welcome challenge for others. Furthermore, there is an integral part of reading footnotes that deals with interpretation. It is quite possible that many of the frustrations expressed by people stem from the idea that there is no "correct" way of interpreting them. Let's look at how to read footnotes in the first place.

Over the course of the next pages, we will make a case for this necessity of interpretation since it seems that the pleasure offered by a text with footnotes is linked to footnotes becoming pluri-interpretable. Although fiction contains within a multitude of interpretations, footnoting is one of the rare formal techniques of adding a different stratum of interpretation to the text.[59]

1.4   How to read a footnote.

Years of scientific use of the note have conditioned the average reader to see it as a reading suggestion, a momentary interruption to gather more information on elements of the sentence just read. Often seen as complement or precision and rarely more. However, these effects remain important because the note, explains François Bessire, "forbids any simple or linear reading, imposing instead a complex deciphering, which confronts text and notes."[60] In the case of notes in fiction, no paratexts are provided to readers to help them understand why the author wanted parts of the text to be noted. A reader must deduce the reason for their presence. The note, then, takes on a symbolic dimension in the sense that Gilles Thérien understands it:

---

[58] Michel Butor, "Le livre comme objet" in *Oeuvre complètes de Michel Butor*, *Repertoire 1,* (Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1960), 460. (my translation)

[59] Others include marginalia, conservation of the editorial marks on a manuscript (such as comments, suggestions or clarifications) and reproduction of notes; most of these techniques can also be imitated in the footnotes, as we will see later on.

[60] François Bessire, "Les suites comiques de l'érudition : la note parodique de Saint-Hyacinthe à Du Laurens" in *Notes*, 255. (my translation)

The word symbolic is significant here because it highlights that these systems of signs have a referential value as hierarchies, scientific systems, knowledge, practices, rituals, ideologies or imaginary visualisation. The symbolic relegates the accent to the fact that the produced sense is not only a sign of the interface, an abstract and classifiable entity but also a force, a potential action that can be useful in circumstances other than that of reading.[61]

Allowing ourselves to understand footnotes as symbolic entrenches the notion of their importance. The symbolic value of the footnote prevents readers from simply skipping it, in case, alas, they miss a pivotal dimension of the book. Although footnotes can often be presented as ancilliary, they are still extremely valuable to the best decoding of the diegesis. This symbolic dimension also integrates the idea that the navigation of a text with footnotes includes a decoding that simultaneously employs two types of deduction: active deduction and abduction. When presented with a footnoted novel, the operation of decoding is two-fold, the first part aimed at the main body of text and the second, directed at the footnotes and their interaction with the main body. The decoding in the latter is often abductive in nature. Abduction is one of the three operations used when searching for information. This idea advanced by C. S. Pierce and explained by Gérard Deledalle refers to a method that "suggests hypotheses or general ideas that deduction develops and that induction, in a sense entirely different from the classical sense, verifies or rather puts to the test."[62] Induction, abduction and deduction are used toward understanding the components of the novel, and how they affect or interact with each other.

Since the fictional note does not provide an explanation for its own decoding, readers are left to their own devices in deducing their interpretation. "Abduction is reasoning by hypotheses. It is therefore distinguished from deduction and induction by the order and relations established between the terms of the reasoning,"[63] explains Gervais. However, these terms of reasoning are elusive. Although the precise meaning of Peirce's notion of abduction is still controversial to this

---

[61] Thérien, "Pour une sémiotique de la lecture", 75. (my translation)

[62] Gérard Deledalle, *Lire Pierce aujourd'hui*, (Paris: De Boeck, 1992), 155. (my translation)

[63] Gervais, *À l'écoute de la lecture*, 64. (my translation)

day, the fact is that "[o]ne traditional interpretation of Peirce on abduction sees it as a recipe for generating new theoretical discoveries. A second standard view sees abduction as a mode of reasoning that justifies beliefs about the probable truth of theory"[64] and functions equally well when the reader is using the process of abduction to understand the footnote. The interpretation of the footnoted text is therefore left to the reader, who may now be mistaken as to the author's intention in using such a technique. Ariane Ferry reminds us that:

> An annotated text is fundamentally double: its places of enunciation, distributed on the page in such a way as to mark a border between these spaces, visible, impenetrable by accepted convention, like the fourth wall in the theater, but porous as is any border, they become two, which poses the problem of readability, or more generally of the modalities of reading such works.[65]

If this is part of the risks of its use, the footnote can also generate very interesting readings. It becomes a question of both trusting the reader and giving free rein to interpretation. This is whitout a doubt one of the many reasons why footnotes have been popular in fiction over the last decade. We somehow feel that the appeal of adding footnotes resides in the fact that they ask more of readers without necessarily burdening them. In our era of exegesis and highly constructed worlds of fiction, this might be just another way to encourage more involvement from the reader. Initiating a decryption process that will allow the reader to understand the reasons for their presence, as well as the author's reasoning behind their use, may be part of the pleasure offered by footnotes. Although this does not make the process explicit, there must be some sort of interpretive stimulation obtained by navigating heuristic cycles of understanding: something the reader must go through.

---

[64] Daniel Jon McKaughan, "From Ugly Duckling to Swan: C. S. Peirce, Abduction, and the Pursuit of Scientific Theories." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, vol. 44, no. 3, (2008), 447.

[65] Ariane Ferry, "La note de bas de page, une provocation à la fiction. Réflexions croisées autour d'un faux roman grec antique (La Caverne des Idées de José Carlos Somoza) et du Précis de littérature du XXie siècle, pastiche signé par Pierre Jourde et Éric Naulleau" in *Notes,* 288. (my translation)

Gilles Thérien spoke of the four reading processes, separated into two groups of operations: "the category of deciphering which forms the first group, then interpretation, commentary and conceptual integration in the second group."[66] Thérien's theory of reading processes describes the mode of receiving and integrating information on the page, which is put to the test when this information is placed in footnotes. As soon as a note appears in a text, the reader must deduce the reason for its presence, check if this hypothesis is consistent with the data in the text and then add this rule to his encyclopedia. Only when all this has been accomplished does the reader resume reading. All this seems highly stimulating, adding an extra operation to decoding the text. This reading process encourages the reader to keep the elements that support interpretation while rejecting those that contradict the reading. Using the note, readers must continuously interrogate the text, which offers them an augmented sense of participation.

1.5   Visual semiotics

To fully comprehend the interpretative potential of footnotes, it is important to understand how their disposition on the page affects the interpretation. In the introduction of his essay on chapters and their impact on the way we read and absorb information, Ugo Dionne makes explicit one of the most fascinating aspects of disposition in the novel:

> There is a paradox in the disposition of the novel. [...] It is by offering itself entirely to the eye, by displaying without reserve the apparatus which signals and designates it, that it passes most surely unnoticed. The eye of the reader, broken with the typographic discipline of the modern novel, apprehends passively the information that the device provides him.[67]

The page has been often seen merely as a blank space on which we lay down the text. This idea is made explicit by Ulises Carrión when he observes that "[a] book may be the accidental container

---

[66] Gilles Thérien, "Exercice de lecture littéraire" in Rachel Bouvet and Bertrand Gervais, *Théories et pratiques de la lecture littéraire.* (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2007), 39. (my translation)

[67] Ugo Dionne, *La voix aux chapitres*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008), 9. (my translation)

of a text, the structure of which is irrelevant to the book [...]"[68]. Clarity would tell us that we should view the page as a canvas. The analysis of the usage of footnotes relies on the understanding that the page is not a passive space but can be active with the intentional disposition of textual elements upon it. Jerome J. McGann points out several advantages of understanding the page this way when he points out that, "seeing pages like this, is to register the gestalt of the figuration - the page treated as 'composition', with that term to be taken simultaneously as a typographer and as a painter would use it."[69] It is therefore conceivable that the page be approached as a space where creation unfolds, and writing can occupy the margins, alter the font, play with blanks and the layout of the text and, obviously, add footnotes.

The note, in addition to breaking the linearity of the text, causes differences in the ocular path upon the text and, consequently, with regard to the rate at which information is received. Speaking on Patricia S. White's research, Hervé Baudry clarifies: "Moved to the bottom of the page or at the end of the volume, [...] the note is often disregarded by the reader because of the spatial displacement of the ocular/muscular jump which reorientates the reading order."[70] Whether or not the reader's gaze hesitates, the presence of the note alters the narrative in such a way as to create a multitude of potential narratives. Depending on when the reader chooses to read the note, all the information received previously will be reviewed and reassessed to take into account the addition. This is also true for a linear reading, but in the case of information added in a note, it alters the information provided in the body of the text. The note then may support the statements, divert attention from the main text or, in extreme cases, contradict the text or its diegesis.

As for the formal aspects of the note, visual semiotics offer a vast array of interpretive tools that allow us to observe the effect of the layout of the visual elements on the page. First of all, there

---

[68] Ulises Carrión, *Second Thought*, (Amsterdam: Void Distributors, 1975), 8.

[69] McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 145.

[70] Hervé Baudry, "Contribution à l'histoire de la note : le double plan du texte dans *La Nuit des Olympica* de Gérald Hervé" in *Notes,* 316. (my translation)

is decoding required to understand in what manner does the foonoted next interect with the main body of text. After reaching an understanding, we can explain how the visual layout establishes semantic relationships between the textual elements. Furthermore, visual semiotic interpretation allows us to observe how the placement of the sentence on the page can modify the reading of a fictional text. Sean Hall highlights the effects of the place occupied by the text, when he declares: "Placing something at the top of a picture tends to idealize it, whereas placing something at the bottom can make it seem more down-to-earth and realistic."[71] This highlights the relevancy of determining whether the higher-placed text occupies a position of authority over the rest on the page. This idea that the eye has a usual pattern of gathering information is prevalent in Gibson's theory of bottom-up visual perception, explained in his very influential *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Such a hypothesis has also been demonstrated visually with certain tests like this one, found online: tests that attempt to show that the average reader has a predictable way of searching for information on a page.

---

[71] Sean T. Hall, *This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics*, (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2012), 73.

Figure 2.4 Reading scheme.

Fernande St-Martin explains this phenomenon:

> It is also necessary to classify among the most usual mechanisms of perception the interpretation of the large details of the visual image and, among these, the preponderance of certain privileged localizations. Some individuals, classified as normal, systematically perceive the central part of the image first. What difficulty of perception will these individuals have in front of an abstract (or sometimes figurative) painting whose lines of force are distributed in the section of the painting not normally used by the spectator in his perception of an image, whatever it is.[72]

Jacques Derrida also addresses the idea of the page's structure, when, on the subject of footnotes, he explains: "The note can be defined by spatial and hierarchical criteria. The status of the text of the note is conferred on it by a 'spatialization' that creates hierarchical relationships: relationships

---

[72] Fernande St-Martin, *Structures de l'espace pictural*, (Québec: Bibliothèque Québécoise, 1989), 34. (my translation)

of authority between the so-called main text […] placed above […] the text of the infrapaginal notes." [73] Derrida confirms that there is a hierarchy inherent to the usage of footnotes. Spatialization is key in understanding how the page can incite different interpretations by altering the disposition of the elements on the page.

Since it's pretty much universally recognized and easily decipherable, the footnote's position on the page can influence interpretation. What we know of footnotes is that they are often delimited by a line that separates them from the body of the text. This delimitation is a sign of a break in the text, a tangible trace that circumscribes two distinct spaces on the page. In a novel, this trait becomes significant because, above it, we have the body of the text, the territory of the diegesis, and below it, footnotes, which belong to a subsection flirtatiously close to the diegesis. Such proximity might be useful in explaining how footnotes can simultaneously affect and be affected by the main body of text. St-Martin explains this space in the following way:

> Although susceptible to receiving all the projections, associations, and interpretations, the line cannot do anything other than define a certain space as soon as it is drawn. Like some sort of magnetic field, it is very concrete by the irreversibility of the event it produces and very abstract because it calls on all the potential sides of the line. It is this line and the sides of it that give it an explicit and rich existence of meanings. [74]

This proximity of footnotes to the main text on the page creates a problematic space. Footnotes are both included in the text and external to it. According to Genette, however, the note is beyond the text: rather, it is part of the set of paratexts that includes the "author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations." [75] In *Figures III* (1972), Genette spends a significant part of his essay theorizing analepses and prolepses, notably in Marcel Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. The results are a repertoire of "[s]tudies of the chronology of stories presumes confronting the events in the narrative discourse with the order of succession of these same events in the story as is explicitly

---

[73] Jacques Derrida, "*Ceci n'est pas une note infrapaginale orale*", *La Licorne,* 2004, https://licorne.edel.univ-poitiers.fr:443/licorne/index.php?id=3024

[74] St-Martin, *Structures de l'espace pictural*, 11-12. (my translation)

[75] Genette, *Paratexts*. 11.

indicated by the narrative itself or as can be inferred from some indirect clue."[76] As in novels such as Jasper Fforde's *Lost in a Good Book* or Jose Carlos Somoza's *The Athenian Murders*, the noted text takes place in another temporality; and although the main text has no "knowledge" of the text relegated to a note, the two still interact. When it isolates a past or future event for diegetic purposes, the note seems to do exactly what Genette points out: it creates a different place in which diegesis must be inferred or deduced.

Footnotes can also be codified differently, as we have seen earlier. Pierre Bayle chose alphabetical letters to indicate footnotes; later, in his work, numbers are used. There are also the asterix (*), the dagger, the obelisk or obelus (†), the double dagger or diesis (‡), the parallels (‖), the section sign (§) and the pilcrow (¶). All of these symbols are, at first sight, interchangeable, although some authors will use them to distinguish between different types of included text. For example, Chuck Zerby's use of footnotes is quite interesting: numbered footnotes refer to a text, while asterisks are commentaries. He states, "[T]he asterisk (little star) we might expect to direct us towards the heavens. But no, of course not. Rather than upward, this star leads us to the bottom of the page."[77] Quite a poetic way to decode the sign as a symbol.

1.6   Fragmentation

Footnotes cause the reading to be fragmented, creating a plurality of possible readings depending on the reader's attention. The isolated, and therefore highlighted, location of the note ensures that it will never be seen as a homogeneous part of the text; it will always be part of the outside world. McGann clarifies this by explaining: "Paratexts stand outside the main body of work and

---

[76] Gérard Genette, *Figures III,* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972) 78-79. (my translation)

[77] Zerby, *The Devil's Details,* p. 50.

comment on it or alter the meaning of it in some way."[78] This questioning of potential readings is also part of Michel Charles' reflections on the notion of possibilities, which he explains as being:

> [...] all the possibilities of reading, or the possibilities that reading attributes to writing. The real text will be considered as effective by what it does not use and abandons as by what it implements; the actual text will be regarded as surrounded by virtual texts and crossed by them, to the point that it becomes itself a virtual text among others. On the one hand, we are putting the authority of the text in checkmate because—obviously—the power of the text resides in its possibilities. On the other, we introduce to the notion of commentary a dimension that we believe one should not have to accept as *a priori:* creativity, since it is what we use to produce new texts emerging from the original examined text.[79]

It goes without saying that fictional paratexts can create the types of virtual texts that Charles describes here. Following the diverse interpretations offered by the presence of footnotes, different novels can be understood as active in a reader-response theory manner. As readers explore the text, they can absorb, include or reject the information offered in the lower part of the text.

We can also add to this the fact that the rhythm of reading plays a vital role in the assimilation of information. Gilles Thérien specifies that:

> Whatever the order in which one scrolls, the reading that is made of it are the various notations put at the disposal of the reader and by the intermediary of which the complex web of the signifying relations that constitutes the discourse will serve to construct the textual object, the sense that the reading will give to such an object of the world.[80]

Keeping this in mind, McGann would like us to understand that:

---

[78] McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 120.

[79] Michel Charles, *Introduction à l'étude des textes*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995), 108. (my translation)

[80] Thérien, "Exercice de lecture littéraire", 21. (my translation)

One does not simply move through works [...] in a linear way, starting at the beginning and then proceeding page by sequential page. Rather, one moves around the edition, jumping from the reading text to the apparatus [...]. The edition also typically drives one to other books and acts of reading, ancillary or related materials which have to be drawn into the reading process to expand and enrich the textual and the reading field.[81]

This navigational path must undoubtedly affect the process of assimilating information, in particular, by the very fact that reading habits are not necessarily uniform and that some readers will wait until they reach the end of the page before reading the note, while others will read it immediately as soon as the call for a note appears. Thus, as Ariane Ferry notes:

[T]he reader who respects the reading protocol provided by the typographic organization on the page must go through the note before engaging in the text; in reality, the eye covers both the number accompanied by the asterisk and the first words [...] The competition between text and note is, therefore, immediate.[82]

However, this manner of reading remains a choice made by the reader, a choice that slightly alters the process of assimilation of information and decoding the footnotes.

And all this only becomes more complex when the note interferes with the fiction. At this point, it is no longer simply a clarification but an alternative reading track. The challenge of using the note is that it potentially contains a reading suggestion that could clarify the entire text if only the reader would stop for a moment to see what is happening below. The note does not make the text immediately indecipherable; quite the contrary, the text remains coherent even though the reader ignores a potentially fundamental part of it. With the use of the note, interpretations of the text multiply. In addition, the hypotheses about the reason for their use appear to readers as they decode them. The text becomes invested with added value. Stanley Fish provides a particularly interesting lead in relation to this decoding:

---

[81] McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 120.

[82] Ferry, "La note de bas de page, une provocation à la fiction." in *Notes,* 290. (my translation)

[…] it will be necessary to make use of all the information that formal characterizations of language can provide, although that information will be viewed from a different perspective. Rather than regarding it as directly translatable into what a word or a pattern means, it will be used more precisely to specify what a reader, as he comes upon that word or pattern, is doing, what assumptions he is making, what conclusions he is reaching, what expectations he is forming, what attitudes he is entertaining, what acts he is being moved to perform.[83]

The presence of notes in a fictional text creates layers of fiction, as the main text and the fictional paratext do not occupy the same diegetic space. It is precisely in this creation of strata that the main play of the note in fiction resides. Its presence leads to the fragmentation of the text, which can have varying degrees of meaning for the reader. The note creates a multi-interpretable text. Adding a note to a fictional text instantly creates a second potential text. The note no longer simply serves as a complement to the text; it makes it possible to bifurcate the reading, by breaking up the narrative structure.

1.7   An underlying digression

To clarify the note's effects on reading, Michel Charles proposes defining the note as a digression because it is framed by formal marks that indicate its beginning and end; thus, the thematic reinterpretation must be relatively easy. The note implies a fork in the story, an explored background, ongoing research. Yet, on this digression, the debate is still raging. Hervé Beaudry points out:

Jacques Derrida, recognizing the digressive nature of the note, refuses to see in it a digression. A syntax of the note reveals that the degrees of dependence, that is to say the measure of the digressive, are related to the type of link established between the two planes. In Searlian terms, the shift of attention or the inversion of the center towards the periphery is assumed according to various modes of concatenation.[84]

---

[83] Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class?*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 92.

[84] Baudry, "Contribution à l'histoire de la note" in *Notes,* 316. (my translation)

This effect on the reading highlights the cultural hierarchy between the central and the digressive, reflected in the position of the footnote. The digressive space, lower on the page, is submitted to the authority of the main body of text. Somehow, through interpretation, the elements of the higher portion of the text seem more authoritative than the lower parts, even though we completely accept that we are presented with elements of fiction in both cases. What Derrida acknowledges is the worth of removing oneself from the centre narrative to explore what surrounds it. These impressions of authority and directness are factual illusions that have been explained by Richard St-Gelais in *L'empire du pseudo* when he states that:

> It is when reading a uchronia novel that we best understand John Searle's distrubingly unverifiable declaration that a factual statement and a fictional statement are formally indistinguishable one from the other. It is not between two texts that the distinction threatens to evaporate but well within one and the same text, and at the same time, discursively continuous (if not precisely from the Editor's note) and ontologically fractured.[85]

This observation highlights one of the intriguing actions that footnotes allow: the manufacturing of fictional and scholarly status to certain textual elements, crafting not through clever stylistic rhetoric but simply by adjusting the disposition of the elements to the page and measuring them against readers' expectations. This authoritative illusion gives way to an interpretative shift, as if the notes came from a more "direct" and "credible" source than the body of the text. This is a highly challengeable hypothesis; one could even argue that the main body of text is less authentic than the footnotes since the lower space presents "direct" arguments to the reader. This effect caused by footnotes will be scrutinized in the following chapters.

---

[85] Richard St-Gelais, *L'empire du pseudo: modernités de la science-fiction*, (Montréal: Nota Bene, 1999), 61. (my translation)

1.8   New worlds on the page.

Footnotes create an uncertain place outside the diegesis, and offer a completely new world. Michel Charles calls these "predetermined units" of the narrative: pre-cut units easily identifiable by educated readers. These units can be homogeneous or heterogeneous. As Charles explains: "One will thus speak about heterogeneity as soon as one of the two following remarks can be made about the text: the semantic unit is not graspable at first reading (or, which amounts to the same thing, in my opinion, the element cannot be summarized); there is a break in the enunciation (the whole of the unit is not attributable to the same voice)."[86] Following this distinction, we must consider footnotes as heterogeneous, it is a disruptive element that shakes reading habits, and it is this disruption in the reading mode that we offer to observation.

But Charles' notion of disruption can also be understood as the overlap of two diegeses that form a single narrative. In such a case, footnotes will be defined as a *metalepsis*, based on the "transgression of the ontological border between the real world and the narrated world, the historical activity of narration and the fictive product of this activity."[87] This *metalepsis* only exacerbates the confusion brought on by these superimposed strata of fiction, a confusion complicated by the fact that the separation occurs first on the page and then in the diegesis.

In addition, the paratext written below the dividing line is a statement that challenges us while occupying the margins of the text. What is the status of such a note? Should we consider it just as important as the body of the text despite its inferior position? What is the status of the text placed in a note? This paratextual fragment, grafted onto the main text, causes major alterations in the interpretation, essentially, changes in the order of the text or, as Charles reminds us when he talks about the text placed in brackets:

---

[86] Charles, *Introduction à l'étude des textes*, 52. (my translation)

[87] Lucien Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme*, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 127. (my translation)

We immediately notice that the autonomous statement is strictly not the text between dashes but the other one, not the grafted text, but the text that receives the graft. In other words, the parenthesis is a formally optional element; it is a separable—and not autonomous—statement: the text can be read without it. It is probably not useful to specify that the parenthesis can have a decisive function in the regime of the discourse, nor that this addition can very well have never been added. On the contrary, it may be part of a very first draft. It will suffice to point out that there are formally non-essential elements in a text, which can, as Fontanier and others have said, have a complete meaning in of themselves.[88]

So, if the note is a non-essential element and has a complete meaning in of itself, what is the footnote's status in the diegesis? Since the space of the note and its influence on the body of the text are never properly defined, we find ourselves having to ask these seemingly obvious questions to compose a general portrait of its usage.

1.9   Postmodernist fiction

Historical background on the development of footnotes in fiction is of great importance as a foundation to explorations of the plurality of effects caused by them. As footnoting seeps slowly into common practice, a variety of uses appears in novels. One of the landmark artistic ideologies that embraced footnotes is postmodern fiction. As defined by Hutcheon:

not a degeneration into "hyperreality" but a questioning of what reality can mean and how we can come to know it. It is not that representation now dominates or effaces the referent, but rather that it now self-consciously acknowledges its existence as representation—that is, as interpreting (indeed as creating) its referent, not as offering direct and immediate access to it.[89]

---

[88] Charles, *Introduction à l'étude des textes*, 93-94. (my translation)

[89] Linda Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, (New York: Routledge, 2002) 32.

This blurred distinction between fiction and reality is also semiotically perceived as a confusion between the symbol and what is represented. Postmodernist writers sometimes use footnotes——with their intrinsic authority and habitus—to play with the corrupting nature of fiction. On this, Brian McHale adds:

> [T]he dominant of postmodernist fiction is ontological. That is, postmodernist fiction deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like the ones Dick Higgins calls "post-cognitive": "Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?" Other typical postmodernist questions bear either on the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects, for instance: What is a world? What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ? What happens when different kinds of worlds are placed in confrontation or when boundaries between worlds are violated? What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects? How is a projected world structured? And so on.[90]

Footnotes have the potential to create effects that raise all these types of questions. The destabilizing presence of footnotes can contradict, alter and interrogate the porous line between reality and fiction. By using its attributes for effect, the postmodernists could metafictionally subvert these expectations in ways that could make their novels question ideals of ontology, truth and reality. According to Hutcheon, this makes footnotes in fiction a convenient and practical tool for postmodernist writers since:

> The process of "reading" the conventions of both the verbal and the visual can now be seen as related, though different: both involve hermeneutic work by a viewer, but this work includes the interpretation of three types of signs, as well as their combinations. This semiotic "fringe interference" contests at once two related assumptions: that the visual and the verbal are always totally independent sign systems, and meaning is universal.[91]

This "fringe interference" is significant for the effect caused by footnotes. Already perceived by some as disruptive to their ideal reading path, footnotes are also disruptive of the credibility of

---

[90] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, (Abingdon-on-Thames. Routledge, 1987), 25.

[91] Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, 126.

the work of fiction, therefore destabilizing the readers' expectations about the effects of fiction. First, however, to fully explain the peculiar effects of footnotes, we need to discuss a general effect, one that we have named "infrafiction."

1.10   Infrafiction

In exploring footnotes' effects in fiction, we encounter many texts that employ them to add metafictional elements to the narrative. In her essay *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984), Patricia Waugh explains metafiction as "a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artifact to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality."[92] She adds that metafiction creates implicit frameworks within the fiction itself that support multiple dimensions of fiction within the work. Of course, as readers, we can deduce that this speculative framework can exist inside or outside the initial diegesis, as it is one of the intrinsic characteristics of this theoretical framework. To complement the idea of footnotes as metafiction, we would also have to add the idea of infrafiction to the list of effects caused by reading footnotes. As opposed to "meta" (over), "infra" (inside) fiction describes something much less emergent in the text, not as hovering over the fiction but rather burrowing inside it. Although the metafictional aspect of footnotes is quite clear, in certain cases, the appearance of this text at the bottom of a page offer more than simply positing that certain strata of the text exist "over" others. Footnotes in fiction grant us the opportunity to think of infrafiction, a type of narrative trick of which footnotes would be one of the manifestations.

Although we may find many taxonomies in the field of work on metafiction, a great deal of historiographical research can assist in our understanding of the plurality of manifestations of this literary technique, rendering the vast category of "metafictional writings" a little more precise.

---

[92] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1984), 2.

Lucien Dällenbach aims to accomplish exactly this when he states his desire "to reach an inventory of virtualities, to sketch, at the same time as a lexicon, a grammar of our form."[93] Although describing footnotes as a metafictional presence is not erroneous, it also doesn't completely convey the vastness of their potential effects. Infrafiction becomes then a necessary addition to the lexicon of metafictional practices. This new term can help potential scholars to correctly define the types of effects caused by footnotes (and a plurality of frameworks) within a text. Furthermore, using this expression will allow us to avoid misunderstandings related to treating the entire text as a metafiction. Doing so seems to flatten the issue of reading.

As well, the metafiction inherent in the use of the note does not, strictly speaking, include "commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity,"[94] as Hutcheon points out in *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980) but acts more like an extension of the text. The use of footnotes questions the relationship to reality within the text itself and not simply one that remains in the relationship between a text and its reader. Finally, infrafiction is a form of metafiction as it creates layers of fiction within diegesis, layers that become key in the scholar's understanding of specific effects caused by footnotes.

What I will present here is not intended to continue the cataloguing of metafictional manifestations but rather to explore the semiotic effect produced by metafiction on the reader and, thus, highlight its many uses. To do this, we will need to identify two typologies of footnotes from which some narrative effects result. These will be what I call centripetal footnotes and centrifugal footnotes. The distinction between the two appears when the readers adopt the books-eye-view. Briefly put, the centripetal footnote attracts extratextual elements towards its center, and the centrifugal footnote pushes the aspects of the narrative out of the frame. Centrifugal footnotes do not produce the same effect as centripetal ones. The centripetal footnotes concern themselves mainly with what Dällenbach calls the implicit reader, and the

---

[93] Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire,* 10. (my translation)

[94] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 1.

centrifugal footnotes present more manifestations of the implicit writer. Both these forms of presence are what Dällenbach defines as "the diegetic 'presentification' of the producer or receiver of the story."[95] These two types of footnotes are forged from complex dynamics. They are obervable within the framework of three well-known types of metafiction: *mise en abyme*, auctorial inclusion and detachment.

1.11   Centripetal footnotes

Centripetal footnotes, as the term indicates, evoke the act of grabbing from the outside to pull inwards. When reading centripetal footnotes, the reader is given the impression that the novel digs into its own self as the fictional framework. Centripetal footnotes rarely appear as disruptive elements but as tools that the author can use to enrich the scope of the fictional world they are trying to craft.

The first type of centripetal footnotes we will look at is one that can make the intertextual connections between novels manifest, as in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847), in which, during the description of a historic event, the author adds:

_____ *
_____
This incident is mentioned in Mr. Gleig's 'Story of the Battle of Waterloo'.[96]

This footnote presents a complement of information to incite the reader to look further within the confines of another book. As with tunnelling, this footnote demonstrates that other books traverse the fiction in play. This demonstration of the interwoven aspect of literature uses the potential encyclopedia the reader possess. Like a textual *mise en abyme*, this book within a book causes a metafictional effect, as if the original novel was pulling other novels into its diegesis.

---

[95] Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire,* 100.

[96] William M. Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, (London: Penguin Books. 1848), 312.

Centripetal footnotes can be used in several metafictional practices, such as is the case with *mise en abyme*, defined by Vincent Colonna as a posture used

> not to reflect the existence of the author in the text but to embed a text in the text: the same work duplicating itself (Gide's *Paludes*); the same work duplicating itself n times, to give the illusion of an infinite reflection as in the image of the Laughing Cow (Huxley's *Counterpoint*); or again, the first work embedding a different work but sufficiently similar to produce a disturbing echo effect (Shakespeare's *Hamlet*).[97]

We often speak of a Chinese box narrative when speaking of *mise en abyme*, but this name does not distinguish the direction nor the movement that fiction takes. Linda Hutcheon explains: "Chinese-box structured metafiction [...] frequently abuses and therefore highlights the normal or conventional balance of the primary text and the traditionally secondary paratextual notes or commentary."[98] Because the embedded narrative can be a movement from inside to outside or vice versa, the term lacks precision. By claiming that the centripetal footnote is a movement towards the inside, we distinguish between two types of *mise en abyme*: one that creates a fictional framework around the novel and one that invests in an inner framework. The centripetal footnote gives the impression of digging into the depths of the text. Alan Dorling, in *Experimental Forms in Contemporary Fiction* (1985), discusses Marcel Ayme's *Le Chemin des Écoliers* (1946) and Joyce Carol Oates's *Expensive People* (1968), explaining that these novels "reinforce the reader's trust in the work, as does, in an albeit more oblique fashion, Borges's numerous scholarly footnotes to his own fictions."[99]

---

[97] Vincent Colonna, *Autofictions et autres mythomanies littéraires* (Auch: Tristram, 2004), 131. (my translation)

[98] Linda Hutcheon, "Postmodern Paratextuality and History" *University of Toronto Website*, 1996, https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/9477/1/TSpace0031.pdf

[99] Alan Dorling, "Experimental Forms in Contemporary Fiction". University of Nottingham, 1985, http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/13310/1/370525.pdf, p. 334.

Sometimes, footnotes can offer the possibility of putting a book inside another book[100] as centripetal footnotes are also used to include fictional readers in the diegesis. In the centripetal footnote, a form of the implicit reader is present, as is the case in novels such as Catie Disabato's *Ghost Network* (2015) and Robert A. Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love* (1973), in which footnotes are even signed.[101] Disabato and Heinlein present someone in the book reading the book. Footnotes are thus used as a space in which the intradiegetic reader can comment on the novel they are reading, and, although these footnotes can give the impression that they are closer to the extra-diegetic reader than to the fiction, there is still the presence of a person reading a book inside a book: demonstrating how the centripetal effect is accomplished.

1.12   Centrifugal footnotes

Quite obviously, the centrifugal footnote creates the opposite effect of the centripetal one as it goes beyond the framework of fiction to contaminate the surrounding reality. It is a meta-functional force that breaks down the framework of fiction. The dynamic of centrifugal footnotes is internal to external, and it might often happen that centripetal metafictions reach the very limit of fiction and stumble into the readers' context. If the centripetal footnote is concerned with Dällenbach's implicit reader, the centrifugal note is more concerned with the implicit writer. Regarding mise en abyme, the centrifugal footnote is more related to Borges' use, which shows that metafiction can make us question our reality as it presents the novel's author. By exposing the writer, the centrifugal footnote issues out of the diegesis to contaminate our own reality with its fiction. This latter case can be seen in a wide variety of novels, notably in Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759):

---

[100] Or a poem in another poem as it is the case with Baron Marc-André Lévesque's *Toutou Tango.*

[101] And this signature becomes a form of intrigue in the novel as the notes signed J.F.45th do not refer to anyone known in the diegesis until page 424. The reader must patiently wait for clarifications about this unknown reader who is revealed to be "Chief Archivist (Justin) Foote." Heinlein adds a bit of humour to the notes in his novel. The gag only understood later in the novel is that the notes in the *Time Enough for Love* are "Foote's" notes.

*the author here is twice mistaken; — for Lithopaedus should be wrote thus, Lithopaedii Senonensis Icon. The second mistake is that the Lithopaedus is not an author but the drawing of a petrified child. The account of this, published by Athosius 1580, may be seen at the end of Cordaeu's work in Spachius. Mr. Tristram Shandy has been led into this error, either from seeing Lithopaedus's name of late in a catalogue of learned writers in Dr. —, or by mistaking Lithopaedus for Trinecavevellius, — from the too great similitude of their names.[102]

By evoking the presence of an editor, Sterne digs outside his fiction and shows us signs of a person who surrounds the fiction but who should not be included in it. The presence of an editor gives the illusion of the contamination of the diegesis by surrounding actors. However, these actors, typically outside of the diegesis, are included in a way that demonstrates an effort to reach outside the commonly framed fiction.

Aristotelian thought has shown us that, unlike mimesis, which tends to reduce the emotional distance between the narrator and the narrative, diegesis allows a large narratological space between the author and the narrative, enough to maintain a sustained reflective relationship in the work. In contrast to Genette, who in *Figure III*,[103] demonstrates the distance between story and narrative and between author and narrator, these works place all the frames on an equal footing and then connect them so as to make them all dependent on each other. In that regard, the centrifugal footnote resembles Brecht's idea of distanciation, meaning "highlighting the production or reception."[104] Brecht's distancing was intended to increase the involvement of the spectator's imagination. Not content with seeing the audience sitting and absorbing the show passively, Brecht encouraged the actors to speak directly to the audience and distance themselves from their characters to better reveal the artifice of fiction and empower the audience with their minds rather than their emotions. The listener was forced to fill the voids of fiction with his own subjectivity. Here, I would like to borrow Derrida's expression that fully explains the function of

---

[102] Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, (Pennsylvania: Franklin Library, 1759), 118.

[103] Genette, *Figures III,* 306.

[104] Dällenbach, *Le récit spéculaire*, 100. (my translation)

the centrifugal footnote in relation to the main text: "Each grafted text continues to radiate back toward the site of its removal, transforming that, too, as it affects the new territory."[105] In this way, the addition of footnotes to the main text forces the reader to re-evaluate the position of the diegesis: the centre becomes unsure, and the corresponding sections become pluri-interpretable. This manifestation of metafiction will be treated in the discussion of the diegetic footnote in Chapter 4, particularly in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000).

---

[105] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 355.

CHAPTER 2

THE SCHOLARLY FOOTNOTE

Their baby began to slowly exist,
like a tiny footnote kicking at the bottom of a great physics text.
-Heather O'Neill, The Girl who was Saturday Night

2.1   Writing wisdom

Among the diverse types of footnotes, the most common and recognized form is the scholarly footnote, used to include a reference or a definition and added to the inferior part of the page. As Shari Benstock explains: "Footnotes in scholarly works serve, at their most elemental, as commentaries on, or references for, the parts of the text to which they are keyed."[106] This type of footnote is a sign of proper intellectual behavior, and, thus, as Bruno Latour says :

> The presence or the absence of references, quotations and footnotes is so much a sign that a document is serious or not that you can transform a fact into a fiction or a fiction into fact just by adding or subtracting references. [...] A paper that does not have references is like a child without an escort walking at night in a city it does not know: isolated, lost, anything may happen to it.[107]

The above speaks of the scholarly footnote in a scientific text but also applies to analyses of works of fiction that rely on its usage. The scholarly footnote is used to add to the readers' encyclopedia: an addition of truly factual or factual diegetic information to enrich the main body of text. Umberto Eco, in *How to Write a Thesis*, lists the several uses of the scholarly footnotes:

---

[106] Shari Benstock, " At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text", *PMLA* 98, no. 2 (1983), 209.

[107] Bruno Latour, *Science in Action*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,1987), 33.

• Use notes to indicate the source of a quote

• Use notes as additional supporting bibliographical references on a topic you discuss in the text

• Use notes for external and internal cross-referencing

• Use notes to introduce a supporting quote that interrupts the text

• Use notes to expand on statements you have made in the text

• Use notes to correct statements in the text

• Use notes to provide a translation of a quote or to provide the quote in the original language

• Use notes to pay your debts.[108]

This list encompasses the variety of uses of the scholarly footnote and is thorough for anyone who has encountered footnotes; it also provides a hint of the many types of usages the reader must remember when presented with them. Of course, any decoding operation will consider all these different usages. This is only for the scholarly reader; many other uses of the footnote can be added to the list when including the editorial and diegetic.

To illustrate the value of the footnote, here is an example as used by James Fenimore Cooper in *The Last of the Mohicans:*

> The two united to rob the untutored possessors of its wooded scenery of their native right to perpetuate its original appellation of "Horican." *
>
> _____
> * As the people of each Indigenous Nation had their own language or dialect, they usually had different names for the same places, though nearly all of their appellations were descriptive of the object. Thus, a literal translation of the name of this beautiful body of water, used by the People who dwelt on its banks, would be "The Tail of the Lake." Lake George, as it is vulgarly, and now, indeed, legally, called, forms a sort of tail to Lake Champlain, when viewed on the map. Hence, the name.[109]

As we can understand by looking at this case, Cooper could not be assured that the definition of "Horican" was known by all, and although he could have trusted the misinformed reader to exit

---

[108] Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesi*s, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015), 169.

[109] James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative*, (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1757), 4.

her reading long enough to research the term, his choice landed on adding a complement of information to the story. One of the apparent uses of scholarly footnotes in fiction is to make explicit a glimpse into the encyclopedia possessed by the author or the narrator of the novel. As footnotes clarify information included in the story, this process can also illustrate how the narrator searches through his own repertoire of knowledge to summon an important piece of information. In this manner, footnotes are akin to showing a reader the thought motivating the declaration or the act without having to make it explicit in the flow of the story. This preoccupation takes the form of a balancing act in which the author must consider the following: "[T]he use of footnotes for the purpose of elaboration calls for considerable discretion. Care should be taken not to lose force by transferring valuable and significant facts to the footnotes; directly relevant ideas and information should be included in the text."[110]

The narrative information that can be found in the scholarly footnote is of the supplemental variety. Opposed to constituent events, supplemental events are "events that do not drive the story forward and without which the story would still remain intact,"[111] meaning that if there ever were an event that would somehow erase every single footnote in the novel, the narrative would not be affected. Only the informative paratext used for precision and context would suffer. In that regard, the true tragedy of this type of erasure would be the loss of all the information the author possessed in crafting the story, knowledge she thought better to make explicit within the margins of the story.

Therefore, the scholarly footnote is distinct from the editorial footnote, although they may appear similar. The editorial footnote is used as an archive of the comment made by a real (or fabricated) editor of the book. Scholarly and editorial footnotes can sometimes resemble each other, but they create different interpretive effects. For this reason, we will be using the expression "scholarly footnote" when addressing traces of scholarly work and "editorial footnote"

---

[110] William Giles Campbell and Stephen Vaughan Ballou, *Form and Style,* 4th ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974), 50.

[111] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 21.

when describing notes that include editorial work. The scholarly footnote is without a doubt the product of the writer. The editorial footnote can be added by a second hand editing the main body of text. In this chapter, we will be studying the effect caused by the scholarly footnote, specifically the note that makes explicit the reference used in the text. The editorial footnote will be explored in the next chapter.

It is therefore acknowledged that first and foremost, the scholarly footnote in a fictional text is used to offer information to the reader that the author could include but would fit awkwardly in the narrative. *Moby Dick'*s (1851) famously footnote-heavy chapter "Cetology" is one of the most celebrated cases of this as Melville included many traces of his research on the great whales in the footnotes of the text, as the following example makes clear:

> By the above definition of a whale, I do by no means exclude from the leviathanic brotherhood any sea creature hitherto identified with the whale by the best informed Nantucketers; nor, on the other hand, link with any fish hitherto authoritatively regarded as alien*.
> _____
> * I am aware that down to the present time, the fish-styled Lamantins and Dugongs (Pig-fish and Sow-fish of the Coffins of Nantucket) are included by many naturalists among the whales. But as these pig-fish are a nosy, contemptible set, mostly lurking in the mouths of rivers, and feeding on wet hay, and especially as they do not spout, I deny their credentials as whales; and have presented them with their passports to quit the Kingdom of Cetology.[112]

When reading these passages, the reader may find it quite irritating to pinpoint who is speaking in each section of text on the page. We might ask ourselves if the main body of text is narrated by the protagonist while the footnoted area is reserved for comments by Melville himself, or maybe Ishmael in the footnotes is a future incarnation of the Ishmael in the main body of text, revising his own journals to add clarity and detail to his story. Since footnotes rarely provide additional information to identify the person that has taken up voice in footnotes; it is up to the reader to take a pause and deduce the identity of the chacters narrating in each section of the text. As in the example above, Melville offers us two different narrators that identify themselves

---

[112] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 1851), 135.

as "I" even though the internal logic of the novel pushes us to deduce the fact that they are two distinct people (or the same person separated in time). Without paratextual hints to help them, it is up to the reader to sort out the signification of both sections of the text.

This chapter will unfold as an exploration of the many uses of the scholarly footnote. We will begin by explaining how information included in footnotes in fiction alters the composition of the story itself. This alteration is made possible by an intrinsic authority conveyed to the footnote as a trace within the overall text of erudition. We will observe how the authority in footnotes allows us to reconsider certain aspects of fiction and decoding: all made explicit by the presence of a paratextual element in the story. This will lead us to explore certain operations intrinsic to the decoding of footnotes.

The voices emerging from the footnotes exploit the habitus and disposition of footnotes and claim a form of authority that also needs to be understood before we can begin to question the editorial footnote, or a footnote added by a third party, such as an editor or proofreader. We will then be interrogating the notion of deduction explained through semiotic theory to help clear up certain ambiguities concerning footnotes' appearance in texts of fiction.

2.2   Trekking to the origins of knowledge

One of the main understandings of why we use scholarly footnotes is that they make it possible for the reader to trace back the knowledge presented in the note to its origins. There is a tacit understanding between writer and reader that if the latter ever decides to investigate the information made available in footnotes, the exploration would end up becoming a hermeneutical treasure hunt through the history of literature. That is also why most people do not pointedly verify every footnote they encounter. There is an implicit understating between parties that everyone involved has done their job correctly: the writer has added the sources of the information; the editor then has verified that all these sources were correct; and, finally, the

reader goes on being amazed by the countless hours of research done in the name of erudition. Everyone wins.

Several novelists use footnotes to expose the reader to knowledge that they need to gain a functional understanding of the story. Apostolos Doxiadis' *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjucture* introduces the reader to mathematical conundrums. In Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*, the author adds footnotes to describe the salaries of civil servants in British India or to explain certain scientific details. Robert Harris's *Dictator* has a single footnote explaining that Corcyra was the ancient name for Corfu. Talbot Mundy's *Om: The Secret of Ahbor Valley* has several footnotes that serve as definitions of certain words. In Douglas Adams' *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, footnotes clarify entries from the guide of the same name. The scholarly footnote can offer supplements of information dearly needed to draw a clearer interpretation of the text. And several novels provide different kinds of information, depending on the story's aim.

