

THE THING

THE BOOK

# THE THING

## A Monument to the Book as Object

Featuring: Gwen Allen • Tauba Auerbach • John Baldessari • Martin Creed  
• Mark Dion • Anthony Discenza • Kota Ezawa • Harrell Fletcher • Ryan  
Gander • Sam Green • Jonn Herschend & Will Rogan • Matthew Higgs  
• Andrew Hultkrans • Chris Johanson • Miranda July • Starlee Kine •  
Andrew Leland • Jonathan Lethem • MacFadden & Thorpe • Mike Mills • Rick  
Moody • Dave Muller • Laurel Nakadate • Tucker Nichols • Trevor Paglen •  
Lucy Pullen • Ed Ruscha • Leslie Shows • David Shrigley • Molly Springfield  
• Sara VanDerBeek • Anne Walsh • Lawrence Weiner • Richard Wentworth

# THE BOOK

## What exactly is a book?

*The Thing The Book* asks that question of more than thirty creative visionaries. Each traditional element of a book—from endpapers to ribbon bookmarks to page numbers—has been assigned to a different artist or writer to use as his or her own personal exhibition space. Miranda July's naughty errata slip, Jonathan Lethem's Foster Wallace-esque footnotes, Ed Ruscha's medieval bookplate, not to mention essays, fiction, photo collections, artworks, centerfolds, a reading group guide—the treasures and pleasures found herein will captivate the mind and delight the imagination.

San Francisco-based artists John Herschend and Will Rogan are founders and curators of *THE THING Quarterly*, an experimental periodical that takes the form of a different physical object for each issue.

[WWW.CHRONICLEBOOKS.COM](http://WWW.CHRONICLEBOOKS.COM)

\$40.00 U.S./£25.00 U.K.

ISBN 978-1-4521-1172-1



54000



9 781452 117201

---

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

---

Compiled by MacFadden & Thorpe, LLC

Please read this License Agreement ("License") carefully before using *The Thing The Book*. By using *The Thing The Book*, you are agreeing to be bound by the terms of this License. If you do not agree to the terms of this License, do not read, look at, and/or use *The Thing The Book* and, when presented with the option to "agree" or "disagree" to the terms, agree to disagree. If you acquired *The Thing The Book* as a gift, as part of a larger purchase (like a house or an important person's archive), or as a mistake, and if you do not agree to the terms of this License, you may return the entire *The Thing The Book* within the return period to the bookstore or authorized distributor where you obtained it for

a refund, subject to the retailer's return policy and their patience. You must return the entire *The Thing The Book* in order to obtain a refund, and may not, for example, keep Miranda July's erratum or David Shrigley's ribbons to bookmark a book of your own choosing. *The Thing The Book* is licensed to you only for reproduction, modification, publication, and distribution of noncopyrighted materials, materials in which you own the copyright, or materials you are authorized or legally permitted to reproduce, modify, publish, or distribute. In other words, if you were one of the contributors to *The Thing The Book*, you may reproduce your contribution, but may not reproduce another's contribution. Not even if you are friends. If you are uncertain about your right to copy, modify, publish, or distribute any material, you should contact your legal advisor, or MacFadden & Thorpe, LLC, who, despite their name, are not practicing attorneys at law in any

way, and will advise you to contact your legal advisor, or if you don't have an attorney, can give you the name of theirs. They also have a bookkeeper, if you need one of those, and you probably do.

### GENERAL

A. *The Thing The Book*, including all words, pictures, documentation, fonts, paper, tasteful cloth cover, foil stamping, head and tail bands, cyan, magenta, yellow, and black ("CMYK") inks, pixels, and metadata as preinstalled on *The Thing The Book* in print form, e-book or any other media, or in any other form (collectively "*The Thing The Book*") is licensed, not sold, to you by *The Thing The Book* ("*The Thing The Book*") for use only under the terms of this License. *The Thing The Book* and/or *The Thing The Book*'s licensors and contributors retain ownership of *The Thing The Book* itself and reserve all rights not expressly granted to you. You agree