2.3   Footnotes for further learning

We should also mention that although footnotes connote a type of arcane knowledge and occulted information, they can also be used (and often are) as a pedagogical tool. Footnotes in children's literature add complementary information to help keep children reading and be up to speed on specific references made by the author that might not be generally known. An example of this is Leon Leclerc's *Zombie Kids*, in which we can find footnotes that clarify references to cultural objects of the time, such as Andrew Lloyd Webber's music or *Apocalypse Now*. In this regard, footnotes become a complement to reading that allows the reader to gain further knowledge without necessarily breaking out of the book. Between having to remove oneself from the process of reading to pick up another book and perusing the lower section of the page, one finds that the latter is a simpler interruption. This type of footnote becomes a way to limit distractions, which might be why it is mainly offered in fiction aimed at younger audiences.

This idea of the use of footnotes has also been subverted into derision. Donald E. Westlake's *Don't Ask* (1993) humorously twists the pedagogical aspect of footnotes in chapter 2A, in which he hilariously writes:

_____

* Optional -historical aside- not for credit.[113]

As we have described earlier, the scholarly footnote is the centripetal form of metafiction. When it appears, the author is suggesting a depository of information within the story-space that is only revealed to the reader in small glimpses. The tomes referred to in footnotes only represent a fraction of the books available intradiegetically; the reader, therefore, must imagine an entire bookscape existing within the frame of the fiction, holding within it the totality of the knowledge excavated from inside that world of fiction. This infrafiction gives the impression of a world larger on the inside. It is an unverifiable promise that if we could somehow plunge into this specific fictional world, a grand alternative library of unknown books would finally be at our disposal.

But things are not always what they seem. Sometimes, quoted within the footnotes which themselves are within works of fiction, we may find invented texts. Texts of reference have been added for the purpose of playing with the reader. Herein lies a problem: What can be done with such writings in which the author has explicitly used a literary process that relies on implicit understanding to create fictional works of authority? The effect that emerges from this practice is intriguing since we are stuck between acknowledging that footnotes are present to prove what the author is trying to pass as fact through citation and acknowledging that the quoted reference cannot be an authentic one.

_____

[113] Donald Westlake, *Don't Ask*, (New York: Mysterious Press, 1993), 16.

Take, for example, this footnote pulled from Suzanna Clarke's novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004):

_____

The History and Practice of English Magic, by Jonathan Strange, vol.1, chap. 2, pub. John Murray, London 1816.[114]

By imitating its form and conforming to the habitual rules of presentation, this scholarly footnote is indistinguishable from this next one:

_____

Miguel de Beistegui, *Jouissance de Proust: pour une esthétique de la métaphore* (Paris : Michalon, 2007)[115]

At first glance, both footnotes appear to be referring to an existing text. Each one conforms to the accepted standards of scholarly presentation and thus does not arouse any doubt about their validity. However, this is what makes scholarly footnotes in fiction such a curious presence: their decoding relies on the reader's understanding. The only true way to debunk the fictional footnote is to embark in extensive research of the quoted text. And even after doing so, the fact that a book does not appear available does not necessarily mean that it doesn't exist. Some databases can have blind spots. In this manner, there will always be some sort of doubt around quoted texts: some will be easily found, some cryptic and abandoned, some truly fictional; but how to decide? And what is demanded of readers is not a superficial decoding but a deeper understanding of the semiotic rules that control the usage of footnotes. They are somehow asked to understand footnotes in a manner that reveals further information about the story they are reading. By adding scholarly footnotes to the novel, the author relies on the reader to either believe that footnotes are authentic and therefore that the threads added to the story make it more credible are true; or not to believe footnotes and only see them as a stylistic exercise to add further dimensions to the world the author is trying to create. As Borges explains himself in the preface

---

[114] Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 3.

[115] Georges Teyssot, *Une typologie du quotidien*, (Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2013), 110.

to *Ficciones*: "It is a laborious madness and an impoverishing one, the madness of composing vast books [...] better to pretend that those books already exist and offer a commentary to them [...] A more reasonable, more inept, and more lazy man, I have chosen to write notes to imaginary books."[116]

This suspension imitates the decoding process inherent to all reading, meaning that either you wholeheartedly believe in what the author is presenting as fiction or maintain a skeptical perspective on everything written. Although in the realm of reader-response theory, this type of trust offered to the reader might be a simple extension of the already well-understood parameters of fiction; something more akin to deep reading. Thus, we have a wholly different struggle. We are not simply interrogating the fabric of fiction but the process of writing and the lengths to which the writer will go to ensure that the illusion of fiction endures.

And although we might pride ourselves in believing that the blurring between reality and fiction is a game from which we can extract ourselves at any moment, there is proof that the process is not that simple. In Audrey Niffenegger's introduction to the novel *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, she recounts a discussion with her father in which he admits being confused by the overlapping of fiction and reality in novels:

> Several years ago, my family members were passing around the books of a certain British lady novelist who writes about the doings of wizards and such. My father, who is a Civil Engineer and not a Reader of Fiction [sic] , was entranced by the books. He had never encountered anything quite like them. At one point he turned to my sister and said, with perplexity and wonder in his voice, 'But – does she really *make it all up*?'
>
> We all assured him that she did, indeed. But we could tell that he didn't exactly believe us, and that the books would have lost some of the lustre if he had been forced to truly think that they were only *made up*.

---

[116] Jorge Luis Borges, *Ficciones.* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1945).

I feel that way about Susanna Clarke's masterpiece, *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. Surely something so charming, so authoritative, so heavily footnoted cannot be simply… invented.[117]

It can be surmised that while reading Susanna Clarke's work, we may be led to believe that the notes refer to true research. Since nothing in them can reveal their status as counterfeit, the reader veers dangerously close to accepting the information offered at face value. But the footnotes are invented,[118] and the author's strategy is to somehow place the seed of doubt in readers' minds that somewhere in some bookcase in England exists such a book as *The History and Practice of English Magic*. Once Clarke's repetition has ingrained this, the experience of world-building opens a whole new world within the novel. Once we finish resisting the idea of a history of sorcery in Great Britain, the idea of invisible ships, inter-dimensional travel and even supernatural creatures all become acceptable. This is a good example of what Edward H. Maloney calls synthetic textual play. He explains:

> While the notes may achieve the effect of making readers aware of the text's synthetic aspects, this effect is lessened by Clarke's attempt to make the novel as realistic as possible in order to normalize the concept of magic as a scholarly pursuit rather than a fantastic possibility.[119]

Including such details in the work, the author, through her corpus, presents a coherent world crafted from information in the footnotes. Writing about fantasy, Farah Mendlesohn had this to say about Susanna Clarke's novel:

---

[117] Excerpt from Audrey Niffenegger's introduction to *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, page not numbered.

[118] It can also happen that authors make up references that are easily searchable on the web. This is the case in Catie Disabato's *The Ghost Network*, in which the author invents articles of popular sites, such as IO9 (p. 59), Esquire (p. 162) and Facebook (p. 67). Although this is similar to the reference footnote found in older books, the accessibility of the internet makes the process of verifying the notes authenticity relatively quick. The urls posted in the book refer to nothing; the searches come up blank. In the argument that footnotes are a tricky tool to use because the reader will rarely do the work to find the source of a quote, the websites used by Disabato bring this complacency one step closer as confirmation of the authenticity of the note is not as hard to find.

[119] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction*, 79.

One cannot write about *Jonathan Strange and Mr. Norrell* without considering the footnotes. The experienced reader is conditioned to see footnotes as dry, as a way of grounding the text in reality. But footnotes are also an intervention, or intrusion into the flow of the text, and Clarke takes advantage of this figuring. In *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, it is in the footnotes that the world of the fantastic slips through to disrupt the meaning or common understanding of the tale told in the main text. The "explanation" they offer is of worlds slipping between each other, of uncontrolled contact with fairy.[120]

The reader can interpret these footnotes as sources of coherence within the fictional text, in which the fantastic realms, due in good part to their very presence, become more credible.

The works of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* cycle, as well as *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*, use this technique of providing an informative paratext within the footnotes. In these books, the reader will sometimes be presented with information in the footnotes to support something just declared by a character in the book.[121] In Pratchett's lengthy cycle, most of the historical, geographical and sociological information will be accompanied by a footnote. For instance:

_____

 * Lit.: 'Thingness-writer', or a device for detecting and measuring disturbances in the fabric or reality.[122]

This addition allows the reader to learn more about the conditions that led to the story or to the laws that govern the diegetic universe (one which, let us not forget, exists entirely on the back of a turtle swimming through the cosmos). Scholarly footnotes, like those present in these fictions, offer a fictional bibliography to a world that only exists in our minds. This technique can be described as conceptual immersion, since it "[relies] on the user's imagination; for example, engaging books like *The Lord of the Rings* are considered 'immersive' if they supply sufficient

_____

[120] Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 167.

[121] *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* is not the only example of a novel using footnotes to clarify supernatural elements. Jonathan Stroud's *The Bartimaeus Trilogy* (*The Amulet of Samarkand*, *The Golem's Eye* and *Ptolemy's Gate*) also adds explanations on the process of magic in the diegesis through footnotes. However, as the notes are rather editorial and more often than not direct addresses to the reader from the character of Bartimaeus, the erudite effect is lessened.

[122] Terry Pratchett, *Moving Pictures*, (London: Corgi Press, 1990), 85.

detail in description for the reader to vicariously enter the imagined world."[123] The primary purpose of erudition is to add volume to the universe that is being created. The author intelligently uses a literary convention to instill a type of coherence to the world. He adds a form of depth to the world by suggesting that the reality inside the realm of this fiction has also been catalogued and analyzed by scholars. This use of footnotes gives us the impression of completeness and thoroughness, even though the quoted volumes still belong to the realm of fiction. By adding fictional paratexts in the diegesis, the author is stacking fictions on top of each other: the main fiction being the one we are reading, and, within it, in a centripetal manner, another one existing. With the appearance of footnotes, we instinctively classify the frameworks of fiction within the story.

2.4   Authority

Why is this hierarchy so interesting? If such a prioritization within the strata of texts exists, we will need semiotics to explain how disposition affects the construction of the narrative. In addition to having to analyze what is said, we also have to look at how it is said and determine the consequences of the interaction between the two. As Hall reminds us: "When it comes to message-making we should not forget that the form of the message matters as much as the content."[124] In the context of layout, the note is both a textual and a visual object. Its indentation, sometimes accompanied by a numerical code or a line, becomes a formal indicator, a device for rearranging the text on the page that calls for a new reading mechanism. The layout of the text undoubtedly affects the management of the information received.

Moreover, this use of footnotes depends on at least a partial acceptance of their authority. Through the scientific flair of footnotes, the note in fiction can appear as a trace of objective

---

[123] Mark J. P. Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2012), 48.

[124] Hall, *This Means This, This Means That*, 140.

research and somehow through our investing belief in footnotes more than in the text. As readers, we create a layer of fictionality, with the main body of text and the footnotes occupying a different range of fictionality. Although this process is unconscious and dependent on some scholarly reflex, we cannot disregard it. Footnotes invoke a habitus that relegates their use to objectivity and erudition. Reading a fictional text in which the author has inserted notes forces a questioning that goes so far as to give us the impression that "more fictional" elements occupy the body of the text and "less fictional" elements are present in the note. This characteristic will become more evident when we turn to the diegetic footnote in Chapter 4, but it can still be observed in the cases of scholarly footnotes since they also depend on a certain pretense of authority to function. The notes that appear in fiction create a form of reality within the narrative, as if what is described comes from a different frame, located outside the narrative. The comments in footnotes belong to a second (or greater, as we will see further on) dimension of fiction. They create a kind of space between extradiegetic life and the domain of diegetic fiction because they can potentially reveal some keys to the behaviour that we, as readers, can adopt. Michel Charles clarifies this when he explains:

> Instead of saying that the text has an authority or, rather, instead of constantly behaving as if it had one, I notice that it is I, reader or critic, who attribute it to it. As a reader, I intuitively give it this authority; as a critic, I construct it, I elaborate the model of a text which has its own existence and its specific identity.[125]

This observation by Charles is revelatory of the power we accord to words, and the analysis of the authority of the enunciation in footnotes leads us to question the performative relationship that the text maintains with its reader. Benstock agrees that authority is not something included by the author but something attributed to the author by the reader: "Thus, authority in fictional texts rests not on extratextual sources that support an intellectual aesthetic but on the implied presence of the author — as creator certainly and sometimes as speaker — who is immediately and frequently directly engaged with the reader, not solely with the text."[126] It is important to

---

[125] Charles, *Introduction à l'étude des textes,* 48. (my translation)

[126] Benstock, *At the Margin of Discourse*, 207.

offer some space for reflection concerning the authority present in the note and on its consequences regarding how fiction is read. To do this, we will include the concept of the authority of enunciation as proposed by Pierre Bourdieu in the first chapters of *Ce que parler veut dire*, which will help us define the main attributes of this authority of enunciation and its effects. This will elucidate the way the note is always implicitly accompanied by an impression of authority, impregnated in the enunciation itself. In this way, this authority manifests itself through the note and clarifies what Benstock means when she asserts: "Whatever specific services footnotes may render, they constantly remind us of the authority on which the text rests."[127] And this authority is not shared with other types of inclusions in the text. Jonathan Russell Clark observes quite precisely: "[T]he technique they use comes from authoritative academics, the footnotes grant these tangential asides a kind of authority not offered by, say, a parenthetical."[128] Thus, it is legitimate to declare that the space of footnotes is endowed with a specific and unique authority that several other spaces in the text do not possess.

Concerning the authority of enunciation, Bourdieu explains: "Linguistic exchanges are also symbolic power relations where power relations between speakers and their respective groups are actualized."[129] The authority of enunciation is an essential product of language. The note is an articulation that, within itself, acts with authority because it is also "produced by authors with authority to write, fixed and codified by grammarians and teachers, who are also responsible for inculcating mastery [...] in the sense of a system of norms regulating linguistic practices."[130] The very presence of a footnote indicates the author's erudition, presented as expertise we must trust entirely, whatever friction may occur because of it.

---

[127] Benstock, *At the Margin of Discourse*, 206.

[128] J.R. Clark, "On the Fine Art of the Footnote; From Nabokov to Danielewski, Beyond the Experimental", *Lithub*, 2015, https://lithub.com/the-fine-art-of-the-footnote/

[129] Pierre Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, (Paris: Fayard, 1982), 14. (my translation)

[130] Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, 27. (my translation)

Bourdieu also specifies that "languages" exist only in a practical state, i.e., in the form of at least partially orchestrated linguistic habitus and of oral production of these habitus."[131] He adds to the enunciation the notion of the habitus of language, an aspect specific to Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotics. In this context, footnotes are also decoded by habit, as they come from a long tradition of use, which explains their authority. Honesty and rigour are attributed to research supported by footnotes, such that the reader rarely questions the veracity of the facts presented at the bottom of the page. This authority inhabits footnotes; people who read them usually have de facto confidence in the information delivered. However, some researchers, such as McGann, completely refute this authority:

> [...] it is an illusion of scholars to think that whereas a special privilege - the possibility of rigor and precision - lies within the range of textual and bibliocritical discourse, it stands beyond the reach of hermeneutics, which is a house built of sand. This illusion is based on various misconceptions, the most prevalent of which holds that so-called positive knowledge, factual information, and documentary materials provide the basic ground of stability in critical thinking. The truth is in fact far more difficult and elusive. The truth is that all forms and states of knowledge, including factual and documentary knowledge, are mediated in precise and determinate ways. These mediations introduce determinate - and hence critically specifiable - instabilities into every kind of investigation. Scholarship is interpretation, whether it is carried out as bibliocritical discourse or a literary exegesis.[132]

This divisive question is particularly interesting for our research, especially when we consider that although most of the reading habits surrounding footnotes have been shaped by scientific texts, the problems related to their practice have also been applied to their use in fictional texts. It also becomes interesting when one considers the relationship of authority between text and annotations. This relationship presupposes that the two texts interact in such a way as to create a hierarchy between them.

---

[131] Bourdieu, *Ce que parler veut dire*, 29. (my translation)

[132] McGann, *The Textual Condition*, 98.

71

However, it is also possible to subvert the hierarchical order of the textual elements by using the note. As Claudine Poulouin and Jean-Claude Arnould point out: "The scholarly note can also be a pure parody of the norms of the scholarly book to question its authority and, beyond that, to exploit in fiction all the virtualities of the book, as is the case in Le *Chef d'œuvre d'un inconnu* de Saint-Hyacinthe."[133] Indeed, Saint-Hyacinthe's work enacts a form of carnival reversal of the note to make fun of it. It becomes the perfect instrument of satire: the parodic note turns out to be perfectly suited to the 'philosophical' spirit: "[I]t takes away all credit from the authority and forbids simple acquiescence."[134] We are led to believe that the authority of the note, as well as its monolithic, peremptory and authoritarian use, has disturbed many. The subverted note was probably designed to make fun of the academic use of the note. Florence Devaille corroborates this observation by affirming that the reader "will recognize in these practices a pleasure in reversing values, notably the stylistically established hierarchy between what is more versus what is less important."[135]

Even though this might be true, Bessire adds: "The parodic note is not limited to the satire of authority; it subverts its approach. Far from founding the text in truth and historicity or pointing out its richness or beauty, it destabilizes it, competes with it and undermines it by inverting the hierarchy, that of the page as meaning."[136] And, to further complicate things, Ariane Ferry explains that "the footnote has something Luciferian about it: isn't its ambition to leave the inferior position it occupies, to take power, by diverting readers from the authority of the primary text, by seducing them, by revealing how much more exciting the hidden things are."[137] In this regard, footnotes become similar to Bakhtin's carnival[138], a space where the high temporarily exchanges places with the low.

---

[133] Poulouin and Arnould, « Introduction » in *Notes,* 12. (my translation)

[134] Bessire, "Les suites comiques de l'érudition" in *Notes,* 253. (my translation)

[135] Devaille, "Mais nous en reparlerons..." in *Notes,* 126. (my translation)

[136] Bessire, "Les suites comiques de l'érudition" in *Notes,* 254. (my translation)

[137] Ferry, "La note de bas de page, une provocation à la fiction" in *Notes,* 293. (my translation)

[138] Mikhaïl Bakhtine, *L'oeuvre de François Rabelais et la culture populaire au Moyen-Âge et sous la Renaissance*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).

This reversal is also a way of overthrowing the authority of the text. Derrida explains that by functioning inside the conventions, the artist offers himself a better chance of destroying the rigid framework of footnotes. Simply said, the best way to dissipate the authority of footnotes is to create false authority and insert it in the footnotes in a manner to lay the seeds of doubt.

And these doubtful things can take many forms. For instance, in Réjean Ducharme's *L'hiver de force*, the author has added explanations for several common anglicisms included in the novel. On page 126 alone, we find three different definitions: one for grilled cheese, one for dill pickle and another for smoked meat.

---

¹ Sandwich au fromage, grillé avec le fromage dedans.[139]

² Cornichons marinés à l'aneth.[140]

³ Sandwich à la viande fumée cawchère.[141]

The reversal of authority brings on a humorous effect. First of all, the idea of having to translate popular expressions for a potential French European readership displays a form of derision concering Quebecois French,[142] a problematic relationship between francophones that still exists to this day. On the other hand, the fact that grilled cheese sandwiches and dill pickles are very common meals renders the scholarly footnote almost useless. On writing about this novel, Rosmarin Heidenreich explains that "the final authority as to the communicatory intention of *L'hiver de force* (1973) does not lie with the narrator, but with the implied presence of an extra-textual perspective which betrays its existence in the mystifying epigraphs, section headings and

---

[139] Cheese sandwich grilled with cheese in it.

[140] Dill Pickles.

[141] Kosher Smoked Meat Sandwich. There is also a very obvious mistake in the way Kosher has been translated to French; this is probably the case because the author wants to underline the popular aspect of the French used in his novel.

[142] Ducharme exaggerates this point further in the novel when he adds a footnote to the word *anyway*. The footnote, obviously included to define the word for a non-English speaker, simply adds:

¹ "Ennéoué", which only further complicates the understanding of the word.

footnotes."[143] In her opinion, some other perspective appears when footnotes are added, not the narrator, but something else, an "extra-textual perspective" that can only be understood through deduction.

In closing on the inter-woven authority laced in footnotes, I would be amiss not to underline the presence of footnotes as a form of power exerted over the text. If the text in footnotes represents a form of authority over the text, the same can be said of footnotes themselves. Their presence is allowed or refused by the authority of the editor. We know that the prestigious collection La Pléiade, known to offer the most well-researched and erudite version of classic novels, does not shy from adding footnotes to the works they reprint. Opposed to them, Library of America—another golden standard in reprints of classic works—refuses to add footnotes to the novels since they would alter the original text and the reading experience. An extreme example of the seriousness of all this is Sir Walter Scott's novel *Ivanhoe* in which the author's notes have been historically included as footnotes in the novel. Although this is the case in most versions, in their 2000 reprint, Tor Classics "removes Scott's notes completely. It is debatable whether Scott's informative notes play a significant role in the novel beyond educating the authorial audience, but it is clear that notes of this sort are often considered external to the narrative."[144] In addition to the authority inherent in the extradiegetic footnotes themselves, we can also add the authority of the extradiegetic editors to judge if a footnote is warranted in the first place.

2.5   Deduction

As much as the process of reading is based on the deciphering of codes to understand the story being told, the presence of footnotes requires another form of decoding that adds a supplemental challenge. To further exacerbate the complications implied in the decoding, there are no

---

[143] Rosmarin Heidenreich, *The Postwar Novel in Canada: Narrative Patterns and Reader Response*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989), 49.

[144] Maloney, *Footnotes in Fiction*, 59.

explanations accompanying footnotes and no indication of how they should be read. When faced with footnotes, the reader is forced to infer the reason for their presence. Deduction, as Charles Sanders Peirce explains, is a form of logic that relies on the presence of a premise and a conclusion that holds true when exposed to a logic that explains how the premise leads to this particular conclusion. He clarifies this by stating: "Obsistent Argument or *Deduction,* [...] the conclusion is drawn in acknowledgement that the facts stated in the Premiss constitute an Index of the fact which it is thus compelled to acknowledge." [145] In reading footnotes, we are continuously wrapped in the question of their presence, an unrelenting interrogation as to why they are present in the first place. This is a staple of poetics. Ugo Dionne explains: "In general, however, poetics does not proceed by induction, but by deduction, and more specifically by tabulation: the 'field of possibilities' is delimited by the combinatory of some data posed *ab initio.*"[146]

Therefore, when a footnote appears in a fictional text, we must begin to draw up a premise of why it has been added. It usually takes more than one footnote to correctly understand the reasoning behind the presence of all the footnotes. The reader's deduction increases in precision with the addition of information points. In *Moby Dick* (1851), the first footnotes appear to clarify certain *lexies* used in the book.

All in all, footnotes are another stratus of the text in which:

> The reader makes implicit connections, fills in gaps, draws inferences and tests out hunches; and to do this means drawing on a tacit knowledge of the world in general and of literary conventions in particular. The text itself is really no more than a series of "cues" to the reader, invitations to construct a piece of language into meaning[147]

It becomes quite fascinating to realize that the common decoding associated with reading becomes ever more complex when the reader is faced with footnotes.

---

[145] Charles Sanders Peirce, "Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce", *Color y Semiotica,* 2014, https://colorysemiotica.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/peirce-collectedpapers.pdf

[146] Dionne, *La voix aux chapitres*, 16. (my translation)

[147] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008), 66.

The automatic filling of gaps by an observer was first noted in Gestalt psychology, which began in the early twentieth century and saw the whole as being more than the sum of his parts. In particular, the gestalt principles of emergence, reification, good continuity, closure, and *prägnanz* all have to do with how the human perceptual system organizes sensory input holistically, automatically filling in gaps, so that the whole contains percepts that are not present in individual parts from which it is composed. While a few principles have been applied to sound, most Gestalt principles apply to vision, and the way one perceives and completes an image, adding details, connections, or forms that are not actually present.[148]

As well, the reader is sometimes put in a situation that demands an understanding of the reasoning behind the footnote's presence and why the information conveyed could not have been communicated differently. Not only must we deduce why the notes are inserted, but we must also wonder what the notes are saying about the story being told or how they influence it. "Why" is not the only deduction that must be operated when confronted with a footnote: there is also the question of which reader the footnotes are addressing, the diegetic or extra-diegetic?

An interesting effect caused by the presence of footnotes is the multiplication of voices inserted in the text. We will return to this idea later, but, first, we must discuss the fragmentation of the act of reading when exposed to the scholarly footnote. One of the effects caused by the presence of footnotes spawns from the idea that there are two types of readers: the information seeker and the leisurely reader. The seeking reader understands the scholarly footnotes as resources for further information, while the leisurely reader does not bother herself with their presence since they are complementary. But the scholarly footnotes in fiction are not necessarily included for their informative aspect. On some occasions, they can be credited with creating dimensions of meaning within the text: they participate in the novel's world-building, either by including complementary information that adds dimensions to the story or by offering the illusion of scholarly works that support the internal logic of the diegesis.

---

[148] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 51.

As Shari Benstock states: "Footnotes in fiction, like Fielding's introductory preface and the frequent addresses to his 'Dear Reader,' constitute direct efforts to engage us in the text. Aimed at the reader, these notes [...] remain part of the fiction."[149] So, we can also add the inclusion of the reader to the list of effects provoked by footnotes. Citing references that may appear too exotic can provokes readers and push them to verify the suspicious source. It should come as no surprise if the source reveals itself to be authentic, but a couple of questions will undoubtedly emerge if the sources, upon closer examination, turn out to be fraudulent. The doubt of inauthenticity resulting from scrupulous but inconclusive research can nag at the reader for the length of the entire book.

One cannot avoid being impressed by the wide variety of footnotes when presented with the corpus of novels that use them. In researching this, the habitus would offer a categorisation of the many voices in footnotes. But, in doing so, we must somehow find a way to define how authors have helped the reader deduce the voice prevalent in footnotes. As we said earlier, there is a wide range of methods to assist in deducing the voice in footnotes. Sometimes the footnotes appear as signatures like "note from the editor" or as markers of relation, like "my father,"[150] but they can sometimes be trickier, as in the case of "lawyers from the future."[151] In those cases, the authors have inserted clues to help the reader understand who is writing footnotes without explicitly marking them. Jacques Derrida speaks of this in *Dissemination* when he introduces the notion of *discours d'assistance*. He explains

> The attending discourse--which is proliferating here--is addressed to the spectator (who attends the spectacle and is carefully attended in his attendance) and assists him in his reading of the moving Structure of the play as a whole in all of its four faces, in its generalized writing and its total account in process of formation. But who is it that is addressing you? Since it is not an "author," a "narrator," or a "deus ex machina," it is an "I" that is both part of the spectacle and part of the audience; an "." that, a bit like "you," attends (undergoes) its own incessant, violent reinscription within the

---

[149] Benstock, *At the Margin of Discourse,* 206.

[150] Mordechai Richler, *Barney's Version,* (Toronto: Penguin Random House Canada, 1997), 386.

[151] Jasper Fforde, *Lost in a Good Book,* (London: New English Library, 2002)

arithmetical machinery; an "." that, functioning as a pure passageway for operations of substitution, is not some singular and irreplaceable existence, some subject or "life," but only,   moving between life and death, reality and fiction, etc., a mere function or phantom.[152]

This *discours d'assistance* is a voice that emerges from behind footnotes that can help us understand the underlying clues within them. The idea of a *discours d'assistance* also allows us to understand the voice tucked away in footnotes that serves as a prompter to assist readers in their decoding. Finally, the *discours d'assistance* can also appear as a clue to the authorial voice that expresses itself. These footnotes are all used for the purposeful intent of helping a reader decode the text and better understand the reasons behind their presence, as well as giving them a specific voice. Often, the speaker in footnotes emerges later in the story. Only after several intrusions in the story can we map out the origin of their inclusion.

Up until now we have presented scholarly footnotes in the form of citations, but what of the other content we can find in the footnotes? What is to be said of comments or clarifications made through the guise of erudition, as in *Moby Dick*? In the novel, the reader is often presented with footnotes vast with information concerning the details of sea-fearing. One's first interrogation concerning these might be along the lines of trying to understand who is adding these details. Are the specificities of aquatic life added by Ishmael or by Melville? Are we supposed to believe that Ishmael constantly interrupts his retelling of the tale to specify certain technical or scientific aspects of the novel? Of course not. The reader understands that the main text is written by the narrator and that footnotes are added by the author. The presence of footnotes creates several problematic situations relative to the decoding of the text, most relative to the voices of the author and the narrator. But, again, this cannot be entirely true. With the addition of footnotes, doubt is created in the reader's mind.

Further questions concerning deduction emerge. For instance: are the body of the text and the footnotes written by the same person? As we have seen earlier, James Fennimore Cooper uses

---

[152] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 325. (my translation)

footnotes to add information unknown by his protagonist, but Melville's footnotes include details about fishing well known by the protagonist Ishmael. Although we know that the entire text, footnotes and all, have been written by the same person because of the name inscribed on the cover of the book, this becomes quite problematic since we do not usually accept the fact that a scientific text has a narrator. So, if the scientific text is written by the author and the fiction is presented by a narrator, is Melville-the-author more present in the footnotes than in the main body of text? In reading this novel, should we accept that the story of *Moby Dick* is told by Ishmael but that the footnotes are Melville's alone? If dso, we are then led to understand that *Moby Dick* presents two voices but one author.

If that is the case, then what appears on the page are two different stories. The first one is the known and accepted story of the crew of the Queeqweg told by Ishmael to the reader in a fictional environment. The second is Herman Melville carefully adding notes to the story to ensure that the traces of his research in writing the book are available to the reader. On one side, we have the quest in search for the great white whale and, on the other, the quest for transparent erudition.

Footnotes reveal the process of creation. Somewhere in the process lies the understanding that a footnote is not simply a footnote when included in a fictional text; it is a clue to something that the author wants to be expressed without necessarily making it explicit in the diegesis. Footnotes become a suggestion of something more, and each footnote is a clue towards something different. Shari Benstock points this out.

> In critical commentary, much of the authority will, of necessity, exist outside the text (in the works to which the text refers for further support, elaboration, evidence, etc.): the notes that bring this extratextual authority to bear on the present analysis support that authority's foundations for the text and stem from the thesis and arguments of the text itself; the supposition is always that the present critical endeavor extends a pattern of thought that was begun in the past, that was applied to the immediate context through

citation, and that will continue in the future, when presumably the present text will itself be a citation in someone else's critical thesis.[153]

Most of this idea is broken in the context of fictional notes since there will be no continuation of the citational chain. And the support brought up by the paratextual apparatus will, at some moment in the reader's venture, reveal itself to be artificial. In addition, although all of this may seem inconsequential, it surely is not since it somehow affects the process of decoding the text and interiorizing the information contained within. Therefore, it is grossly irresponsible to ignore or, at worst, to disregard this technique as literary trickery.

2.6   World-building

A supplementary effect generated by the scholarly footnote is the crafting of a coherent world through its bibliography. The informative and cohesive backdrop offered by fictional footnotes becomes the building blocks in creating and designing fiction. Alberto Manguel's and Gianni Guadalupi's *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (1980) provides a case: it presents, in the guise of an encyclopedia, the idea that world-building is a creative force in fiction. This encyclopedia gives the reader an idea of what Mark P. Wolf calls *secondary worlds*: "Just as fictional worlds are a subset of possible worlds, secondary worlds are a subset of fictional worlds, since secondary worlds are necessarily different enough (and usually detached or separated in some way) from the Primary World to give them 'secondary' status."[154] The secondary world exists in opposition to the primary world. The primary world is a broadly coherent fictional version of our own world, and the secondary world can be whatever the author can fathom up in terms of world-building.

The concept of world-building is very important in science-fiction and fantasy novels. It was originally used as an expression to describe a thought experiment in hypothetical science. World-

---

[153] Benstock, *At the Margin of Discourse*, 206.

[154] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 25.

building was originally a manner of thinking of the future in which things could have been otherwise. It was used by the author R.A. Lupoff to describe the many historical footnotes appearing in Edgar Rice Burroughs' *John Carter* series.[155] Since then, world-building has become a creative concept in writing. Chuck Wendig's definition gives a dimensional berth to the concept:

> [World-building] covers *everything and anything inside that world*. Money, clothing, territorial boundaries, tribal customs, building materials, imports and exports, transportation, sex, food, the various types of monkeys people possess, whether the world does or does not contain Satanic twerking' rites. World-building is not merely creating a fictional setting and writing a narrative in it. It is an attempt to flesh out an invented world in a way that allegedly feels "real".[156]

In this sense, we can easily add footnotes as a mechanism for world-building. In several regards, the usage of footnotes adds depth to the intradiegetic encyclopedia of the world proposed to us through fiction. For instance, Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* includes only one footnote in the entire book, and it is for the word *tadde*:

_____
* Papa. A small child may call any mamme or tadde. Gimar's tadde may have been her father, an uncle, or an unrelated adult who showed her parental or grandparental responsibility and affection. She may have called several people tadde or mamme, but the word has a more specific use than ammar (brother/sister), which may be used to anybody.

This note is immensely significant in understanding the lineages in the diegesis. Since *tadde* is an unknown word in our reality, we need a definition for it to fully comprehend how the usage of this word signifies a specific bond between characters in the story.

Many novels have exploited footnotes to craft a more coherent diegesis: books such as Jean d'Ormesson's *La Gloire de l'Empire*, in which the novelist presents his research about a pre-Christ

---

[155] Richard A. Lupoff, *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure*, (New York: Ace Books, 1968)

[156] Chuck Wendig, "25 Things You Should Know About Worldbuilding", *Terrible Minds*, 2013, http://terribleminds.com/ramble/2013/09/17/25-things-you-should-know-about-worldbuilding/

empire in France; or Max Brooks's *World War Z*, a step-by-step description of the apocalyptical zombie outbreak that destroyed humanity. Both use footnotes to further deepen the world in which their stories take place. By being exposed to fictional books used as references within the fictional world, the reader can experience something akin to bibliophile world-building.

Although Lincoln Michel's proposition to rename world-building as "worldconjuring"[157] fits more with footnotes as complements for crafting, in their defence of the concept, Ekman and Taylor add precision by explaining that there are three types of world-building: the authorial, the readerly and the critical.[158] Authorial world-building refers to the specific material used by the author to create this alternative world (graphs, maps or even ideological lines). Readerly world-building is when the reader is expected to "carry out a hermeneutical construction of a world by adding elements to a structure already in place, evaluating the pieces in light of what is known about the world so far, and, conversely, evaluating the whole world in light of new pieces."[159] Finally, critical world-building grasps at the entire concept of world-building by observing "how world information is doled out to the audience is an important part of world-building and design."[160] Critical world-building is a closer examination of how the implied reader must decode elements disseminated in the text to constitute a coherent world. It concerns itself more with the hermeneutical nature of fiction. Ekman and Taylor further explore the concept of critical world-building by stating that

> Another part of the composite perspective of critical world-building is a view of the world in its entirety. While a literary critic is certainly, from one point of view, a reader and as such part of a world's audience, criticism—the structured, theoretically informed analysis and interpretation of a world—requires a holistic approach to a world as well as a sequential one. It requires viewing the world both as a whole structure, and as one that has been put together in a particular order; as its own system of interlocking elements

---

[157] Lincoln Michel, "Against Worldbuilding: Why "Worldbuilding" is the Most Overrated and Overused Concept in Fiction", *Electric Literature,* 2017, https://electricliterature.com/against-worldbuilding/

[158] Stefan Ekman and Audrey Isabel Taylor, "Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building", *Fafnir: Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research.* vol. 3, Issue 3, (2019). 7–18.

[159] Ekman and Taylor, "Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building", 11.

[160] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 155.

and as a unit in relation to a wider literary and theoretical context. In other words, the critic analyses a world in terms of the final result of the author's creative process and the reader's progression through the novel, but also through the critic's own contribution in terms of a broader perspective. Critics may generally look at worlds rather than world-building, but it is integral to our approach that both aspects be examined. Thus both the world and the world-building process are central to how a critic examines world-building as a whole within particular works.[161]

To this, Doležel specifies: "Regardless of how many elements are included in an imaginary world, they will only form part of a world. We do not suggest that the sum total of the elements that combine to build an imaginary world means a complete world; imaginary worlds are by their very nature incomplete."[162] In this regard, footnotes complete their semiotic function as pieces of world-building. To return to the function of footnotes as units of signification, we can explore world-building by "analyz[ing] the function of a place [which first] requires analysis of the *form* through which it is expressed, portrayed, visualized, described, or narrated." [163] With the understanding that the books referred to in the fiction recall the encyclopedic knowledge of that world's inhabitants, readers can broaden their scope of the world by imagining it populated by these fictional books. To return to our example of *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004), one would have to envision a world in which volumes such as

_____
[1] *Trois états perfectibles de l'être*, William Pantler, Henry Linto ed, Londres, 1735.

exist. Nothing in the novel is presented as complete; the reader must cobble together an idea of the diegetic world with the materials offered.

---

[161] Ekman and Taylor, *Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building,* 11.

[162] Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 169.

[163] Ekman and Taylor, *Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building,* 13.

While keeping in mind the idea that the scholarly footnote represents a sort of alternative bookshelf, one cannot escape a certain feeling of deep diving when exploring how the crafting of footnotes figures in world-building.

The first idea is that the presence of footnotes participates in the elaboration of a credible world or at least credible in its intrinsic logic. No footnote should contradict the elements presented in the novel unless the author decides to craft dissonance within his story and thus in its reception. What can also be added here is the simple fact that one will always have the option to forego reading them and will potentially choose the poorer path through the novel rather than the richer one with all the paratext involved, sacrificing a deep understanding in exchange for a more linear exploration. To understand this, we must recall the reproach against footnotes quoted in our introduction made by certain readers that perceive them as unapologetically irritating because of their tendency to fragment the reading process. This idea of breaking the line of sight to read an addendum to the sentence somehow causes a stupor for some people. Although this feels overplayed for dramatic effect, what we cannot deny is that footnotes demand interpretation and that maybe the idea of having to change from literary decoding, as one does while reading, to footnote decoding, as one does while doing research, is the line that should not be crossed. But world-building also brings us back to another characteristic of footnotes: the fact that they can enrich the text without appearing as a seamless addition of information within it. To this, Wolf adds,

> the construction of most narrative media entities, be they novels, films, television programs, and so on, is usually strictly determined by the narrative line (or lines) they contain; this is to say, the determination of which details and events will appear is motivated by whether or not they advance the story, which is given primary importance in traditional storytelling. For works in which world-building occurs, there may be a wealth of details and events (or mere mentions of them) which do not advance the story but which provide background richness and verisimilitude to the imaginary world.[164]

---

[164] Wolf, *Building Imaginary Worlds*, 2.

Thus, footnotes can be wholly understood as a tangential method of storytelling, as a technique that unfolds dimensions within the text without explicitly revealing the process. It should be clear now that footnotes can be a multifarious tool for adding dimensions of interpretation to the text. We will pursue this idea in the upcoming chapters, digging deeper into the hollows of footnotes and their effects on the main body of text.

Before we further explore the varieties of footnotes, let's offer a final observation on the short story "Nothing New Under the Sun," included in Anne Fadiman's *Ex Libris*[165]. The brief text recalls a story concerning Daniel Okrent and his recipe for ham. Concerning this recipe, Fadiman reveals that, although he is praised for his excellent dish, Okrent could not take credit for it since the recipe was provided to him by Evan Jones in *American Food*. It therefore becomes problematic for Okrent to claim responsibility since the way the meal was prepared came not from his mind but from another. Fadiman uses this anecdote to extrapolate on the notion of influence in writing, marking every lifted expression in the short story with its literary origin, going all the way back to the Bible, as is the case with the title "Nothing New Under the Sun." As the tale unfolds, Fadiman continues to expose the origins of certain expressions, highlighting the literary pillaging she has been doing all along, presenting, with no shame, all her textual plucking and sources. Footnotes in "Nothing New Under the Sun" are a constant reminder that most texts are intertexts and present a literary weaving that borders on the insufferable. This is because footnotes can only present the origins of certain expressions; they do not offer more than a manifestation of what we all already know: writers steal from each other. As fascinating as it may be, the effect caused by the complete transparency of these scholarly footnotes is not one of clarity but of cluttering.

In reading footnotes in "Nothing New Under the Sun," we are made to understand that what is presented as the origins of certain key phrases or ideas are simply the origins in Fadiman's encyclopedia. Certain thefts are made by her from people who have also stolen from somewhere else. Concerning this, Hutcheon explains: "There has always been an implicit or explicit hierarchy among documentary sources for historians, based on the 'rule of immediacy': the farther we get

---

[165] Anne Fadiman, *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1998)

from the actual event, the less trustworthy is the document."[166] Therefore what is presented in footnotes is in no way the exhaustive history of a quote or idea but simply the author's knowledge of their book of origin. True research to find the original utterance of words is a vain exercise, akin to Peirce's unlimited semiosis, a sign that suggests another sign that, in turn, evokes another sign, and on and on forever.

---

[166] Hutcheon, *Postmodern Paratextuality and History*, 306.

CHAPTER 3

THE EDITORIAL FOOTONOTE

*No isolated fact, even when described with the greatest fidelity,
constitutes a truth in itself; it only becomes truth if, in the same sentence,
we become aware of another fact, opposed in some way to the first.*
- Václav Havel, Power of the Powerless

3.1   Bibliophilia

The scholarly footnote—one that includes traces of research, references and bibliophilia—is closely linked to the following type of footnotes. Although the scholarly footnote presents complementary knowledge to the narrative in a text of fiction, the tacit understanding behind its presence is that it is marginalia added by the author and is included to enrich the text. The scholarly footnote, as we have explained earlier, is a technique used to reach back to the source knowledge or to include information in the text that would awkwardly fit in any other form.

The editorial footnote, on the other hand, is an addendum to the main body of text written by another intra-diegetic writer. Although the work of an editor of a novel is always present (sometimes even ostensibly so), it is a voice rarely distinguishable from the author's. The editorial footnote makes explicit the editor's presence in the novel: the editor is an active presence whose traces appear in the novel as footnotes, sentences that guide or inform the reader of variations in the text, errors the author might have made or even sometimes, in graver cases, the hijacking of the fiction.[167]

---

[167] Certain novels even play on this idea of information sharing. Jonathan Strand's *The Amulet of Samarkland* (2003) has this interesting addendum in which the editor adds descriptive information concerning a room in the novel. After a very succinct and underwhelming description he adds in the footnotes:

[3] "Not a good enough description for you? Well I'm only trying to move the story on. Heddleham Hall was a great rectangular pile with stubby north - south wings, plenty of tall, arched windows, two stories, high sloping gables, a surfeit of brick chimneys, ornate tracery that amounted to the Baroque, faux-

In the editorial footnote, the editor has the potential to finally be heard, thus provoking an extensive array of effects. Considering the authority intrinsically present in footnotes, the editorial footnote often complexifies the struggle since the editor who adds his writing to the text has the final say. With this authority, the editor can contradict the information displayed in the main body, and the ur-author will not be able to recount his version of the facts (unless the novelist also adds his comments to the editor's, provoking an interesting back-and-forth). Earlier on, we explored the authoritative effect of footnotes. Now we will need to look at how the editorial footnote creates even more confusion over that authority by showing how two voices within the same text may argue and contradict the validity of their respective perspectives.

The editorial footnote is the first stage of centrifugal metafiction as it acknowledges the fact that someone is reading and commenting on the book the extra-diegetic reader is reading. In the editorial footnotes we are served the comments provided by someone who is reading the same text but is allowed a space to include their input on it. The editorial footnote is the first occurrence of a second character writing in the novel. This first degree of centrifuge is provoked by the fabrication of an editor that is somehow inside and outside the diegesis. The presence of this editor creates a second strata of fiction: the first being the story, the second being the person who comments on the story and alters it through editorial means. The editor is inside and takes on the form of a character within the book but is also outside as a presence commenting upon the diegesis itself.

In this section, we will be exploring several novels that use footnotes as a channel for the editor: Stephanie Barron's *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor* (1996), Mordechai Richler's *Barney's Version* (1997)*,* Hubert Aquin's *Blackout* (1968) and Douglas Rushkoff's *Exit Strategy* (2001). Every footnote will contain two underlying questions: Who is writing this and why? Editorial footnotes can blur the line between the editorial input in the creation of the book and

---

battlements above the main door, high vaulted ceilings (heavily groined), sundry gargoyles (likewise) and all constructed from a creamy-brown stone that looked attractive in moderation but en masse made everything blur like a big block of melting fudge." (*Amulet of Samarkland*, 373).

the author of the novel, dividing the authority in the novel into two camps and sometimes pushing the reader to choose whom to believe. In some cases, these editorial footnotes even question the identity of the person adding the comments to the main body of text. Footnotes can be used to create red herrings, to trick the reader into confirmation bias or even flip the causality relation within the novel: Do footnotes exist to comment on the novel or does the novel exist because of the presence of footnotes? This chapter will conclude with some final thoughts on the manuscript effect that stems from this use of editorial footnotes in fiction.

But first, let us tackle one of the main questions evoked by the presence of editorial footnotes: *Who is writing this?*

3.2   Yeah, really, who is writing this?

To quote Neil Gaiman's Sandman books: "Writers are liars.[168]" This is well known to anyone who has ever enjoyed a book in their lifetime. Through crafting fiction, writers have often tried to play games with the reader, twisting events, creating puzzles, and sometimes even trying to obfuscate the true identity of the person telling the story. Although several authors fuddle with the identity of the author, some have chosen the footnote to craft their red herring. In David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King*, the author's posthumous novel, the identity behind the footnotes is clearly exposed at the get-go. During the author's foreword, Foster Wallace makes explicit:

> But this right here is me as a real person David Wallace, age forty, SS no.975-04-2012, addressing you from my form 8829-deductible home office at 725 Indian Hill Blvd, Claremont 91711 CA, on this fifth day of spring, 2005, to inform you of the following:
>
> All of this is true, this book is really true.[169]

---

[168] Neil Gaiman, Sandman: Dream Country (New York, Vertigo) 1991, 57.

[169] David Foster Wallace, *The Pale King*, (New York: Little Brown, 2011), 66-67.

Here, Wallace does not present footnotes in the guise of an editor but as a complement to his main text, as if he had somehow entrusted himself to be his own editor. In this case, footnotes are a space for the author's habitual digressions made famous by Wallace's previous novel *Infinite Jest*. Clearly, still interested in experimenting with this digression, in *The Pale King* (although the description Wallace offers of his book classifies it as nonfiction, the title page explicitly describes *The Pale King* as AN UNFINISHED NOVEL), the author doubles down on the authorial presence in the book by adding in the footnotes another caveat:

> Author here. [1]
>
> _____
> [1] I won't keep saying this each time that I, the living author, am actively narrating[170].

This footnote raises an interesting question, namely, why does David Foster Wallace decide to express himself in the main body of text and in the footnotes with the same voice? Although our first instinct would be to call Wallace's bluff on his haphazard metafiction, the author nonetheless pleads with us to understand that "I find these sorts of cute, self-referential paradoxes irksome, too [...] and that the very last thing this book is is some kind of clever metafictional titty-pincher."[171] Even though we know perfectly well that Wallace's reputation as a metafictional titty-pincher needs no confirmation, and we are made to understand that the blurring of nonfiction and fiction is a simple ploy, Wallace shows immense self-consciousness towards what he is doing. To wit:

> For as everyone knows, whether consciously or not, there's always a kind of unspoken contract in between a book's author and its reader; and the terms of this contract always depend on certain codes and gestures that the author deploys in order to signal to the reader what kind of book it is, i.e., whether it's made up vs. true. And these codes are very important, because the subliminal contract of nonfiction is very different from the one for fiction."[172]

---

[170] Foster Wallace, *The Pale King,* 256.

[171] Foster Wallace, *The Pale King,* 67.

[172] Foster Wallace, *The Pale King,* 72-73.

And although by stating this, the implicit author is trying to convince us that what we are reading is true, the entire apparatus of the book shows us the contrary. We know the conventions of the novel, and Wallace knows them very well.

Further along, we will see how authors can create doubles, alter egos and sometimes even new authors in the space of footnotes. These manifestations are quite explainable in interpretations of the text, but in the case of *The Pale King* (a title that probably harkens back to Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), a seminal piece of American literature when it comes to showing the tensions between a text and its interpreter), why does Wallace echo his own statements in the footnotes? Some have called this play his "open-ended endgame"[173] or part of his "other meaning,"[174] which may be a method of making the form of the text reflect upon its content.

The editorial footnotes in *The Pale King* call upon a closer examination of *double entendre*, a term for which Merriam-Webster gives two possibilities: one for linguistics, "a word or expression capable of two interpretations with one usually risqué," and one for literature, "ambiguity of meaning arising from language that lends itself to more than one interpretation."[175] In the case of *The Pale King*, both definitions work. However, we should consider that in French, *double entendre* also means *hearing twice*. Nathan Seppelt explains that this idea of hearing twice has several interpretations in David Foster Wallace's work. *Double entendre* manifests itself in several ways, whether it is about wordplay or added material. The culmination, for Seppelt, is to "understand one of the questions central to *The Pale King* — and much else of Wallace's writing — the role of the author as being either a part of, or external to, the text."[176]

---

[173] Brian Chappell, "David Foster Wallace's Open-Ended Endgame" in *The poetry*, 2011 http://www.thethepoetry.com/2011/05/david-foster-wallace%E2%80%99s-open-ended-end-game/

[174] Nathan Seppelt, "Dig Shallower, Uncovering the Other Other Meanings in Wallace's Works", *Medium,* 2015, https://medium.com/just-words/dig-shallower-a3906def1312

[175] "Double entendre",*The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/double%20entendre

[176] Seppelt, *Dig Shallower.*

This goes for the content of footnotes as well. When added as paratext, some parts of *The Pale King* only assure that the reader is well-informed and up-to-date on the jargon describing the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). By doing so, the footnotes take on the form of a crash course for the reader to catch up with the writer on the crux of information needed to decode the events that will take place later on. This is quite crafty and ensures that the system's intricacies do not surpass readers' knowledge at any moment of the story (that is, if the reader has done the task of reading footnotes in the first place). Another salient and quite amusing example of this concerns a typographical specification Wallace offers us when there's a surprising call to footnote during a conversation.

'How can you constantly be so obtuse?'
'Me, obtuse?'
'Jesus.'
'I'm not aware of being the least bit obtuse.'
'...'[64]

_____
[64] (signifying that the first kid said nothing)[177]

Although we may at first misunderstand the reason behind this explanation of this typographical convention, maybe feeling that such explanation is unnecessary for an experienced reader, lo and behold, some one hundred pages later in the novel, Wallace makes significant use of this convention, making it quite clear why he decided to specify the reasons for the footnotes presence in the first place.

'I myself have never been here before. I'd heard good things about it, though, from some of the fellows in Administration. I've been anxious to try it.'
'...'
'And here we are'
(Removing chewing gum and wrapping it in Kleenex removed from handbag.)'Uh-huh.'
'...'

_____
[177] Foster Wallace, *The Pale King*, 306.

'...'
(Makes minute adjustments to placement of silverware.) '...'
'...'[178]

By clarifying the convention with a footnote, Wallace displays once again the *double entendre* of writing. The fact that the signification of the three dots necessitates an explanation underlies how interpretation is key but also serves as a metaphorical punchline for the use of such a typographical convention.

Another main theme of *The Pale King* is boredom. The novel's setting is the IRS, and the narrator goes on and on about the tediousness of it all, as Foster Wallace explains in the novel: "It is the key to modern life. If you are immune to boredom, there is literally nothing you cannot accomplish."[179] The novel no longer preoccupies itself with having a reader; the footnotes become an inner monologue, as if the author had decided to speak to himself, allowing himself to trail off in every direction he desires without really wondering if anyone is reading. The antidote to boredom here is talking to oneself, or in the case of *The Pale King*, writing to oneself. The previous understanding of this type of metafiction is that fiction can present itself as being aware of its own status as fiction. Still, *The Pale King* does not present these characteristics: the footnotes do not ante-up the fictional presence of the novel but reduce it. The same authorial enunciation is displayed in the main body of text and in the footnotes. It's as if the author has flattened the multiplicity of voices to a single one: one person addressing the reader through as many channels as he can muster. The multitude of voices in *The Pale* King circle around the redundancy of the events depicted in the novel in a manner that evokes the idea of wordiness around events that do not deserve such repetition. It is an example of the exhaustion of the written word, a book that writes around its own writing. In *the Pale King*, David Foster Wallace acts as his own editor, commenting on his own writing, thus creating a circle of words. We will

---

[178] Foster Wallace. *The Pale King*, 408.

[179] Foster Wallace. *The Pale King*, 438.

now continue this exploration of the editorial footnote with the multiplication of enunciations, with the appearance of the figure of the editor.

3.3   Figure of the editor

As readers, we take for granted that it is the editor behind any footnotes in the text. However, we will see that the editor can exist simultaneously in the novel and outside the story. This places editorial footnotes into a category akin to the figure, a construct of the imagination described by Bertrand Gervais as "the result of a semiotic production, a production of the imagination."[180] Gervais explains that the figure is

> [...] an enigma; it engages the imagination of the subject who, in the same movement, captures the object and defines it in its entirety, giving it a meaning, a function, even a destiny. The figure, once captured, is at the heart of an imaginary construction. It does not remain static, but generates interpretations, by which the subject both appropriates the figure and loses himself in its contemplation.[181]

The manner in which footnotes become a figure is quite important, for it is with the appearance of the familiar symbol of the asterisk[182] (or another symbol, as, for instance, the icon can vary, but its location and use almost always conforms to tradition), and a second voice can emerge from the text without supplemental clues. The call to footnotes acts as a figure for behind it is concealed a voice that we do not recognize immediately. The asterisk assumes the imaginary work done by the reader to decipher its reason, origin and intent.

---

[180] Bertrand Gervais, *Figures, lectures. Logiques de l'imaginaire*, (Montréal: Le Quartanier, 2007), 19. (my translation)

[181] Gervais, *Figures, lectures,* 16-17. (my translation)

[182] In legal scholarship, the asterisk is most often used "to identify the author in terms of his (the masculine pronoun is used advisedly) institutional affiliation, his academic credentials, and (sometimes) his professional associations." Charles A. Sullivan, "The Under-Theorized Asterisk Footnote*", *SSRN*, https://ssrn.com/abstract=711083 p. 2.

The principal figure deduced through the presence of footnotes is the editor, someone who is not the only figure but the most common, the one who makes the figure so intriguing. For as much as the editor becomes a character in the novel, his or her attributes are never revealed: The editor is not an actor in the diegesis like other characters would be. On the other hand, this actor does not inhabit the diegesis equally as the characters in the story do. Although this actor remains part of the story, the actor does not exist in it in the same way, in the same space, and is not given the same habitual introductory remarks as we traditionally give characters. This figure often remains nameless, description-less and is motivated by nothing of note except maybe exhaustivity and correctness.

There are several fascinating effects produced with the addition of the editor as a presence in footnotes. Novels such as *The People in the Trees* (2013), by Hanya Yanigihara, contain fictional editors who add comments to the main body of text. Russel Hoban's *Riddley Walker* (1980), a post-apocalyptic coming-of-age novel about a young man's quest to roam the devastated countryside of Kent whilst becoming a collector of stories, includes a single footnote to the novel:

_____
  * Iwl write down the Eusa Story_ when I come to it.

This footnote, written in the cryptic language of the wasteland, demands decoding. In « *L'enfant-artiste et les savoirs bricolés de l'écriture postapocalyptiques* : Riddley Walker de Russell Hoban, » Élaine Desprès explains that it

> [indicates] a minimal knowledge of editing and layout codes. In this footnote, Riddley anticipates his manuscript and his intentions as a narrator, he demonstrates a willingness to order his narrative, but subtly he also presumes an outside, literate readership, not familiar with the founding myth of his time, probably located in the future or elsewhere, a readership that would share xenoencyclopedic gaps with us.[183]

---

[183] Elaine Després, "L'enfant-artiste et les savoirs bricolés de l'écriture postapocalyptiques : Riddley Walker de Russell Hoban", Sylvie Servoise (ed.), *Enfances dystopiques*, (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2020), 4. (my translation)

This can raise several interesting questions, such as this one brought up by R.D. Mullen:

> His single footnote may reflect some knowledge of such a practice in scholarly referencing, but it could conceivably be the only marginal note he saw fit to add after reading his work.
>
> The Greeks and Romans, even in their highly literate periods, managed well with minimal punctuation and textual segmentation, so the question is: why does Riddley, in a largely oral culture, so often use these devices? Clearly literature is more established in this culture than the content of his story would have us believe.[184]

In the case of the editorial footnote, a figurehead (i.e., of the editors) interposes itself on the novelist's intentions and adds to the syuzhet of the novel. Using extensively the Russian formalist term, David Bordwell explains:

> The analysis of narration can begin with the syuzhet's tactics for presenting fabula information. We must grasp how the syuzet manages its basic task - the presentation of story logic, time, and space - always recalling that in practice we never get ideally maximum access to the fabula. In general, the syuzhet shapes our perception of the fabula by controlling (1) the quantity of fabula information to which we have access; (2) the degree of pertinence we can attribute to the presented information; and (3) the formal correspondences between syuzhet presentation and fabula data.
>
> Assume that an ideal syuzhet supplies information in the "correct" amount to permit coherent and steady construction of the fabula. Given this hypostatized reference point, we can distinguish a syuzhet which supplies too little information about the story and a syuzhet which supplies too much: in other words, a "rarefied" syuzhet versus and "overloaded" one.[185]

In light of this explanation, the presence of the editor becomes quite instrumental in judging the syuzhet of the novel. Certain novels may suffer from lack of syuhzet when we ignore footnotes,

---

[184] R.D. Mullen, "Dialect, Grapholect, and Story: Russell Hoban's 'Riddley Walker' as Science Fiction", *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2000, https://www.jstor.org/stable/4240920?seq=1.

[185] David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 54.

while with other novels, the oversharing in footnotes by a fictional editor may burden the diegesis, making the surcharge of information unbearable for the reader. In David Foster Wallace's case, his footnotes seem to encapsulate the desire to add just one more detail. Yet, failing to prioritize brevity, he often stumbles into digressions of half a page or more. It would not be surprising to hear someone declare that Wallace sometimes exhausts the shuzhet, but perhaps that is the objective.

The overloading of syuzhet can also instigate an effect of contradiction. Details offered in the main body of text can sometimes be contradicted (intentionally or not) in the footnotes, causing a form of dissonance. Whether the contradiction is intentional or not, the reader might feel some difficulty in constructing coherence. In the case of intentional incoherence, the author might be playing this for effect. Sometimes an editor explicitly calls out wrongful information, as in this passage of Jerome Charyn's *The Tar Baby* (1973)

_____

* Birdwistell's reading of the "Wittgenstein" is simplistic and ironbound. In his attempt to impose a one-to-one relationship on Ludwig's world (i.e., Dessart=Birdwistell, Drake=Korn, and so forth), he shows little understanding of transfiguration psychology.[186]

The idea is to confuse readers or force them into choosing between the author and the editor as the objective source of information. As readers, and since we do not have access to Anatole Waxman-Weissman's original essay *Wittgenstein Among the Redwoods*, only second-party impressions of it, we cannot choose in an informed manner and therefore are left to create our own impressions of the story. Since the intradiegetic editor is in fact only an extension of the fictional author's voice, this leaves us with quite an interesting conundrum: one diegetic voice contradicting the other, akin to a lone puppeteer putting on a show with many characters. A felt puppet police officer in one hand used to beat Punchinello in the other.

_____

[186] Jerome Charyn, *The Tar Baby*, (Normal: Dalkey Archive, 1973), 70.

Further on in Gervais's exploration of the semiotic function of the figure, he expands on the idea of the figure to create three main categories.[187] The *figure-trace* is the first sign that is also the original handle of the figure. The second category is the *figure-pensée* to describe the ideas that are brought on by the figure, and the final one, the *figure-savoirs*, is still the figure but approached by means of the knowledge required to understand and decode it.

To each of these types, Gervais adds three conceptual characters to illustrate this concept. Connected to the *figure-trace* is the graphomaniac, the contemplator is associated with the *figure-pensée*, and the third is the interpreter. The graphomaniac and the contemplator would be associated with the act of writing as repertoire: they are both reflected in the diegetic footnote. As for the interpreter — who reflects on what is written — he acts as commentator on the story as the editorial footnote does. This typology of figures in literature matches perfectly well with the functions we have presented of the various types of footnotes. This gives us a wider understanding of how the footnotes can affect the main body of text even though they are inherently treated as exterior to it.

3.4   A full spectrum of editors

The presence of the editor exists on a sort of spectrum, ranging from the external editor who acts objectively towards the text all the way to the impeding editor who takes control of the text and alters it.

One of the most puzzling figures of the fictional editor is the contradictory editor. H. Rider Haggard's *She* begins by telling us that someone has found the manuscript describing the adventures of Horace Holly. We are therefore—from the beginning of the story—fully informed that what we are reading is in fact a manuscript passed down by someone else. The editorial

---

[187] Gervais, *Figures, lectures*, 32-33.

footnotes make this clear, even extending into a bit of literary criticism on the interpretation of the text:

_____

[1] It will be observed that Ayesha's account of the death of Kallikrates differs materially from that written on the potsherd by Amenartas. The writing on the sherd says, 'Then in her rage did she smite him *by her magic*, and he died.' We never ascertained which was the correct version, but it will be remembered that the body of Kallikrates showed a spear-wound in the breast, which seems conclusive, unless, indeed, it was inflicted after death. Another thing that we never ascertained was *how* the two women - *She* and the Egyptian Amenartas - were able to bear the corpse of the man they both loved across the dread gulf and down the shaking spur. What a spectacle the two distracted creatures must have presented in their grief and loveliness as they toiled along that awful place with the dead man between them! Probably, however, its passage was easier then. -L.H.H.[188]

This signature is also an interesting clue as to the origin of this story. L.H.H. probably refers to the narrator Horace Holly, while other notes clearly describe the note's source as "The Editor." There are, therefore, several competing accounts of the story played out in the novel: the testimony of what happened in the story, the one recounted by L.H.H. and the one verified by "The Editor." All these versions compromise the central "truth" of the novel, crafting an aura of doubt regarding what has really gone down in the story. And although readers might be suspicious of how this story unfolds, having these many contradicting accounts forces them to pick a side.

At the beginning of *L'oeuvre posthume de Thomas Pilaster* (1999), we are presented with clues that express the type of work we are going to be exposed to. The book is the reproduction of a found book "carried over by a simple notebook brocaded pale green with great care, a single ink, and a systematic interval of three lines between each, these notes so disdainfully unfactual are obviously a compilation of older journals, skimmed and then destroyed after the operation."[189] We are led to believe that the footnotes are the comments added by Marc-Antoine Marson, the intradiegetic childhood friend of Pilaster, even though the novel does present Éric Chevillard as the author on the front page.

---

[188] H. Rider Haggard, *She*, (New York: Dover Publications, 1886), 211-212.

[189] Éric Chevillard, *L'œuvre posthume de Thomas Pilaster*, (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1999), 7. (my translation)

The notes are somewhat snarky comments made by Marson; he says, for example:

_____

* This explains the abrupt breaks and idle detours in Pilaster's accounts, who preferred to develop very pretentious theories on the "art of digression" (sic) to justify them.[190]

Or on page 38:

_____

* Dreaming of a universal tribune in a diary... Naivety that will make you smile, and even more so if we imagine the effect that the next notation read from the same tribune would have.[191]

Chevillard also added footnotes that explain the state of the journal. On page 48, a footnote explains the reason why there are suspension points used in the manuscript:

_____

1. Name illegible in the manuscript. [192]

Footnotes can also present different voices within the novel. This technique, presented in Genette's *Figures III*, raises the question of whether a narrative voice is limited to the voice of the narrator or could also arise from other speaking subjects.

This is the case in Jonathan Stroud's *The Amulet of Samarkand* (2003), a fantasy novel in which a goblin by the name of Bartimaeus will sometimes use the space of the footnote to comment on elements of the fiction. Interestingly enough, and consistent with the story, these occurrences only appear in the chapters that follow Bartimeaus as a character; no other diegesis is commented in this manner. This usage of footnotes thus resembles a theatrical *apparté*,[193] as we can see here:

_____

[190] Chevillard, *L'œuvre posthume de Thomas Pilaster*, 25. (my translation)

[191] Chevillard, *L'œuvre posthume de Thomas Pilaster*, 38. (my translation)

[192] Chevillard, *L'œuvre posthume de Thomas Pilaster*, 48. (my translation)

[193] "Speech from the character that is not addressed to an interlocutor but to himself (and consequently, to the audience). It is distinguished by its brevity and its integration with the rest of the dialogue. The *apparté* seems to escape the character and to be heard "by chance" by the audience, whereas the monologue is a more organized speech, intended to be perceived and demarcated from the dialogic situation." Patrice Pavis, *Dictionnaire du théâtre*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 2009), 24. (my translation)

──

[6]Unexpectantly sharp. And cold. No one can say I don't work hard describing things for you.[194]

These editorial footnotes can be used to speak "directly" to the reader in a metafictional manner; in the case of Jonathan Stroud's *The Amulet of Samarkand*, footnotes only appear in the Bartimaeus chapters. This conveys some kind of magical characteristic to the imp, which, in turn, implies that since that specific character is magical, he can interact directly with the reader, a skill unavailable to the other less-powerful characters. This is akin to the breaking of the fourth wall, often seen in theater.

Robert Grudin's *Book: A Novel* even presents footnotes as characters in their own right. In the novel, the footnotes become gradually more ambitious in their comments and critique of the story, leading to a full-blown uprising of the paratext to replace the body of text (more on this later).

──

[5]Allow me to comment informally on this paragraph. "Dr. Johnsonian" is a reference to the personal appearance of the celebrated Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709-84), who was represented as having a highly intelligent though somewhat coarsely featured face and a slouching posture. "Dr. Johnsonian" might also apply to the content of Professor Adler's remarks, which, though rather truculent, seem to me more reasonable and humane than those of his colleagues. To be sure, as a footnote, I am not supposed to be making such evaluations. But I see this as a special case. Perhaps other footnotes will agree.[195]

But these types of "animated" footnotes will be central in the fourth chapter of this thesis, with more discussion of the diegetic subversion of footnotes. In the case of John Dickson Carr's *The Nine Wrong Answers* (1952), footnotes are used as a form of subversion of the implicit pact of the detective novel. There are exactly nine footnotes in the novel, each one explaining why the potential hypothesis of the reader is wrong. As the title indicates, the nine wrong answers are not plot twists within the novel but nine wrong ideas that the reader may have had while trying to

──────────────────

[194] Jonathan Stroud, *The Amulet of Samarkand*, (New York: Miramax Books, 2003), 213.

[195] Robert Grudin, *Book: A Novel*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 67.

clarify the mystery woven by the writer. Footnotes manifest in two manners: one as a metafictional commentary on the way we read detective novels, the other as a sort of arrogant flip of the finger towards people that (naturally) read these types of novels and try to find out who the culprit is before it is revealed by the author. There is also a kind of vindictive demiurge aspect to this technique, as we know quite well that the author is in complete control of the direction of this mystery but is still giving himself the childish authority to remind his reader on nine occasions, no less, how much control he has of the story.

Andréas Pfersman speaks of this type of intervention as *parabase,* explaining that,

> The [*parabase*] often designates the formal principle of self-parody whose meaning has often been wrongly limited to that of a simple rupture in the illusion. However that moment must also be understood as a point of introduction to reflection on the structure of the work. The appearance of the implicit author, who either observes, or criticizes, by breaking the artifice of the fiction, reconstitutes it within the text, operating thus the synthesis of the work and of the criticism. [196]

Therefore The Nine Wrong Answers operates a type of self-anhilitation, breaking down the reader's reflexes to act as a detective at every given opportunity.

3.5   Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor

Stephanie Barron's *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor* (1996) presents itself as "The first Jane Austen Mystery." Although presented as such by the author on the cover, Stephanie Barron is the intradiegetic editor who claims that she is publishing a found manuscript written by the famous author that contains several apocryphal biographical facts unknown until now. Footnotes in the story are used to explain and corroborate certain events in Jane Austen's

---

[196] Pfersmann, "L'ironie romantique chez Sade", 86. (my translation)

life in parallel with this investigation at Scargrave Manor. This work of fiction is simultaneously an extension of Jane Austen's biography and the imagining of the life of the 18th-century writer as an amateur detective. Also, we must specify in this introduction that Stephanie Barron is simply a *nom-de-plum*; the actual author's name is Francine Matthews. The entry for the author in the 2nd edition of *Great Women Mystery Writers* clarifies her process:

> As Barron, she writes a historical mystery series featuring the British writer Jane Austen, who plays amateur sleuth. Her academic training in European history is highlighted in this series. She notes that she has heavily researched the lives of Austen and her family, using Austen's correspondence as a key source, and that she: "look[s] for holes in key events in her life that are compelling" and uses those to launch the plot. She rereads Austen's works almost every winter, and in February 1994, she writes that she: "had read Austen to such an extent that her syntax and oddities of speech had infiltrated my own [...] I reveled in Austen's speech. I adopted it as my own. I was, I am convinced, channelling Jane. I sat down to write what she told me." ("Detective"). When she was finished, she had the draft manuscript for the first Jane Austen mystery. The books are presented as Austen's lost diaries that Barron merely edits. In addition to solving various crimes, the books include accounts of various events in Austen's life, as well as the history of England.[197]

Stephanie Barron explains in the opening "Editor's Foreword" that she was offered this forgotten manuscript by her close friends, the Westmorelands, after they discovered it in their newly renovated home of Dunready Manor, in the spring of 1995. As the only Austen expert on hand, Barron was offered the script after a much-heated competition between Johns Hopkins University, Williams College and Oxford's Bodleian Library. We are encouraged to believe that the Westmorelands, convinced of Barron's affection for Austen and mystery novels simultaneously, thought of Barron as the ideal editor for such an apocryphal text.

Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor is a literary fiction that belongs to the tradition of RPF (short for Real Person Fiction). Defined by Scott Stroud, RPF is a "subgenre of fanfiction [that] occurs when fans write their favorite public figures—including actors, athletes and

---

[197] Elizabeth A. Blakesley, *Great Women Mystery Writers*, (2nd Ed., Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2007), 162.

musicians—into fictional stories. These realities are created, owned and controlled by fans, leading to a wide array of creative and sometimes disturbing storylines."[198] In the case of Francine Matthews' novel, Stephanie Barron offers us an explanation of the biographical gaps in Jane Austin's history when she explains that:

> What is known of her life comes principally from her surviving letters and the memoirs of family members written after her death, from which several scholars have drawn admirable biographies. Since many of her letters were written to her sister, Cassandra, who destroyed them after Jane's death, whole passages of Austen's life remain dark. The discovery of letters sent to Cassandra, along with the journal accounts I have edited here, must be considered a new window on the author's experience.[199]

Herein lies the fascinating play with footnotes present in the Scargrave Manor novel. Although the voice present in the footnotes is unambiguously Stephanie Barron's, what she inscribes in them are details about the verified biography of Jane Austen to complement and authenticate the manuscript itself. Certain footnotes like this one feed on actual biographical facts to blur the line between fact and fiction:

> It is possible that Austen eventually turned Fitzroy, Viscount Payne into her most famous male character, Fitzwilliam Darcy, although strong evidence is lacking. *First Impressions*, in which Darcy is the main male character, was written in 1796, and rejected for publication in 1797. Later retitled *Pride and Prejudice*, it was revised substantially in late 1802 or early 1803, following Austen's visit to Scargrave, and again before publication in 1812.[200]

The character of Viscount Payne is wholly fictional, but Francine Matthews via Stephanie Barron's erudite voice on the subject transforms him into a character halfway between biography and fiction; she even makes this relation more complex with the supposition that Viscount Payne may

---

[198] Oluwasemilore Adeoluwa and Scott R. Stroud, "When Actors Become Characters: The Ethics of Digital Real-Person Fan Fiction", *Media Engagement,* 2018, https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/29-real-person-fan-fiction-case-study-1.pdf

[199] Stephanie Barron, *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor*, (New York: Bantam, 1997), xi.

[200] Barron, *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor,* 27.

or may not be the inspiration behind Mr. Darcy of *Pride and Prejudice* fame. To recap, Francine Matthews creates a false document that passes itself off as a possible inspiration for Austin's future classic novel. Specifying that Barron is somewhat of an expert on Austin also adds a dimension of authority to the argument. It would come as no surprise if a reader somehow accepted the entire novel as based on true revelations about the author; the simulacrum is executed well enough to convince a non-expert. There is also a type of appreciation that can only be offered once we willingly suspend our disbelief towards the paratext. If we raise our defences regarding what is said in the introduction, several of the tricks included in the novel will be lost on the reader. There's an unusual sensation in the novel of knowing that the surrounding explanation for what we are reading is rooted in fiction, even though we simultaneously accept to play along to maintain the pleasure of reading, of abandoning ourselves to fiction.

3.6   Official history versus Unofficial history

The authors of historical fictions have found many ways of using footnotes to convey accuracy in their fiction. Alexandre Dumas, in his follow-up novel to the *Three Musketeers* (1844), *Twenty Years Later* (1845) and *Marguerite de Valois* (1845), included footnotes to clarify details about French history. The same can be said for novels by Sir Walter Scott, notably *Waverly* (1814) and *Quentin Durward* (1823), as well as in Lance Horner's *Rogue Roman* (1965), in which the author even adds minute details about ancient Rome, notably:

---

1 sesterce at the time of Nero was worth 27 $^1/_2$ c.[201].

Footnotes in historical fiction are mainly scholarly and can often be used as a manifestation of lost information on ancient times and customs. In the introduction to the 1971 Bantam edition of

---

[201] William Denton, "Fictional Footnotes and Indexes", *Miskatonic University Press*, 2021, https://www.miskatonic.org/footnotes.html

Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908), Howard Zinn claims: "The footnotes of *The Iron Heel*, supposedly written many centuries later to inform readers of what life was like in the early twentieth century, still cut deep to fundamental truths."[202] These notes can sometimes be used for ethnocritical analysis, presenting non-diegetic details that can shed light on specific behaviours or customs displayed in the story. On this subject, Alessandro Portelli's *Jack London's Missing Revolution: Notes on The Iron Heel* explains that the multiple narrators "share the responsibility for its contents," and thus:

> the different narrators accentuate the book's credibility. Everhard is the source of theoretical knowledge; Avis of direct experience; Meredith of historical knowledge. Each introduces a different literary genre: the essay and oratory (Ernest), the novel and autobiography (Avis), history and criticism (Meredith). The presence of Meredith's notes raises Avis's story to the status of a "document," conferring upon it the credibility belonging to historical "sources." The fact that Meredith questions some of Avis's secondary statements underlines the accuracy of the rest. At the same time, Avis's narrative clothes the bones of Ernest's theoretical discourse with the flesh of personal experience.[203]

Historical fiction can therefore be ornamented by the addition of footnotes. This complementary information adds a stratum of justification for particular choices or can encourage the reader to delve into the author's historical resources. In certain conditions, footnotes can provide a space to distinguish between official recorded documents and unofficial retellings of events. The main body of text, the most authoritative space in this case, acts as the "official" historical account. Underneath, in the "unofficial" space, we have access to this type of oral retelling or rumormongering around historical events. This is the case in Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, in which Diaz has included several events in the Dominican Republic's history. Most events involve Trujillo's dictatorship, recounted from the official version in the main text and commented on principally in an informal fashion in the footnotes. This use of footnotes reminds us that there is always an underlying truth to official history. It also brings forth the notion of

---

[202] Denton, "Fictional Footnotes and Indexes*".*

[203] Alessandro Portelli, "Jack London's Missing Revolution: Notes on The Iron Heel", *Science Fiction Studies,* vol. 9, https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/27/portelli.html

footnotes as a conduit for informal discussion. Also brought into question here is the authority of official history. The novel uses the footnote to make the reader understand that the authoritative version of events occupies the main body of the text, as if authoritative accounts can always officialize history. Still, an unofficial version will remain, concealed in the footnotes.

In the pop culture heavy *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* at a point in the story when La Inca saves a girl's life, Oscar draws parallels between the heroine of his neighborhood and Galadriel and presents us with a footnote that quotes an entire passage from *The Lord of the Rings*.

[20] And as the Captains gazed south to the Land of Mordor, it seemed to them that, black against the pall of cloud, there rose a huge shape of shadow, impenetrable lightening-crowned, filling all the sky. Enormous it reared above the world, and stretched out towards them a vast threatening hand, terrible but impotent; for even as it leaned over them, a great wind took it, and it was all blown away, and passed; and then a hush fell.[204]

Oddly, this section is not referenced, so if one is not a scholar of Tolkien, there is no way, apart from reading *The Return of the King* (1955), to verify this quote. Although it is used to exemplify the maleficent hand of doom of Trujillo over the Dominican Republic, this intertext also makes explicit the intertextual relationship Oscar entertains between his reading habits and the historical events that have shaped his family.

This intertext has been the subject of an article by Linda Hutcheon, in which she treats the specificities of fictional historical writings. She explains: "They all raise the question of how the intertexts of history, its documents and traces, get incorporated into an avowedly fictive context, while still somehow retaining their historical documentary status."[205] On this subject, one notices that the usage of footnotes in Max Brooks' *World War Z* (2006) presents a calculated transition

[204] Junot Diaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* (New York: Riverhead books, 2007), 156.

[205] Hutcheon, *Politics of Postmodernism*, 302.

from verifiable fact to imagined accounts of events. Brooks introduces the reader to a world that is coherent and identical to our own (first when describing the warzone in Denver, Colorado, the narrator explains the press-to-military ratio during the battle of Yonkers) but adds elements of fictional history in the footnotes (then when explaining the invented Prochnow military plan to explain why General Lang killed himself). Using footnotes to graft fictional details to the background is not meant to be noticed by the reader; rather, the exact opposite: the effect is only efficient if the transition between history and fiction is seamlessly made. At a certain point in the novel, the diegesis flies off from recognizable to fantastic, and footnotes continue their aim of offering "verifiable proof" of the truthfulness of these events. By feeding off the initial authority of footnotes (mostly used to explain military-grade equipment and certain socio-political issues that relate to specific regions of the world), the later footnotes can essentially break through the fiction as more authentic than what we would expect from an account of an international zombie outbreak. Readers must intentionally remind themselves that the notes describe fictional events, even though they had started as fragments for educational purposes. A moment must be taken to break away from this illusion of veracity and understand that the notes become instruments of verisimilitude.

3.7   Barney's Version

Historically, the editor's two cents have often been present in fiction. Novels such as Robert A. Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love* (1973) present works of fiction in which the editor must sometimes intervene to rectify information or to specify details about the story. Pierre Daninos's *Les carnets du Major Thompson* (1954) is a telling example of this. The series of novels[206] are travel logs written by a fictional British major, in which he erroneously comments on the French lifestyle. These errors are embarrassingly corrected by Daninos himself in the footnotes. Their presence in these types of stories exemplifies the creation of a second stratum of fiction. The

---

[206] *Les Carnets du Bon Dieu* (1947), *Le secret du Major Thompson* (1956), *Le Jacassin* (1967), *Le Major Tricolore* (1999), *Ludovic Morateur* (1970) and *Les Toursitocrates* (1974).

main body of text is considered to be the principal stratum. The second stratum, in which we find footnotes, is a compendium, an addition to the story to sometimes corroborate, sometimes refute facts included in the story. As Keith A. Smith explains, the footnote as gloss is: "A running commentary in the margin that can elaborate, contradict, qualify, the main column of text."[207] Between both strata, we can discover hidden meanings or additional knowledge of the story. When the stories synchronize, there is no place for doubt. More often than not, however, the main story and the editorial footnotes do not necessarily match; this is when the reader's doubts come into play: the moment when interpretation is key to understanding.

Barney's Version (1997) is the fictional autobiography of Barney Panofsky, concentrating mostly on his three failed marriages. Separated into three sections: "Clara," "The Second Mrs. Panofsky" and "Miriam," the novel follows Barney's interpretation of those events that have made his life so tumultuous. Presenting itself as an autobiography, the book is written by Barney during what appears to be the height of his mental degradation. Several confused declarations and hazy recounting of events turn the writer into an unreliable source. As the story unfolds, the reader slowly witnesses Barney's moments of confusion, his incapacity to remember the simple timeline of events, accumulating in a complete mishmash of information surrounding the death (or murder) of his close friend "Boogie" Moscovitch.

Quoting Walter Johnson's attempt to write the first "Novel of Senility," Jason Blake, in his article *'The Truth Will out'* - Mordecai Richler's *Barney's Version*—explains:

> In many ways *Barney's Version* by Mordecai Richler is that novel. As curmudgeonly, unreliable Barney Panofsky sits down to pen his memoirs, Richler rubs the reader's nose in the relationship between memory and writing. How well can we know the self? Can truth out? How reliable is the link between knowing the self and letting others know about that self through fiction?[208]

---

[207] Smith, *Text in the Book Format*, 33.

[208] Jason Blake, " 'The Truth Will out' - Mordecai Richler's Barney's Version", *The Central European journal of Canadian studies*, vol. 4, 2004, https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/bitstream/handle/11222.digilib/116024/2_CentralEuropeanJournalCanadian_4-2004-1_8.pdf?sequence=1.

The unreliability of Barney's memories is even a source of worry for Michael, Barney's son, when he declares: "I fear that by this juncture my father's memory was unreliable, even somewhat scrambled, and that pages of this manuscript were put together in a haphazard fashion."[209] Concerning the notion of unreliable narrator, Wayne Booth, the notion's instigator, explains:

> For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms[210] of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not. […] It is most often a matter of what [Henry] James calls inconscience; the narrator is mistaken, or he believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him."[211]

This use of footnotes amplifies the effect in fiction called the unreliable narrator.[212] The unreliable narrator is a form of narration that conveys information that is either illogical within the structure of the novel or impossible to be known at that point in the story; he creates doubt in the reader's mind that what is being communicated is truthful or honest. In short, this play on the reader's sense of reality within the textual framework can cause suspicion to emerge from the reading. This is quite an interesting effect since the only information that can be given in a novel must somehow be trusted: the novel's credibility is, let's remind ourselves, in the balance. But when an unreliable narrator appears or is discovered, the entirety of the diegesis is put into question. Doubt appears and rarely dissipates with time; what stays is this suspension of belief, one that

---

[209] Richler, *Barney's Version*, 386.

[210] "Norms" is a clumsy word that encompasses "theme," "meaning," "ontology" and other such grails residing in the literary work; for Booth "the implied author includes not only the extractable meanings but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all of the characters" (Booth, 73). Chatman argues less "morally" that the implied author is "reconstructed by the reader from the narrative" (Chatman, 148), i.e., it and has more to do with structure than with morals. Blake, *"The truth will out" - Mordecai Richler's Barney's Version*, 69-79.

[211] Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 158-159.

[212] Alexandra Rowland, author of *A Choir of Lies*, revealed in an interview that she added footnotes to her novel because she was disappointed with the fact that several readers had misunderstood the narrator of her previous book *A Conspiracy of Truths* as reliable. Adding footnotes, she says, allowed her to make explicit the fact that the information present in her novel was unreliable in nature (Be the Serpent (podcast), Episode 56: Title of the episode, March 11th, 2020).

we should be experiencing since the very beginning of the novel but that we somehow suspend willingly.

But the notion of the unreliable narrator is fraught with contestation. Peter J. Rabinowitz succinctly explains that "all fictional narrators are false in that they are imitations; but some are imitations of people who tell the truth, some of people who lie."[213] Rabinowitz is quite right to add this, for the intentionally sly narrator, like the novel *Lolita*'s Humbert Humbert, shares a few characteristics with the slowly demented Barney Panofsky, if not simply that they are both in the business of making themselves look good when faced with controversy, although this might be true for the beginning of the autobiography. An interesting way of approaching this problem is through Henry James's original idea of "inconscience," an idea that Wayne Booth rethought as "unreliability," a finer way of describing what is slowly happening with the character of Barney. As the story progresses, he increasingly loses the mental clarity to recall events in their entirety. To illustrate this, Richler often adds sections of mental operations (starting with his incapacity to name all seven dwarves) to make explicit the struggle that Barney is having in remembering elements of his past. Passages such as this clarify for the reader that something is afoot with Barney's memory:

> Were I a real writer, I would have shuffled the deck of my memoirs so that this would be a real nail-biter. Worthy of Eric you-know, he wrote 'The Something of Dimitrios.' Eric like I was going for a walk. Eric Stroller? No. Eric like that publication Sam Johnson used to write for. 'Idler.' Eric Idler? No. Never mind. Forget it.[214]

These marks of mental degradation are left intact in the novel. Although they appear in varying typographical manners, these hesitations mark the slow worsening of Barney's condition. They accompany the reader's heartbreak of seeing the protagonist's mental deterioration. As the story progresses, Barney transforms from an irresponsible and egotistical man to a scared and lonely human, fearful that his entire life story will disappear with his memories. And here are where

---

[213] Peter J. Rabinowitz, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 4, No. 1, (1977), 134.

[214] Richler, *Barney's Version*, 365.

footnotes become of interest as the significant errors appearing in the autobiography are corrected by an editor's footnotes.

This editor sometimes realigns facts, offers corrections and adds complementary information about Barney's memories. The footnotes are initially presented as a straightforward editorial job but become particularly endearing and much more intimate as the story develops. Although there are several hints in the story that demonstrate that Barney is a confused and somewhat unreliable narrator, there is nonetheless tension between the body of the text and the footnotes. Since the footnotes here appear as a hint to correct misinformation in the story, they are somehow infused with a flair of authority as if the editor somehow was more knowledgeable than the narrator himself. The footnotes are therefore present as indications that the information in the autobiography is hazy at best.

Here, footnotes offer a way to counterbalance the narrator's unreliability by adding someone else's expertise to the story being told, and we as readers are encouraged to believe the editor more than the intradiegetic author. But there is a lot to be said about the editor, who might not be as impartial as we would be encouraged to believe.

Early on, Barney hints at the fact that he has never completely actualized his relationship with his son. He explains: "but I hoped it would please Mike, with whom I had a difficult relationship."[215] For the reader, this statement becomes an important detail in the story. Before this detail is added, we are led to understand that Mike is behind the footnotes. On page 15, Barney is caught up in a dithyramb about his ex-wife and mentions that "[s]he and Blair stopped over here for three days on October fourth, on their way to a conference in Glasgow." There, at the end of the sentence, is footnote 7, adding: "Actually, according to my diary, Blair and my mother stopped over on October 7th, and the conference was in Edinburgh." By using "my mother" as a *discours d'assistance*, we are led to understand that Mike is adding the footnotes to his father's manuscript.

---

[215] Richler, *Barney's Version*, 17.

112

Furthermore, when inspecting the footnotes, the reader is confronted with the question of who would embark upon such an undertaking. Who, we ask ourselves, would, outside of their job, review a 400-page manuscript and delicately note the inconsistencies of family history and fact checking? It seems that only an affectionate son would give himself the responsibility of such a profound undertaking. By minutely going over every detail of the book, Mike expresses his love for Barney. Footnotes show devotion to the text and to his father, even though this sentiment is expressed unconventionally. The son's footnotes express this idea of quiet respect for his father in a manner never made explicit in the novel. Barney will never know the lengths to which Mike will go to make sure that Barney's Version gets completed. What we are exposed to with the presence of footnotes is the son's work to ensure his father's story gets told. There is a soft kindness to the act of noting the entire autobiography that would not be as powerful if stated overtly in the book.