that the terms of this License will apply to any *The Thing The Book*-associated materials, unless such product is accompanied by a separate license, in which case you agree that the terms of that license will govern your use of that product. B. *The Thing The Book*, at its discretion, may make available future upgrades or updates to *The Thing The Book* such as *The Thing The Book v1.2*. Upgrades and updates, if any, may not necessarily include all existing features or new features that *The Thing The Book* releases for newer or other models of *The Thing The Book*. The terms of this License will govern any upgrades or updates provided by *The Thing The Book* that replace and/or supplement the original *The Thing The Book*, unless such an upgrade or update is accompanied by a separate license in which case the terms of that license will govern. C. Title and intellectual property rights in and to any content displayed by or accessed through *The*

*Thing The Book* belong to the owner. Such content may be your or other intellectual property or may be subject to terms of another license providing such content. We do not grant you any rights to use such content if it is destroyed, if it is lost, if it is out, or if there were a fire and you were destroyed.

PERMITTED LICENSE USES AND LIMITATIONS. Subject to the terms and conditions of this License, unless you obtained *The Thing The Book* under a volume license, maintenance agreement from *The Thing The Book*, you are granted a limited, nonexclusive license to store, shelve, and/or display one (1) copy of *The Book* at any one time, if you obtain

---

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

---

Compiled by MacFadden & Thorpe, LLC

Please read this License Agreement ("License") carefully before using *The Thing The Book*. By using *The Thing The Book*, you are agreeing to be bound by the terms of this License. If you do not agree to the terms of this License, do not read, look at, and/or use *The Thing The Book* and, when presented with the option to "agree" or "disagree" to the terms, agree to disagree. If you acquired *The Thing The Book* as a gift, as part of a larger purchase (like a house or an important person's archive), or as a mistake, and if you do not agree to the terms of this License, you may return the entire *The Thing The Book* within the return period to the bookstore or authorized distributor where you obtained it for

a refund, subject to the retailer's return policy and their patience. You must return the entire *The Thing The Book* in order to obtain a refund, and may not, for example, keep Miranda July's erratum or David Shrigley's ribbons to bookmark a book of your own choosing. *The Thing The Book* is licensed to you only for reproduction, modification, publication, and distribution of noncopyrighted materials, materials in which you own the copyright, or materials you are authorized or legally permitted to reproduce, modify, publish, or distribute. In other words, if you were one of the contributors to *The Thing The Book*, you may reproduce your contribution, but may not reproduce another's contribution. Not even if you are friends. If you are uncertain about your right to copy, modify, publish, or distribute any material, you should contact your legal advisor, or MacFadden & Thorpe, LLC, who, despite their name, are not practicing attorneys at law in any

way, and will advise you to contact your legal advisor, or if you don't have an attorney, can give you the name of theirs. They also have a bookkeeper, if you need one of those, and you probably do.

### GENERAL

A. *The Thing The Book*, including all words, pictures, documentation, fonts, paper, tasteful cloth cover, foil stamping, head and tail bands, cyan, magenta, yellow, and black ("CMYK") inks, pixels, and metadata as preinstalled on *The Thing The Book* in print form, e-book or any other media, or in any other form (collectively "*The Thing The Book*") is licensed, not sold, to you by *The Thing The Book* ("*The Thing The Book*") for use only under the terms of this License. *The Thing The Book* and/or *The Thing The Book*'s licensors and contributors retain ownership of *The Thing The Book* itself and reserve all rights not expressly granted to you. You agree

that the terms of this License will apply to any *The Thing The Book*-associated materials, unless such product is accompanied by a separate license, in which case you agree that the terms of that license will govern your use of that product. B. *The Thing The Book*, at its discretion, may make available future upgrades or updates to *The Thing The Book* such as *The Thing The Book* v1.2. Upgrades and updates, if any, may not necessarily include all existing features or new features that *The Thing The Book* releases for newer or other models of *The Thing The Book*. The terms of this License will govern any upgrades or updates provided by *The Thing The Book* that replace and/or supplement the original *The Thing The Book*, unless such an upgrade or update is accompanied by a separate license in which case the terms of that license will govern. C. Title and intellectual property rights in and to any content displayed by or accessed through *The*

*Thing The Book* belong to the respective owner. Such content may be protected by other intellectual property laws and may be subject to terms of use of the provider providing such content. This License grants you any rights to use such content, but it guarantees that such content will not be available to you. An example is if a page is lost, or if there were a fire and only a few pages were destroyed.