Also, it is never really absolutely clear whether Barney's son is on his side. The way the notes underline the blatant subjectivity of the story being told, however, is a hint that he is not entirely on board with the views being expressed by his father in the story. Jason Blake explains:

> Counterbalancing Barney's overt subjectivity is a (somewhat) neutral observer. Barney's son Michael has acted as editor to the memoirs, sorting and ordering them, adding notes where deemed necessary, and providing an Afterword in his own name. We have the best of both worlds: the insider's view of what went on in Barney's mind, and a more objective fact-checker. Having an editor check the facts should add to the truth claim by exposing lies, corroborating claims made against hard evidence. Punctilious Michael intrudes throughout the novel as an avid footnoter, verifying, refuting or doubting details, cross-examining Barney, with the grating lead-in of "actually..."[216]

This becomes an interesting game for the reader since the footnotes clearly demonstrate a bias towards the editor, making the pathos surrounding Barney himself even more discouraging. Either way, in the novel, Barney's son corrects the errors that his father has inadvertently inserted

---

[216] Blake, "The Truth Will out" – Mordecai Richler's Barney's Version", 69-79.

in his memoir to either spare him some humiliation or accentuate it. Since there are no footnotes to correct the editor of the text version, we are somehow left to believe that he holds the more faithful version of the story. Furthermore, Thomas Edwards of the *New York Review of Books* points out: "[n]ot all the errors Michael detects are erroneous,"[217] opening up to the idea that not everything that was corrected needed to be; it may be that some uncorrected elements remain in the novel. It becomes alas apparent that Michael's subjectivity has affected the narrative. *Barney's Version* is exactly this: the retelling of Barney Panofsky's life as told in a frequently subjective manner. For Blake:

> In Mordecai Richler's spin on the technique, unreliability enters with the very title: *Barney's Version*, as if it were just one of several testimonies, as though we should listen to all the "versions" before passing judgement. The title may imply that there are other versions, but that is a lie. There is only Barney's version. No more witnesses are available. It is the singular form that provides the unreliable narrator with a guaranteed ear for his story."[218]

3.8   Dueling editors

The decision to pick the authoritative voice in fiction can manifest itself seamlessly in the novel: it can be a process unnoticed or at least not evoked explicitly. But the case of arguing editors does not have the benefit of subtlety on its side. In novels with arguing editors, footnotes are clearly indicated to reflect the opinion they are communicating either by signature (as is the case in *Accordéon* (2016) by Kaie Kellough) or by varied typography (in Christopher Miller's *The Cardboard Universe* (2009)), where we are presented with two (or more) secondary characters that make contradictory claims on the truth within the fiction. In *The Cardboard Universes*' case, we have two colleagues who offer their contradicting opinions on the life and times of Phoebus K. Dank. The novel, an obvious play on the life of real-life science fiction writer Philip K. Dick, offers

---

[217] Thomas R. Edwards, "Pulling Down the Temple", *New York Review of Books*, 1998, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1998/03/05/pulling-down-the-temple/

[218] Blake, "The truth will out" - Mordecai Richler's Barney's Version", 72.

us arguing editors in the guise of William Boswell ("the world's leading Dankian"[219]), who oversees the entries from this encyclopedia about Dank with kinbotian[220] fervour, and Owen Hirt, a less enthusiastic author from Dank's surroundings.

The Cardboard Universe is a novel that takes the form of the world's first and foremost encyclopedia about the works of Phoebus K. Dank. The project is a posthumous jest thrust upon both diegetic writers included in the last will and testament of the recently deceased Dank. As may easily be surmised, the operation turns sour pretty quickly, thus giving us a prime example of arguing editors unable to reach a common vision of the events of Dank's life. On the one side, Boswell argues that everything in Dank's lifetime was a consequence of his misunderstood genius; on the other, Hirt's opinion is precisely the opposite, that Dank was as much a literary genius as he was a lizard. This literary exercise has a lot to do with the force behind interpretation, but it also puts us, as readers, in a position where we must choose: Boswell or Hirt? The choice may sound inconsequential in the grand scheme of things, but it will have a great impact on our understanding of the novel. Since every choice made by one of the editors will be immediately discredited by the other, the fact of truth lies not in what is verifiable but with the editor we decide to trust. Boswell even openly declares his mistrust of everything Hirt says in the first one hundred pages of the novel:

> As for *his conditions,* they forbid me to delete or change a single word of his, though they do allow me to object, in footnotes, to his more outrageous misstatements - a compromise that I accepted with misgivings, since it also means that he gets to footnote *my* entries. And since of course I can't point out *everything* unfair to Dank, readers may assume that I endorse those libels to which I don't object at the bottom of the page. So, I'll say this once and for all that I object to *all* Hirt's cavils, quips, and quibbles - to quibbling in general.[221]

---

[219] Christopher Miller, *The Cardboard Universe: A Guide to the World of Phoebus K. Dank*, (New York: P.S., 2009), back cover.

[220] In reference to Charles Kinbote, editor of Shade's poetry in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*.

[221] Miller, *The Cardboard Universe,* 84.

Therefore, not only are we involved as the reader to discover this eccentric author's biography and body of work, but we must also suffer the constant bickering between editors within the diegesis. Furthermore, the book does not offer much towards tipping the balance in one or the other editor's favour. How does one pick a camp when all is explicitly fictional? So, we are effectively constrained into having to suffer these arguments until one of the editors decides to drop out or is kicked out, as is the case at the entry for "Wyatt's Party," during which Boswell effectively boots Hirt out of the story:

_____

*All right, this demented stichomythia has gone on long enough. As has this no-less ridiculous collaboration. As of today (June 8, 2007), I hereby remove Hirt from the project once and for all. Readers who have grown as sick of him as I have will be glad to know that I'll be writing the rest of this guide by myself. Let Hirt crawl back under his rock, and that's one stone we'll leave unturned. I've blocked all e-mail from his address and eagerly look forward to never hearing from him again. (BB)[222]

Although this might be enough to satisfy us in terms of unreliable narrator and the use of footnotes as a technique to blur the lines of authority in fiction, the encyclopedia/novel antes up its game in an ultimate nod to Philip K. Dick by concluding that the entire thing was strictly the product of Dank's imagination. By playing over the psychotic aspect of Dank's biography[223] in concluding this novel, once again the author is folding in piece by piece the declared narrators of the novel. For what has been an unfolding of unreliable narrators (Boswell and Hirt speaking of Dank in a novel written by Miller), we travel through this fiction as if going through a funnel (Boswell eliminates Hirt, Dank eliminates Boswell, and Miller in his afterword eliminates Dank), effectively reminding us that, as much as an author can craft compelling narrators through efficient textual hijinks (footnotes being one of them), there is only one author, and his or her name is often the first (or second) thing you notice on a book once you've picked it up.

---

[222] Miller, *The Cardboard Universe*, 503.

[223] This is so even to the extent of adding to the story a novel in Dank's repertoire in which an author by the name of Philip K. Dick stumbles upon an alternate reality in which his double Phoebus K. Dank suffers his same fate as a struggling author.

Although the idea of dueling editors adds mostly to the confusion, there are particular examples where contradiction doesn't automatically mean confrontation but a difference of opinion. This is the case in the children's book *I, Jack* (2005), a story told from the point of view of a dog in which neighborhood cats interrupt in footnotes, making explicit their disdain for the canine narrator.

---
[1] Dogs are disgusting.[224]

The majority of the novel is a canine-eye view of events, all perspective distortions included, and the cats' footnotes are used to offer a feline take on certain events, as if species can sometimes offer a variation in perspective on events. Although this example is to be taken lightly, using footnotes to describe different epistemologies differs significantly from what we have seen in other novels.

3.9   Blackout

Blackout (1968) is Hubert Aquin's follow up to *Prochain episode,* his first novel published in 1965. In *Blackout* (*Trou de mémoire* in French), the author places in contrast two central characters: P.X. Magnant and Olympe Guézzo-Quénum, both men pharmacists and revolutionaries, the first, residing in Montréal, and the second, in Cote d'Ivoire. The story also includes a mysterious editor named RR who may or may not be Rachel Ruskin, Guézzo-Quénum's lover, who is also pregnant with Magnant's child. She is a nurse operating in the city of Lagos and a writer and also has a deceased sister named Joan, who was once a microbiologist in Montreal and a theater specialist. The complexity of the characters' interrelation is intentional because the crux of the story revolves around the reader often being put in the position of not knowing which narrator takes

---
[224] Patricia Finney, *I, Jack*, (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 14.

precedence over the other. Instead of offering the reader a clear idea of the narrator, Aquin offers a string of " reader-interpreters[225]". Maurice Cagnon discusses this effect:

> On the typographical space of the page in *Trou de memoire* a triple graphic palimpsest is effected: upon P.X.'s text, the editor inscribes his infrapaginal notes; when the narrative I shifts in the body of the text from P.X. to the editor, the latter's notes are still appended but now inscribed upon his own text; RR, in the guise of editor also, inscribes her notes upon P.X.'s text, or her own, or the "other" editor's, or upon that editor's notes on P.X.'s text in an on-going game of one-upmanship in writing. The technique of an inner intertextuality [letters, diary, (auto)criticism, literary allusions, editorial notes, pastiche, parody] functions by way of microtexts within the global text which modulate fictional and narrational directions.[226]

This effect is part of Aquin's self-proclaimed literary aesthetic that he called "modern baroque": the "collaboration asked of the spectator as the author invites him to be in some way an actor and introduces him to the movement of the novel which seems to be made at the same time that he discovers it."[227]

Pierrette Malcuzynski, whose thesis is partially about *Blackout's* affinity with Neobaroque esthetic, explains: "It is a series of narrative bipolarizations that question the validity of the discourses to which it refers, not only at the signifier level but also that of the form, the imagery and the characterization."[228] Aquin himself confesses to this type of story when he explains in his journal: "the parts of my novel will not be parts of a novel - but autistic assemblies and schizophrenic chapters put together in one room."[229]

---

[225] Marilyn Randall, *Le contexte littéraire : lecture pragmatique de Hubert Aquin et de Réjean Ducharme* (Longueuil: Editions du Préambule, 1990), 96. (my translation)

[226] Maurice Cagnon, "Palimpsest in the Writings of Hubert Aquin", *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, (1978), 83.

[227] Jean Rousset, *Littérature de l'âge baroque en France*, (Paris: Jose Corti, 1965), 232.

[228] M.-Pierette Malcuzynski, *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques, 1960-1970 : littérature carnavalisée et aliénation narrative chez Hubert Aquin, Guillermo Cabrera Infante et Thomas Pynchon*. (Montréal, McGill University, 1982), 118. (my translation)

[229] Hubert Aquin, *Journal 1948-1971*, (Montréal: Bibliothèque québécoise, 1999), 250. (my translation)

With this description, it becomes clear that Aquin's intent was not to craft a linear story that contains clarity but to impose a skewed perspective on the narration to eradicate the possibility of a single interpretation of the events depicted. The novel contradicts itself, potentially making the story complex to decipher. Malcuzynski offers this interpretation of Aquin's novel, which is

> riddled with editor's notes, calls into question the facts that have so far appeared in the narrative discourse as a whole. The reader will find it very difficult to find himself, and to detect a significant logic in this labyrinth of adventures […] We are in the presence of a technique of text setting by which a series of dualities are juxtaposed and accumulated, within which everything ends up being opposed to everything.[230]

This constant opposition between P.X. Magnant and Guézzo-Quénum exposes the ambiguity of reliability explored in *Barney's Version*. By constantly offering contradicting statements, the body of the text and the intradiegetic editor's footnotes end up destroying the story. Maurice Cagnon whose analysis of *Blackout* focuses on its elements of palimpsest describes the dynamic within the fiction:

> *Trou de memoire's* editor notes the evidence of identity between text and event, as well as P.X.'s deformation of the "true story" which leads the editor to complete the narrative by complementary or divergent versions of the events recounted. In the complex network of pluridimensional and polysemic threads which compose and decompose *Trou de memoire*, RR appropriates P. X.'s text as her own and denounces the lie of all fiction.[231]

To this idea, we can add Malcuzynski's description: "The polyphonic dialogical practice of *Trou de mémoire* is constituted by a series of apparently autonomous facts, but which self-destruct by their contradictions; a principle of disaffirmation or non-affirmation at all levels of the text (characters, action, places)."[232] The author's intent to destroy the novel form becomes quite clear in the chapter "The Neptune Incident," during which:

---

[230] Malcuzynski, *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques,* 74. (my translation)

[231] Cagnon, "Palimpsest in the Writings of Hubert Aquin", 86.

[232] Malcuzynski, *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques,* 185. (my translation)

the editor has just inserted, not only is based on an inversely anamorphosis perception of a situation (the waiter can see after having positioned himself *"en plein milieu de la salle'*, but adds the perceiving eye of the waiter, and of the editor himself, to the story by Magnant.) On the one hand, the editor's text now elongates the one by Magnant; on the other hand, we find the self-representation of an observing consciousness added to the scene of the couple as it is painted by Magnant. If we are willing to rediscover this picture from the second perspective offered by the editor, however, we are immediately drawn into the next act of this play, which sees the editor himself losing his superior position.[233]

The disorientation provoked by the contradiction between editors affects the process of understanding the novel, but added to this confusion, we are also served a moment in which the intradiegetic editor of the novel explains in so many words:

If we wish to understand Pierre X. Magnant's book we are better to situate it somewhere outside of literature, outside of fiction and certainly outside the novel; for it would be falling into a very obvious trap to give it any recognition as an un-novel or counter-novel or yet an a-novel or even an infra-novel—a few of the variants possible nowadays in the novel which is capable of such unceasing renewal.[234]

By having the characters comment on the novel as being outside of the traditional form, Aquin completely subverts the expectations of the reader. Nonetheless, the secondary effect is that you somehow are exposed to something similar to a fragmented mind bordering on schizophrenia.[235]

---

[233] Winfried Siemerling, *Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994) 100.

[234] Hubert Aquin, *Blackout*, (Toronto, Anansi, 1974), 56. (translated by Alan Brown)

[235] One of the truly unexpected discoveries that have been made during the writing of this thesis is the staggering amount of times that footnotes in fiction have been used to connote the presence of a neurodiverse lead character in an objective manner. The principle that footnotes can indicate the presence of exceptional or alternative ways of thinking seems to have been used by several authors in a wide variety of ways. When used as an expression of someone's subjectivity, the footnote is transformed from a writing technique that distances itself from the story into a writing technique that makes apparent the character's thought process. In those occurrences, inspecting the footnote is akin to plunging into the mind of the character who—incidentally—is located outside of the main text. The footnote becomes the space of the mind's factory, revealing its gears and hinges. What strikes us here is the idea of using footnotes to suggest that we are not dealing with a normative thought process.

Several books offer descriptions of the characters in a manner that we must deduce where the character places himself in the spectre of neurodiversity. John Green's Colin Singleton, protagonist of *An*

The fears the intradiegetic author displays throughout the book make it an ideal demonstration of the dizzying use of footnotes when used as complimentary but contradictory information. Even characters such as Charles-Edouard Mullahy described as

> the meticulous editor who annotates, at the bottom of the pages, the "autobiographical" story of Pierre X. Magnant's and who even intervenes in the story's plot. This editor of the Pierre X. Magnant continually questions the first stage of his existential manifestation, that of the "autobiographical writing". The notes, in addition to constituting a hypocritical contestation of the validity of the book, "operate a kind of incessant decentering which ends up renewing the very act of reading a novel."[236]

The whole of the idea behind their presence is to justify who we should be believing in this story; the notes are constantly enriching this idea that nothing is completely true as the contradictions are far more convincing than the truth. Who is to be trusted in *Blackout*? Aquin says absolutely no one.

In Marilyn Randall and Janet Paterson's critical edition of Aquin's novel, we are informed of the fact that the author was very much influenced by Jurgis Baltrusaitis's work *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux* (1955) in the crafting of *Blackout*. So much in fact that he recuperated certain passages of Baltrusaitis's book as footnotes from the editor. This influence does not appear randomly, Malcuzynski explains: "Baltrusaitis elaborates a definition of the

---

Abundance of Katherines (2006) is described in a way to make us interpret the character as neuroatypical:

"Colin backed away from the door then. It occurred to him that he'd never done anything else in his whole life. Anagramming: spitting back facts he'd learned in books; memorizing ninety-nine digits of an already known number; falling in love with the same nine letters over and over again: retyping and retyping and retyping and retyping. His only hope for originality was the theorem." (p.92)

Once we know this about the character, the presence of footnotes become a useful reminder of the way the character's mind works. His prodigality is made apparent by the multiple footnotes in the book, recalling information he has stored during his life and the multiple languages he speaks. Here the footnotes are used to remind the reader that she is not dealing with a normative thought pattern. The breaks in the story created by the footnotes give an impression of ADD, which is also present in several people that present symptoms of prodigality. Therefore, without explicitly calling Colin neuro-atypical, the author suggests the presence of neuroatypicality through a writing process that imitates the mind's workings.

[236] Jean-Pierre Martel, "Trou de mémoire : oeuvre baroque, essai sur le dédoublement et le décor", *Voix et images du pays*, vol. 8, no 1, (1974), 77.

techniques of anamorphosis in the field of art, which seems to correspond in particular to what Hubert Aquin achieves in his novel."[237] The definition as it appears in *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux* is the "projection of shapes out of themselves and their dislocation so that they straighten when seen from a given point. The process is established as a technical curiosity, but it contains a poetics of abstraction, a powerful mechanism of optical illusion, and a philosophy of false reality."[238]

Anamorphosis describes an illusion crafted by a deforming mirror in which the image sent to the eye is disproportioned and eschewed. One can only see the original form at a precise angle, often creating a sense of confusion. Malcuzynski adds that, in *Blackout*, the anamorphic effect takes on a different signification, "both baroque and new to the tradition of carnival literature . . . [e]ssentially what is called *trompe-l'oeil* [...] something that gives the impression of reality (or truth) but is falsified in its uniqueness [...] also used to accentuate any kind of magnitude by repeating it several times, differently, and multiplying it polyphonically."[239] This *trompe-l'oeil* effect is increased with the presence of footnotes. Several of the footnotes indicate that the editor has tried to confirm the facts exposed but found they were not true. To further stress the unreliability of the work of fiction, some footnotes are indicated as written by the editor, while others are written by the mysterious RR. There are some passages that the editor refuses to transcribe:

> 1) It is felt that it would not be fitting to publish the five pages that follow the last words of this passage. As a matter of honesty I insist on drawing the reader's attention to the fact that an unannounced omission would give the impression of discontinuity, especially as the text of P.X. Magnant is characterized, to say the least, by its internal consistency and its "legato" style. Moreover, I feel obliged to mention the rape scene, which the author describes with much precision. The location once chosen, the narrator employs a daring stratagem to archive his ends. The fact that he exploits the (unconscious) mediation of certain persons is doubtless the most incredible aspect of his machination,

---

[237] Malcuzynski, *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques,* 283. (my translation)

[238] Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux*, (Paris: Olivier Perrin, 1955), 5-6. (my translation)

[239] Malcuzynski, *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques,* 287. (my translation)

which he describes in a kinetic style that allows us to relive what he is narrating. Ed. note.[240]

In all actuality, the editor of the novel becomes an aide in the deciphering of Magnant's manuscript. The use of footnotes often indicates the complexity of understanding such a story, and the editor often confesses to his lack of clarity about certain statements. In this manner, the editor in the footnotes parallels the readers' difficulty, he becomes an ally in trying to understand the novel, sometimes even more than an ally, sometimes even a double.

Surprisingly, a sudden turn of events in the chapter's semi-finale reveals that RR and the author are indeed one and the same. RR confesses to this:

> I confess that my initials are not really RR. This is a kind of abridged pseudonym in which I've dolled myself up, and which to a degree expresses my first impulse to treat myself on the level of fiction. It's true, in the whole of this polymorphous text I have never ceased pursuing an experiment in fictitious writing. From that very first page I never stopped inventing and wanting to invent a novel.[241]

Furthermore, the scholarly edition of the novel also adds footnotes on erroneous information given by the editor in the novel. We therefore have a chain of very confusing misinformation corrected by different editorial instances throughout the book. Aquin's use of footnotes accentuate confusion of the reader and somehow transfers that confusion to the writer who must keep track of the cohesion of the story, although the story is delivered in a very incoherent manner. Shari Benstock explains:

> the notes openly point to authorial errors and narrational gaps, thus simultaneously extending and undermining the text. Because footnotes in fiction cannot serve the ends they serve in scholarly tradition, they parody the notational convention and draw attention to the failed authority present in all such structures, most especially those employed by scholars.[242]

---

[240] Aquin, *Blackout*, 28.

[241] Aquin, *Blackout*, 97.

[242] Benstock, *At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text*, 22.

Aquin's novel presents footnotes that are not truly footnotes but a *renversement* of footnotes. This *renversement* is explained by Jacques Derrida as a technique that makes it possible "to go further, in order to be more radical or more daring, and take an attitude of neutralizing indifference with respect to the classical oppositions which would be to give free rein to the existing forces that effectively and historically dominate the field."[243]

As it is the case in *Blackout*, the editorial footnote is a *renversement*; these notes contain the footnote's principal attributes while distorting their use, showing a corruption of what a footnote is supposed to present. One example of this has been found by the scholar Jean-Pierre Martel, who discovered that the footnote on page 78 that credits Maurice Blanchot does not at all come from him but from a letter written by Roland Barthes to Hubert Aquin. André Lamontagne goes on to explain that "the ludic nature of this false attribution becomes a way to decipher false plagiarism from plagiarism. This entire section only further participates in Aquin's omnipresent exploration of originality and literary ownership."[244] Regarding this act of plagiarism, Martel goes on to show how Aquin's footnotes, rather than making explicit the process of linking knowledge, prove how easy it is to subvert the preconceived relationship of authority that a footnote has with its content. It is the perfect illusion to unmask the hypocrisy of scholarly works and, somehow, to question the idea of authority itself. Malcuzynski goes on to explain that this type confusion is a desired effect in Aquin's novel it:

> obliges the reader, piqued in his curiosity by the confusing aspect, by the mysterious form that this reality takes in its fake condition, to modify his point of view, to demystify it and thus to become fully aware of its presence. [...] It is in these terms that the neobaroque aesthetics detectable in this novel can best be summed up by this device where the only possible deciphering is according to what the anamorphosis distorts, in order to camouflage its precise meaning.[245]

---

[243] Derrida, *La Dissémination*, 6.

[244] André Lamontage, *Les mots des autres : la poétique intertextuelle des oeuvres romanesques de Hubert Aquin,* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1992), 86.

[245] Malcuzynski, *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques,* 287. (my translation)

Upon closer inspection, the reader understands that the footnotes in *Blackout* have two functions: as indetermination within the novel and as a tool by Aquin to contradict his own writing. The first, indetermination, rests on a complex web of contradictory claims that constantly shifts the text's authority from one protagonist to another. Neither P.X. nor Olympe ever gain the upper hand on the story; they are constantly undermining each other and breaking the diegesis in the process. As used by Aquin to contradict his own writing, they become centrifugal, looking outwards towards Hubert Aquin's own biography. Marilyn Randall explains:

> The function of marginal references is twofold: as elements of the fiction, they are centripetal, reflecting on the text in a mirror effect and completing the fiction of which they are an inextricable part. But insofar as these notes call upon an extrafictive referential domain, they are centrifugal with respect to the text: the reading of the texts quoted in notes distances us from the fiction by participating in the "real" world, which is also dual. Not only do the psychopharmacological texts exist, but they exist in the intellectual universe of the author (Aquin) where they share a space inhabited by Nietzsche, Teilhard de Chardin, Nabokov, Fanon and others.[246]

3.10   Exit Strategy

For those trying to understand the many usages of footnotes in fiction, Douglas Rushkoff's *Exit Strategy* (2002) sets up an interesting proposition, in part because Rushkoff conceived it in the early 2000's as an open-source novel. *Exit Strategy* is a novel that explores the increasing *marketphilia* of the early 21st century in a fiction that slightly resembles Bret Easton Ellis's *American Psycho* (1991). What changes is that Rushkoff offered the novel as open-source online, opening it to annotation by users. He added these notes to the printed novel and framed these addenda as scholarly comments made by 23rd-century scholars. In the preface to the novel, he explains this process:

---

[246] Marilyn Randall, "L'homme et l'œuvre : biolectographie d'Hubert Aquin", *Voix et Images*, vol. 23, (1998), 571. (my translation)

I had such a good time creating these footnotes and re-experiencing the present from the perspective of the future, that I decided to let the readers in on the game. Why should I be the only one getting to participate in this experiment? So I put the whole book online – it's still up at Yahoo Internet Life's site, http://www.yil.com – (Writer's note: No it's not, but you can use waybackmachine.com) for readers to become writers and add their own commentary to the text, in the voices of their own 23rd Century annotators.[247]

As the principal writer, Rushkoff creates himself a 23rd-century alter-ego in the guise of Sabrina Samuels, Editorial Director and Chief Annotator, Chair, Institute for Post-Capitalist Studies. She is joined by roughly a thousand readers and has preserved something along the lines of a hundred commentaries in the published version by Soft Skull Press. Rushkoff explains that he had hoped that several versions of the book would end up going to publication, but the experiment was cut short when Yahoo Internet Life was put offline in 2002, the year that saw the novel appear in paper format. In the admitted intention of writing an allegory of the Bible, Rushkoff connects his text to the Talmudic tradition of annotation. The Torah is often well recognized as one of the most important of all annotated texts, and the author finds himself reflecting upon this practice in his novel.[248] For this reason, the notes in *Exit Strategy* are not footnotes but marginalia, notes scribbled to the left or right of the text. Although the disposition of the text creates signification, the effect is not the same. Somehow the adjacent nature of the text connotes erudition more than comment. The idea that habit creates meaning is here as well. As in the footnote that has slowly become recognized as a space for presenting sources or specifics, the margin is used for notation and comment. Once again, as is traditional in Talmudic practice, the margin is the space where the traces of our thoughts are in development. *Exit Strategy* presents us with an interesting case of interpretation, the notes clearly exposed as being comments from a futuristic society, and the paratext makes the experiment quite clear. As readers, therefore, we are left to our own devices to interpret the polyphony of the novel. The instructions are quite clear: from the outset, the author reveals the different voices used in the story. The marginalia are also identified: this time by using internet usernames such as MRNORMATIVE, RSDIO, RABBITROAR and DUSTYONE1,

---

[247] Douglas Rushkoff, *Exit Strategy*, (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2002), VII-VIII.

[248] This novel is included in a cycle of creation that reflects on Judaism. In this cycle, we find Rushkoff's essay *Nothing Sacred* (2004) and his comic book *Testament* (2006).

making explicit the fact that we are dealing with personas off the internet, while other aliases such as SHANKELY and JACOBACOV stay true to the rabbinic undertones of the experiment by giving themselves Hebraic connoted names. On the one hand, *Exit Strategy* presents the theme of universal erudition in a future where knowledge is open-sourced, following the expiration of the capitalist experiment when the floodgates of knowledge have opened to the world. It is logical, in this regard, that an online group could alter itself into a brain trust of sorts around a certain text. On the other hand, the Hebraic names recall the familiarity that the Jewish tradition has with the notion of shared knowledge. This idea was explored by Rushkoff in his essay *Nothing Sacred*, in which he explored the ancient rabbinic tradition in light of new technological behaviors. He writes: "The tradition of midrash — the development of new stories, explanations, and parables around the core mythology of our Torah — is the right and responsibility of every thinking Jew. Like open-source programmers, we write our own narratives around a central code."[249]

He further explains: "The Torah is commenting upon itself, beginning the process of midrash (Torah commentary) and encouraging its readers to do the same."[250] The editorial footnote is a way of showing the reader that no one possesses the final authority on a text, and by offering traces of a difference of opinion in footnotes, the book encourages the reader to comment to themselves about what they are reading. This use of footnotes is a call back to Leopold von Ranke's habit of calling his audience "participatory readers" in the introductions of his works.[251] Rushkoff's *Exit Strategy* posits that with the use of footnotes, any novel can become open-source and can be reopened in the light of new information or with the benefit of hindsight by the reader. His novel exposes the possibility of constantly reworking works of fiction by adding information in the margins; this could potentially be done forever and with any book.

---

[249] Rushkoff, *Nothing Sacred*, 195.

[250] Rushkoff, *Nothing Sacred*, 115.

[251] Grafton, *The Footnote*, 51.

3.11   The manuscript effect

These recent examples of footnoted fiction bring us to the "manuscript effect," an idea that has been hinted at but not fully discussed in the previous chapters. The "manuscript effect" is a paradoxical effect that gives the impression that the published book readers hold in their hands is not the book they are reading but a printed and bound version of the manuscript that has not been published yet. This manuscript effect is caused by the fact that the version of the story we are currently reading presents traces of editorial work and thus is a work in progress, not a final version. This manuscript effect becomes wholly explicit when opening Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (1938), where, in the beginning, the reader is warned by the editors:

> These notebooks were found among the papers of Antoine Roquentin. They are published without alteration. The first sheet is undated, but there is good reason to believe it was written some weeks before the diary itself. Thus it would have been written around the beginning of January, 1932, at the latest. At that time, Antoine Roquentin, after travelling through Central Europe, North Africa and the Far East, settled in Bouville for three years to conclude his historical research on the Marquis de Rollebon.
>
> -THE EDITORS[252]

This is a warning as well as a clue. The interpretation of such a notice is that what we are holding in our hands, although physically identical to a novel, is a manuscript, and what we are about to read is not a finished work of art but found documents that exist as fragments or incomplete pieces. For instance, in the novel, footnotes can be added to indicate that certain passages are not printed but written by hand and missing, as seen in the previous passage of *La Nausée* or in this passage of *Blackout*: "End of the typewritten portion. Ed. note.[253]"

These additions entirely change the nature of the page we are reading. Where one would expect completeness, there is now incompletion; where one would expect one voice, there are now

---

[252] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea* (translated by Lloyd Alexander*,* New York : New Directions Publishing Corp, 1964, 1.

[253] Hubert Aquin, *Blackout*, (Toronto, Anansi, 1974), 16

many; and where fiction offers us cohesion, there is now confusion. Genette speaks of an "authentic authorial preface disavowed"[254] when defining this type of presence in a novel. This authentic authorial preface disavowing is a process in which authors establish a distance between the diegesis and their writing. For example, such an authorial preface would be used in an opening to a book, where the author explains how he found such a document. These prefaces are addenda that comment on the text's origin and create a *mise-en-abyme* as if the second text was included in the first.

This manuscript effect can also diminish the clarity of the novel. For instance, in *Barney's Version*, the protagonist somewhat loses his train of thought and is immediately brought back by the editor in footnotes: "Hold the phone. Somewhere in my Noter's Write Book I've got something very apropos to that time and the problem I fumbled so badly, it was written by Dr. Johnson in 1772, when he was sixty-three years old."[255] A footnote on page 196 has the same effect, in which Barney's son offers an explanation of the previous quote:

> As I was going through my father's manuscript, limiting myself to correcting facts and filling in names, places or dates, where memory had failed him, I also happened to be reading Peter Vansittart's memoir of post-World War II London, *In the fifties* (John Murray, London, 1995), and came upon the following passage on page 29:
>
> In 1938, a mildewed colonel about whom we gibed that he had lost one leg at Mons, another at Ypres, a third on the Marne, and the last of his wits on the Somme, had barked at me: "Your Mr. Auden's no great lover of Herr Hitler, but will he be joining me to fight the bugger?" Many whom Auden derided – colonels, retarded public school boys, suburban golfers, trite-tongued mediocrities, romantic but goofy stuffed shirts – saved Western civilisation. My vision of Auden as anti-fascist commando could not be maintained when, with the barbarians at the gate, he departed to America.
>
> I can't add plagiarism to the many sins my father has to answer for. Rather, I prefer to think Kate was right when she insisted that this had to be innocent error. "No doubt,"

---

[254] Genette, *Paratexts,* 185. (translated by Jane E. Lewin)

[255] Richler, *Barney's Version*, 177.

she said, "shuffling through his index cards, Daddy mistakenly took a thought of Vansittart's that he had transcribed for one of his own.[256]

Somehow these notes appear in the published version, which can strike many as odd since the editorial work on the book should have just corrected the errors and published a fact-checked version of the book. But by keeping footnotes in the book, we are led to believe that what we are reading is not an edited book but someone's manuscript, never taken up by a proper publishing house, thus accentuating the diary aspect of the novel.

3.12   Notes taking over

After considering the vast array of effects that scholarly and editorial footnotes can cause, we now need to pause to reflect on another use of footnotes. This will allow us to transition towards the diegetical footnote in the next chapter. Before proceeding, this section will highlight a peculiar use of footnotes found in texts spanning several ages.

We must first look back to Germany in the 18th century to find the first known example of a footnoted text that eliminates the main diegetical body of text. The author's name is Gottlieb Wilhelm Rabener, and his work *Hinkmars von Repkow Noten ohne Text* (1743) is presented as a series of notes without text. The reason behind this, as explained by Anthony Grafton is the following: "Nowadays, [Rabener] argues, one wins [fame and fortune] not by writing one's own text but by commenting on those of others. Hence, he has set out to eliminate the middleman: to write his own footnotes and become famous through them, without waiting for a text to tie them to."[257]

---

[256] Richler, *Barney's Version*, 196.

[257] Grafton, *The Footnote: A Curious History*, 120.

Andréas Pfersmann has coined the expression "*prose notulaire*,"[258] when it comes to describing works of fiction that rely on footnotes to advance the story. This type of prose can take on many forms, such as texts that completely rid themselves of the top part of the novel and make available only the footnoted section. The works of fiction described in this section question the practicality of a main body of text, to the point of eliminating it. The first section will explore works such as *Footnotes* (2001), by C.C. Finlay, *Revenge of the Translator* (2003), by Brice *Matthieussent and The Body* (2002), by Jenny Boully . All three stories are told within the confines of the footnote's space, offering no trace of the main body of text as a way of judging the commentary delivered by footnotes. These texts reframe the authority of the lower part of the page and abandon the reader to interpret the reason for footnotes without the help of a main text to verify said interpretation.

We will be looking at texts that (and authors who) have rejected footnotes, along with the arguments used to explain their absence. This will allow us to see if this absence can still make itself felt when not announced. Is there an effect created by the absence of footnotes?

The final part of this chapter will concern footnotes in their most invasive aspect, starting with Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine* (1988), in which most of the story takes place in footnotes, and other texts, such as *Notes towards a Mental Breakdown* (1990), by J.G. Ballard, along with Lydia Davis' *Southward Bound, Reads Worstward Ho* (2007). Both short stories consist of one phrase, with each word footnoted. Finally, we will show how works that massively use footnotes do so while diluting the time and space of the reading act.

These three instances of extreme uses of footnotes will hopefully allow us a better understanding of how footnotes interact with the main body of text, even when used extensively.

---

[258] Andreas Pfersmann, *Séditions infrapaginales : poétique historique de l'annotation littéraire. XVIIe-XXIe siècles*, (Genève: Droz, 2011)

3.13   When notes are bountiful

One of the expressed reasons for the distaste of footnotes is that they somehow distract the reader from the main linear path of reading. This idea is approximated when one regards footnotes as *détournement*, as something that offers an alternative path in the novel, a bifurcation. For some, they may represent a distraction, while others can regard this interruption as a potential unfolding of the story.

The description of the novel as an unfolding is especially apt when discussing novels such as Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine* (1988) or Steven Hayward's short story *To Dance the Beginning of the World* (2015), in which the main body of text is augmented by the presence of footnotes. The stories, easily considered straightforward, unfold in footnotes. This process takes place with the addition of details or fragments of the story to the main body of text; in this way, harmless or mysterious details come to light through a new understanding. Baker defines this usage of footnotes as "the finer-suckered surfaces that allow tentacular paragraphs to hold fast to the wider reality of the library."[259] These kinds of footnotes are additions to the story, offering space for expansion to the events in the novel.

This unfolding of story can take on many forms, as is the case in *The Mezzanine* (1988), where the diegetic time is essentially equal to a lunch break, but the footnotes cover every single thought the protagonist has during that break. Hence, the story unfolds in vast digressions and explanations for what ends up being quite a stale hour. Here, the process of unfolding presents the vastness of the human imagination but also the potential for future writers to explore this process, which could be referred to as an unending, similar to semiosis. Nicholson Baker seems to so enjoy this idea of the footnote that he even comments upon it in a very metafictional manner:

---

[259] Nicholson Baker, *The Mezzanine,* (New York: Random House, 1988), 123.

They liked deciding as they read whether they would bother to consult a certain footnote or not, and whether they would read it in context, or read it before the text it hung from, as an hors d'oeuvre. The muscles of the eye, they knew, want vertical itineraries; the rectus externus and internus grow dazed waggling back and forth in the Zs taught in grade school: the footnote functions as a switch, offering the model railroader's satisfaction of catching the march of thought with a superscripted "1" and routing it, sometimes at length, through abandoned stations and submerged leaching tunnels. Digression—a movement away from the *gradus*, or upward escalation, of the argument––is sometimes the only way to be thorough, and footnotes are the only form of graphic digression sanctioned by centuries of typesetters.[260]

In Barry Lopez's story collected in *Light Action in the Carribean* (2001), titled "Rubén Mendoza Vega, Suzuki Professor of Early Caribbean History, University of Florida at Gainesville, Offers a History of the United States Based on Personal Experience," the entire story is one paragraph with sixteen footnotes and quite poetically retells the story of the wisdom passed on from generation to generation of Cuban fathers. This abuse of footnotes is not without its peculiar effects, notably the fact that the entire story needs to be read twice. Once, to understand the main body of text, a read that must be done uninterrupted by footnotes since no one could possibly manage to grasp every detail when interrupted every three words, and with a second read that takes on the form of a more substantive understanding of the reason behind the use of each word. Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963) functions similarly. Two different ways of reading are proposed at the outset: one that goes straight to the point and the other that offers a more scenic route through the diegesis in an interactive narrative.

Other texts of unfolding footnotes are Lydia Davis' *Southward Bound, Reads Worstward Ho* (2007) and "Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown" in J.G. Ballard's *War Fever* (1990). This pullulation of footnotes can have many effects: polyphony being one, intertextuality and rewriting being others. Jonathan Evans, in *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality* (2016), explains Lydia Davis' short story in the following manner:

---

[260] Baker, *The Mezzanine*, 122.

[Davis' story] combines citation and pastiche in a way that allows it to comment on Beckett's *Worstward Ho* (1999) while at the same time recounting its own narrative. The citational nature of all of these stories means that they recontextualise material from elsewhere, creating moments in the text which are doubly coded, pointing the reader to another text while also forming part of Davis' story. This process is similar to what happens with translations, where the target text is both a new text and a representation of the source text.[261]

These remarks allow us to understand that the unfolding in Davis' short story is not only diegetic but thematic and interpretative. They allow the reader to fully grasp the span of the fictional tapestry laid out by Davis. The vastness of references used by Davis exerts a strong pressure on the reader to piece together and understand what is being done by the author. The temptation to fully collect all the information present in the notes can baffle, overwhelm and even possibly encourage some sort of mental breakdown, as it is announced in the J.G. Ballard short story that uses the same technique. James Redgate explains it best when he declares:

We discover that the story's title "Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown" is to be taken literally: with each additional note, the 'doctor' moves further towards the unravelling of his 'maze of lies' and the revelation that he is in fact the broken man about whom he is writing. The patient's "Inner Space" that has been abstracted through the lens of an emotionless, scholarly industry of psycho-pathologizing that redefines how the post-atomic subject thinks about themselves. So much so, indeed, that the patient in Ballard's story has no way to articulate his *own* pathography: he is pathology only and can only talk about himself in the mode of the case report.[262]

These experiments in adding footnotes to every word that results in revealing the choice and reason made behind each and every word in the text is a reminder of the paradigmatic component of language. In these short stories, the choice of word on the paradigmatic scale is

---

[261] Jonathan Evans, *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 126.

[262] Jamie Redgate, *Wallace and I: Cognition, Consciousness, and Dualism in David Foster Wallace's Fiction*, (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2019), 127.

individually explained in length; every footnote complements an understanding of the precise choice of word affected by the author.

A last case of footnotes to conclude this exploration of experimentations concerns Anne Fadiman's short story collection *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader* (1998). In this brief collection of personal essays, Fadiman includes a short story titled "Nothing New Under The Sun" that discusses her interest in plagiarism, as she explains: "Like most writers, I have long been fascinated by the sea-change though which an aggregation of words, common property when scattered throughout a dictionary, is transformed into a stealable asset[263]." Recuperating Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and Shield's *Reality Hunger* (2010), the main body of text is an open and frank discussion about influence and textual poaching in which footnotes act not only as erudite information, but they also trace back the origins of certain anecdotes and quotes further down the line of influence. Therefore, some footnotes try to make explicit the lineage of a line or a description showing us that although one might cite a principal source for a quote, nothing is put into place to show us that that source was the first to come up with the wording.

_____

26. Everything I've said about Biden is from Mallons, op. cit. Among Mallons' other examples of Chinese-box plagiarism is Jacob Epstein's plagiarism of a description of a character's balding head from a passage that Martin Amis had previously plagiarized from Dickens. Mallon also notes that the University of Oregon plagiarized the section on plagiarism in its student handbook from the section on plagiarism in Stanford's teaching-assistant handbook. . 264

Footnotes help us keep track of the knowledge presented in the text but do not have a responsibility to present an exhaustive genealogy, only a marker back to where the author found the information. In this regard, what Fadiman does is show us the idea of citation as something akin to unlimited semiosis, that is, as Eco has explained, " the signified is endlessly commutable—

_____

[263] Anne Fadiman, *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 105.

[264] Fadiman, *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*, 108.

functioning in its turn as a signifier for a further signified." [265] How Fadiman presents the information in footnotes closely resembles this unlimited semiosis as we will realistically never have irrefutable access to the first utterance of a sentence or an idea; what a footnote gives us is simply what the author of the main text has found within the limits of his or her own knowledge. A famous quote can simply be borrowed by a lesser-known artist, and an idea can be an institutional publication of a brainstorm shared between colleagues. Footnotes are not equipped to show us the genealogy of an idea or quote. Furthermore, what footnotes will declare is the written evidence of an element borrowed from someone other than the author, but that same quote can be rooted in oral culture and, therefore, may have only appeared in books by way of a writer to whom the idea did not belong in the first place. Trying to trace back the true origins of a quote becomes an operation akin to unlimited semiosis, looking back to find the origin of something lost in time.

3.14   Footnotes without text

Our first venture through these cases of footnote abuse will be an observation of fictions that have eliminated the main body of text and left only the footnotes intact. This type of non-literature strikes right to the reader's imagination when first seen or witnessed. Novels of this type, often presented as incomplete, immediately evoke ideas associated with poetry: the encompassing presence of space on a page displays a preoccupation with the disposition of the text on the page, the footnote line, usually used to separate two sections of text that now appear to separate the sections of text. The most worrisome effect caused by the disappearance of the main body of text is how this erasure confronts habitus, how clearly this kind of reading shows our familiarity with the standard page. When reading a page, we may see the elements in

---

[265] Daniel Chandler and Rod Munday, "Unlimited Semiosis", *A Dictionary of Media and Communication*, 2016,https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758.

opposition to traditional texts since we have abandoned ourselves to our reading predispositions and habits. Mariano D'Ambrosio explains this phenomenon in the following way:

> The presence of the note on the printed page poses the problem of a dualism between the text and its commentary, which can also be, in the case of allographic notes, an antagonism between two (or more) voices, one of which controls or parasitizes the other. The hierarchical relationship between notes and commentaries is unclear: the note can serve as a device for controlling the reader's reception, sometimes reaffirming the accuracy of the remarks made in the text by referring to an unquestionable auctoritas, and other times refuting the text itself, taking a polemical, contesting position, and trying to direct the reading of the text from its periphery.[266]

And, thus, as Roland Barthes points out, "the work of the commentary, as soon as it escapes from any ideology of totality, consists precisely in mishandling the text, in cutting it off from the speaker.".[267] This mishandling has inspired several ideas for novels, notably Enrique Vila-Matas's *Bartleby & Co* (2000) and his idea of negative writing made explicit simultaneously by Bartleby's famous expression, "I would prefer not to" and by a novel of footnotes without text that would also — clearly — rather not.

C.C. Finlay's short story "Footnotes" is an experiment in crafting a story in which the footnotes occupy the main body of text, resembling something akin to a tale told in point form. Sadly, the organization of the page does not imitate an organization of footnotes; therefore, the story reads mainly like a succession of bullet points. Still, the story presents itself as being composed of footnotes mainly because of the presence of markers preceding the lines and not because of how they are arranged on the page. Here is a sample of the story to further demonstrate how this example differs from the examples to follow:

---

[266] Mariano D'Ambrosio, "Quatre cas contemporains de notes sans texte : du texte absent au texte scriptible", *Hypothèses*, 2012, https://adhoc.hypotheses.org/ad-hoc-n6-loriginal-absent/quatre-cas-contemporains-de-notes-sans-texte-du-texte-absent-au-texte-scriptible (my translation)

[267] Roland Barthes, S/Z, (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), 22.

- Connor DeSilva, *The Evolution of Disaster* (St. Louis, 2041). The more famous outbreak in Overbrook, Kansas, on 30 Jan is now regarded as a secondary event.

-These effects either duplicated or mimicked the earliest class of nanoneuropharmaceuticals. "Repairing the Brain: A Special Issue," *Nanoscience* Vol. 28, (2017).

- For a technical description, see Madhu Mantri, "Insect hormone failsafes in substituted cyclohexane hinges," in *Proceedings of the 26th International Foresight Foundation*, 2018[268].

As we can see, the short story fails to produce an effect concerning main and *ancillary* texts but yet does imitate the form well enough for us to understand particular comments on footnotes as form. But not all is lost; certain interesting interpretative elements remain. First of all, most footnotes are references to scientific texts and articles. In those, the research titles are explicit enough for us to understand the general thesis of the article. With these elements only, we can interpret the story as concerning a plague that somehow affects people's memory; thus, *Footnote* becomes a commentary on what will remain after we lose our capacity to remember: will there be only footnotes to help us recall our previous existence?

The fact that what is mostly quoted is scientific research indicates that the situation is getting exponentially dire. Somewhere within these notes, there is a hint that maybe most people concerned by this viral attack (that might or might not actually be a terrible lab mistake implicating nanotechnology) have not given enough weight to the scientific community's expertise and therefore have aggravated the situation to a point of no return. We are, quite humorously, taught a lesson of the perils of ignoring knowledge, mirrored by the faults committed when skipping footnotes.

If anything, C.C. Finlay's story shows us that we need but very few textual elements to piece together a narrative on our own. The apocalyptic tone remains explicit in such an implicit form of

---

[268] C.C. Finley, *Footnotes,* (Hoboken: The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, 2001) (no pages indicated)

writing. Footnotes become a versatile tool for storytelling. But the experimentation with this technique does not stop here.

3.15   Revenge of the translator

Following in the tradition of the Oulipian work *Suburbia* (1990), by Paul Fournel, Brice Matthieussent's *Revenge of the Translator (2003)* presents the story of David Grey, a translator in charge of *Translator's Revenge,* a novel written by the French Abel Prote. From the very beginning of the story, Grey finds the novel lacking and thus decides to completely eliminate the main body of text and place his own comments on the diegesis in the footnotes. As the novel progresses, the white space of the page becomes more and more occupied by the translator's comments, effectively taking over the invisible diegesis, working upwards until Chapter 12,[269] in which the footnoted space flips beyond the habitual line in the page and grows to occupy the main body space.

Like Fournel's novel, *Revenge of the Translator*'s use of footnotes also demonstrates, "with beautifully ridiculous clarity the opportunities that paratexts offer to enable an astute reader to assess the meaning of meaning in literature and shows how paratexts manipulate the reader by using them in an overtly humorous and extreme form."[270] In effect, what readers are asked to do during their decoding of the novel is to deduce what has been removed and why. It is up to the reader to piece together Abel Prote's novel with the clues offered by David Grey's remarks. Thus: "The body of the text in turn becomes a blank that the reader must fill in, performing on a grand

---

[269] Aptly called "The Theft" and therefore underlining the fact that Grey is effectively hijacking the novel.

[270] Shlomo Berger, *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam: Early Modern Yiddish Books in Paratextual Perspective,* (Paderborn, Brill, 2013), 16.

scale the kind of exercise required by the very footnotes that appear to delete significant information..."[271]

Since only the comment remains, *Revenge of the Translator* demands that we effectively fill in the blanks of the story, even though it is becoming rapidly clear that we will never have Prote's original version of the novel available to us. What becomes fascinating with this type of fiction is, as Jonathan Russell Clark explains:

> Expanding the limits of storytelling is not the job of all storytellers, and some attempts at this have failed to produce worthwhile results, but what the aforementioned artists have proven is that once we accept a new form—i.e., once it's stripped of its *novelty*—we allow ourselves to see just how useful and radical and profound it can be. Footnotes, once the hallmark of pedantry and pretension, have now entered the realm of craft. More than a trick, footnotes can be *technique.* We've seen how they can be used to comment on a narrative or to create a new one, to overlap separate narratives, to evoke character in new ways, and to dig into difficult parts of who we are. Footnotes, in other words, no longer merely support a story; now, they can *be* the story.[272]

And this peculiar story is more about Grey's auto-analysis of his translation. *Revenge of the Translator* is a novel about the idea of translating and what that says about the person carrying out the work. Freddie Plassard adds: "It is thus the translator's reputedly second word that occupies the front of the stage here, he who, as a rule, is a priori deprived of enunciation in his own name."[273] This reversal of the roles is originally taken as tragic; the supplanting explanation in footnotes give us no choice but to believe that the original novel is of no interest. Here, the function of footnotes is less to add a complement of information than to replace the existing information with a more updated body of text. In a way, this is pretty desolating, but further along

---

[271] Christian Bök, "Quick Review 05, by Christian Bök", *Poetry Foundation*, 2007, www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/10/quick-review-05.

[272] Jonathan Russel Clark, "On the Fine Art of the Footnote: From Nabokov to Danielewski. Beyond the Experimental*." LitHub*, 2015, https://lithub.com/the-fine-art-of-the-footnote/

[273] Freddie Plassard, "Mineur de fond ou chirurgien esthétique ? Traducteur et traduction dans Vengeance du traducteur de Brice Matthieussent", *Hal Open Science*, 2010, https://hal.science/hal-01639177 (my translation).

in the story, Grey reveals that his act of deleting is a choice made of empathy for the failed writer because:

> I even think that in these gaps, in those residual blank spaces, in the nonwritten that constitutes the residual blank spaces, in the nonwritten that constitutes the most clear-cut part of your life, you have all the freedom to act and think as you like. The exits are numerous: you can easily escape the text. It is riddled with holes like a sieve, pierced like a Gruyère, drilled with an entire network of secret passages that allow you to go elsewhere to see whether I am there—and I am not there, ever, you are outside the range of my words, my orders, my spheres encompassed by other spheres, themselves inscribed in other spheres, and so on and so forth, perhaps infinitely, a dizzying interlocking of successive inclusions.[274]

The erasing of the main body of text is therefore a vector of a plurality of possible interpretations a reader must uncover further along in his exploration. Although the original declarations from Grey would lead us to think that the disappearing of the original novel is solely to embarrass Prote, further reading reveals several layers of potential reasons for the act of deleting the Translator's Revenge, the diegetic novel. As is inherent in the purpose behind the presence of footnotes in the first place, *Revenge of the Translator* asks us to decode the reasoning behind the act of eliminating the main body of text, a reason that evolves as long as the novel develops. This operation becomes an important part of the semiotic decoding of the novel. Jenny Boully's novel, *The Body*, presents another.

3.16   The Body

Jenny Boully's novel *The Body* (2002) takes this experimentation with no central body of text to another level. Although the author uses the previously explored technique of removing the main text and leaving only footnotes, it does not take long to understand that the effect Boully reaches

---

[274] Brice Matthieussent, *Revenge of the Translator*, (Palm Coast: Deep Vellum, 2009), 269. (translated by Emma Ramadan)

is entirely original. *The Body* uses the technique of eliminating a central text not only to create a space of interrogation about the content of the central body of text but also to reflect the reader's interpretation and ability to question what exists in-between the main body of text and the footnotes.

Figure 4.1 Jenny Boully, *The Body*, 39.
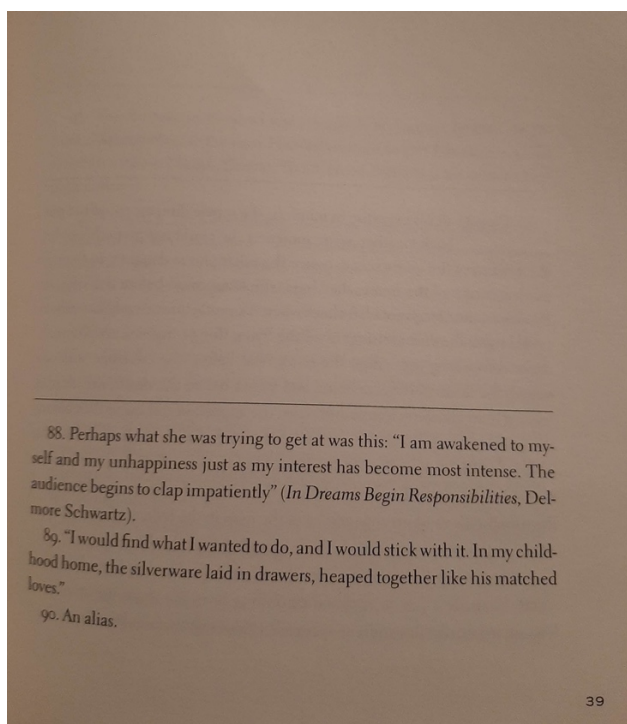
(Transcription:
[88] Perhaps what she was trying to get at was this: "I am awakened to myself and my unhappiness just as my interest has become most intense. The audience begins to clap impatiently" (In *Dreams Begin Responsibilities,* Delmote Schwartz.
[89] "I would find what I wanted to do, and I would stick with it. In my childhood home, the silverware laid in drawers, heaped together like his matched loves."
[90] An alias.)

As poet, Christian Bök explains:

> *The Body* draws aesthetic attention to the peripheral topography of the page, analyzing the poetics of a neglected, miniature genre that often escapes scrutiny because its functionalism renders it too marginal or too subaltern to warrant either artistic emphasis

or literary analysis. The poet here reveals, however, that the minor space and viral scale of the footnote represents a necessary, albeit parasitic, dimension of writing, one that plays out the logic of the supplement, displacing rather than augmenting the body that supports it.[275]

What *The Body* accomplishes is a narrative essay that entices the reader to constantly imagine what the erased part of the book presents to decode the poetics of the undeclarable. It is therefore a book of the imagination for what consists as the main body to which footnotes generally refer only exists in the reader's mind. Jenny Boully herself commented on this use of footnotes,

> If you read "footnotes," I believe that means you are paying more attention, looking for the nuances, the details, what everyone else doesn't see necessarily. That seems a much better way to live to me. If you believe that everything manifests for some reason, then it would seem to me that you're more alert in your living life and more in tune with messages, wherever they might come from. You're always looking to see how things connect, how you fit in.[276]

This explanation resonates with the sensitive nature of the novel, one that demonstrates quite clearly, "she's interested in taking the unemotional language of academia and putting it to emotional use, in part by what the citations *suggest* about the missing prose above."[277] And this textual cooperation between the intellectual decoding demanded to extrapolate from the given information, combined with the emotional labor necessary to allow the sensibilities of the described situations permeate the reader, are noteworthy. The footnotes here are precise textual elements that give enough information to create a space of understanding. In that regard, Jonathan Russell Clark chimes in: "Boully is not trying to create a story by cobbling together sporadic hints; instead, she's creating an emotional landscape through what *isn't there*. The

---

[275] Bök, *Quick Review 05.*

[276] Candice Wang, "Five Questions: An Interview with Jenny Boully", *Ashberyland*, 2016, https://ashberyland.com/2016/11/16/5-questions-an-interview-with-jenny-boully/

[277] Clark, *On the Fine Art of the Footnote from Nabokov to Danielewski.*

missing text becomes an empty place that meaning can fill in and becomes a metaphor for the protagonist's fragmented and incomplete self."[278]

These spaces are very important. Although originally presented as large white spaces, they hold a great deal of weight in any interpretation of the text. On several occasions, Boully adds editorial details in footnotes that enrich our imagination of the (absent) main body of text. On page 6, for instance, we can read a note that claims

---

17. Although the narrative is rich with detail and historical accounts, the author is blatantly supplying false information.[279]

Boully's is not simply a suggestion of a main body of work; it also leaves space for a second interpretation of the editorial work needed to decipher the truth concealed in the book. As the reader must make deductions to imagine a main body of text, he or she must also allow another space of interpretation to imagine what others may have interpreted. Footnotes such as

---

* This particular footnote is imagined as being elucidated by a future edition.[280]

show us the level of the incompleteness of *The Body*. As if the book had presented us absences we would not suspect. What was removed from the text hides even more information, so far removed from the author that it renders her abstract in the most confrontational manner:

---

33 [...] All the same, how sad and strange that I, Jenny Boully, should be a sign of a signifier or the signifier of a sign, moreover, the sign of a signifier searching for the signified.[281]

---

[278] Clark, *On the Fine Art of the Footnote from Nabokov to Danielewski.*

[279] Jenny Boully, *The Body,* (Ohio: Essay Press, 2007), 6.

[280] Boully, *The Body,* 13.

[281] Boully, *The Body,* 14.

With this footnote, Boully completes our understanding of the stakes of *The Body*. The text itself, its body, is as abstracted as Boully body's is, her identity. What exists can only be found in-between the cracks of potential interpretation. It is in the space between the text and the note that truth can be found, but since the main text is erased, we are left to understand but a fraction of what can be seen and must offer our own imagination as tool to complete the essay.

But let's turn now to other types of footnoted texts, texts with no footnotes where they should be.

3.17 Main texts without footnotes

After discussing the elimination of the main body of text, we might say something about the elimination of footnotes. Famous examples of such a text or lack thereof are Jacques Ellul's *La Technique ou l'Enjeu du siècle* (1964), in which he declares, "[S]ince books are made to be read and not consulted, I have rejected the scholarly tradition of specifying pages in footnotes."[282] This affront can only be matched by Wittgenstein's explanation: "[T]herefore I will give no sources, because it is indifferent to me whether what I have thought has already been thought before me by another."[283]

The rejection of footnotes, along with the remnants of research, seems to stem from a wholly unabashed intellectual arrogance more than a rejection of conventions. Although the logic behind this behavior could probably be explained as a flippant provocation to the reader to do their own research, there is also a call to trust the author and accept what is said because of the author's

---

[282] Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, (New York: Vintage books, 1964), 437. (Translated by Jonathan Wilkinson)

[283] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1972), 4. (translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness)

inherent authority. By not offering any marks or indication of research or work, we can expect several kinds of reactions on behalf of the reader, the first being the pig-headed path of embarking on personal research about the subject, which, let's be realistic, is a rather drastic and time-consuming decision. On the other hand, if the reader decides not to do their own research, they are bound to completely trust these authors that either the research has been correctly done in the first place or that someone in the editorial staff did it afterwards.

All in all, by turning the tables on footnotes, the author willfully creates a rift between himself and the reader. In fiction, Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1971) and his *Take it or Leave it* (1981) are examples of novels in which the text format recalls the presence of footnotes but without using the very familiar footnote reference.[284] Throughout those novels, there are several examples with fragmented elements of textuality possibly considered para-textual if they'd been indicated as such. Here, the author shows us that only what is presented as a footnote can be thought of as such. Even if the main body of text is squashed to the bottom of the page in reduced-point font, one cannot call it a footnote without the numerical or iconic marker.

While exploring the extreme examples of footnote use, we might as well give ourselves a moment to reflect on the marker without a footnote. This may be due to a habit in our collective pattern recognition, but, when reading Lauren Beukes novel *Moxyland* (2008), we may retain the urge to inspect the bottom of the page each time the author mentions an online persona under the name 'skyward*.' The addition of the asterisk at the end of the name without doubt was added to express the idea that the deigetic user has considered adding a symbol to her name in case of false identification. This puzzles the footnote enthusiast at every evocation. Yet, somehow, even without any appearance of a section at the bottom of the page, every evocation of skyward*'s name directs notice to the bottom of the page. There's a Pavlovian enthusiasm, constantly to be shot down a micro-second later when the reader's memory catches up with the reader's reading reflexes to explain that the * in skyward is not a footnote reference but a random use of the symbol.

---

[284] Such as Anne Carson's *The Albertine Workout*, per example.

In short, the editorial footnote creates several effects when read in conjunction with the main body of text. As we have seen, it can either confirm, reassess or contradict statements made in the main body of text, opening it up to several potential interpretations. The editorial footnote is akin to the process of decoding fiction itself, revealing the process of reading and structure behind the creation of the fiction. The editorial footnote is the architecture of the imagination: scaffolding, layering, enforcement or decoration around the text. By including notes, can the author reveal how the architect's creation, the building, was made, and see how it was decorated.

CHAPTER 4

THE DIEGETIC FOOTNOTE

We are the link in a chain, between the author and the < printed > page...the author has one temperament and we another, the pen has one temperament, and the page has a totally different one...he (=the author) has words, we have the letters and the signs.

-Matan Hermoni, Hebrew Publishing Company.

4.1   The race of footnotes

It has been observed that, since Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605), authors have searched for, and found, countless ways to test the gullibility of the reader. In their craft, their constant innovation, storytellers have explored several diegetic techniques to blur the line between fiction and non-fiction. This quest has affected readers and writers alike, both playing a red queen's gambit in an effort to outsmart one another. Although it is obvious that neither actually truly achieves this end, the artistic techniques aimed at thinning the line between reality and fiction are regularly improved. In effect, writers are becoming more convincing liars, and readers, better detectives. The diegetic footnote is one such attempt to approach the realm of fiction to the readers' current reality. Countless novels have built on the success of others making this technique and its effects more and more convincing, or authentic. In this chapter, we will closely observe uses of the cutting-edge diegetic footnote, one that offers another completely separate diegesis in the novel.

This type of footnote is different from the editorial one insofar as it adds another diegesis to the novel, a path completely different from the one that is being developed in the main diegesis. When presented with the editorial footnote, which always comments on the main story, the reader can always connect the paratext to the text. This is not necessarily the case in diegetic footnotes that can be so interwoven into the text and complex that the reader might be given the

impression that the novel is doubling itself, as if two or more stories were competing for precedence, provoking a wide variety of literary and semiotic effects.

4.2   Notes from the underground

The diegetic footnote will often manifest as the intrusion of another character (or set of characters) in the novel. These additional characters, residing in the footnotes, although existing in the same novel, do not necessarily have anything to do with the main story. In fact, the diegetic characters in footnotes often exist in parallel to the main body of text and are not a post-completion addendum. In the case of the diegetic footnote, the effect encountered is one of two (or more) diegeses being played out quasi-simultaneously within the novel.

In the cases of diegetic footnotes, the novel becomes plural; a story branches out to become several. This plural novel already has caused, in contemporary times, a great deal of debate. Francis Berthelot states: "This principle of the plural novel, where, in addition to the main narrative, other narratives are organized in the peritext (preface, footnotes, comments, bibliography, afterword, etc.), is currently enjoying some success, which is not surprising, given the many possibilities it offers."[285] Berthelot is right to comment on the wide range of possibilities that diegetic footnotes offer for there is a wide assembly of effects that can be attained by their presence, effects that have been manifest in as wide a variety of novels. In recent years, footnotes have become a tool for complex storytelling, often even producing an informal corpus of cult novels by authors who use them in puzzling manners.

Here, we will continue to explore how footnotes affect the main body of fiction but will also be paying close attention to the puzzles created by the use of this type of footnote. The chapter will progress through several types of effects generated by the footnotes, building towards the

---

[285] Francis Berthelot, *Bibliothèque de l'Entre-Mondes, Guide de lecture, les transfictions*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 56. (my translation)

analysis of a novel that incorporates several uses. We will begin by looking at Jose Carlos Somoza's *The Athenian Murders* (2000) and how the diegetic intrusion within the book acts as a commentary on the role of writer and the prison that can represent fiction. In Somoza's novel, the footnote becomes the escape mechanism used by the protagonist to flee the story in which he is held prisoner. This presentation of the footnote further amplifies the idea of infrafiction, where the story reveals holes within itself to be able to reach further inside the hole. We will follow through with the idea of footnotes as holes and tunnels, as shown in Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (2008) and Kaie Kellough's *Accordéon* (2016). Continuing with the idea of a space crafted by the footnote, we will demonstrate how Jasper Fforde's *The Well of Lost Plots* (2004) and Robert Grudin's *Book: A Novel* (1992) exemplify the idea of footnotes as a figurative space where a text can go to exist outside the main body of the page. This space will also allow us to imagine how footnotes have the potential to make the entire structure of a novel come crumbling down under its own weight, culminating with Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), where footnotes are presented as a potential labyrinth inside the fiction, tunnels that contort and misdirect. Two main readings of *House of Leaves* will be presented (Nathalie Hamilton's and N. Katherine Hayles'). The first one focuses on the dizzying effect of fiction, to the point that the readers, similar to the characters in the story, lose their points of reference in this labyrinthine novel. The second one emphasizes the idea of materialism in the novel in a way to show how the work itself is an accumulation of effects subverting the reader's expectations with its blurring of the line between printed work and hypertext.

Diegetic footnotes are the ultimate manifestation of the centrifugal footnote. Within these novels, the diegesis is overflowing, pouring out around the edges of the story and reaching towards various strata of fiction. The diegetic footnotes as strata offer the opportunity to the author to tell the story of multiple characters. When doing this, the novelist allows for each character to inhabit a different stratum of fiction demonstrated by the character's position on the page. The central story unfolds in the main body of text and is flanked by other different stories that exist in the footnotes. If the author includes many layers of footnotes, he allows himself to multiply the number of stories being told in a quasi-simultaneous manner. All along the main

story, the reader does not know for sure if the story within the footnotes will or will not interact with the main body of text, forcing the reader to guess throughout. This superposition can sometimes encourage the reader to search for connections (sometimes there are none) or to find patterns designed (or not) by the author. Since the mind is a sense-making machine, it can even take elements from separate diegeses and combine them, simply because they both occupy the same page. This is a literary game that can be, and often is, exploited by the novelists examined in this chapter. The use of footnotes is a tool for the creation of red herrings and puzzles, labyrinths and paranoia, irrational fears that what exists within the book can somehow leap out from the page and corrupt the reality of the reader. They produce an interpretative space where one can "project his or her own histories and anxieties."[286]

4.3   The Athenian Murders

As we have noted, the effects produced by the centrifugal footnote are wide and varied. Jose Carlos Somoza's *The Athenian Murders* (2001) is an ideal starting point to demonstrate how a note, seemingly used to imitate scholarly purposes, can grow in complexity, and affect the diegesis. This novel involves a typical but complex whodunnit set in Ancient Greece, the intrigue developing shortly after the Peloponnesian War. The murder of the ephebe Tramachus is investigated by Heracles Pontor, a man known for his function as "Decipherer of Enigmas." The plot follows the pattern of a traditional detective novel, until the reader is presented, via footnotes, to a translator hired to do work on *The Athenian Murders*. In the beginning, this translator is understood to be present mainly to offer certain definitions, justifications and insights into terms and expressions. Although the footnotes are presented originally as scholarly, halfway through the novel they change function, and we learn that the unnamed translator has been kidnapped and confined in a cell, captured and reduced by an unknown detainer to be a slave to his work of translating the original Greek text. The function of the footnotes therefore

---

[286] Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory, "Haunted House--an Interview with Mark Z. Danielewski", *Critique*, 44, (2003), 107.

shifts, transforming an informative supplement into a distinct second diegesis, one in which we follow the story of this incarcerated translator who is trying to escape his cell. And so, as readers, we are asked to follow two diegeses: the first one concerning Heracles Pontor's investigation of Tramachus' death, and the second,concerning the imprisonment of the translator by an unknown assailant.

Figure 5.1 Jose Carlos Somoza, *The Athenian Murders*, 147.
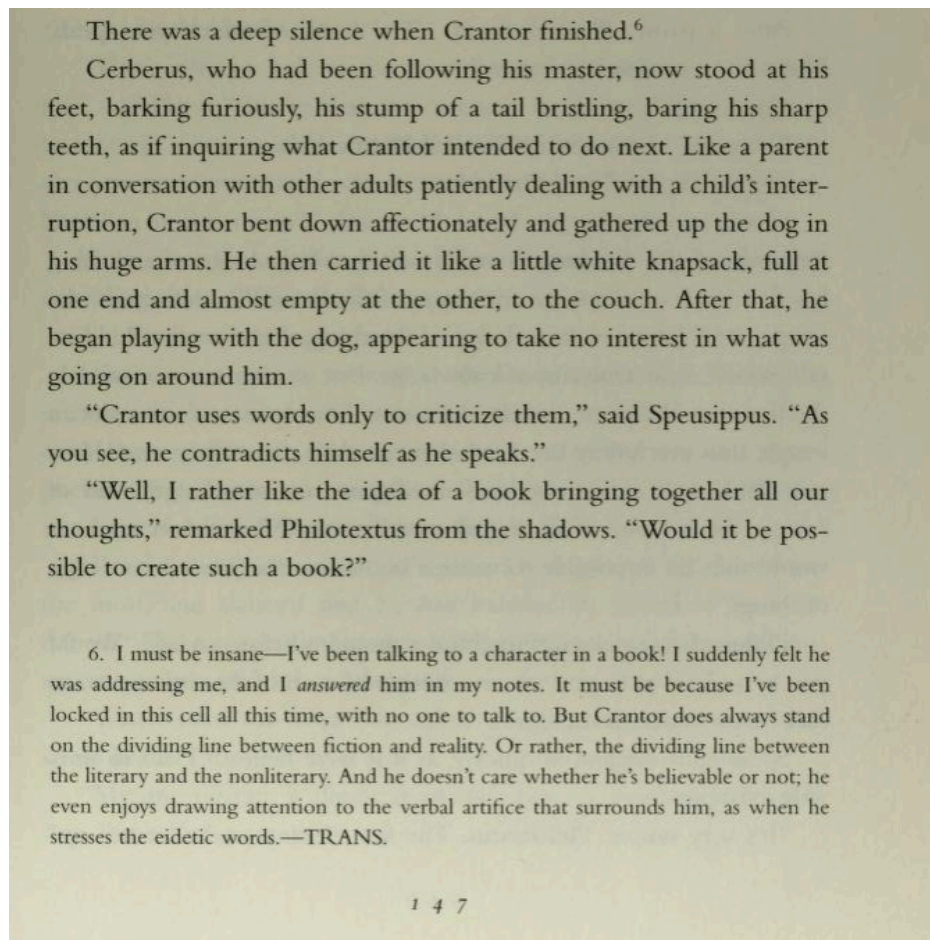
(Transcript: 6. I must be insane — I've been talking to a character in a book? I suddenly felt he was addressing me, and I *answered* him in my notes. It must be because I've been locked in this cell all this time, with no one to talk to. But Crantor does always stand on the dividing line between fiction and reality. Or rather, the dividing line between the literary and the nonliterary. And he doesn't care whether he's believable or not; he even enjoys drawing attention to the verbal artifice that surrounds him, as when he stresses the eidetic words —TRANS.)

For the reader, this type of inclusion increases the *verfremdungseffekt* in the novel, the addition of oddity to the story. This is an example of how the footnote makes strange the story presented and how it also distances the reader from the story. This use of footnotes can be interpreted in many manners. Rosemary Arrojo, who has written extensively on the space offered to the translator, states that a "footnote could arguably be introduced as an appropriate metaphor for the marginal, ambivalent position generally occupied by translators divided between the demands of invisibility prescribed by tradition and their need to be heard and participate in the virtual dialogue with readers."[287]

This understanding that the space occupied by the footnote is revelatory of a dynamic that can be exploited for the purposes of fiction is doubled in an observation made by Klaus Kaindl, when he explains: "the hierarchical tensions between original and translation, the power struggles between author and translator are made particularly visible through the positioning of the main text and footnote text."[288]

Suffice to say, the connection linking the footnotes to the translator is an obvious fit. On the one hand, it makes the presence of the translator explicit. It also opens a space to complexify and even ambiguate the connection between the work, the writer and the translator. This is quite obviously what Somoza was aiming for in his novel, and to great avail.

Borrowing from the Platonic idea referred to in the Spanish title (*La caverna de las ideas*[289]) *The Athenian Murders* seems to suggest that, when the reader pays only attention to the diegesis, he or she is simply paying attention to the shadows on the wall of the cave. Like those shadows, the diegesis is simply a distraction that pulls us away from understanding what is it that creates these shadows in the first place. In this case, the translator is the source since he brings us the story.

---

[287] Rosemary Arrojo, *Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation Through Literature*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 38.

[288] Klaus Kaindl, "The Centrality of the Margins: The Translator's Footnote as Parergon", in *The Translator's Footnote as Parergon in Transfiction and Bordering Approaches to Theorizing Translation: Essays in Dialogue with the Work of Rosemary Arrojo*. (New York, Routledge, 2022), 32.

[289] The Cavern of Ideas.

But it cannot be that simple, for the translator in the story is also part of the story. He is included in the novel; he is also a shadow. The true source of the shadow is the writer behind it all, the one who manipulates the fabric of the story to create the shadows that entertain us in the first place. It is the writer that holds the power to create space in the story necessary to include another stratum of the diegesis. Although the diegetic footnote may appear like a simple fiction-based trickery, its existence implies a complex world-making, as in a M. C. Escher's drawing. This weaving must be done carefully and comprehensively, the risk of miscalculating is great, and the consequences of spoiling the effect are dire.

This use also doubles the plot. On one level, we are preoccupied with the story of a murder; on the other, by a kidnapping. Clued in by certain hints from the translator, we are made to believe that both these plots somehow connect with each other. This may appear odd since one of the stories is set in Ancient Greece, but the *eideitic* clues explained in the novel as "a literary technique invented by the Ancient Greeks to transmit secret messages or keys in their works. It consists in repeating, in any text, metaphors or words that, when identified by a perceptive reader, make up an idea or image that's independent of the original text." [290] These clues are disseminated throughout the original manuscript to incite the reader to believe that there is a connection between both stories as if the realm of fiction could affect the life of the translator. The stories act as a two-way street, the translator affected by the novel, the novel affected by the translator. Although thematic in the novel, this type of contamination is also an expression of the fact that footnotes can affect our understanding of the main body of text and vice-versa. Since the translator firmly believes that there is a connection, as readers we will also allow ourselves to be open to the idea that clues from one diegesis can inform the other, even though, let us not forget, both stories are clearly separated in temporality and in plot. Somoza seems to want to exploit our willingness to create connections, albeit fictional ones, between both realms of fiction. And while we are left scratching our heads to make sense of this paradox, the author stands amused by his craft and how it plays with us like puppets.

---

[290] Jose Carlos Somoza, *The Athenian Murders*, (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2002) p. 36.

154

Additionally, in the final footnote of the novel, Somoza adds a conversation between the two main characters present in the footnotes: the translator and Montalo, a fool, responsible for the translator's imprisonment. In their discussion, Montalo explains that his intent is to fulfill a challenge made by Plato to Philotexte regarding crafting a story that includes the five platonic elements of wisdom. The first two elements are plain to express: the name of things and their definitions are included in the main body of text. The third one is also quite quickly dealt with through the creation of the concept of eidesis (revealed not to have its origins in ancient Greece but simply crafted for this novel by necessity). Montalo can craft images that do not solely rely on definitions. The images crafted through this idea depend more on the reader's imagination than on the description by the author, therefore accomplishing the third element. As for the fourth, an intellectual conversation, Montalo declared this to be the most difficult. He resorted to creating two characters outside of the story, able to converse. It is only with the use of footnotes that Montalo (or Somoza) was able to implement the fourth element of wisdom. By investing a space outside of the main story, which two other characters can inhabit, Montalo was able to present a dialogue about the main story, without the dialogue being integrated in the story, a true space for independence and discussion.

The final element is the idea in itself, presented as the research done by the characters and the reader equally in the goal of finding the solution to the problem within the novel. As a double detective story, one taking place in ancient Greece, while the other is a mystery surrounding the sequestration, Montalo makes sure that the reader is challenged enough to search for the idea itself. He accomplishes his task and gives reason to Philotexte, humiliating Plato in the act.

4.4   Holes

The idea that there is a connection between the strata of fiction, notably through footnotes, supposes then that there is a passage between these spaces. Through the idea of these imagined passages, we can also imagine that the diegetic footnote sometimes acts like a hole inside the

diegesis: not a hole in the form of an absence, but a hole as a tunnel, a way to slip outside of the principal text and fall into a second one. In this regard, footnotes render the text porous, filling its main body with holes that can be explored like secret passageways to imaginary lands, as the wardrobe in Narnia.[291] They appear as paths through which we pass to explore a liminal space. Although footnotes quite clearly expose the texts' interconnectivity, they also present the diegesis as constantly prone to investigation. In Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials* (2008), the novel is read by a character who appears in the footnotes. A fictionalized version of the author explains that a hole

> speed up and triggers a particular subversion in solid bodies [...] It unfolds holes as ambiguous entities - oscillating between surface and depth - within solid matrices, fundamentally corrupting the latter's consolidation and wholeness through perforations and terminal porosities. For a solid body, the vermiculation of holes undermines the coherence between the circumferal [sic] surfaces and its solidity.[292]

This description of holes in the terrain, explained as a (w)hole theory in the novel, inspires many ideas about how one could treat footnotes in a novel. The footnote (the hole) and the body of text do have this type of relationship, wherein the first can puncture through the second and subvert it. As we have seen, contradictions within the text can emerge when there is a difference of proposition between what is presented in footnotes and what is told in the main body of text. This can be said equally about burrowed terrains, pristine on the surface but riddled with tunnels underfoot into which we might fall if we happen to walk over them.

To further the comparison, footnotes are simultaneously textual surface and depth. They are a textual element, but through their disposition on the page, they take on characteristics of submission to the main body. Thus, they do not only exist in the lower part of the page, they make their presence be known by the symbol affixed to a word, the call to note that is the entrance of

---

[291] C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1950)

[292] Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, (Melbourne: re-press, 2008), 43.

the tunnel that unites the main body of text to the footnote. But this connection is also that through which the disruptive element makes itself known. The call to note, be it numerical or iconic, is the true origin of the disruption in the text. The punctured surface of the text leads to another surface, another diegesis that operates on its own but can also potentially disrupt the surface above. This parallel in between the footnote and its evocation of territory is explained by Nicola Masciandaro in his article "Becoming Spice":

> Commentary likewise does not break its text, but preserves its integrity, shaping itself to it even in the midst of digging through it interlinearly and dwarfing, dominating it circumferentially. Something of the phenomenal earthiness of this complex relation is captured by our tendency to speak both of footnotes as *mines* and of *mining* footnotes. Commentary lets the text be a text and furthermore brings it into the open as self-secluding in the sense of presenting itself, not as some transparent medium for seeing behind or underneath it, but as further text.[293]

To pursue this idea further, footnotes cannot simply appear anywhere; their location is precise and calculated. In no way can footnotes be removed or affixed to another word without an effect on the text, which will also become altered. In this regard, footnotes can only exist where there is space in the text for them. This space is what Wolgang Iser calls *Gestalten* or the "place needed for interpretation."[294] The mark of the footnote is the first sign of a potential Gestalten in footnote form: when we see it, we can deviate from our general reading, as it opens up a place where interpretation can occur.

Sarah E. Truman pursues the occult dimension in Negarestani's novel when she describes the citation in the following manner:

> Citation as a spell, a conjuring, a summoning: the word "cite' comes the Latin citare 'to summon, urge, call; put in sudden motion, call forward; excite' (Online Etymology Dictionary) But what if those summoned don't want to be called? Could a textual

---

[293] Nicola Masciandaro, "Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy", *Collapse*, VI, (2010), 35.

[294] Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response, (*Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978)

reference resist the summoning? What if the citation is a 'diversity and inclusion' citation? What if the author is tired, dead, or they don't want to be mis-cited and used?

Citation as resource extraction (Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes):* we do citations resources and they are extracted from other texts, often violently.

Citation as a wormhole: connecting different space-times and worlds.

Citation as poltergeist: haunting the paper and haunting the citer. An absent presence. A promise. A debt.[295]

This way of understanding the footnote amplifies feelings of malaise that comes following contact with something forbidden. The footnote becomes occult in both senses, something arcane and mystical but also which can be revealed but only at a price.

A footnote that appears in a context that needs no explanation is superfluous but never unnecessary, for that expendability can be a part of the effect. By sliding in between spaces of interpretation, footnotes exploit the space in between words to link themselves to another stratum of fiction. In following the footnote, we take momentary leave of the main text and lose ourselves (sometimes briefly, sometimes for quite a while) in the inner workings of the fiction.
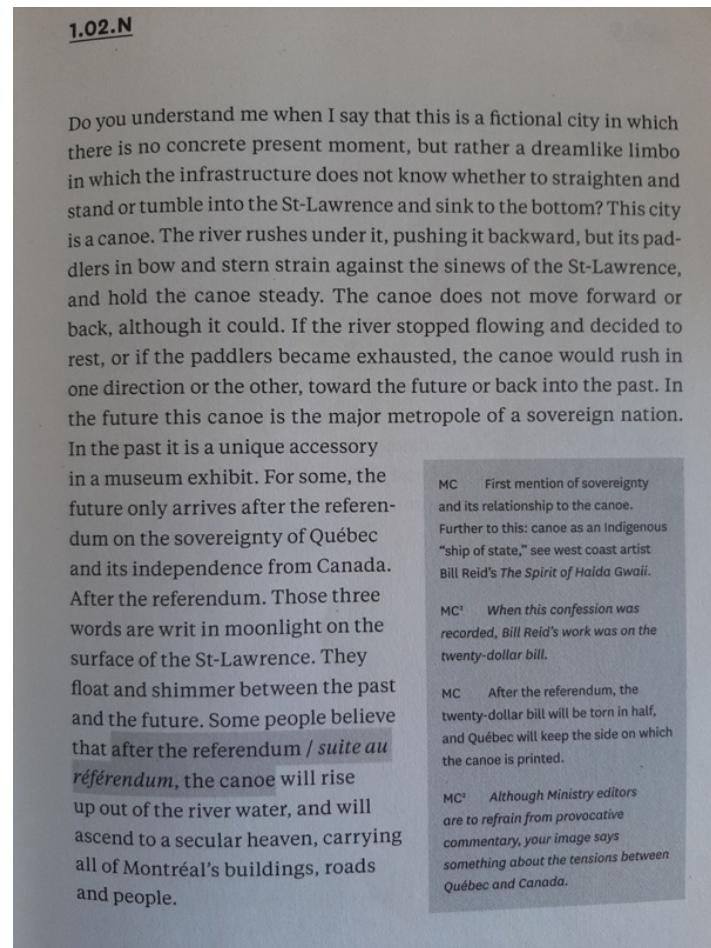
The novel *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006) comes to mind. In this book, the author makes use of the footnote to insert seemingly random complementary information in the text. One such occurrence happens when the protagonist attempts to spit a watermelon seed into a hole in the ground. The footnote leads to further information on the record-breaking, 69-foot, 11 inches spit affected by Jim Dietz in 1978. This complement of information is neither needed nor called for, but it is surely appreciated for those small-talk conversations. The footnote appears to be a useless complement of information, but calling it useless does not necessarily mean it is useless, only the information inserted there. What is not useless is the idea that we are exposed to a tidbit of random information possessed by the protagonist, and we are to imagine that he possesses

---

[295] Sarah E. Truman, *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation: Writing Pedagogies and Intertextual Effects*, (New York: Routledge, 2021), 62.

further selected pieces of arbitrary knowledge. The footnote is a digression but is used to illustrate the mind-state of the protagonist of the book.

This idea of the footnote as a hole in fiction can be presented in many ways. Also, varying manners of displaying footnotes can offer different interpretations of the idea of holes and tunneling. For example, a footnote marked with a number evokes the idea that there will be more further along in the text, as ones marked with an asterisk can give the impression of a one-time scenario. An unusual symbol confounds the understanding of what we are being presented with. There are many types of call to footnote that can be read in various manners. This is the case with Kaie Kellough's *Accordéon* (2016), which takes its own approach to the display of footnotes, the annotated text highlighted in grey and therefore visually connected to another section of the page equally greyed but encompassing the comments. The final design looks like this:

Figure 5.2 Kaie Kellough, *Accordéon*, (non-paginated).

1.02.N

Do you understand me when I say that this is a fictional city in which there is no concrete present moment, but rather a dreamlike limbo in which the infrastructure does not know whether to straighten and stand or tumble into the St-Lawrence and sink to the bottom? This city is a canoe. The river rushes under it, pushing it backward, but its paddlers in bow and stern strain against the sinews of the St-Lawrence, and hold the canoe steady. The canoe does not move forward or back, although it could. If the river stopped flowing and decided to rest, or if the paddlers became exhausted, the canoe would rush in one direction or the other, toward the future or back into the past. In the future this canoe is the major metropole of a sovereign nation. In the past it is a unique accessory in a museum exhibit. For some, the future only arrives after the referendum on the sovereignty of Québec and its independence from Canada. After the referendum. Those three words are writ in moonlight on the surface of the St-Lawrence. They float and shimmer between the past and the future. Some people believe that after the referendum / *suite au référendum*, the canoe will rise up out of the river water, and will ascend to a secular heaven, carrying all of Montréal's buildings, roads and people.

MC First mention of sovereignty and its relationship to the canoe. Further to this: canoe as an Indigenous "ship of state," see west coast artist Bill Reid's *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii*.

MC¹ When this confession was recorded, Bill Reid's work was on the twenty-dollar bill.

MC After the referendum, the twenty-dollar bill will be torn in half, and Québec will keep the side on which the canoe is printed.

MC² Although Ministry editors are to refrain from provocative commentary, your image says something about the tensions between Québec and Canada.

(Transcript: **MC** First mention of sovereignty and its relationship to the canoe. Further to this: canoe as an indeginous "ship of state" see west coast artist Bill Reid's *The Spirit of Haida Gwaii.*
MC¹ When this confession was recorded, Bill Reid's work was on the twenty-dollar bill.
MC After the referendum, the twenty-dollar bill will be torn in half and Québec will keep the side on which the canoe is printed.
MC¹ Although Ministry editors are to refrain from provocative commentary, your image says something about the tension between Québec and Canada)

Although the format which Kellough uses here does not concord with the habitual disposition of footnotes, the elements are disposed in a formal manner that does not upset the concept of footnotes presented in this analysis. Accordéon's technique is reminiscent of David Foster Wallace's piece "*Host*",[296] published by *The New Yorker* in which the call to note does not present

---

[296] David Foster Wallace, "Host*", The Atlantic*, 2005,
https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/04/host/303812/

itself with a symbol but with a color, leaving the symbols to signify characters in the novel. In *Accordéon*, MC and MC^2 are ministry officials tasked with tracking dissident elements in Quebec culture. Both live in footnotes and exchange ideas about their work, their past and even their ideologies. Both characters work in a hollow section of Mount Royal (adding weight to this idea of footnotes as holes), a mountain in downtown Montreal that is used as headquarters for an organization that spies on French revolutionaries in the province. Although they are shielded from having contact with the outside world, both these operatives end up expressing different emotions regarding their work. In fact, the novel ends around the moment when MC quits his job and leaves the footnotes entirely, a strongly poetic twist of events in which we are meant to understand that the civil servant is fed up with living in the margins of society and decides to quit being a footnote. He leaves the novel to explore the richness of existence as the main character of his own story, in another novel quite possibly. As the story becomes affected by the materiality of the page, what catches the reader's eye is how the design of the footnotes alters our way of decoding. This observation becomes quite intriguing since the call to note is not simply a discreet number but a blotch of grey sieging on chunks of narration. This manner of presenting the footnoted space functions well with the theme of surveillance in the novel. Both employees mark the text like a giant spotlight that shows that the sections have been analyzed, proofread and catalogued. The wandering thought does not appear at the end of a reflection but during the process of musing on the event. Kellough's way of visualizing the footnote amplifies the theme of the work and makes explicit this idea of differentiated spaces on the page. This presentation of the footnote truly lands the idea of Foucault's heterotopia, a space that is other but still manages to affect or transform what exists outside it.

4.5   Footnotes as space

Continuing this exploration of footnotes as diegetic holes, we must now take a moment to look at works of fiction in which the footnote is an actual space: not simply a passage, a hole or a tunnel but a complex fictional space. The footnotes in Fforde's *The Well of Lost Plots* and Robert

Grudin's *Book: A Novel* make footnotes a travelable and livable space for text. In both novels, the footnote is an occupied territory.