PERMITTED LICENSE USES AND RESTRICTIONS. Subject to the terms and conditions of this License, unless you obtained *The Thing The Book* as a volume license, maintenance, or other agreement from *The Thing The Book*, you are granted a limited, nonexclusive license to view, share, and/or display one (1) copy of *The Book* at any one time, if you obtain

you to contact your legal advisor. An attorney, or even a law school professor, can give you the best advice. You may also have a bookkeeper, if you have one, and you probably do.

The Thing The Book, including all words, pictures, illustrations, fonts, paper, tasteful cloth covers, head and tail bands, cyan and magenta ("CMYK") inks, pixels, and fonts, as installed on The Thing The Book or any other media, or in any other format (including "The Thing The Book" software) is provided to you by The Thing The Book (or its licensors) for use only under the terms and conditions of this License. The authors and contributors retain all rights in and to the content of The Thing The Book itself and reserve all rights not expressly granted to you. You agree

that the terms of this License will apply to any The Thing The Book-associated materials, unless such materials are accompanied by a separate license, in which case you agree that the terms of that license will govern your use of that product. B. The Thing The Book, at its discretion, may make available future upgrades or updates to The Thing The Book such as The Thing The Book v1.2. Upgrades and updates, if any, may not necessarily include all existing features or new features that The Thing The Book releases for newer or other models of The Thing The Book. The terms of this License will govern any upgrades or updates provided by The Thing The Book that replace and/or supplement the original The Thing The Book, unless such an upgrade or update is accompanied by a separate license in which case the terms of that license will govern. C. Title and intellectual property rights in and to any content displayed by or accessed through The

Thing The Book belong to the respective content owner. Such content may be protected by copyright or other intellectual property laws and treaties, and may be subject to terms of use of the third party providing such content. This License does not grant you any rights to use such content nor does it guarantee that such content will continue to be available to you. An example is if a page were torn out, or if there were a fire and only a page or two were destroyed.

#### PERMITTED LICENSE USES AND RESTRICTIONS

Subject to the terms and conditions of this License, unless you obtained The Thing The Book under a volume license, maintenance, or other written agreement from The Thing The Book, you are granted a limited, nonexclusive license to read, share, and/or display one (1) copy of The Thing The Book at any one time. If you obtained a license

for The Thing The Book from a bookseller, a witch/wizard, a captain of industry, a close relative, or someone very important, then your use is subject to the terms and conditions that they set forth, which are not The Thing The Book's problem. If you are an educational institution and have licensed this book for a library or survey class, you are commended on your choice of The Thing The Book for your students. They may read it at their leisure, and The Thing The Book hopes they find it interesting and accessible as they develop a conceptual stance of their own, and it's The Thing The Book's greatest hope that they may someday become artists themselves and credit The Thing The Book as an influence, perhaps even the influence. However, they may not photocopy The Thing The Book—if that's even done anymore. Photographing it for the purpose of reproduction is probably also not acceptable. Drawing it is OK, as is sharing of The Thing The Book through

social media, or talking about The Thing The Book at parties or other directly social scenarios. It is also more than fine to alert your professors of the book's existence, and suggest that they too may do well to purchase a copy.