Although Fforde is well known for his narrative experimentations in his Tuesday Next series, it is in the third installment, *The Well of Lost Plots* (2004)*,* that footnotes take center stage. In the novel, the author presents his footnotes as tunnels in fiction. Named the "footnoterphone," the footnotes in the series are used as conduits to deliver messages within the diegesis, without knowledge from the characters residing in the main body of text. The Jurisfiction Guide to the Great Library describes the "footnoterphone" in the following way:

> Although the idea of using footnotes as a communications medium was suggested by Dr Faustus as far back as 1622, it wasn't until 1856 that the first practical footnoterphone was demonstrated. By 1895 an experimental version was built into *Hard Times*, and within the next three years most of Dickens was connected. The system was expanded rapidly, culminating in the first trans-genre trunk line, opened with much fanfare in 1915 between *Human Drama* and *Crime*. The network has been expanded and improved ever since, but just recently the advent of the mass junkfootnoterphones and the deregulation of news and entertainment channels have almost clogged the system. A mobile footnoterphone network was introduced in 1985.[297]

What is clear here is that Jasper Fforde amuses himself with the history of footnotes, adding that Christopher Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* was a trial run for the footnoterphone, followed up by Charles Dickens' *Hard Times*.[298] In *The Well of Lost Plots*, footnotes are similar to the modern mobile phone, present everywhere and mostly adding to the ambient noise of daily life but nonetheless connecting everything through a mass communication channel. The footnoterphone is the main method of communication inside the fiction but left unrevealed (or shown) by the actors in the

---

[297] Jasper Fforde, *The Well of Lost Plots*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003), 45.

[298] Although no version of *Hard Times* seems to corroborate this hypothesis, Michael Hollington's *The Reception of Charles Dickens in Europe* explains: "The only sound translation of the first chapters of *Hard Times* so far is in an anthology edited by Nikos Balis in 1979. The anthology, which comprises excerpts from foreign studies on educational matters, opens with long quotations from *Hard Times* translated by the editor and accompanied by extensive and enlightening explanatory footnotes on the novel's critique of the educational system in Dickens' time." in Michael Hollington, *The Reception of Charles Dickens in Europe*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2003), 555.

story. Like a Production Assistant with a megaphone on a movie set, footnotes can be used to order around extras within the story to act in accordance with the supposed diegesis.

In Fforde's series, the characters are part of a division called Jurisfiction that polices the diegesis of books, ensuring that plot and endings remain the same and that novels do not fall prey to the attacks of fiction-terrorists. With the completion of several dangerous tasks and throughout the sequence of books, Tuesday Next skips from promotion to promotion; in *The Well of Lost Plots* (2004), she joins The Literary Detectives, the agency responsible for dealing with forged or stolen manuscripts and works of literature. With this position comes access to certain organizational facilities, namely to the physical tunnels that represent footnotes. Towards the end of *The Well of Lost Plots* (2004), Tuesday Next meets Vernham Deane, who encourages her to "empty your mind. We're going to go *abstract.*"[299] Here is an example of a conversation entirely placed in footnotes that goes on to explain this new space:

---

[23] The Jurisfiction office vanished and was replaced by a large and shiny underground tube. It was big enough to stand up in but even so I had to keep pressed against the wall as a constant stream of words flashed past in both directions. Above us another pipe was leading upwards, and every now and then a short stream of words was diverted into this small conduit.
'Where are we?' I asked, my voice echoing about the steel walls.
'Somewhere quite safe,' replied Deane. 'They'll be wondering where you went.'
'We're in Outland - I mean, home?'
Deane laughed
'No silly - we're in the footnoterphone conduits.'
I looked at the stream of messages again.
'We are?'
'Sure'
'Come on, let me show you something.'
We walked along the pipe until it opened out into a bigger room - a hub where messages went from one genre to the next. The exits closest to me were marked 'Crime', 'Romance', 'Thriller' and 'Comedy', but there were plenty more, all routeing the footnoterphone messages towards some sub-genre or another.
'It's incredible!' I breathed.
'Oh, this is just the small hub,' replied Deane, 'you should see the bigger ones. It all works on the ISBN number system, you know - and the best thing about it is that neither Text Grand Central nor the Council of Genres knows that you can get down here. It's sanctuary, Tuesday. Sanctuary away from the prying eyes of Jurisfiction and the rigidity of the narrative."[300]

---

[299] Fforde, *The Well of Lost Plots*, 321.

[300] Fforde, *The Well of Lost Plots*, 321-322.

The Well of Lost Plots not only presents footnotes as a place where diegetic characters can travel through the fiction, something akin to a backstage section for fiction, but also explains that it is a space reserved and hidden from the main body of text. This space is useful for the coherence of the diegesis, as if the backstage of fiction were always rumbling with movement and work to keep the entire fictional illusion functional. By extrapolating on this idea, one could imagine that all fiction has this space used to keep the infrastructure of the story working; it is just up to the author to hide or reveal it to the reader. The image here is something akin to a puppeteer showing or not showing the puppet's strings or someone turning around in a cavern full of shadows to see what is causing all that movement. Footnotes become the structure that is needed to keep the fiction coherent: a backstage to the novel, if you will.

In quite a surprising fashion, Robert Grudin's *Book: A Novel* reversed most preconceptions on the use of footnotes by presenting them as characters in their own right. In the novel, as the diegesis about the mysterious disappearance of a writer progresses, we are witness to a type of communication between footnotes. As if they possessed an identity within the diegesis. In Grudin's book footnotes are characters and therefore act as if they are personified, allowing them to comment on the diegesis in this manner

_____

[9] I must join Footnotes 6, 7 and 8 in questioning the propriety remarks made by professors during this meeting. I have myself been a footnote for over two hundred years. I have loyally obeyed the conscience, and satisfied the whims, of humanists from the Augustan age down through the twentieth century. But this is going too far. This sort of behavior jargonizes and ideologizes language to satisfy political interest and indulge personal neurosis, until language no longer makes sense. And if language loses its openness, its potential for impartiality, then culture will rot from within.

If this goes on much longer, we may have to take steps.[301]

Footnotes, therefore, need to be understood as diegetic forces in *Book: A Novel.* Not only are they an apparatus, but they are also actors in the forging of fiction, actors with intent and

_____

[301] Grudin, *Book: A Novel*, p. 70.

ideologies, that hold the power to resist certain liberties taken by the author. In *Book*, the footnotes have agency. Obviously, what is declared has consequences and when the author decides to disregard the footnotes, certain actions are taken:

[13] You all ready? Good. At the count of three, now. ONE
[14] TWO
[15] THREE! We're going in!
[16] DOWN WITH JARGON!
[17] I'M AS MAD AS HELL, AND I'M NOT GOING TO TAKE IT ANYMORE.
[18] TAKE SOME OF YOUR OWN MEDECINE, YOU SUPEREROGATORY, SEMPITERNAL, HEAUTONTIMORUMENICAL SYCOPHANT!
[19] ARE WE DISRUPTIVE OR ARE WE?
[20] HEY, I THINK WE'RE IN CONTROL. LET'S TAKE OVER THE WHOLE TEXT AND RID IT FOREVER OF[302]

In this agile gag referencing both Monty Python's *Holy Grail* (1975), the Llama uprising in the opening-credits and Paddy Chayefsky's famous Howard Beale speech from *Network* (1976), the footnotes' unrest blows into a full-blown uprising on page 71, when the footnotes declare war on the main body of text. This revolt is quickly squashed on page 73, when there appears a page with "Technical difficulties Please stand by" written on it.

This failed revolution shows us that there is no overtaking the main body of text, even by footnotes. If such an uprising would be possible, they would replace the main body of text, and potentially new footnotes would emerge to comment on this. Like the fears felt towards most revolutions, the oppressed would end up taking the place of the oppressor with very little change.

All in all, what is fascinating in this example is the importance Grudin bestows on this pesky presence. Footnotes are not only used for editorial or diegetic presence; they actually are editors and characters in the story. Furthermore, the novel prevents them from encroaching on the story itself as if it is defending itself from their disruptive appearance. This raises plenty of questions

---

[302] Grudin, *Book: A Novel*, p.71.

about the status of footnotes, especially with an old question we have ventured to answer in earlier chapters.

4.6   Who is writing this? (part 2)

From Somoza's footnotes to Fforde's, the question of "who is writing this" becomes salient. As it is the case with these novels, the layers of fiction add to the centrifugal effect and push us to wonder once more whose voice is heard in the notes. For example, novels such as *Beat the Reaper* (2008), by Josh Bazell, ensure that the reader is completely unable to decipher whether footnotes are supposed to come from the writer or the character, and this is one of the rare books that offers this challenge. We know by the back-cover biography that Josh Bazell, actual author of the novel, is a writer who is also a health specialist, exactly like the protagonist Dr. Peter Brown in the novel. Hence, the complement of information offered in footnotes can simultaneously be produced by the protagonist's inner monologue or by the author's, with whom he shares a profession. This becomes puzzling throughout the reading of the novel, since we are absolutely unable to pinpoint with certainty who is behind the declarations being read. Although we know for sure that the author wrote it, it becomes complicated to say with certainty whether it's the character or the author who is the voice behind the footnotes. This allows the possibility of imagining that the implicit author is the one recounting the story and that the biographical Bazell is commentating on the telling of the story through footnotes. In this example, the footnotes inform the reader of the existence of a persona who, as Shari Benstock clarifies, "speaks in the guise of the author therefore plays a double role existing in the narrative (he is "fiction" as Booth and Iser remind us) but continually expanding its boundaries to include the reader."[303]

We must add to this the fact that the protagonist somehow narrates as if the story is a confession. In *Beat the Reaper*, the author sometimes pauses to offer an aside to the reader, something akin

---

[303] Benstock, "At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text", 207.

to a breaking of the fourth wall. These asides are disseminated throughout the story in footnotes as if Bazell had taken the time to add them at a later moment, after the book was written. It is not strange for fiction to play with the reader, but it is an interesting effect when paired with footnotes. In the following excerpt, the protagonist must explain to another character the ordeal surrounding his incarceration. To do this, he must speak of other characters implicated in the story. One of them, called Tits, becomes the subject of a footnote. It goes as follows:

> *Look, I'm sorry to call her "Tits" but everybody did. Even the prosecution, including one time in court, though it mysteriously failed to appear in the transcript.[304]

Presented as an aside, what we have here is the inclusion of Bazell as an extra-diegetic presence who feels he needs to clarify choices made by the author to the reader. This appeal to the reader becomes rather suspicious when comparing the layers of fiction in the book. If footnotes give the illusion of belonging to a closer stratum than the main body of the text, and the main body presents itself as a book that can be read by characters in the book, where do footnotes belong? These types of literary puzzles can sometimes obfuscate the reading or befuddle as to what is indeed true or not.

Such an effect can be further understood by taking into consideration Rabinowitz' suggestion: "In the proper reading of a novel, then, events which are portrayed must be treated as both 'true' and 'untrue' at the same time."[305] To clarify, Rabinowitz lists four types of audiences: the actual audience; the authorial audience; the narrative audience and the ideal narrative audience. Although scholarly footnotes serve the authorial audience, it is often used to provide more information. But when presented with diegetic footnotes, the reader witnesses this as a confrontation between the authorial audience and the narrative audience. The narrative audience is the imitation of the audience, present in the diegetic footnote at the bottom of the page, in this case taking on the voice of Bazell commentating on the story already written. Although both of these audiences are hypothetical, every layer of fiction adds a narrative

---

[304] Josh Bazell, *Beat the Reaper*, (New York: Little Brown, 2009), 222-223.

[305] Rabinowitz, *Truth in Fiction*, 5.

audience that affects the other narrative audiences and the original authorial narrative in different ways. Every time a new stratum of footnote is added, someone new is potentially reading the story. This process adds layers of fiction but also diegetic audiences to the fiction, forcing us to wonder: Who is writing this? This multiplication of audiences, authorial and narrative can lead to some very complex readings. With our current understanding of the complexity that footnotes can engender when imagining audiences, coupled with the idea of the space of the footnote and the stratification of characters, we can now begin our exploration of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), which combines all these effects.

4.7   House of Leaves

House of Leaves is Mark Z. Danielewski's breakthrough debut novel and, since its publication in 2000, has become unavoidable in the studies of footnotes in fiction. The fragmented novel tells the story of Johnny Truant, an angst ridden, problem-magnet, down-on-his-luck young man who, through a series of accidental events, stumbles upon the reading notes of an old blind man named Zampanó that focus on a documentary entitled *The Navidson Records*. The documentary constitutes the home-movie type investigation of a family whose house is mysteriously bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. *House of Leaves* is a novel that functions with multiple strata; the central document is Zampanó's description of *The Navidson Records* and his comments on it. The reader is also presented with additional text composed of Truant's autobiographical interjections; a transcript of Navidson's brother Tom's film; interviews with many people about *The Navidson Record*, by Karen, who lived in the house, and occasional brief notes from unidentified editors, all interwoven in a plethora of footnotes and end documents. With its sheer number of footnotes, the novel is impossible to pass over when addressing the effect that footnotes can provoke on a reader of fiction.

The novel has been read in many manners, most famously as a literary labyrinth and as a remediated novel. What remains outstanding about both these readings is that they are but

faintly preoccupied about the content of the novel but pay greater attention to the disposition of the textual elements on the page and how these choices alter interpretation. Both these readings are interested in how the presentation of the story reveals something about the diegesis itself. Although there is a lot to be said about the story through a literary lens, both readings focus mainly on the semiotic aspect of the book.

The first reading of *House of Leaves* that is often encountered concerns its labyrinthine aspect. The labyrinth is the central figure used to describe the novel in Natalie Hamilton's analysis *The A-Mazing House: The Labyrinth as Theme and Form in Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*, in which she explains: "Readers become trapped in the corridors of this house, diachronically experiencing the maze of the text, which is fragmented and provides limited vision of what is to come. The reader of such a text soon becomes disoriented."[306]

This disorientation is the author's desired effect, for it resounds profoundly with the theme of the book. In *The Navidson Records*, the family's observation that their house is bigger on the inside than the outside entices them to explore seemingly unending hallways and tunnels in their house. This parallels the exploration of the reader who must make sense of the disposition of the novel that also plays with fonts, spacing, orientation, colors and display to present the idea of textual labyrinth. Hamilton explains that when reading *House of Leaves*: "The reader who chooses to follow the footnotes as they are presented in the narrative is forced to flip pages back and forth to earlier footnotes and later appendices, often rereading passages (or retreading corridors already traveled)."[307] Navigating *House of Leaves* can sometimes demand unusual physical manipulation of the book; this is a destabilizing factor for we are rarely demanded to flip over, reverse, advance and return, reread and construe hidden words as a reader. In this regard, *House of Leaves* summarizes the characteristics of what Espen Aarseth called "ergodic literature",

---

[306] Natalie Hamilton, "The A-Mazing House: The Labyrinth as Theme and Form in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 50, (2008), 14.

[307] Hamilton, *The A-Mazing House,* 14.

In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text. If ergodic literature is to make sense as a concept, there must also be nonergodic literature, where the effort to traverse the text is trivial, with no extranoematic responsibilities placed on the reader except (for example) eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages.[308]

The label of ergodic literature has been applied to many works of fiction, ranging from Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* to Milorad Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars* and to J. J. Abrams' and Doug Dorst's *S.* Brian W. Chanen applies the idea of ergodic literature to *House of Leaves*:

it is a text that requires physical effort on the part of the reader. Just as the exploration of a labyrinth requires physical effort, it takes physical effort to follow the paths within the chapter: the book needs to be turned sideways and upside down in order to read certain notes and the callouts (the numbered footnote references) can send the reader backward and forward within the chapter and beyond to other chapters, the appendix, and thus to other notes in these places as well. The footnotes form an explicit linking to the nest of texts swirling around *House of Leaves.*[309]

There is an obvious pull when reading to try and make sense of this maze. In order to avoid being lost, readers may systematize what they are reading by believing that there are four main narratives to the story: The Navidson Records, Zampanò's commentary, Truant's narrative and the additional comments by the unidentified editors. Danielewski constantly undermines the hierarchy of the stories by linking them at unexpected moments. There is no way to keep track; reading *House of Leaves* demands we abandon the search for coherence, since the text and the textual apparatus are against the reader, everything functioning in harmony to confuse us. One important example is how footnotes even fold into each other at several points, notably with note 146 that runs through all even-numbered pages from page 120 to page 134. Note 147 is called at the end of note 146, and is flipped, written backwards on page 135 and continuing on the odd pages to page 121, completing a loop. To the figure of the labyrinth is added the figure of the Möbius strip, a geometrical form that is a "two-

---

[308] Espen J. Aarseth, *Cybertext—Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 1–2.

[309] Brian W. Chanen, "Surfing the Text. The digital environment in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 11, (2007), 169.

dimensional object that has sneaked into our three-dimensional world,"[310] which is also an interesting way to comprehend the novel and its uses of centrifugal footnotes.

All this destabilization creates an unfamiliarity regarding the story, making it strange and unusual, disorienting, exploiting Freud's *unheimlich* by concentrating its efforts and every resource on its being a story, provoking this feeling of uneasiness. The labyrinth is a mythological space of terror; within it roam monsters and the crippling fear of being lost and forgotten. *House of Leaves* thematizes this fear, the characters in the story live in it and the reader brushes up against it often while trying to understand the novel. Hamilton explains:

> The terror experienced by the characters at all levels of the novel is made more immediate for the reader because of the bizarre and unfamiliar typography of the book, which not only delays apprehension of the various plots through constant diversion but also makes the act of reading the novel an unfamiliar experience. The suspense is extended from the content of the plot to the form of the novel itself.[311]

What the reader experiences is the complex task of organizing what the author is presenting. Like Will Navidson's trek through the long hallways of his house, the reader must make sense of the orientation of the book and find a coherent direction. Doing this demands a rational hold on the book, a hold that often is given to be immediately taken away afterwards, thus prolonging the need for points of reference even though they are few and far between. Though readers may see and then use familiar textual elements, such as footnotes as a way to make sense of the novel, they are nevertheless stuck in indecisiveness, for the rational authority of the footnote fails in many ways. The reader can simply not trust what he knows about reading when presented with this uncanny text. This incredulity is paralleled within the book, as Will Navidson burns pages of the book itself when exploring the impossible hallways of his own home. Which goes to show that even the characters of the novel cannot believe what they are reading.

---

[310] Francisco Doménech, "Möbius and Impossible Objects", *Open Mind BVA*, 2018, https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/science/mathematics/mobius-and-impossible-objects/

[311] Hamilton, *The A-Mazing House,* 14.

Nele Bemong clarifies this by explaining that the novel "incorporates the meta-narrative perspective of theory and criticism."[312] This addition further complicates the search for a map to escape the maze of the story. *House of Leaves* folds into itself and even self-reflexively deconstructs its own processes in a manner that brazenly evokes the idea behind Raymond Federman's critifiction, described as "a kind of narrative that contains its own theory and even its own criticism."[313] Danielewski integrates this idea of critifiction in many ways in the novel, notably in the footnotes that offer paths of interpretation that can be useful for the reader. For example, note 166 name-drops Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*, and note 167 quotes Edgar Allan Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*, explicitly presenting some influences that we may deem important in the writing of *House of Leaves*.

Federman's idea of critifiction spawns from his exploration of surfiction, a type of writing that does not concern itself with realism but aims towards metafictional effects such as self-consciously advertising its own fictional status. Federman's ideal in surfiction is to offer some type of new fiction which, "will not attempt to be meaningful, truthful, or realistic."[314] Critifiction posits that postmodernism is dead and therefore becomes a way for the story to look at itself in an englobing manner, absorbing even the greatest ideas about one's own work and turning them against the text. This is explicitly the case when we come to understand the use of footnotes in *House of Leaves*: the addition of this type of textual apparatus aims to comment and deconstruct what could be understood as truth within the diegesis. Therefore, "Danielewski's footnotes invite the reader into a labyrinth of critifictional playfulness, inquiring what is true and what is a lie, what is fiction and what is fact."[315]

---

[312] Nele Bemong, "Exploration #6: The Uncanny in Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *Image & Narrative*, issue 5, 2003, https://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/uncanny/nelebemong.htm

[313] Emory Elliot, "Centrifiction", in *The Columbia Literary History of the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1154

[314] Raymond Federman, *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*, (Ohio: Swallow press, 1975), 3.

[315] Michael Hemmingson, "What's Beneath the Floorboards: Three Competing Metavoices in the Footnotes of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves"*, *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 52, (2011), 276.

A final thought about the reading of *House of Leaves* is the function of the labyrinth in mythology. The maze is a jail used to hold people against their will and often lose them for an indeterminate amount of time, sometimes even leading to death. The labyrinth as a trap that keeps people incarcerated through confusion is important to consider describing *House of Leaves* as such. And if we are to believe Jessica Pressman's declaration, "The house is like a book: made of ink, it becomes a thing to be read and analyzed, navigated and referenced,"[316] then the haunted maze that exists within the story is also the effect caused by the story itself. In addition to this, the maze presupposes that although the reader can leave the book at any moment, escaping *House of Leaves* is another matter: the reader cannot ever leave it entirely. In a brief passage of the novel, it is revealed that "Zampanò's entire project is about a film which doesn't even exist. You can look as I have, but no matter how long you search you will never find The Navidson Record in theaters or video stores. Furthermore, most of what's said by famous people has been made up."[317] And just like that, the labyrinth has no center anymore. The reader is cut loose from his chase and is further thrown in a loop. The centrifugal force operating in the novel is now decentralized, and the reader has lost the sense of beginning that he was counting on to reach the end. Sudha Shastri, in her article "Return to the Beginning: House of Leaves",*[318]* cleverly observes that although the novel includes multiple story threads that expand and interconnect in varying manners, none of them are adequately resolved by the end of the book. The idea that all should make sense in the end is completely disregarded by the author as he maintains the reader in a state of puzzlement from opening to closing.

The second authoritative reading of *House of Leaves* is one about the text as a remediated novel. In her 2002 article, N. Katherine Hayles analyses the notion of the materiality of the book, and through convincing arguments about the history of our conception of the text, proposes that the reader should

---

[316] Jessica Pressman, "*House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel", *Studies in American Fiction*, Volume 34 (2006), 112.

[317] Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), xix–xx.

[318] Sudha Shastri, "Return to the Beginning: *House of Leaves* by Mark Danielewski", *Atenea*, vol. 26, (2006), 87.

reconceptualize materiality as the interplay between a text's physical characteristics and its signifying strategies. This definition opens the possibility of considering texts as embodied entities while still maintaining a central focus on interpretation. In this view of materiality, it is not merely an inert collection of physical properties but a dynamic quality that emerges from the interplay between the text as a physical artifact, its conceptual content, and the interpretive activities of readers and writers. Materiality thus cannot be specified in advance; rather, it occupies a borderland—or better, performs as connective tissue—joining the physical and mental, the artifact and the user.[319]

This echoes our impressions concerning the use of footnotes in fiction. Their materiality being linked to the disposition on the page, they are still connected to the central text and operate in a dynamic way with it. This allows us to pursue our understanding of footnotes as a space of interpretation, notably in *House of Leaves*.

Hayles' observations on the novel expand towards an understanding of Danielewski's novel as a remediation ("the formal logic by which new media refashion prior media forms"[320]) originally presented by Bolter and Grusin to demonstrate how Danielewski's novel is a work of literature that "recuperates the vitality of the novel as a genre by recovering, *through the processes of remediation*, subjectivities coherent enough to become the foci of the sustained narration that remains the hallmark of the print novel."[321]

Following through with the idea of a remediated novel, Hayles shows how the remediation allows *House of Leaves* to present a novel that is a hybrid between printed novel and hypertext. She goes on to explain this idea which

Jane Yellowlees Douglas and others have defined as a rhetorical form having multiple reading paths, chunked text, and a linking mechanism connecting the chunks. Many technotexts, including *House of Leaves*, also qualify as hypertexts. Remarking on the

---

[319] N. Katherine Hayles, "Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis", *Poetics Today,* vol. 25 (2004), 6.

[320] Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 273.

[321] N. Katherine Hayles, "Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*", *American Literature*, vol. 74 (2002), 781.

relation of his narrative to Zampanò's commentary, Johnny writes in chapter 8 (''SOS''): ''There's just too much of it anyway, always running parallel to the old man and his book, briefly appearing, maybe even intruding, then disappearing again'' (106). He calls it ''another type of signal,'' parodying it as ''Here Come Dots,'' a phrase that applies as well to the dots that carry their own cryptic signals in this chapter. As Johnny's remark suggests, the linking mechanisms are diverse, consisting not only of footnotes on footnotes (on footnotes) but also positional cues, nonalphabetic marks such as the dots and alchemical symbols, and complex intertextual references as the narrative weaves from Zampanò's text remediated by Johnny to Johnny's text remediated by the editors.[322]

The footnotes in *House of Leaves* are a space commented upon; they exist as an individual space where a variety of characters exist. Brian W. Chanen adds: "The footnotes throughout the text function to shift reader perspective and to create juxtapositions. The initial effect of an impenetrable surface, however, ends as soon as the reader begins to explore the chapter more fully. The notes act as a web, catching the reader in a network of associations."[323]

This web echoes the idea of the labyrinth presented in other interpretations of the novel but also describes the actual web of connections constructed by the footnotes. Building on the idea of *House of Leaves* as labyrinth, and combining this with the idea of remediated novel, Chanen illustrates the pathways through *House of Leaves*:

---

[322] Hayles, "Remediation in *House of Leaves*", 796.

[323] Brian W. Chanen, "Surfing the text: The digital environment in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 11 (2007), 168.

Figure 5.3 Brian W. Chanen, Surfing the text: The digital environment, in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves.*
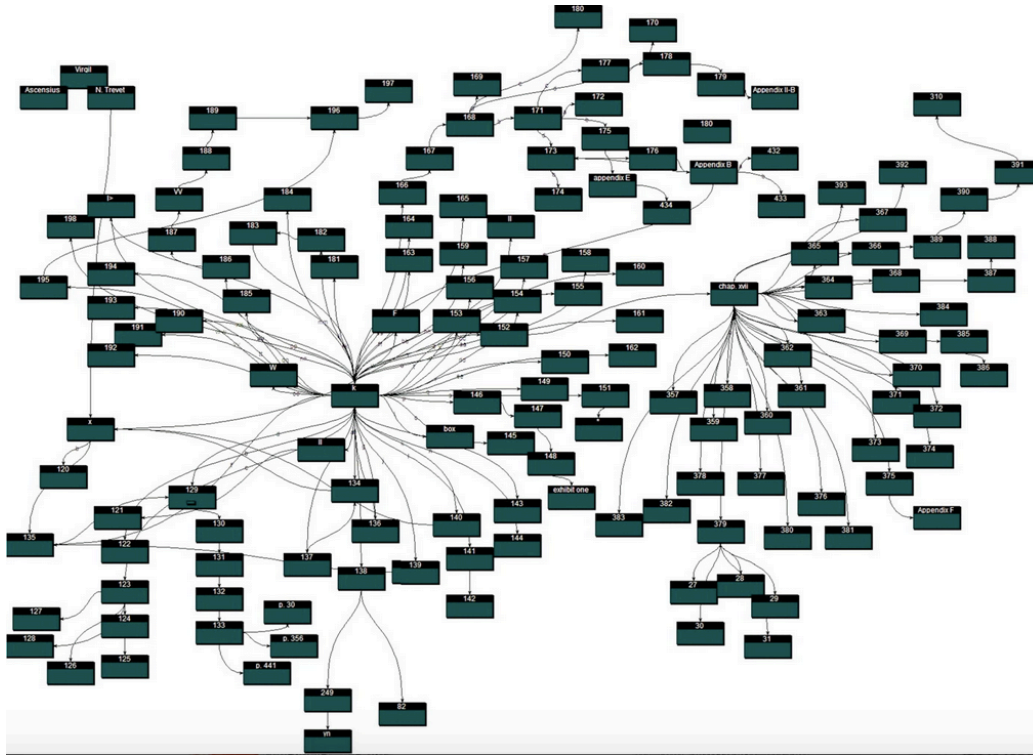
By using Storyspace, a hypertext writing tool, Chanen reproduces the potential readings of each footnote in Chapter 9, the most frenetic chapter regarding the use of footnotes. This visualisation shows clearly how "[t]he main feature of the structure is that there is no clear way out of the text; if every link is followed as presented, the reader is taken in many directions and can in fact wind up in infinite loops."[324] Chanen continues his explanation of how footnotes function in relation to narrative by showing that this disappearing sense of equilibrium and fragmentation can be likened to losing the sense of continuity of a narrative or "losing the plot."[325] This loss has also been seen as a consequence of this type of writing by George Landow. He explains:

> [T]he writer [...] loses certain basic controls over his text, particularly over its edges and borders … the text appears to fragment, to atomize, into constituent elements (into lexias or blocks of text); and these reading units take on a life of their own as they

---

[324] Chanen, *Surfing the Text*, 169.

[325] Chanen, *Surfing the text*, 171.

become more self-contained, because they become less dependent on what comes before or after in a linear succession.[326]

This nonlinearity, seen in our previous chapters, amplifies the feeling of confusion. We will conclude this chapter later on with our own exploration of this idea of "losing the plot." Before doing that, let's return for one last observation about the notion of space, this one offered by Nicholas Rouleau in his work about the labyrinthine aspect of *House of Leaves*. In Lectures Labyrinthiques: House of Leaves de Mark Z. Danielewski, Rouleau specifies that space can also mean "a celestial, cosmic space,"[327] and that, through the idea of cosmic space, the reader can reach another understanding of the text. This idea of the cosmic space is introduced through Turant's first footnotes regarding Zampanò's commentary on the Navidson Records: he states: "in this chapter, Zampanò penciled many of the translations for these Greek and Latin quotations into the margins. I've gone ahead and turned them into footnotes."[328] This turns out to be true since all the notes left by the author are indications of our solar system: Earth, Pluto, Mars, Mercury, the Moon and Jupiter. These notes, left by Zampanò, have been transformed by Truant in the footnotes, erasing their signification with this act but adding another more literary dimension. This personal symbolic system acts on the diegesis itself. Furthermore, there is another and more central sign to this cosmic system, a circle with a dark dot in the middle. This symbol is used by Zampanò to identify himself simultaneously as the sun of the cosmos but also as the center of the story. This places Zampanò as the demiurge of *House of Leaves*, the dot from whom the ripples emanate. As the novel is constructed like a center that is constantly trying to spill out of the frame, the figure of Zampanò is the source of all these strata of fiction pushing out of the center mass.

---

[326] George P. Landow. *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997). 64.

[327] Nicolas Rouleau, Lectures labyrinthiques: House of Leaves de Mark Z. Danielewski, (Montréal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 2007), 47, (my translation)

[328] Danielewski, *House of Leaves,* 41.

Adding to the above list of effects caused by the presence of footnotes are several issues related to the potentials of writing explained by Michel Charles:

> This is where the notion of "potentials" comes in again, and not only the potentials of writing, but also and above all the potentials of reading, or the potentials that reading attributes to writing. The real text will be considered as effective by what it doesn't use and by what gives up as much as what it actually implements; the real text will be considered as surrounded by virtual texts and crossed by them, to the point that it becomes itself a virtual text among others.[329]

This idea of potential readings is present in *House of Leaves*, including the fact that Danielewski operates "an erasure of the commentator in favour of total transparency in the communication and transcription of information concerning the texts,"[330] as Mathilde Bombart says. This aspect of the work is accomplished in particular by the blurring of the novel's voices, made possible by the notes. More than a polyphonic novel, *House of Leaves* is a cacophonic novel, which piles voices one on top of the other on the same page. The use of the note causes confusion in the reader. The notes, and the layers of fiction that are built by them, serve as screens that veil the author. The voice of the author Danielewski disappears behind this polyphonic multiplication.

The constant overlapping of narrative strata raises many questions about fiction, some more obsessive than others, as Jonathan Russell Clark demonstrates in his text *On the Fine Art of the Footnote* (2015):

> Danielewski, in effect, questions where narratives can exist in fiction. He places the bulk of *House of Leaves* in the margins, evokes character through commentary, and creates tension with verisimilitude. Who, a reader may find herself wondering, is *real* here? Johnny feels *realer* than Will Navidson, even though Zampanó provides much more detail (and references) for *The Navidson Record*'s validity than the editors do for Johnny. Why, then, do we grant him more authority?[331]

---

[329] Charles, *Introduction à l'étude des textes*, 108. (my translation)

[330] Mathilde Bombart, "Le savoir des clés: note, érudition, et lecture à clé. Un annoteur de Boileau au XVIIIe siècle, Claude Brosette" in *Notes*, 191. (my translation)

[331] Clark, *On the Fine Art of the Footnote.*

The questions raised by Russell Clark concern the impact of centrifugal metafiction. The consequences of having a story expand around its own foundation, overflowing over itself until we lose most of our bearings, remind us of the irritation described by several on the use of footnotes, quoting them as being an unwelcome distraction. In the case of *House of Leaves*, the distraction is the desired effect. Danielewski's aim by adding these layers of footnotes is to fragment and disorient. While reading the novel, we are constantly asked to go back and forth through the pages to read annexes and endnotes and then go up and down on the page to read footnotes. This only furthers the dizzying effect of the novel. When confronted with a footnote, the reader must quickly shift to another fragment of the story, and suffer from changing context, tone and stakes sometimes several times on the same page. The distractive aspect of this technique cannot be understated, but one must also admit and accept that the effect caused by this constant shuffling is desired; it causes dizziness, loss of reference and in certain cases fear. Fear like the one described by John Sturrock: "Many readers *are* afraid of meaning when it threatens to distract them from the words they have in front of them."[332] Alas, mystification is temporary, for one who tries to clarify *House of Leaves* will not assuredly fail but will have missed the point of experiencing the confusion made apparent in the novel.

But the fact of the matter is, these questions raised by footnotes are also regularly asked about fiction in general. What is real and who has authority are timeless interrogations in literary studies. In the case of infrafiction, however, these questions are included within the fabric of the novel. Diegetic characters ask themselves these same questions within the story, adding to the plunging effect of the novel. If Truant can't believe Zampanó has seen *The Navidson Records* because of his avowed blindness and if Zampanó can't believe certain declarations that Will Navidson makes about his house in the recordings, who *can* we believe? These footnotes challenge the interpretive footing on which we stand when we enter Danielewski's novel.

The use of notes in the narrative supports the thesis of the novel. Danielewski manipulates the notes to increase the reader's uncertainty. Not only do they not reduce the enigmatic dimension

---

[332] Sturrock, *Structuralism*, 136.

of the object, but they also contribute to increasing it. This is coherent with the declarations made by the author who admits that he wanted to infuse anger and, consequently, fear into the reader:

> The rush anger gives us, the sense of power and possibility, is so powerful we forget the origins. [...] So I'm encouraged by the trend towards Smart Horror because it suggests on a cultural level that there's a desire to get past the Anger Response and deal with a much more heroic question: what am I afraid of? And why? And how should I respond? After all, maybe what we're so frightened of will turn out to be nothing more than a dark, empty room. Then again, maybe it won't. That's what we're here to find out.[333]

This quote from Danielewski makes explicit his desire to explore new paths but also to destabilize the reader. It seems obvious to us that such excessive use of the note is a writing technique that makes it possible to achieve maximum defamiliarization. The text itself, gathered from different forms of writing, typographies, dimensions and ultimately confused referents, manages to generate confusion. And at the centre of all this, we find the note as Danielewski says: "More than the fixing of precise referents, it is to an intertextual network made up of discourses with very different status and degrees of publication [...] that the annotation finally opens up."[334] The note contributes to the opening up of the work. In this case, this opening seems too vast, too immense and projects the reader into an unthinkable limbo, like this house larger on the inside than on the outside.

Footnotes are used to alter the habitually linear progression through the novel. Just by looking at its first 20 pages, we can see how Danielewski uses notes to constantly disrupt a linear reading. Page 3, where the novel begins, already includes three footnotes; by page 4, the author has already included a footnote to a footnote, creating a third strata of fiction. Then, on page 9, a footnote sends the reader to consult another footnote on page 55. Page 12 has a five-page long footnote that brings us to page 16, then back again to page 12, to reconnect with the original footnote that brought us to this tangent. This constant flipping through pages has often been

---

[333] Sophie Cottrell, "A Conversation with Mark Danielewski", *Bold Type*, 2006, http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0400/danielewski/ interview.html

[334] Bombart, "Le savoir des clés: note, érudition, et lecture à clé." in *Notes*, 200. (my translation)

described as labyrinthine. This technique has been presented by Keith A. Smith as *non-consecutive viewing*: that is, "[the] direct referral by the writer revealed by one of several means of intentional non-consecutive text or pages. This may be an alternative to, or an addition to, consecutively constructed pages."[335] In this regard, footnotes are also another iteration of the tunnel, removing the reader from a specific place in the text and bringing her somewhere else. In Danielewski's case, this brings forth a form of dizziness that has been attached to the figure of the maze, but also induces a destabilisation sensation in the reader. Footnotes can also act as a sort of tunnelling through literature, searching and verifying sources that will sometimes send the reader into an exploration.[336] Tunneling exposes the reader to the rhizomatic essence of footnotes and, once again, furthers the impression of the maze. This effect is even commented upon in the very first pages of the novel:

> So you see from my perspective, having to decide between old man Z and his story is an artificial, maybe even dangerous choice, and one I'm obviously not comfortable making. The way I figure it, if there's something you find irksome - go ahead and skip it. I couldn't care less how you read any of this. His wandering passages are staying, along with all his oddly canted phrases and even some warped bits in the plot. There's just too much at stake. It may be the wrong decision, but fuck it, it's mine.[337]

Such commentary is the source of dispute even within the novel: for instance, on page 107, Johnny Truant comments on Zampanò's lack of rigor with his primary sources. He explains, in footnote 120:

---

[335] Smith, *Text in Book Format*, 65.

[336] Sometimes even for textual resources that have little to do with the diegesis. In a specific footnote, Danielewski encourages the reader to research videogames and role-playing games. This footnote (referring to strictly fictional essays), is reproduced here:

_____

[115] See Corning Qureshy's essay "*D & D, Myst, and Other Future Paths*," in MIND GAMES, ed. Mario Aceytuno (Rapid City, North Dakota: Forston Press, 1996): M. Slade's "*Pawns, Bishops & Castles*" http://cdip.ucsd.eud/: as well as Lucy T. Wickramasinghe's "*Apple of Knowledge vs. Windows of Light: The Macintosh-Microsoft Debate*," in *Gestures*, v. 2, November 1996, pp.164-171. (Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 99.)

[337] Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 31.

[120] In fact all of this was quoted directly from Penelope Reed Doob's The Idea of the Labyrinth: From Classical Antiquity through the Middle Ages (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) p. 21, 97, 145 and 227. A perfect example of how Zampanò likes to obscure the secondary sources he's using in order to appear more versed in primary documents.

Once again, as readers, we are stuck with having to make a choice as to who we can believe. The trust we put in Zampanò or Truant or Danielewski affects our reading of the novel and skews our interpretation of events. This goes against the common understanding of the implicit pact of fiction, the fact that we trust the author to lie to us but only in exchange for a coherent story. In *House of Leaves*, Danielewski goes against this pact, and the results are baffling.

4.8   On creating confusion

To recapitulate, the theme of the labyrinth and the remediation aspect present in *House of Leaves*, made possible with an extensive use of footnotes, take part in a larger scheme to induce a general confusion in reading. The visual layout of the novel being what it is, just looking at this story makes me feel a little queasy,"[338] as declares Truant. In this way, the novel assumes its posture as a "fantastique" novel, for it offers a "detour in the unreal".[339] This definition also matches very well with Federman's idea of surfiction. Most readers of Danielewski's novel emerge from their reading deeply affected, if not perturbed by what they have lived through their reading. "The novel thus blurs the boundaries between the house on Ash Tree Lane and the house of paper leaves containing the story of this haunted house. In so doing, it presents a parallel between readers of both houses and their frightening experiences reading mutating texts,"[340] as Jessica Pressman says. This apprehension is without a doubt a desired effect, as we have read earlier, but such a profound effect demands to be regarded in a more significant manner. Why

---

[338] Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 15.

[339] Denis Mellier, *La littérature fantastique*, (Paris: Le Seuil, 2000), 13. (my translation)

[340] Pressman, "*House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel", 112.

does a book that offers such a complex and unique reading experience destabilize that much, and how does it stay within the confines of what is acceptable as literature?

It is our impression that the greater plan entrenched in the multiple techniques of reader destabilization is similar to certain shock operations studied in the field of interrogation techniques that prey on the moment when the subject is aptly undermined in his habits long enough to create a breach in his perspective. This moment, explained here in the Kubark Counterintelligence document from the CIA, clarifies this momentary destabilization and its effects:

> There is an interval - which may be extremely brief - of suspended animation, a kind of psychological shock or paralysis. It is caused by a traumatic or sub-traumatic experience which explodes, as it were, the world that is familiar to the subject as well as his image of himself within that world. Experienced interrogators recognise this effect when it appears and know that at this moment the source is far more open to suggestion, far likelier to comply, than he was just before he experienced the shock.[341]

Although this document entails real life events, the effect desired is not unlike what the reader experiences when first exploring *House of Leaves*. Danielewski's writing exploits the same vulnerabilities that Dr. Cameron, renowned psychologist, observed in patients:

> According to his published papers from the time, he [Cameron] believed that the only way to teach his patients healthy new behaviors was to get inside their minds and "break up old psychological patterns.[342]" The first step was 'de-patterning', which had a stunning goal: to return the mind to a state when it was, as Aristotle claimed, "a writing tablet on which as yet nothing actually stands written", a tabula rasa. Cameron believed he could reach that state by attacking the brain with everything known to interfere with its normal functioning - all at once. It was "shock and awe" warfare on the mind.[343]

---

[341] Central Intelligence Agency. "Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation", *NS archive*, 1963,
https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/

[342] Ewen Cameron and S. K. Pande "Treatement of the Chronic Paranoid Schizophrenic Patient",
Canadian Medical Association Journal, Volume 78, (1958), 95.

[343] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, (London: Picador, 2008), 34.

This description may put us in mind of Patricia Waugh's observations on metafiction. Metafiction exists as "fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality."[344] But it is also built with fictional statements that "exist and have their 'truth' within the context of an 'alternative world' which they also create."[345] Such a description is very apt in describing Danielewski's approach to storytelling in *House of Leaves*, for by deconstructing habits of reading, notably through the use of footnotes, the author destabilizes the reader. Once the destabilization is complete, Danielewski introduces an unknown terror that exists in the uncertainties of the text: this terror, namely the Minotaur, is present and absent in the novel: present in the sense that the figure is very well evoked but absent because most of the text that makes explicit its presence has been struck out in a way to show us a piece of text that shouldn't be present.

---

[344] Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, 2.

[345] Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*, 100.

Figure 5.4 Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 338.

The text that has been struck through, absent and present simultaneously, becomes a paradox that baffles just enough to destabilize the reader and create confusion. Although the fact that no one actually believes that a house like the one on Ash Tree Lane exists, the dizzying effect of footnotes enforces this type of willing suspension of disbelief.

As we explained earlier, this use of footnotes doesn't obfuscate the clarity of the fiction but works as a complexifying strategy, as Jeff Somers explains succinctly: "Mark Z. Danielewski uses footnotes not simply to produce a disruptive effect, or exert control over his readers, but to

purposefully build three distinct narratives—to make his book larger on the inside than it at first appears, as they would take up many more pages if set in the same typeface as the 'main' plot."[346]

A final puzzling crescendo and the culmination of our reading of *House of Leaves* as centrifugal metafiction lie in the fact that the book presented in the story is without a doubt the same book that you are holding in your hands. This first detail is understood when Johnny explains the following: ("The book, however, is 736 pages long," p. 467); and although the book's pagination stops at 709, when we add the Johnny introduction, the title page, table of contents and all other paratexts, we end up with the exact same number: 736 pages long. Therefore, the book we are reading is the exact replica of the one Navidson is reading. His loss in the maze that is *House of Leaves* mirrors our own. Furthermore, if Navidson had devoted careful attention to reading the footnotes in a peculiar and, yes, obsessive manner, would he have noticed that by taking the first letter from the first eleven footnotes in the novel and putting them side-to-side, he would have known the name of his incarcerator: Danielewski.