#### INDEMNITY

If you use The Thing The Book for purposes in violation of our Terms and Conditions, as determined in our sole and absolute discretion, you agree to indemnify and hold harmless The Thing The Book and its officers, directors, employees, agents, pets, friends, "friends," parents, former lovers, bankers, children, loose associates, grocers, trusted mechanics, website developers, family, and that guy, from and against any claims, suits, proceedings, disputes, demands, liabilities, damages, losses, costs, and expenses, including, without limitation, reasonable legal and accounting fees (including costs of







# NATURE OF THE FUTURE

Overproduction, 37  
Overspecialization, 39  
Oxford University, 39  
Ozerkani, Amelke

Packaging, 79  
Painters, 65  
Partners, 100

Parladio, A  
Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

Partners, 100

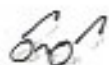
Partners, 100



# THE THING

A MONUMENT TO THE BOOK AS OBJECT

John Herschend & Will Rogan



CHRONICLE BOOKS  
SAN FRANCISCO

# THE BOOK

## A Table of Contents to a Book Other Than the One You Are Holding in Your Hands

---

1. Wiggling Our Way through the Eons
2. Sanctum Stupendous
3. When Frolics Turn Fearsome
4. The Nostril Befouled
5. Why I Left Bobby for Ben
6. Abalone Avalanche
7. Counting Threesomes by Foursics
8. Tête-à-Tête in Dawn's Funky Pavilion
9. You're the Radish to My Anguished Turnip
10. Now: My Pants
11. Thinking Clean, Being Clean
12. The Soda That Thinks It's a Juice
13. S.O.P. Is D.O.A.
14. Donald at the End of Time
15. Tubers Über Alles
16. The Mandrills in Our Midst
17. Who *Did* Let the Dogs Out?
18. Micromanaging the Mini
19. Bare-Assed and Beautiful
20. More Than You Ever Expected from Your Panties
21. Bodacious Beetles
22. The Day Johnson Became a Hottie
23. When Abs Are Tight but Lips Are Loose
24. A Big-Ass Space Full of Itty-Bitty Ideas
25. It's Official: You Suck
26. Not a Creature Was Stirring, Except the Twelve Billion  
Bacteria in Your Colon
27. Cashing In, Checking Out, Calling Mom Back
28. The Unspeakable Heresies of Ashleigh
29. Heaven in a Pie Pan
30. The New Freshwater Lifestyle

31. This Neck's a Louner
32. The Weirdest Thing in Cleveland (Is the Hottest Thing in Des Moines)
33. Minor Cruelties of the Supply Room
34. This Week's Fucked-Up Shit
35. Lox Populi
36. Your Feedback Rocks!
37. Mano a Manischewitz
38. Everything Is Stackable
39. Fur, Glorious Fur
40. Heavy into Puddles
41. Single Hirsute Male: Enjoys Leather, Hammocks, Birdsong
42. The Haunting of Knott's Berry Farm
43. A Few of Our Favorite Lycanthropes
44. You're Weird, Your Carpet's Weird, I'm Outta Here
45. Betrothed to the Balrog
46. Don't Blame Picasso
47. Amazing Weight-Loss Secrets of the Mayans
48. 10 Memorable Meltdowns
49. Derek vs. the Jennifers
50. The Seven Crazy People You'll Meet in My Bathroom
51. Interlude in Azure
52. Everyone Likes It but Mom
53. Our Guests, the Gastropods
54. The Suds Have Spoken
55. Where There's Smoke There's Grandpa
56. Her Golden Touch
57. Decorated in Human Blood!
58. Maidenheads on the Mizzenmast
59. Teleconference Away the Heartache
60. When the Cheese Hits the Meat

ms, suits or proceedings brought by any way related to your access to or The Book.

Book and all included content are on "as is" basis without warranty of any express or implied. The Thing The Book has no responsibility and assumes no liability for any content that is exposed to content that is inadvisable, inappropriate, or otherwise harmful or constitution. On the other hand, The Thing The Book takes no responsibility for any content that is beautiful, essentially life-changing, or simply nice. The Thing The Book takes no responsibility for any content that is written by other user or third party writes, creates, or otherwise uses to alter