4.9   Parergon

As the work becomes increasingly decentralized, the footnotes in *House of Leaves* take on the form of a parergon, a notion proposed by Kant to express what is outside the work of Art. His *Noten-prose* according to Andréas Pfersmann is:

> anti-enlightenment even where it affects to be in the service of the general understanding. As a counterversive with the authority of tradition, as a cunning metacritic of fiction, as an irony of fiction or romantic irony, as a discussion of aesthetic codes and an attempt to redefine them, on one hand as a privileged place of reflection

---

[346] Somers, "Consider the Footnote", 3.

in the novel and an operator of its enigmaticity, the notes constitute on the other a strategic place for clarification or education. [347]

This type of reading tends to present the footnotes as demonic, a source of corruption or stress that hinders the understanding of the text. It's also, according to David Rodowick "summoned and assembled like a supplement because of the lack - a certain 'internal indetermination - in the very thing it enframes (sic)."[348] Derrida continues to explore this notion:

> The text affirms the outside, marks the limits of this speculative operation, deconstructs and reduces to the status of "effects" all the predicates through which speculation appropriates the outside. If there is nothing outside the text, this implies, with the transformation of the concept of text in general, that the text is no longer the snug airtight inside of an interiority or an identity-to-itself (even if the motif of "outside or bust" may sometimes play a reassuring role: a certain kind of inside can be terrible), but rather a different placement of the effects of opening and closing.[349]

As long as they appear in the novel, footnotes will be creating layers and layers of diegesis, each one fulfilling the impression that it is closer to the actual audience without ever getting close enough to the reader to be entirely real. They are Zenon's paradox applied to fiction, each layer being more distant from the main body of text but never actually reaching the actual audience. This process could be repeated forever, adding layers and layers like a Russian doll, and each layer interacting with the rest, altering our interpretation of the entire text with each attempt to reach the real. If the scholarly footnote can be used to expose a reader to a vastness of information once unknown, then the diegetic footnote unveils a vertiginous number of stories that could be annexed to a main story. Footnotes — in their most egregious use — have the potential to show us that there are two ways to corrupt a story: on the one hand, we can be intimidated by the immense ocean of information; on the other, we are presented with the abyss of fiction: how

---

[347] Pfersmann, *Séditions infrapaginales*, 289. (my translation)

[348] David Rodowick, *Reading the Figural, Or, Philosophy After the New Media*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001),134.

[349] Derrida, *Dissemination*, 35-36.

stories can be so bountiful and multiplying that they engulf everything from the main story to the

the readers themselves. Footnotes, not pride, go before the fall.

CHAPTER 5

FOOTNOTES ELSEWHERE

So, that notion of hypertext seemed to me immediately obvious because footnotes were already the ideas wriggling, struggling to get free, like a cat trying to get out of your arms.

-Ted Nelson

5.1   Footnotes on the drawn page

In *Séditions Infrapaginales*, an essay devoted to the proposed idea of notology (the study of footnotes), Andréas Pfersmann writes about the Jumilhac papyrus, an Egyptian scientific treaty probably dating from around 1 BC. The papyrus, which is currently kept in the Louvre in Paris, is divided into columns, the hieroglyphs form the main part of the text, but the lower part of the scroll gives space to writing about the cult of Anubis of Cynopolis, written by a reader of the treaty.[350] The lower part of the text is written in demotic, a simplified version of hieroglyphic, which is used to explain the main text to the common reader. What Pfersmann presents is undoubtedly a precursor of the footnote in its functionality: footnotes that would accompany a logographic text. This early example is fascinating: if an exploration of the effects of footnotes in fiction is to be complete, it must, without contradiction, give some space to graphic literature such as comics and graphic novels.

In the interests of coherence, it is also important to consider the use of footnotes in graphic literature because they also raise questions about how footnotes create meaning through their arrangement in space on the page. The ways in which design and composition alter meaning is

---

[350] Pfersmann, *Séditions infrapaginales*, p. 33.

well documented in comic book studies,[351] and the same kind of reflection can focus on how footnotes inhabit the page.

For that reason, I will be looking more closely at how elements of graphic literature react to the presence of footnotes. Since I have been looking at the novel's page as semiotic space, certain questions as to how the relation between illustrations and footnotes can be raised. Footnotes as textual elements added to a graphic page might also impact the process of reading and decoding the structure of the story.

And since this chapter will be giving a close look at footnotes in different types of spatial disposition, the idea of hyperlinks as footnotes also needs to be interrogated and observed. Since the act of hyperlinking elements on the internet also concerns a spatial dimension, it is important to look at how hyperlinks act as the footnotes for the web and what consequences derive from treating them as such.

5.2   Footnotes for funnies, annotation in comic book format

Another type of semiotically interpretable page, what have been renamed 'graphic novels' or 'comic books' have also intergrated footnotes into their narratives. This is largely because both the comic and the footnote occupy graphic space; adding a footnote to a comic is therefore not much different from adding one to a novel. But the effect of adding a footnote to a comic book is strikingly different.

Footnotes in comic books can appear in several places, sometimes even recuperating uses found in novels such as shown, here, in this panel found in *Iron Man #3*:

---

[351] See Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*, (New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 1994).

Figure 6.1 Cantwell, C. & Cafu, *Iron Man*, (no pages inscribed).
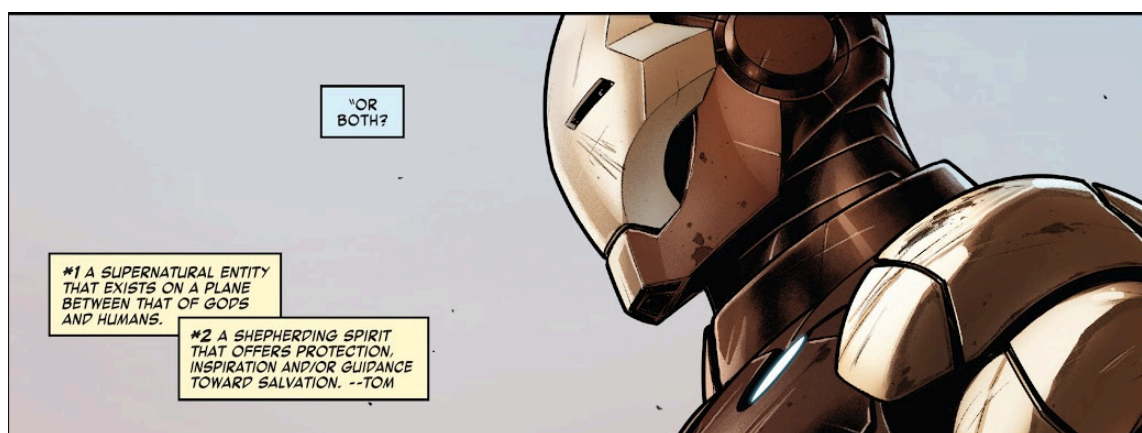
(Transcription: *1 A supernatural entity that exists on a plane between that of the gods and humans.
*2 A shepherding spirit that offers protection inspiration and/or guidance towards salvation -- Tom)

In this panel, the usual asterisk used to indicate footnotes is instead used to indicate another box containing details and explanations of elements of the story. This use is similar to the role of the editorial note. In comics, the most common editorial strategy for including a digression is an additional dialog box in which the editor of the book (most often) indicates that the events taking place are somehow related to, or comment on, another event that has previously occurred (or will occur). Such an intervention is often signaled at the end in a way that makes it clear whose voice is represented in the box. In this example, the superimposed arrangement of caption boxes is used to clarify the order of reading. And although this way of presenting encyclopedic knowledge is very common in comic books, novels such as Douglas Adams' *Mostly Harmless* (the fifth book in the inaccurately named *Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* trilogy!) (1983) use this type of footnote to help the reader recall events that occurred in a previous volume, to ensure that they do not get confused or fail to connect the two events. In any case, the footnotes used

by Adams are very similar to the editorial footnotes we find in comic books, as we can see in this footnote from *Mostly Harmless* (1983):

_____

[4] See, *Life, The Universe and Everything*, Chapter 18.[352]

Similarly, in the superhero comic-book tradition, footnotes are mostly used as a way to keep the reader up to speed with the many tangled events in the comics' continuity. As seasoned readers will no doubt know, the superhero diegesis is often complex and convoluted, and linear time is a rather vague concept as adventures and publishing schedules rarely respect a chronological order. As Umberto Eco explains in his book "The Myth of Superman"[353], this has a lot to do with the apparent eternal youth of the characters, along with the fact that most serialized comic books tend to end as they began, with the basic premise of the character remaining the same; and no amount of adventure will lead to long-standing change. For these reasons, to ensure that every reader understands the unfolding of certain events or the declarations of particular characters, editors will insist that a supplementary caption be added as an informative paratext. As explained earlier, this box will be used to inform the reader of ulterior diegetic facts and resembles this lower-case caption:

---

[352] Douglas Adams, *Mostly Harmless*, (London: Pan Books, 1992), 89.

[353] Umberto Eco, *The Myth of Superman*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), (translation by Natalie Chilton)

Figure 6.2 Donny Cates & Ryan Stegman, *Absolute Carnage*, Issue #4, (no pages inscribed)

(Transcription:*Editor's note: Back in Web of Venom: Cult of Carnage; True Believers! --Editor)

A peculiar aspect of these captions belongs to a tradition mainly ushered in by Stan Lee in the sixties when most reader knew him as the creator of the comic they were reading. As creator of several of the Marvel-canon superheroes, Lee would add fourth-wall-breaking notes to the editorial captions in order to orient the reader. This footnote, or caption note, was a way to speak directly to the reader in a similar fashion as he was well known to do on his True Believer letters pages. In this letters page, at the end of the comic, he would call upon the "true believers" of the Marvel universe in a direct style that gave the impression that Stan "The Man" Lee was truly speaking to them. Stan Lee noticed the resounding success of this technique and decided to use

it everywhere, even within the comic book itself. This editorial technique of speaking directly to the reader spawned many other techniques now considered as classic of that editorial brand. The signed caption, often with an amusing epithet accompanying the name of the editor who added the historical caption, is one of those historically important brand recognition techniques. Since the sixties, the Marvel editors have almost always been identified by the use of a superlative with their name. (Jack Kirby would be called "Jumpin" Jack Kirby, while Steve Ditko would be branded "Shy" Steve Ditko.)

These captions function in the same manner as footnotes, even though — contrary to novels — they appear within the space of diegesis. Included in the drawing, they exist within the main body of text, although they are carved within a special space. Thus, the act of reading a footnote in comic books does not pull the reader out of the story as violently as would happen in a novel. The act of reading a comic book requires a form of perusal over the image; the reader will inevitably scroll over the footnoted caption box without ever leaving the designed space of the diegesis. Julie Lefebvre, who studies footnotes in literary texts, qualifies the mark of the footnote as existing simultaneously inside and outside the text.[354] The classic footnote marker is not part of what would be considered typical punctuation, since a section exists outside the main body of the text. Footnotes in graphic literature, on the other hand, can often exist within the graphic representation of the panel. What Lefebvre sees as a break with the linearity of the text becomes an acceptance of the non-linearity of the text. The illustrator sometimes offers some visual clues to indicate the direction of reading, but this does not mean that this convention is automatically understood by every reader.

More can be said about this distinction regarding the inside and outside of the text in graphic literature, especially if one considers that graphic literature is composed of two types of expression, graphic and textual that work with one another. In the case of footnotes, they do not interact with the graphic dimension of graphic literature and exist only in the spaces given for

---

[354] Julie Lefevbre, "La note comme greffe typographique: étude linguistique et discursive", *L'information grammaticale*, no 119, (2008), 54-55.

textual content. Furthermore, the addition of the mark of the footnotes provokes the inclusion of another textual space (another speech box). Whereas footnotes in novels appear in a second, dedicated space, lower on the page and often in smaller point form, those present in graphic literature can take the form of a second textual space identical to the first, eliminating the sense of subordination at the bottom of the page.

But this idea of the footnote included in the panel is not the case for every comic book: some have extended this similarity to novels to the point of including footnotes outside the panel in the section called 'the gutter.' This is the often white space that separates panels on a comics page. Its primary use is to delimitate the illustrations one from one another. This white margin represents inexistent space, like the margins of a novel, a space we often disregard, a blank space to be ignored. If we consider the panel to be the main body of the text, then any text that appears outside the panel is very similar to a footnote (although some texts outside the panel do not appear with a call to a footnote, others do). However, unlike what we have seen in the novel, the gutter in comics is highly codified.

Many artists have toyed with this excess of space, as a novel would invest the margins with marginalia, and comic book artists have also explored the possibilities offered by this unused space. In certain cases, the gutter takes the form of an unbreakable barrier that keeps visual and textual elements apart, but sometimes a massive force (the likes of the Hulk or Superman) displays enough strength to break down these barriers. This has been famously the case in *Infinite Crisis* (2006), a story, helmed by Geoff Johns, that recounts the events of a cosmically threatening event, the likes of which we often see during summer blockbuster storylines. Although banal in its occurrence, the interesting element here and what interests us the most is the fact that during the unraveling of the story the character of Superboy Prime — Superman but from a different dimension, the prime one, being our own — leaps towards the gutter and punches what is known as "The Source Wall" in the DC universe. The source wall, creation of Jack Kirby, is the impenetrable border that separates the comic book reality from our own. In punching it, Superboy Prime causes ripples through reality. His act is akin to punching the fabric of reality

itself, the physical manifestation of this border between the fictional universe and ours, the gutter: what amounts to the white space between panels, the exact same space that welcomes footnotes when needed. By presenting the gutter as a space that exists between the fictional realm and the reader's reality, the author posits the white plane as a liminal space between both worlds, too close to the reader's to truly belong to fiction but nonetheless existing on the page and, therefore, still a part of the fiction. This effect in novels is purely speculative, but in comic books it is a verifiable hypothesis because of previous experimentations with the comic art form. All this is of great interest when we observe what authors decide to put in these gutters, for they essentially act as an informal 'dumbwaiter' between the realm of fiction and reality. Thus, we have another game, one that lies between the author (or illustrator) and the reader, games that we have seen in novels but that function as well in graphic literature.

Take this example from the popular *Adventure Time* (2012) comic book:

Figure 6.3 Ryan North & Sheili Paroline, Adventure Time, Issue #1, (no pages inscribed).


(Transcript of what is written: There is another sign just out of frame that shows the following: "Look at this workmanship and I'm sure you'll see/Ain't nobody better at making quick extremely accurate signs than me."
Adventure Time #1)

When we look closely, footnotes appear under the panels, written in a lighter color, giving the impression that the illustrator is somehow trying to be subtle with their inclusion of footnotes. In these cases, footnotes to the panels do not bounce off the page in a way to attract the reader's attention but exist under the illustrations as a quiet whispering only available to those who pay attention. This use of footnotes mirrors the characteristics that we have described in the previous chapters. In the case of *Adventure Time* (2012) comics, some footnotes serve as complementary explanations (as we have seen in the picture), others as editorial comments, but they can also have metafictional purposes, and some are even jokes shared between characters in a manner that recalls off screen interruptions. Several of the ways footnotes are used in this book evoke the direct address to the reader. When presented with jokes, footnotes resemble marginalia well known from famous publications such as *Mad Magazine* and *Fluide Glacial*. The latter was very well known for its illustrations in the magazine's margins, and its creators have used this technique to share with the public several examples of artists goofing around with their drawings. This addition to the page is not in service of the story but mostly indicates, in a sort of metafictional form, the clowning-around dimension of the artist's work. These comedic doodlings are akin to in-jokes, winks made by the artists to the reader. In the *Adventure Time* (2012) comics, certain jokes are included in the gutter, with the benefit of having only a simple thumbnail of the characters head floating in the ether, as the following image shows:

Figure 6.4 Ryan North & Sheili Paroline, Adventure Time, Issue #1, (no pages inscribed).
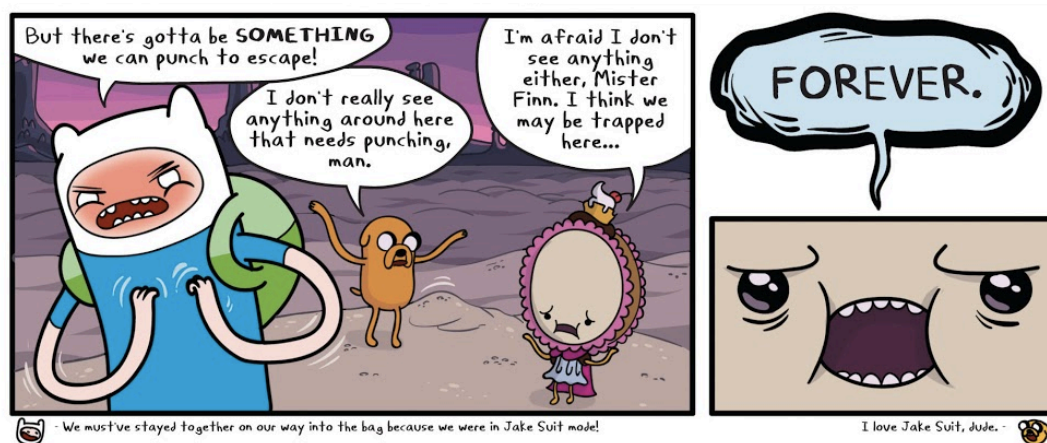

(Transcript: Finn (far left): We must've stayed together on our way into the bag because we were in Jake Suit mode.
(Jake, far right): I love Jake Suit, dude.)

The presence of these disembodied heads sputtering jokes has a vaudeville effect, the protagonists of the story momentarily stepping aside to tell a quick joke before going on with their story, similar to punchline jokes often found in Borscht Belt stand-up comedy.

This use of footnotes for humorous effect is primordial in Leah Williams's tenure on the Gwenpool series at Marvel comics. This series ties-in with the already metafictionally heavy title *Deadpool*, in which a scar-ridden assassin makes several displays of his super-power aptly named Comic Consciousness.[355] In Gwenpool's case, her Comic Consciousness allows her to play with textual elements, notably footnotes. The first use of footnotes in *Gwenpool Strikes Back* (2019) immediately tackles the notion of authority in the notes for it blatantly contradicts something said by the titular character.

Figure 6.5 Leah Williams, & David Baldéon, *Gwenpool Strikes Back*, Issue #1, (no pages inscribed).
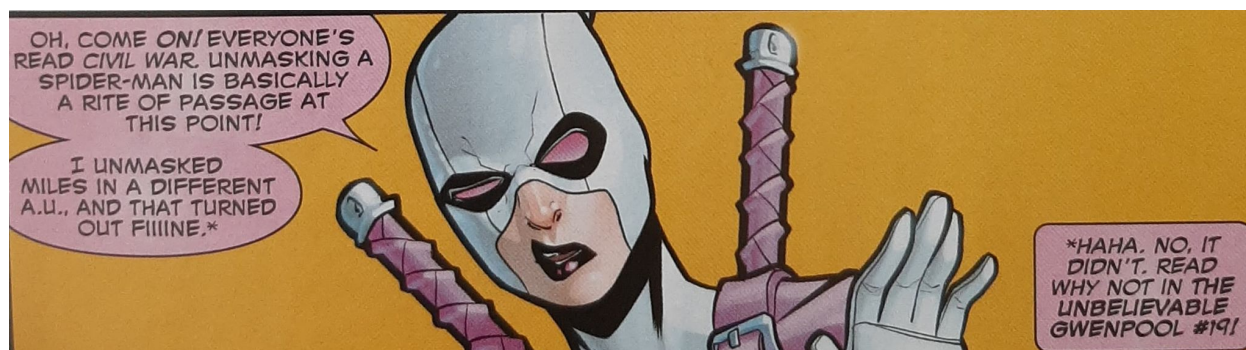
(Transcript: Haha. No, it didn't. Read why not in The Unbelievable Gwenpool #19!.)

---

[355] A power that imbues its wielder to understand than he is a fictional character in a book and acts accordingly. The Comic Conscious character can manipulate the elements of the comic book at his or her ease (e.g., moving thought bubbles, commenting on dialogue clouds, pushing the borders of the panel, falling off the page).

Further on, footnotes are used for another purpose, to help the reader realize a time-loop within the book itself.

Figure 6.6 Leah Williams, & David Baldéon, *Gwenpool Strikes Back*, **Issue #1, (no pages inscribed).**

(Transcript: *Go back to page 15, Panel 3!)

Further on, several footnotes are used to confuse the reader as to whose voice is present in the captions: the character's, author's or illustrator's?

Figure 6.7 Leah Williams, & David Baldéon, *Gwenpool Strikes Back*, Issue #3, (no pages inscribed).

(Transcript: First image: She-Hulk: Stupid **Tony**! Bikini...Beach. Caption: Look. This is how Jen is in the current comics right now. Don't @ me.
Second image Illustrator: Vale cettamos el chiringuito for hoy. Roughly meaning : "Let's call it a day")

In a mind-bending finale of the series, the character must plunge into the fabric of comic books to pick up the different iterations of herself in the multiple dimensions of the diegesis. While doing this, every panel in which her kidnapping is executed is marked with a footnote to allow the reader to clearly see at what exact moment she was pulled out of the comics' continuity.

Figure 6.8. Leah Williams, & David Baldéon, *Gwenpool Strikes Back*, Issue #4, (no pages inscribed).

(Transcript of what is written: First illustration: Superior Spider-Man #7 (2009) Second illustration: West Coast Avengers #1 (2018) Third illustration: Champions #5 (2018), Fourth illustration: Rocket Racoon and Groot #9(2016) Last illustration: The Unbelievable Gwenpool #12 (2016))

Here, in *Gwenpool Strikes Back*, we witness the exhaustivity of the practice of using footnotes and a demonstration of the possibilities notes can have in a metafictional work. Footnotes are one of the tools shown here, even though there are several others, such as breaking the fourth wall.

In the interests of returning to our original idea regarding the importance of the location of the text in terms of how information is received, we must devote time for an exploration of Matt Kindt's work: notably his 2005 work *3 Story: The Secret History of the Giant Man* and *Mind MGMT*, published by Dark Horse comics between 2012 and 2015.

3 Story: The Secret History of the Giant Man (2005) ups the ante by adding complementary information in footnotes of certain panels, but instead of adding strictly textual elements, the story innovates with an offering of these additions in a comic form. On two occasions, the reader is presented with flashbacks that take the form of a strip under the main page. This type of footnoting imitates the novel's predisposition to add inferior text to the main body of text, with additional panels instead of a space for footnotes**.** *3 Story* offers an definitive comic book within a comic book.

This is not the only time we have seen illustrations as complements to text. Diane Schoemperlen's *Forms of Devotion* (1998) has an entry entitled "Innocent Objects," in which the author describes several objects in the main body of text and adds an illustration and a complete description of the object in the footnotes.

Figure 6.9. Diane Schoemperlen, *Forms of Devotion*, 58.
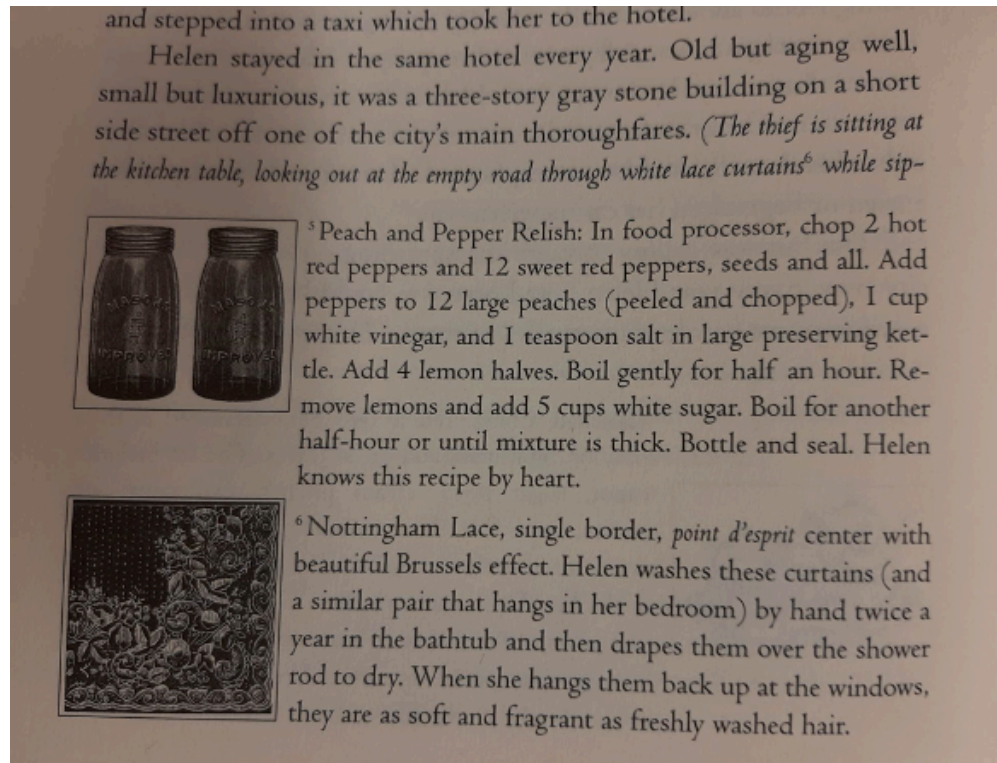
(Transcript of what is written:
[5] Peach and Pepper Relish: In food processor, chop 2 hot red peppers and 12 sweet red peppers, seeds and all. Add peppers to 12 large peaches (peeled and chopped), 1 cup white vinegar, and 1 teaspoon sail in large preserving kettle. Add 4 lemon halves. Boil gently for half an hour. Remove lemons and add 5 cups white sugar. Boil for another half-hour or until mixture is thick. Bottle and seal. Helen knows this recipe by heart.

Nottingham Lace, single border, *point d'esprit* center with beautiful Brussels effect. Helen washes these curtains (and a smilar pair that hangs in her bedroom) by hand twice a year in the bathtub and then drapes them over the shower rod to dry. When she hangs them back up at the windows, they are as soft and frragrant as freshly washed hair.)

This example is quite interesting since it shows the addition of imagery to the text. Footnotes in "Innocent Objects" tend to compensate for the lack of precision words have in relation to illustrations. The addition of the visual components tends to make us understand that the author

could exhaust herself in describing every single object in a precise and minute manner, but that would not be worth it for the effect desired.

In *3 Story: The Secret History of the Giant Man*'s case, footnotes act more similarly to what we have called the editorial footnote, adding another story to the main narrative in the guise of informative footnotes. The stories told in footnotes take the form of recollections from stories past, not necessarily essential to know to further the story but to complement the complex life of certain characters in the story. This addition to the diegesis adds little to the story but depth. The note thus acts as a centripetal footnote, digging within the story to expose more elements of the story. In turn, the result is a particular understanding that, although we are reading the story of the Giant Man himself, we could, without a doubt, be reading the story of Billy, a private whose life Giant Man saved during the war. These footnotes illustrate the tapestry of stories surrounding the principal story which is unfolding. Every footnote becomes a path not taken in the telling of the story, an unexplored venue that the author has decided to include in the balancing act of creation between adding details to clarify elements of the story and an economy of details to avoid clutter.

5.3   Mind MGMT

To all appearances, Matt Kindt hadn't finished his exploration of the potential of footnotes with *3 Stories* because with the publication of *Mind MGMT* (2012), he doubles down on their use, further exploring their practicality in regard to their interaction with the main body of text. *Mind MGMT* tells the story of a specially trained squad of international spies. Most members of this squad have had their minds expanded so that they can read psychic impressions of locations, objects, people; they have become immortal and can expand their emotions to affect others. In the first volume of *Mind MGMT*, entitled *The Manager*, the book's gutter shows the printing lines of a professional drawing page. On the sides, we can still see the brackets that center the image for printing uses, while on the top of the page, there's the following notice: "WHEN FILING

REPORT ALL ESSENTIAL DETAILS MUST FALL WITHIN THIS SOLID "LIVE AREA" BOX. THIS IS THE BORDER FOR A STANDARD, NON-BLEED FIELD REPORT." Added to the margins are entries from the Mind MGMT psychic operations book. Notations such as "Mind MGMT FIELD GUIDE 27.1. If required to give reports in the field, agents should use the verbal-visual hypnotic cues to convey the most accurate mental picture to the agent receiving the report" decorate the side pages. They can often be seen or used as interpretative clues concerning certain events in the main body of the comic book. Although every page has the marginalia of the field report disclosure, almost half have the added field manual insert on the side margin. Therefore, the disposition on the page does not allow them to be called footnotes per se, even though the addition of the "27.1" becomes a surrogate for the habitual*, giving the reader an indication of the issue "27" and the page "1," on which the note appears. The marks on the page thus take on the qualities of footnotes within the story and qualify as such since they induce effects on the main body of text.

For a large portion of the issues of *Mind MGMT*, the addition of these field manual entries is enigmatic. Without being explicitly distracting, they eventually become a part of the story, present without being intrusive; some readers may begin to skip over them from time to time. But Kindt's timing with footnotes ensures that what can appear as an accessory slowly becomes a tool in crafting tension in the story. In issue 5, when we reach the breaking point of the intrigue surrounding the mysterious protagonist Meru, footnotes become interrupted by an outside voice calling at Meru's (and the reader's) attention. The field operations manual begins breaking the fourth wall in a disruptive manner.

Figure 6.10 Matt Kindt, Mind MGMT issue #5, (no pages inscribed).

(Transcription: ...field guide 5.1. In aquatic scenarios it is best toYOU NEED TO SNAP OUT OF IT)

Suddenly, the notes are speaking directly to Meru, ordering her "to snap out of it." What was originally believed to be a companion piece to the intrigue becomes a voice calling out to the main character. This intriguing modification to the use of footnotes increases the tension of the story, intentionally baffling the reader, showing that when dealing with Mind MGMT, there is more than what meets the eye. With this psychic theme blown out of proportion, this new usage of footnotes causes readers to quickly rethink their rapport with footnotes. Having footnotes suddenly break the fourth wall to speak directly to us encourages us to question whether the story is still contained within its pages or if the address is aimed at us instead. Are the psychic

abilities of the group called Mind MGMT powerful enough to enable characters to speak to us directly? Are the pages calling to me, the reader? Or is the message directed at Meru? Therein resides one of the first tasks of decoding demanded of the reader. Many more will follow.

Around issue 12, when certain plans turn awry and the training instilled in Meru start to unravel, the habitual blue-hued MIND MGMT field Manual footnotes turn into a more panic-inducing, bright red, announcing that **disbanding protocols begin with the exchange of all clothing and equipment that have ever been used in the line of duty**. Afterwards, the Field Guide notes are replaced by DISBANDING PROTOCOLS. When this happens, the reader is immediately informed that the footnotes are reacting to events taking place in the diegesis and will take the form of the guide needed at that moment. It's as if instructions were altered because of the severity of the situation. Essentially, we are faced with a clue as to how to understand the presence of footnotes since they change with the story. They can no longer be understood as mere additions to complete the story; rather, they clearly have diegetic use. But the reader will need more clues to correctly piece together the reason behind their presence.

Although Kindt expands on his use of footnotes, one effect is the aforementioned story within a story. Around issue 7, the field footnotes have been replaced by chapters of Meru's book, *Premeditated*. After being central in the story for the first six issues of *Mind MGMT* (2012), the book *Premeditated* makes its first textual appearance in the form of footnotes (this time without the appendix to indicate their proper location). *Premeditated* is the investigation by Meru into a mysterious murder, a crime that is obviously tied (but *how* remains to be seen) to the mysterious organization Mind MGMT. As the reader continues through the book, not only does the intrigue become more and more complex, but the addition of textual elements surrounding the prime narrative also increasingly become suspicious.

Around the concluding events of the story, we finally reach the peak layer of understanding with regards to the presence of these footnotes. As the intrigue unravels around the organization, Meru must meet the illustrious First Immortal, who lives under the sea. During a conversation,

the First Immortal explains to Meru that he and Leopold (both founding members of Mind MGMT) have made a mind-bending discovery while they were developing the Field Guide: the discovery is a third state of consciousness. Underneath consciousness and unconsciousness lies triconsciouness, a state of mental awareness in which people can imprint others with orders or suggestions. For agents of Mind MGMT, the triconsciousness is the space on which the forming agents inscribe the Field Guide deep within their cerebral activity. Although the reader is originally led to believe that the Field Notes were simple explanations of the behavior adopted by the agents in the book, these notes turn out to be activated commands that exist in the agents' triconsciouness. The space on the side of the page was simply (but incredibly) an area to display the protagonist's triconscious activity without being invasive or disruptive.

Once again, the gutter becomes a space not to be disregarded, rather, a space that holds an autonomous activity of interpretation. It is a space invested with text that shows us occulted information that informs that story but will never be fully accessible to the protagonist. In this regard, the gutter exists simultaneously inside and outside the story. Inside because it affects behaviour, certain actions of the characters are visible to them. Outside because since this information is only accessible to those reading the book, only the reader can decipher the code that is pulling the protagonists' strings. Furthermore, the First Immortal's revelation to Meru makes her finally hear the underlying code of her existence. Matt Kindt illustrates this by having the words written in her triconsciouness float off from their marginal space over the main body of text. This is akin to the crossing of two independent spaces: the graphic illustration of the meeting of two spaces is indicated by the text being integrated into the main body, as we can see on this page.

Figure 6.11 Matt Kindt, Mind MGMT issue #26, (no pages inscribed)
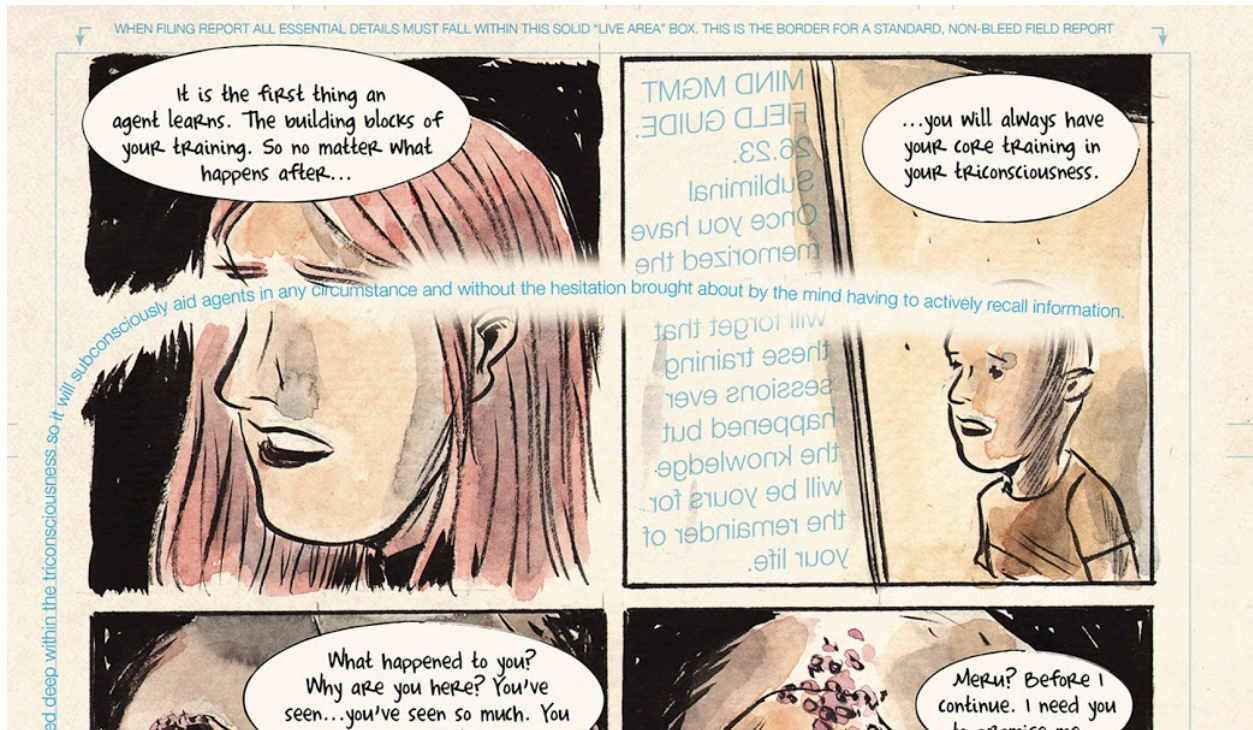
(Transcription: ...ed deep within the triconsciousness so it will subconsciously aid agents in any circumstance and without the hesitation brought about by the mind having to actively recall information.)

Furthermore, the inconspicuous and unchanging header "WHEN FILING REPORT ALL ESSENTIAL DETAILS MUST FALL WITHIN THIS SOLID "LIVE AREA" BOX. THIS IS THE BORDER FOR A STANDARD, NON-BLEED FIELD REPORT" is also revealed to be a heavily interpretative space since the message lies in the pages used by Meru when chronicling her own story of how she brought down Mind MGMT. These traces serve as an editorial mark for the reader to understand what they are reading, but they are in fact the manuscript written by Meru herself, the pages being reproduced as they are and not copy-proofed as a professionally edited book would be published. The book itself is a key component in bringing Mind MGMT to its knees, making the book a metafictional relic from within the story. It is a paradox unto itself that we could not interpret if it were not for

the headers' maintained presence. As regards the use of paratextual elements, this revelation becomes quite intriguing since the two marginal spaces invested with text are separate in their interpretative function. The side of the page shows the space for triconsciouness since the top of the page has text to demonstrate the manuscript effect necessary to the understanding of the story's conclusion. These are two different spaces that have two different uses and interpretations. Triconsciousness is the name given to the interpretive effect that occurs when the main text is combined with footnotes, as if this space could offer extraordinary interpretive powers. Triconsciousness can also be a way of describing the quality of the interactions within the diegesis. Just as the textual elements interact with the graphic elements, the footnotes (textual) also interact with the graphic and with the textual within the story. If the addition of image to text is not an addition but a multiplication of meanings, the inclusion of footnotes as a graphic and textual presence exponentially increases the potential for interpretation and effect. This is a groundbreaking use of the footnote, not just as a supplement but as an active ingredient in fiction, made possible entirely by the graphic composition of the page.

Graphic footnotes have only just begun to see the light of day, and the experiments are already promising. Japanese manga has always made extensive use of footnotes, mostly to explain puns and translate Japanese characters used in the illustrations. But heavy reads like Shirow Masamune's *Ghost in the Shell 2: Man/Machine Interface* use them for massive informative exposition, as do other books, such as *Kenichi: The Mightiest Disciple or Junko Mizuno's Pure Trance* manga, in which every character has their own explanatory footnote, sometimes playing with the abundance of information for humour, as in the case of *Ninja Nonsense* (Volume 1), which counts 63 footnotes for a 148-page manga, varying in size and utility, sometimes taking up entire pages for no apparent reason.

As use becomes more widespread, we will undoubtedly see more effects caused by the inclusion of footnotes. As this is a relatively new application in graphic literature, the works to come hold great promise. Great promise, as in the following example, where the famous webcomic XKCD recaptures the labyrinthine quality of the footnote often found in novels:

Figure 6.12 XKCD strip

MY HOBBY: FOOTNOTE LABYRINTHS
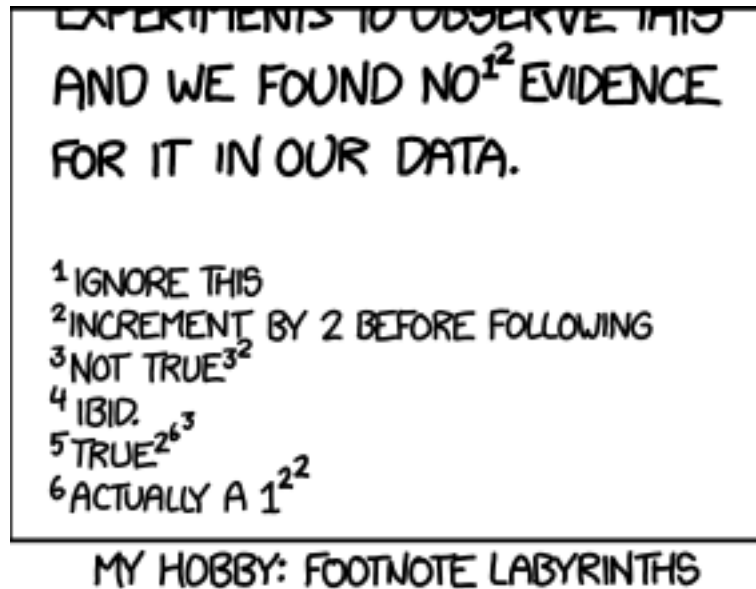
5.4   Hyperlink the note

Graphic literature has not so much transformed the footnote as offered it the opportunity to create or adapt its effects to a new type of literature. The Internet, on the other hand, has transformed the footnote. The practice of hyperlinking has transformed the mark of the footnote from the traditional call (asterisk, number or other) to the highly recognisable underline and blue color. In line with the observations about the graphic and spatial nature of footnotes, it becomes clear that what we have noticed about footnotes still persists, but in a different format on the Internet.

Although footnotes have a rich history and are useful for many things, their presence was predicted to be in jeopardy with the advent of the Internet, and in particular with the creation of the web page and the hyperlink. The advent of the web has changed our relationship with footnotes in two ways.

First, the hyperlink has been enriched by the tradition of the footnote. More importantly, our understanding of hyperlinks and their inherent uses can be enriched by a better understanding of the footnotes that preceded them. Alexandra Seammer's book *Rhétorique du texte numérique: figures de la lecture, anticipations de pratiques* (2015) proposes a rich understanding of the hyperlink that mirrors the description of footnotes we have given here. She explains that "many readers approach the hyperlink with the idea of accessing factual elements, additional information, explanations, definitions, evidence and illustrations."[356] A second, less common figuration of the hyperlink associates it with the idea of a dialogical crossing of points of view. In this respect, Saemmer treats the hyperlink in the same way as we have treated the footnote.

The hyperlink also made new kinds of storytelling possible. As with Tolkien's inherent world-building, or Tolkien's invented world-building, the creation of the hyperlink gave rise to a new kind of hyperlinked fiction, the "database narrative."

> As a cultural form, the database represents the world as a list of items, and it refuses to order this list. [...] In general, creating a work of new media can be understood as the construction of an interface to a database. [...] The new media object consists of one or more interface to a database of multimedia material. If only one interface is constructed, the result will be similar to a traditional art object, but this is the exception rather than the norm. This formulation places the opposition between database and the narrative in a new light, thus redefining our concept of narrative. The "user" of a narrative is traversing the database, following links between its records as established by the database's creator[357].

---

[356] Alexandra Saemmer, *Rhétorique du texte numérique : figures de la lecture, anticipation de pratiques.* (Villeurbanne: Presses de l'Enssib, 2015), 243.

[357] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 225-226.

In regard to this interpretation of footnotes as databases, developments in hypertextuality have encouraged us to challenge ourselves to understand footnotes as *repertoire*.

Another transformation of footnotes resides in the behavior taken by some publishing houses that now prefer to exile footnotes and any other paratext to their hosting websites. Indexation notices such as: "For source notes and suggestions for further reading, go to excellentsheep.com" are now common usage and orient the reader to another location in which they can find the erudite origins of the information in the text. The economic reasoning behind this is that eliminating footnotes frees up pages but also dispenses with the hassle of reading them for people who find them cumbersome. This new way of making resources available hardly pleases everybody, and we can sympathize with those who wish they could still find them at the source. The tradition of footnotes is a historic one and has been with us since the beginning of our exploration of books; it is not surprising that some people have reacted strongly to this change. But nostalgia is a weak reason to keep using footnotes; authors such as Nathan Heller have even dedicated articles to the importance of preserving the footnote. In *Save Footnotes,* Heller explains that:

> Online, explicit source citation tends to be redundant: you don't need notes, because, ideally, you can click to an original source. In this context, the removal of back matter makes some kind of sense. But publishers aren't taking endnotes off the Web. They're putting them on the Web. Instead, back matter is starting to vanish from books, the one place where it's still very much needed.[358]

Although mainly happening within informative texts, this type of migration has also been practiced in fiction, notably in Liza Lutz' novel *The Spellman Files* (2007), for which footnotes are unavailable in Kindle or EReaders and need to be downloaded separately from her website.[359]

---

[358] Nathan Heller, "Save Footnotes", *The New Yorker*, 2004, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/save-footnotes

[359] Lisa Lutz, "Downloadable Footnotes", *Lisalutz.com*, 2009, http://lisalutz.com/blog/downloadable-footnotes/

This is also the case with Sarah Smith's *Chasing Shakespeares* (2003): the published novel does not include notes; rather, they are present only on the novel's website. One of the problems that emerges is that this type of migration transforms footnotes (a paratext) into epitexts, meaning a section of text located away from the original, and these work in an entirely different manner than footnotes.