The Thing The Book. You understand and agree that your additions, subtractions, or marginalia are primarily for your own amusement or scholarship, and do not constitute an improvement. If you get a paper cut, or are injured by a thrown or falling copy of The Thing The Book, it's clearly not The Thing The Book's fault. In addition, actions or events The Thing The Book is not responsible for include, but are not limited to, bad days, eye strain, being "not funny," a sunburn, an odor, global warming, un- or half-truths, the high cost of living, careless whispers, unnecessary software upgrades, slights, rainy days and Mondays, excessive executive compensation, being flippanant, being "not quite right," airline fees, mothers-in-law, sciatica, leaky windows, running out of toilet paper, splinters, "waiting too long," power failures (although a book is a good thing to have in one), cold fronts, a run-up in costs of goods, and anything associated with pain and suffering.

#### ACCESS TO THE THING THE BOOK

Only you, your immediate family, people you are trying to impress, romantic liaisons, domestic help, high-functioning animals, and the cable provider may access your copy of The Thing The Book. If you are a company or for-profit organization, your employees, temporary employees, interns, clients, people waiting in the lobby, and salesmen are allowed access, but in a time frame not to exceed twenty (20) minutes, in which they should get a general idea of The Thing The Book but expressly not the whole idea. This should be sufficient to decide if they would like to purchase their own copy of The Thing The Book, which is strongly encouraged. If you are a library or educational institution, your membership, staff, students, faculty, visiting artists, and so on, shall be able to access The Thing The Book without time limitation, and to their full enjoyment. External professional service providers

such as attorneys, accountants, contractors, etc., should be advised to concentrate on the work they are being paid to do, and read their own copy of The Thing The Book on their own time.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

These terms and conditions will be governed and interpreted pursuant to the laws of your country of residence, notwithstanding any principles of conflicts of law or just stuff that comes up. If any part of these terms and conditions is unlawful, void, unenforceable, unethical, a bad idea, not really thought out, or fake, that part will be deemed severable and will not affect the validity and enforceability of any remaining provisions. The Thing The Book is both a work of fiction and nonfiction. Which is to say it simultaneously exists and does not exist. It shall be, and also shall not be, and together Book and reader are of one bond, one love, from here until the end.

Before proceeding, please agree to these Terms and Conditions. Failure to do so may have bleak and unwelcome consequences.

I agree with the Terms and Conditions ☺

I do not agree with the Terms and Conditions ☹

I neither agree nor disagree with the Terms and Conditions ☹

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

a witch/  
ative, or  
subject to  
n, which  
u are an  
his book  
nded on  
tudents.  
ing *The*  
ossible  
air own,  
ope that  
ves and  
perhaps  
ot pho-  
en done  
f repro-  
wing it  
through

social media, or talking about *The Thing The Book* at parties or other directly social scenarios, it is also more than fine to alert your professors of the book's existence, and suggest that they too may do well to purchase a copy.

#### INDEMNITY

If you use *The Thing The Book* for purposes in violation of our Terms and Conditions, as determined in our sole and absolute discretion, you agree to indemnify and hold harmless *The Thing The Book* and its officers, directors, employees, agents, pets, friends, "friends," parents, former lovers, bankers, children, loose associates, grocers, trusted mechanics, website developers, family, and that guy, from and against any claims, suits, proceedings, disputes, demands, liabilities, damages, losses, costs, and expenses, including, without limitation, reasonable legal and accounting fees (including costs of

defense of claims, suits or proceedings brought by third parties), in any way related to your access to or use of *The Thing The Book*.

#### DISCLAIMERS

*The Thing The Book* and all included content are provided on an "as is" basis without warranty of any kind, whether express or implied. *The Thing The Book* takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for any content. You understand and agree that you may be exposed to content that is inaccurate, objectionable, inappropriate, or otherwise unsuited to your constitution. On the other hand, you may be exposed to content that is beautiful, meaningful, potentially life-changing, or simply nice to look at. *The Thing The Book* takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for any content that you or any other user or third party writes, draws, glass, carves, or otherwise uses to alter