One of the other obvious problems with this is the idea that what goes on the internet stays intact forever on the internet. This is clearly not true; servers migrate, hyperlinks break, printing companies and publishing houses go bankrupt and, with them, vanish the websites that used to offer the desired information. This is an obvious problem since the effort put in by the original author to make available the traces of her research disappear by no fault of her own rendering. No longer will there be proof of each and every source discovered, and the chain of annotation that links scientific papers will be broken.

Also, but this is quite the worst-case scenario, there are certain displeasing situations that can emerge, such as that surrounding the publication of *The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan* (2014), in which Rich Perlestein published the endnotes to his book uniquely on his website. What became of this decision is a 25-million-dollar lawsuit for plagiarism brought on by a fellow researcher accusing him of "sloppy scholarship, improper attribution and plagiarism."[360]

And obviously we must also include the argument that footnotes are an intrinsic component of the book that we cannot exclude without some sort of violence done to the original work. Artists like Edward Gibbon, in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776,) or Pierre Bayle, in *Historical and Critical Dictionary* (1697), used footnotes with such wit and sophistication that it would be preposterous to consider they be removed and stored online far away from the original text. Sadly, this is also the case with classic texts of fiction: versions of

---

[360] Alexandra Alter, "Reagan Book Sets Off Debate", *The New York Times*, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/business/media/rick-perlsteins-the-invisible-bridge-draws-criticism.html

Moby Dick without footnotes are readily available online, raising the somewhat puritanical question that if ever someone encounters these versions first, do they really know the text correctly? In this regard, footnotes belong to bibliophiles' active members of the book-loving community who believe that the book is a perfect technology, such that it cannot be innovated in any manner, only impoverished.

With minimal browsing online, one can encounter several ways that the web has adapted footnotes to the new reality of the online text. Because the interface is not the same, websites cannot perfectly export the technique of noting a text without certain changes. The most convenient coding technique for footnotes is certainly the one adopted by the Barnes and Noble website that adds a virtual footnote in the text that serves as hyperlink, and on the reference is added another button, this time marked [back], returning the reader to the previous position. This is probably the least invasive way of integrating footnotes in the online text without transforming their use, but it also does not consider the page itself.

With the advent of the ebook, certain imports of books have recklessly transformed the traditional footnotes into endnotes and, as Alexandra Horowitz reminds us in "Will the E Book kill the Footnote?", "the footnotes are shunted off to the end of the text, relegated to being mere endnotes. If footnotes are at risk of going unread, endnotes are even more so."[361]

Further in her argument, Horovitz arrives at a staggering reflection on the future of footnotes when she declares: "The e-book hasn't killed the book; instead, it's killing the 'page.'"

But a final question raised about this erasure of footnotes concerns a very modern problem that has flourished in the past years and does not seem to have an end in sight. Misinformation, conspiracy and the advent of fake news all point to a problem that can be linked to a lack of rigor with the diffusion of information. As we have previously said, footnotes and the void have a lot

---

[361] Alexandra Horowitz, "Will the E-Book Kill the Footnote?", *The New York Times*, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/books/review/will-the-e-book-kill-the-footnote.html

in common. On the one hand, the footnote makes a large amount of information available, but, on the other hand, that information is filtered and edited to make it coherent, thus avoiding the trap that the void sets. The footnote also adds a strata of fiction: when used in a fictional context, the footnote can blur the line between the real and the fictive. But this line is always held by the context of fiction, the presence of the novel or the poem or the play. What we are living now is information too widespread to be clarified and fiction too blurry to be distinguishable from fact. Our crisis of information is caused by the lack of barriers that footnotes have offered us for several decades.

It would be quite ironic to say that only footnotes can save us now. Such a despised technique might now be seen as the final bastion of protection in the face of fiction gone feral and information overflowing without context. But there is a certain truth to this statement. The fact of the matter is that what is needed for us to start again to differentiate between fact and fiction is a line, a note and someone who has verified the information before publishing it.

CONCLUSION

IT WAS THE FOOTNOTES

I once asked a young dissertation writer whether her suddenly grayed hair was due to ill health or personal tragedy; she answered: "It was the footnotes."

— Joanna Russ, How to Suppress Women's Writing

Sometimes all it takes is a simple question to spark a contemplation, and sometimes that contemplation can be entertained and encouraged by many curious people. Here, for this dissertation, the entire process started after a reading of Stephen Barney's question, "How to do things with pages?" a play on Austin's famous "How to do things with words." And through a great many conversations, the table was set to think about the effects caused by footnotes in a fictional text. Initially, my presumption of perceiving the page as a semiotic space allowed me to present the wide range of interpretations caused by the presence of footnotes, even though, in all effects, the note never changes. Although constant in its material presentation, the footnote has an uncanny way of being pluri-interpretable, depending on the context and clues offered by the author.

A constant surprise has been discovering how varied the effects provoked by the footnotes can be. Although often similar in their presentation, the plurality of effects caused by the presence of footnotes is staggering. How amazing can footnotes be, when each time they show up, they provoke a renewed impact on the reader?

It is also hard to ignore that all this was written in a time of great controversy about the notion of truth and authority. "Fake news" has emerged as a concept in the time it has taken me to write this; the notion that one could present misleading information under the guise of authority and

use it to manipulate the public's opinion is squarely on the nose of this thesis's objective. As I'm writing, the advent of A.I. and ChatGPT is raging through academia. This new technology can consume mass quantities of information and repackage this information with no regards to the source material: such an idea is as well presented within these pages. It seems like a rumination on footnotes now includes another dimension on confronting the dire problems of our times. And as much as footnotes seem like the answer to both problems — because by showing our sources we may evade the grasp of fake news and the wanton reappropriation of human labor by machines — this thesis makes clear that sources can be trafficked, reinterpreted and transformed. The footnote has as much the ability to transform truth into fiction as anything else that poses a challenge. The footnote is as capable as anything else to cause harm in transforming truth into fiction, or ficiton into truth.

As presented in the Introduction, people have often expressed disdain and sometimes outright hatred for footnotes, often underestimating the role of the page as a space for interpretation: footnotes, after all, interrupt the flow of reading. Though parochial in appearance, this kind of irritation may have to do with the uncertainty ingrained in our understanding of footnotes. Rather than understanding them as techniques of conceptual writing or as elements of the page that require further decoding from the main text, the frustrated prefer to reject them altogether.

A prolonged study of footnotes reveals that they hold far too much potential utility in their addition to a text to hold out hope for their eventual disappearance. An example of such utility comes in the form of the footnotes in *Mots d'Heures: Gousses, Rames: The d'Antin Manuscript*. An analysis of the potential of footnotes in this text acting as a red herring confirms the validity of according great importance to footnotes. Although I firmly believe that deciphering footnotes is a fascinating semiotic experiment, the research on it is virtually non-existent. After limiting the corpus to footnotes and not endnotes, we can see that it becomes possible to isolate the precise effects caused by the presence of the former. What remains is a model of three types: the scholarly, the editorial, and the diegetic, all possible focal points for further studies.

The footnote has a long tradition, flowing back through the sands of time to include books written by many cultures. By looking at their past, we are better able to understand the wide variety of uses to which they have been put to in our current times.

Much has been said about the history of the footnote as a textual addition, most notably by Gérard Genette, through his idea of paratext. All of these historical antecedents inform our way of reading, decoding, and understanding the place of footnotes in literature. Through this lens, we can present the concept of the page as interpretable space. Because the footnote can also be read as a fragment or even as a digression from the main body. The effective result of its presence is to give a sense of belonging to other layers of the story and can be said to provoke centrifugal and centripetal effects. In turn, this centripetal effect gives the impression that what exists outside of the text is being pulled in, that all outside sources are now converging on the story. The centripetal metafictional footnote allowed us to explore what could be crafted within a page, reflecting the concerns of writers since the early years of the novel. We have called this the "infrafictional" effect, an effect that gives the impression of grasping within the fabric of fiction — the polar opposite of the metafictional effect, this one more closely associated with burrowing within the text than with positioning itself outside of it. The centripetal effect is exactly the opposite: a centrifugal footnote gives the impression that what exists in the story is spilling out in the reader's world.

Chapters Two, Three and Four present the diverse effects of footnotes in different types of novels. Chapter Two focuses on the scholarly footnote, footnotes that take the form of research papers or scholarly references. This type of footnote is used to present traces of scholarship; it presents a way to peruse the influence and history behind the ideas. In novels, the scholarly footnote is another way of counterfeiting authority, using a time-honored technique that should be trusted but sometimes simply cannot be. Novels such as *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* (2004), by Susanna Clarke, and Borges' *Ficciones* (1944) show us how the authority of the scholarly footnote can be manufactured. These novels and fictions provoke us to question the authority of the footnote; they present us with the idea that although everything is presented as it would be in a

scholarly book, once the footnote is included in fiction, the author has a plethora of effects at his or her disposal. As readers, we need to make inferences to understand these effects and navigate through the work. Although many authors have chosen to use the scientific footnote to create uncertainty or present impossible worlds, the footnote can also be used for effective worldbuilding.

Chapter Three explores the impacts caused by the footnotes when they include editorial comments. Novels such as Stephanie Barron's *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manor* (1996), David Foster Wallace's *Pale King* (2011), Mordechai Richler's *Barney's Version* (1997)*,* Hubert Aquin's *Blackout* (1968) and Douglas Rushkoff's *Exit Strategy* (2001) show us how footnotes can be used as comments made on the main body of text itself. There are many effects that follow, notably the possibility of creating doubt about the text itself. The texts here show us examples of figures that can be associated with a wide variety of editors, all of whom act in different ways in their respective texts. These novels reveal some tensions between official and illicit history, and the footnotes become a privileged space to expose truths that are often too complex to be shown in the main body of text. Since truth is an evasive thing, editorial footnotes can also be a space of negotiation (or argument) over the consensus surrounding events. The editorial footnote affects the main body of text in a smorgasbord of ways, from the manuscript that gives the impression of reading an unpublished version of the story, to the literal revolutionary uprising of footnotes within the text.

I have also examined the effects caused by a multiplicity of footnotes and the absence of main body in works such as *Revenge of the Translator,* (2018) by Brice Matthieussent, or Jenny Boulley's *The Body* (2002)*.*

As we progress in the reading, we are led to wonder how the author could have manipulated the reader, with an addition of contradictory footnotes, which opens up an understanding of what we call the diegetic footnote, one that functions as a second layer of fiction within the novel. The diegetic footnote is a second space on the page that interacts with the main body of text but has

the ability to choose otherwise. This idea of space leads us to consider works such as Jasper Fforde's *The Well of Lost Plots* (2003)*,* Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia* (2008) and Robert Grudin's *Book: A Novel* (1992)*.* All three texts present the footnotes as a space buried within the main story: in the footnotes, the reader can connect spaces through the novel or even craft a section of the story so seperated from the main text that it allows to hide information. These are undoubtedly very metafictional practices that incite further experimentation by authors. Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and Jose Carlos Somoza's *The Athenian Murders* (2000) craft the space of the footnote into a labyrinth. The selected retracted space of the footnote becomes a technique used to spin, twist, and confuse the reader.

I have taken us into the final chapter, with a consideration of the presence and impact of footnotes in graphic literature. In starting with an already explicitly graphic type of storytelling, I have explored the way in which graphic artists use footnotes to subvert and lie, as well as to try to create different spaces of interpretation on the page. Matt Kindt's *Mind MGMT* (2015) presents the page as constantly expanding. He draws a story that uses the potential of footnotes in fiction to play with the reader and the characters expectancies.

In retrospect, the fact that we live in such a complex time, with more and more tools at our disposal to challenge the distinction between reality and fiction, means that we need more footnotes, not fewer. Misinformation, conspiracy and the rise of fake news can be linked to a lack of rigor in the dissemination of information. As previously stated in these pages, footnotes and the void have a great deal in common. On the one hand, the footnote makes a large amount of information available, but on the other hand, this information is filtered and edited to make it coherent, thus avoiding the trap of the void. The footnote also adds strata of fiction; when used in a fictional context, the footnote can blur the line between the real and the fictive. But that line is always held by the context of fiction, the presence of the novel or the poem. What we are living now is a life in which information is too pervasive to be clarified and fiction too blurred to be distinguishable from fact. Arguably, our crisis of information is caused by those lack of barriers that footnotes have been offering us for years.

Yet, it would be quite hyperbolic to say that only footnotes can save us now. Is it possible, however, that such a despised technique could be seen as the final bastion of protection in the face of fiction gone feral and information overloaded and lacking context? Perhaps there is a certain truth here: what is needed for us to again differentiate between fact and fiction is a line, a note, someone who has verified the information before publishing it.

We know that everything that has ever been written has been done because of influence. Footnotes show this influence, even though we have presented this apparatus as deceitful. Footnotes show us truth, whether it is truth about the source of our ideas, truth about the importance we offer to lies or truth about our willingness to cooperate with fiction. Footnotes do not try to deceive us because they want to undermine us; rather they are used as a tool for cooperation between the text and the reader. They wink at us, and we wink back.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

FICTIONS

Adams, Douglas. *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy*. London: Pan Books, 1979.

Adams, Douglas. *Mostly Harmless*, London: Pan Books, 1992.

Aquin, Hubert. *Trou de mémoire,* Montréal: Bibliothèque Québécoise, 1968,

Arnason, Eleanor *Hwathath Stories: Transgressive Tales by Aliens*. Seattle: Aqueduct Press., 2000.

Baker, Nicholson. *The Mezzanine*. New York: Random House, 1988.

Ballard, J.G. *War Fever*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1990.

Barth, John. *Sabbatical: A Romance*. London: Secker & Warburg, 1982.

Barron, Stephanie. *Jane and the Unpleasantness as Scargrave Manor*. New York: Bantam, 1997.

Bazell, Josh. *Beat the Reaper*. New York: Little Brown, 2009.

Coelho, Paulo. *Aleph*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *Ficciones*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1945.

Boully, Jenny. *The Body*. Ohio: Essay Press, 2007.

Brooks, Max. *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War*. New York: Three Rivers Press, 2006.

Cantero, Edgar. *The Supernatural Enhancements*. New York: Doubleday, 2014.

Cantwell, Christopher. & Cafu. *Iron Man*, Issue #3, New York, Marvel Comics, 2020.

Carol Oates, Joyce. *The Accursed*. New York: Eccom 2013.

Cates, Donny & Stegman, Ryan. *Absolute Carnage*, Issue #4, New York, Marvel Comics, 2019.

Charyn, Jerome. *The Tar Baby*. Normal: Dalkey Archive, 1973.

Chevillard, Éric. *L'œuvre posthume de Thomas Pilaster.* Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1999.

Clarke, Susanna. *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell*. London: Bloomsbury, 2004.

Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans: A Narrative*. New York: Limited Editions Club, 1757.

Cox, Michael. *The Meaning of Night*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006.

Crichton, Michael. *State of Fear*. New York: HarperCollins, 2004.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2000.

Daninos, Pierre. *Les Carnets du Major Thompson.* Paris: De Fallois, 2012.

Davis, Lydia. *The collected Stories of Lydia Davis*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009.

Diaz, Junot. *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. New York: Riverhead books, 2007.

Dickson Carr, John. *The Nine Wrong Answers*. New York: Lorevan, 1952.

Disabato, Catie. *Ghost Network*. Brooklyn: Melville House, 2015.

d'Ormesson, Jean. *La Gloire de l'Empire*. Paris : Gallimard, 2017.

Dompierre, Stéphane. *Marcher sur un Lego et autres raisons d'aimer la vie.* Montréal, Québec Amérique, 2019.

Doxiadis, Apóstolos. *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture*. London: Bloomsbury, 1992.

Ducharme, Réjean. *Hiver de Force*. Paris: Gallimard, 1973.

Dumas, Alexandre. *Marguerite de Valois*, Victoria: Leopold Classic Library, 1845.

Dunn, Mark. *Ibid: A Novel*. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004.

Fadiman, Anne. *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.

Fforde, Jasper. *Lost in a Good Book*. London: New English Library, 2002.

Fforde, Jasper. *The Well of Lost Plots*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2003.

Finley, C.C. *Footnotes*. Hoboken: The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, 2001.

Finney, Patricia. *I, Jack*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000.

Foster Wallace, David. *The Pale King*. New York: Little Brown, 2011.

Fournel, Pierre. *Banlieue.* Paris: La Bibliothèque oulipienne, 1990.

Fowles, John. *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Boston: Back Bay Books, 1969.

Gaiman, Neil, *Sandman: Dream Country,* New York, Vertigo, 1991..

Gentle, Mary. *A Secret History: The Book of Ash* #1. New York: HarperCollins, 1999.

Green, John. *An Abundance of Katherines*. New York: Dutton Books, 2006.

Grudin, Robert. *Book: A Novel*. New York: Penguin books, 1992.

Haddon, Mark. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 2003.

Haggard, H. Rider. *She*. New York: Dover Publications, 1886.

Hamburger, Robert. *Real Ultimate Power: The Official Ninja Book*. New York: Citadel Press Books., 2004.

Hayward, Steven. *Buddha Stevens and other stories*. Toronto: Exile Editions, 2000.

Heinlein, Robert A. *Time Enough for Love*. London: Penguin, 1987.

Hijuelos, Oscar. *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love*. New York: Perennial Classics, 2000.

Kellough, Kaie. *Accordéon*. Winnipeg: ARP press, 2016.

Kindt, Matt. *Mind MGMT*. Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2014.

Kindt, Matt. *3 Story: The Secret History of the Giant Man*, Milwaukie: Dark Horse Comics, 2005.

Kochalka, James. *The Cute Manifesto*. Cupertino: Alternative Comics, 2005.

Kosinski, Jerzy. *Hermit of 69th Street: the working papers of Norbert Kosky*. New York: Seaver Books, 1988.

Joyce, James. *Finnegans Wake*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1939.

Lacroix, Yannick. *Les cosmonautes de l'Absolu.* Montréal: Moult éditions, 2012.

Leclerc, Léon. *Zombie Kids*, Montréal: Éditions Victor et Anaïs, 2020.

Leduc, Simon. *L'évasion d'Arthur ou La commune d'Hochelaga*, Montréal, Le Quartanier, 2019.

Le Guin, Ursula. K. *The Dispossessed*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2014.

Lindenberger, Herbert. *Saul's Fall*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

Long, Dustin. *Icelander*. San Francisco: McSweeney, 2006.

Lopez, Barry. *Light Action in the Caribbean*: Story. New York: Vintage, 2001.

Lutz, Lisa. *The Spellman Files*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007.

Lyons, Jenn. *The Ruin of Kings*. New York: Tor, 2019.

Matthieussent, Brice. *Revenge of the Translator*, Palm Coast: Deep Vellum, 2009.

Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick*. New York: Pearson Longman, 1851.

Miller, Christopher. *The Cardboard Universe: A Guide to the World of Phoebus K. Dank*. New York: P.S., 2009.

Mitchell, David. *Cloud Atlas*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004.

Negarestani, Reza. *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, Melbourne: re-press, 2008.

North, Ryan.& Paroline, Sheili. *Adventure Time*, Los Angeles: Boom Studios, 2012.

O'Brien, Flann. *The Third Policeman*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1967.

O'Brien, Flann. *The Poor Mouth: A Bad Story about the Hard Life*. Champaign: Dalkey Archive Press, 1941.

Ozeki, Ruth. *A Tale for the Time Being*. Toronto: Viking, 2013.

Perec, Georges. *La Vie mode d'emploi* Paris: Poche, 1978.

Puig, Manuel. *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. New York: Vintage International, 1979.

Pope, Alexander. *The Dunciad*. London: John Long, 1728.

Poulin, Mathieu. *Des explosions ou Michael Bay et la pyrotechnie de l'esprit*. Montréal. Ta Mère, 2015.

Pratchett, Terry. and Gaiman, Neil. *Good Omens: the nice and accurate prophecies of Agnes Nutter, witch*. New York: William Morrow, 1990.

Pratchett, Terry. *The Color of Magic*. London: Corgi press, 1983.

Pratchett, Terry. *Moving Pictures*. London: Corgi press, 1990.

Richler, Mordechai. *Barney's Version*. Toronto: Penguin Random House Canada, 1997.

Rushkoff, Douglas. *Exit Strategy*. New York: Soft Skull Press, 2002.

Somoza, Jose Carlos. *The Athenian Murders*. London: Abacus, 2000.

Salinger, J.D. *Franny and Zooey*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1955.

Salm, Arthur. *Anyway**
*A Story About Me with 138 Footnotes, 27 Exaggerations, and 1 Plate of Spaghetti. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Nausea.* (translated by Lloyd Alexander*,* New York : New Directions Publishing Corp, 1964

Schoemperlen, Diane. *Forms of Devotion*. Toronto: HaperCollins, 1998.

Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. Pennsylvania: Franklin Library, 1759.

Stroud, Jonathan. *The Amulet of Samarkand*. New York: Miramax Books, 2003.

Taschereau, Ghislain. *L'inspecteur specteur et le doigt mort.* Montréal : Les Intouchables, 1998.

Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Vanity Fair*. London: Penguin Books, 1848.

Vance, Jack. *The Star King*. London: Grafton Books, 1988.

Westlake, Donald. E. *Don't Ask*. New York: Mysterious Press, 1993.

Williams, Leah. and Baldéon, David. *Gwenpool Strikes Again*. New York: Marvel Comics, 2019.

Yanagihara, Hanya. *The People in the Trees*. New York: Doubleday, 2013.

ESSAYS

Aarseth, Espen J., *Cybertext—Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Abbott, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Adeoluwa, Oluwasemilore & Stroud, Scott R. "When Actors Become Characters: The Ethics of Digital Real-Person Fan Fiction", *Media Engagement,* Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/29-real-person-fan-fiction-case-study-1.pdf

Adin, Rich. "Footnotes, Endnotes, & References: Uses & Abuses". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://americaneditor.wordpress.com/2010/03/29/footnotes-endnotes-references-uses-abuses/

Allacher, Harald. "Crossing Borders: A Philosophical Take on Metalepsis". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/11587626.pdf

Alter, Alexandra. "Reagan Book Sets Off Debate". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/05/business/media/rick-perlsteins-the-invisible-bridge-draws-criticism.html

Anderson, Bruce. "The Decline and Fall of Footnotes". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://stanfordmag.org/contents/the-decline-and-fall-of-footnotes

Aquin, Hubert. *Journal 1948-1971*. Montréal: Bibliothèque québécoise, 1999.

Archibald, Samuel. Le *texte et la technique: la lecture à l'heure des médias numériques*, Montréal: Le Quartanier, 2009.

Arrojo, Rosemary. *Fictional Translators: Rethinking Translation Through Literature*, New York: Routledge, 2018.

Augé, Marc. *Fictions fin de siècle* suivi de *Que se passe-t-il?*. Paris: Fayard, 2000.

Baltrusaitis, Jurgis. *Anamorphoses ou magie artificielle des effets merveilleux*, Paris: Olivier Perrin, 1955.

Barney, Stephen. Annotation and Its Texts. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Barthes, Roland. *Le bruissement de la langue.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1998.

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970.

Bemong, Nele. "Exploration #6: The Uncanny in Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *Image & Narrative*, issue 5, Accessed February 17th. 2023.
https://www.imageandnarrative.be/inarchive/uncanny/nelebemong.htm

Benstock, Shari. "At the Margin of Discourse: Footnotes in the Fictional Text", *PMLA* 98, no. 2, 1983.

Berger, Sholmo *Producing Redemption in Amsterdam: Early Modern Yiddish Books in Paratextual Perspective,* Paderborn, Brill, 2013.

Berthelot, Francis. *Bibliothèque de l'Entre-Mondes, Guide de lecture, les transfictions*. Paris: Gallimard, 2005.

Blake, Jason. " 'The Truth Will out' - Mordecai Richler's Barney's Version", *The Central European Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 4, Accessed February 17th. 2023.
https://digilib.phil.muni.cz/bitstream/handle/11222.digilib/116024/2_CentralEuropeanJournalC anadian_4-2004-1_8.pdf?sequence=1

Blakesley, Elizabeth. *Great Women Mystery Writers*, 2nd Ed., Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 2007.

Bök, Christian. "Quick Review 05 by Christian Bök". Accessed February 17th. 2023.
www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/10/quick-review-05.

Bolter Jay David & Grusin, Richard. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999.

Bongco, Mila. *Reading Comics: Language, Culture, and the Concept of the Superhero in Comic Books*. New York: Garland Publishing, 2000.

Booth, Wayne. C. *The Rhetoric of Fiction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Ce que parler veut dire*. Paris: Fayard, 1982.

Bouvet, Rachel & Gervais, Bertrand. *Théories et pratiques de la lecture littéraire,* Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 2007.

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the fiction film*. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

Bowersock, G.W. "The Art of the Footnote", *The American Scholar*, Vol. 53, No. 1, 1983/1984.

Bray, Joe & Handley Miriam & Henry Anne C. *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Brouillette, Marc-André. *Spatialité Textuelle dans la poésie contemporaine*, Montréal: Nota Bene, 2010.

Burkle-Young, Francis & Maley Saundra R. *The Art of the Footnote: The Intelligent Student's Guide to the Art and Science of Annotating Texts*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1996.

Butor, Michel. "Le livre comme objet" in *Oeuvre complètes de Michel Butor*, *Repertoire 1,* Paris: Éditions de la Différence, 1960.

Cagnon, Maurice. "Palimpsest in the Writings of Hubert Aquin", *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1978.

Campbell, William Giles and Ballou, Stephen Vaughan. *Form and Style,* 4th ed., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974.

Camus, Michel & Roger, Philippe. *Sade: Écrire la crise*, Coll*oque de Cerisy-la-Salle*, Belfond, Paris, 1983.

Carrión, Ulises. *Second Thought*, Amsterdam: Void Distributors, 1975.

Central Intelligence Agency. "Kubark Counterintelligence Interrogation". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB122/

Chan Man K. & Venter Pieter M. "Midrash as Exegetical Approach of Early Jewish Exegesis, with some Examples from the Book of Ruth". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/787/926

Chanen, Brian W. "Surfing the Text. The digital environment in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 11, 2007.

Chandler, Daniel and Munday, Rod "Unlimited Semiosis". Accessed February 17th. 2023. 2016,https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199568758.001.0001/acref-9780199568758.

Chappell, Brian. "David Foster Wallace's Open-Ended End Game". Accessed March 29th. 2019. http://www.thethepoetry.com/2011/05/david-foster-wallace%E2%80%99s-open-ended-end-game/

Charles, Michel. *Introduction à l'étude des textes*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995.

Clark, Jonathan Russell. "On the Fine Art of the Footnote; From Nabokov to Danielewski, Beyond the Experimental". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://lithub.com/the-fine-art-of-the-footnote/

Collot, Michel & Mathieu, Jean-Claude. "Présentation" in *Espace et poésie, Actes du colloque des 13-14-15 juin 1984.* Paris: Presses de l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, 1987.

Colonna, Vincent. *Autofictions et autres mythomanies littéraires,* Auch: Tristram, 2004.

Compagnon, Antoine. *La Seconde main ou le travail de la citation*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1979.

Cottrell, Sophie. *"*A Conversation with Mark Danielewski*.".* Accessed May 26th, 2021. http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0400/danielewski/ interview.html

D'Ambrosio, Mariano. "Quatre cas contemporains de notes sans texte : du texte absent au texte scriptible." Accessed February 17th. 2023.https://adhoc.hypotheses.org/ad-hoc-n6-loriginal-absent/quatre-cas-contemporains-de-notes-sans-texte-du-texte-absent-au-texte-scriptible

Dällenbach, Lucien. *Le récit spéculaire: Essai sur la mise en abyme*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977.

Deledalle, Gérard. *Lire Pierce aujourd'hui.* Paris: De Boeck, 1992.

Denton, William. "Fictional footnotes and Indexes". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.miskatonic.org/footnotes.html

Derrida, Jacques. "Ceci n'est pas une note infrapaginale orale". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://licorne.edel.univ-poitiers.fr:443/licorne/index.php?id=3024.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Translated by Barbara Johnson. London: The Athlone Press, 1981.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Parergon*, Translated by Craig Owens, Cambridge, MIT press, 1979.

Dionne, Ugo. *La voix aux chapitres: Poétique de la disposition romanesque* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2008.

Doležel, Lubomir. *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Doménech, Francisco. "Möbius and Impossible Objects", *Open Mind BVA*, Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.bbvaopenmind.com/en/science/mathematics/mobius-and-impossible-objects/

Dorling, Alan. "Experimental Forms in Contemporary Fiction". Accessed February 17th. 2023. http://eprints.nottingham.ac.uk/13310/1/370525.pdf

Eagleton, Terry. *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2008.

Eco, Umberto. *How to Write a Thesi*s, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015.

Eco, Umberto. *Lector in Fabula*, Paris: Grasset, 1985

Eco, Umberto. *Le Signe*. Paris: Grasset, 1992.

Eco, Umberto. *The Myth of Superman*, Translation by Natalie Chilton, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972.

Edwards, Thomas R. "Pulling Down the Temple". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1998/03/05/pulling-down-the-temple/

Ekman, Stefan & Taylor, Audrey Isabel. "Notes Toward a Critical Approach to Worlds and World-Building". *Fafnir*: Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research. vol. 3, Issue 3, 2019.

Ellul, Jacques. *The Technological Society*, Translated by Jonathan Wilkinson New York. Vintage Books, 1964.

Emory Elliot, "Centrifiction",*The Columbia Literary History of the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.

Evans, Jonathan. *The Many Voices of Lydia Davis: Translation, Rewriting, Intertextuality*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.

Ewen, Cameron D., Pande, S.K. (1958). *"Treatement of the Chronic Paranoid Schizophrenic Patient",* Canadian Medical Association Journal 78.

Federman, Raymond. *Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow*, Ohio: Swallow press, 1975

Fish, Stanley. *Is There a Text in this Class?*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Fishburn, Evelyn. "A Footnote to Borges Studies:A Study of the Footnote" *Institute of Latin American Studies Occasional Papers*. No. 2, 1996.

Fox, Michael V. "On Footnotes", *Hebrew Studies,* Volume 28, 1987.

Gay, Peter. *Style in History*. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

Genette, Gérard. *Figure III*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1972.

Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts.* Translated by Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Gervais, Bertrand. *À l'écoute de la lecture*. Montréal. Nota Bene, 2006.

Gervais, Bertrand. *Figures, lectures. Logiques de l'imaginaire*, Montréal. Le Quartanier, 2007.

Goldsmith, Kenneth. "Paragraphs on Conceptual Writing." *Poetry Foundation*. Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/05/paragraphs-on-conceptual-writing

Grafton, Anthony. *The Footnote: A Curious History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Grossman, Lev. *Between History and Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1990.

Guilet, Anaïs. "Le traitement des notes de bas de page dans House of Leaves de Mark Z. Danielweski." Accessed February 17th. 2023. http://www.academia.edu/3302659/Le_traitement_des_notes_de_bas_de_page_dans_House_of_Leaves

Hall, Sean T. *This Means This, This Means That: A User's Guide to Semiotics*, London: Laurence King Publishing, 2012.

Hamilton, Natalie. "The A-Mazing House: The Labyrinth as Theme and Form in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves", Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 50, 2008.

Harding, James T. "Review: The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes by Chuck Zerby". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://empowermint.wordpress.com/2012/04/04/review-the-devils-details-a-history-of-footnotes-by-chuck-zerby/

Hayles, N. Katherine. "Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis", *Poetics Today,* vol. 25, 2004.

Hayles, N. Katherine. "Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*", *American Literature*, vol. 74, 2002.

Hebert, Dominic. *L'être dérivé, Une lecture situationniste de Prochain épisode d'Hubert Aquin*, Québec, Université Laval, 2008.

Heidenreich, Rosmarin. *The Postwar Novel in Canada: Narrative Patterns and Reader Response. Waterloo*: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1989.

Heller, Nathan. "Save Footnotes". Accessed February 17th 2023. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/save-footnotes

Hemmingson, Michael. "What's Beneath the Floorboards: Three Competing Metavoices in the Footnotes of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*", *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 52, 2011.

Hilbert, Betsy. "Elegy for Excursus: The Descent of the Footnote". *College English*, vol. 51, #4, 1989.

Hollington, Michael. *The Reception of Charles Dickens in Europe*, New York: Bloomsbury, 2003.

Horowitz, Alexandra. "Will the E-Book will the footnote?". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/books/review/will-the-e-book-kill-the-footnote.html

Howes, Victor. "Barth's Literary Puzzle: Several Novels Disguised as One; *Sabbatical: A Romance*, by John Barth"*. The Christian Science Monitor*, 1982.

Hutcheon, Linda. "Postmodern Paratextuality and History". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/9477/1/TSpace0031.pdf

Hutcheon, Linda. *Politics of Postmodernism*, New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox*, Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978.

Kaplan, Norman. "The norms of citational behavior: Prolegomena of the footnote". Accessed February 17th. 2023. http://search.proquest.com/docview/195436263?pq-origsite=gscholar

Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. London: Picador, 2008.

Klinkenberg, Jean-Marie. *Précis de sémiotique générale.* Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2000.

Kostelantz, Richard. *Essaying Essays*, New York: AC Institute, 2019.

Kwakkel, Erik "Footnotes Before Print*", Books Before Print*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018.

Lamontage, André. *Les mots des autres : la poétique intertextuelle des oeuvres romanesques de Hubert Aquin,* Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1992.

Landow, George P. *Hypertext 2.0: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Langford, David. "Notes that foot". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://ansible.uk/sfx/sfx128.html

Latour, Bruno. *Science in Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Lefevbre, Julie. "La note comme greffe typographique: étude linguistique et discursive", *L'information grammaticale*, no 119, 2008.

Lefebvre, Julie. "«*Note» et « Note» : proposition de défrichage linguistique*", Poitiers: La Licorne, n°67, 2004.

Lightstone, Jack N. *The Rhetoric of the Babylonian Talmud, Its Social Meaning and Context*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1994.

Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica: Fiction and Possible Worlds*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Lupoff, Richard A. *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure*. New York: Ace Books, 1968.

Lutz, Lisa. "Downloadable Footnotes", Accessed February 17th. 2023. http://lisalutz.com/blog/downloadable-footnotes/

Luzzatto*, Moché Haïm. La logique du Talmud*. *Paris;* Éditions de l'Éclat, 2013.

Malcuzynski, M.-Pierette. *La fiction néobaroque aux Amériques, 1960-1970 : littérature carnavalisée et aliénation narrative chez Hubert Aquin, Guillermo Cabrera Infante et Thomas Pynchon*. Montréal, McGill University, 1982.

Maloney, Edward. H. *Footnotes in Fiction: A Rhetorical Approach*, Ohio: Ohio State University, 2005.

Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: MIT press, 2001.

Marion, Dominic. "Naissance et mort du lecteur détective : lectographie de Trou de mémoire d'Hubert Aquin". *Nouvelle Revue Synergies Canada*, vol. 16, 2022.

Martel, Jean-Pierre. "Trou de mémoire : oeuvre baroque, essai sur le dédoublement et le décor", *Voix et images du pays*, vol. 8, no 1, 1974.

Marti, Marc. "La clôture narrative, propositions théoriques d'analyse" Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-00568036/document

Masciandaro, Nicola. "Becoming Spice: Commentary as Geophilosophy", *Collapse*, vol.VI, 2010.

Max, D.T. Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story: A Life of David Foster Wallace. New York: Penguin, 2012.

McCaffery, Larry & Gregory, Sinda. "Haunted House--an Interview with Mark Z. Danielewski", *Critique*, vol.44, 2003.

McCloud, Scott. *Understanding Comics*, New York: William Morrow Paperbacks, 1994.

McGann, Jerome J. *The Textual Condition*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991.

McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. Abingdon-on-Thames. Routledge, 1987.

McInnes, Andrew. *Feminism in the Footnotes: Wollstonecraft's Ghost in Mary Hays' Female Biography*, Abingdon-on-Thames: Life Writings, 2011.

McKaughan, Daniel Jon. "From Ugly Duckling to Swan: C. S. Peirce, Abduction, and the Pursuit of Scientific Theories." *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2008.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Abingdon-on-Thames. Routledge, 1964.

Menand, Louis. "The End Matter, The Nightmare of Citation", Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2003/10/06/the-end-matter

Mendlesohn, Farah. *Rhetorics of Fantasy*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary (The*)*, "Double entendre", Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/double%20entendre

Michel, Lincoln. "Against Worldbuilding: Why "worldbuilding" is the most overrated and overused concept in fiction". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://electricliterature.com/against-worldbuilding/

Millier, Denis. *La littérature fantastique*, Paris: Le Seuil, 2000.

Mowitt, John. *Text: The Genealogy of an Antidisciplinary Object*. Durham. Duke university Press, 1992.

Mullen, R.D. "Dialect, Grapholect, and Story: Russell Hoban's 'Riddley Walker' as Science Fiction", *Science Fiction Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.jstor.org/stable/4240920?seq=1

Munari, Bruno. *Design as fiction*. London: Penguin, 2008.

Newman, Andrew Adam. "How Should a Book Sound? And What About Footnotes?". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/books/how-should-a-book-sound-and-what-about-footnotes.html

Ouspenski, Boris. *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Pavis, Patrice. *Dictionnaire du théâtre*. Paris: Armand Colin, 2009.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. "Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://colorysemiotica.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/peirce-collectedpapers.pdf

Perron, Bernard. "Faire le tour de la question". *Cinémas: revue d'études cinématographiques*, vol. 12, n° 2 ,2002.

Pfersmann, Andréas. *Séditions infrapaginales : poétique historique de l'annotation littéraire (XVIIe-XXIe siècles).* Genève: Droz, Genève, 2011.

Pfersmann, Andréas & Dürrenmatt, Jacques. *L'espace de la note*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004.

Phelan, James & Rabinowitz, Peter. J & Warhol*, Robyn. *Theory and interpretation of narrative,* Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013.

Plassard, Freddie. "Mineur de fond ou chirurgien esthétique ? Traducteur et traduction dans Vengeance du traducteur de Brice Matthieussent". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://sciendo.com/article/10.2478/tran-2014-0025

Portelli, Alessandro. "Jack London's Missing Revolution: Notes on The Iron Heel*". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.depauw.edu/sfs/backissues/27/portelli.html

Poulouin, Claudine & Arnould, Jean-Claude (ed.) Notes: études sur l'annotation en littérature, (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Publication des Universités de Rouen et du Havre, 2008.

Pressman, Jessica. "*House of Leaves*: Reading the Networked Novel", *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 34, 2006.

Rabinowitz, Peter J. "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 4, No. 1, 1977.

Randall, Marilyn, "L'homme et l'œuvre : biolectographie d'Hubert Aquin", *Voix et Images*, vol. 23, 1998.

Randall, Marilyn. *Le contexte littéraire : lecture pragmatique de Hubert Aquin et de Réjean Ducharme,* Longueuil: Editions du Préambule, 1990.

Redgate, Jamis. *Wallace and I: Cognition, Consciousness, and Dualism in David Foster Wallace's Fiction***,** Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge**,** 2019.

Riess, Peter. *Towards a Theory of the Footnote*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1983.

Rodowick, David. *Reading the Figural, Or, Philosophy After the New Media*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2001.

Rouché, Berton. "As Empty as Eve". The New Yorker. Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1974/09/09/as-empty-as-eve

Rouleau, Nicolas. Lectures labyrinthiques: *House of Leaves* de Mark Z. Danielewski, Montréal: Université du Québec à Montréal, 2007.

Rousset, Jean. *Littérature de l'âge baroque en France*, Paris: Jose Corti, 1965.

Rushkoff, Douglas. *Nothing Sacred, The Truth about Judaism*. New York: Crown Publishers, 2003.

Russo, Julian & Stewart, Carson. *Introductory English Language*, Waltham Abbey. Ed Tech Press, 2018.

Saemmer, Alexandra. *Rhétorique du texte numérique : figures de la lecture, anticipation de pratiques*. Villeurbanne: Presses de l'Enssib, 2015.

Seppelt, Nathan. "Dig Shallower, Uncovering the Other Other Meanings in Wallace's Works". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://medium.com/just-words/dig-shallower-a3906def1312

Servoise, Sylvie. (ed.), *Enfances dystopiques*, Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2020.

Shastri, Sudha. "Return to the Beginning: *House of Leaves* by Mark Danielewski", *Atenea*, vol. 26, .2006.

Siemerling, Winfried. *Discoveries of the Other: Alterity in the Work of Leonard Cohen, Hubert Aquin, Michael Ondaatje, and Nicole Brossard*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1994.

Smith, Keith A. *Text in the Book Format*. Rochester: Keith A. Smith Books, 1995.

Smith, Keith A. *Structure of the Visual Book*. Rochester: Keith A. Smith Books, 2003.

Snyder, Ilana. *Page to screen: Taking Literacy into the Electronic Era*, New York: Routledge, 2003.

Somers, Jeffrey. "Consider the Footnote: Why Don't More Authors Use This Powerful Tool?". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/consider-the-footnote-why-dont-more-authors-use-the-most-powerful-tool-in-fiction/

Spitzer, D.M. & Oliveira, Paulo. "The Centrality of the Margins: The Translator's Footnote as Parergon", in *The Translator's Footnote as Parergon in Transfiction and Bordering Approaches to Theorizing Translation: Essays in Dialogue with the Work of Rosemary Arrojo*. New York, Routledge, 2022.

St-Gelais, Richard. *Châteaux de pages.* Montréal: Hurtibise. 1994.

St-Gelais, Richard. *L'empire du pseudo: modernités de la science-fiction*. Montréal: Nota Bene, 1999.

St-Martin, Fernande. *Structures de l'espace pictural*. Québec: Bibliothèque Québécoise, 1989

Sturrock, John. *Structuralism*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003

Stroud, Scott R. & Oluwasemilore, Adeoluwa. "When Actors Become Characters: The Ethics of Digital Real-Person Fan Fiction". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://mediaengagement.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/29-real-person-fan-fiction-case-study-1.pdf

Sullivan, Charles A. "The Under-Theorized Asterisk Footnote*", SSRN*, Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://ssrn.com/abstract=711083

Teyssot, Georges. *Une typologie du quotidien*. Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2013.

Thérien, Gilles. "Pour une sémiotique de la lecture", *Protée*, vol.18, no 2, (1990).

Throgmorton, Molly. *House of Leaves: Navigating the Labyrinth of the Deconstructed Novel*. Arkadelphia: Ouachita Baptist University, 2009.

Todd, Janet. *The Pickering Masters: The Works of Aphra Behn*, Vol. 1. London: Pickering & Chatto, 1992.

Truman, Sarah E., *Feminist Speculations and the Practice of Research-Creation: Writing Pedagogies and Intertextual Effects*, New York: Routledge, 2021.

Vandendorpe, Christian. "Paradigme et syntagme, de quelques idées vertes qui ont dormi furieusement". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://ruor.uottawa.ca/bitstream/10393/12790/5/Vandendorpe_Christian_1990_Paradigme_et_syntagme.pdf

van Leunen, Mary-Claire. *Handbook for Scholars*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.

Wallace, David Foster. "Host*", The Atlantic*, Accessed February 17th. 2023.https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2005/04/host/303812/

Wang, Candice. "Five Questions: An Interview with Jenny Boully". Accessed February 17th. 2023. https://ashberyland.com/2016/11/16/5-questions-an-interview-with-jenny-boully/

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1984.

Wendig, Chuck. "25 Things You Should Know About Worldbuilding". Accessed February 17th. 2023. http://terribleminds.com/ramble/2013/09/17/25-things-you-should-know-about-worldbuilding/

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness, Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 1972 .

Wolf, Mark. J. P. *Building Imaginary Worlds*. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2012.

Zerby, Chuck. *The Devil's Details: A History of Footnotes*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 2002.

* WHENEVER YOU SEE A MYSTERY ASTERISK THAT DOESN'T HAVE A MATCHING FOOTNOTE, IT POINTS HERE.