*The Thing The Book*. You understand and agree that your additions, subtractions, or marginalia are primarily for your own amusement or scholarship, and do not constitute an improvement. If you get a paper cut, or are injured by a thrown or falling copy of *The Thing The Book*, it's clearly not *The Thing The Book's* fault. In addition, actions or events *The Thing The Book* is not responsible for include, but are not limited to, bad days, eye strain, being "not funny," a sunburn, an odor, global warming, un- or half-truths, the high cost of living, careless whispers, unnecessary software upgrades, slights, rainy days and Mondays, excessive executive compensation, being flopant, being "not quite right," airline fees, mothers-in-law, sciatica, leaky windows, running out of toilet paper, splinters, "waiting too long," power failures (although a book is a good thing to have in one), cold fronts, a run-up in costs of goods, and anything associated with pain and suffering

#### ACCESS TO THE THING THE BOOK

Only you, your immediate family, people you are trying to impress, business reasons, domestic help, high-functioning animals, and the cable provider may access and use of *The Thing The Book*. If you are a company or for-profit organization, your employees, temporary employees, interns, clients, people waiting in the lobby, and salesman are allowed access, but in a time frame not to exceed twenty (20) minutes, in which they should get a general idea of *The Thing The Book* but expressly not the whole idea. The client is sufficient to decide if they would like to purchase their own copy of *The Thing The Book*, which is strongly encouraged. If you are a library or educational institution, your membership, staff, students, faculty, visiting artists, and so on, shall be able to access *The Thing The Book* without time limitation, and to their full enjoyment. External professional service providers

such as attorneys, accountants should be advised to concentrate on what are being paid to do, and read *The Thing The Book* on their own time.

#### MISCELLANEOUS

These terms and conditions will be interpreted pursuant to the law of the state of your residence, notwithstanding any choice of law or just stuff that confuses you. If these terms and conditions is unenforceable, unethical, a bad idea, out, or fake, that part will be deemed void, and will not affect the validity and enforceability of the remaining provisions. *The Thing The Book* is a work of fiction and nonfiction, and shall simultaneously exist and does not exist, and also shall not be, and together with all other things are of one bond, one love, from

## Contents

Endpapers <i>Leslie Shows</i>	
Bookplate: "Ex Libris" <i>Ed Ruscha</i>	
Bookmarks <i>David Shrigley</i>	between 1–156
Epigraph <i>John Baldessari</i>	5
A Table of Contents to a Book Other Than the One You Are Holding in Your Hands <i>Anthony DiScenza</i>	6
Folios <i>Tauba Auerbach</i>	6
Footnotes <i>Jonathan Lethem</i>	8
Introduction <i>John Herschend &amp; Will Rogan</i>	10
Essay: "The Artist as Bookmaker" <i>Gwen Allen</i>	13
Essay: "Society of Things" <i>Lucy Pullen</i>	25
Flip Book: "Dancers" <i>Dave Muller</i>	27, 96
Photography: "Roman Women" <i>Sara VanDerBeek</i>	32, 47, 76, 80, 93, 94, 95, 134
Essay: "My Fricids" <i>Harrell Fletcher</i>	33
Essay: "Work No. 470: If you're lonely, 2005" <i>Martin Creed</i>	42
Note: "A Note to My Students" <i>Andrew Leland</i>	44
Erratum <i>Miranda July</i>	between 44–45



"The Hearing Trumpet: A Character List" <i>Anne Walsh</i>	48
Photography and Sculptures <i>Richard Wentworth</i>	54
(Detail from): "Investigation #81—The Coulash Trigonometry of Fate" <i>Ryan Gander</i>	58
Illustration: "Bookshelf" <i>Tucker Nichols</i>	60
Bibliography: "Difficult Times: Every Book About Spirituality I Own." <i>Mike Mills</i>	62
Calligraphy: "I Don't Speak Japanese" <i>Kota Ezawa</i>	68
Essay: "The Fire This Time: Razing the Book" <i>Andrew Hultkrans</i>	70
Essay: "A Postcard from Lascoux" <i>Trevor Paglen</i>	77
Centerfolds: "Contemporary Readers" <i>Laurel Nakadate</i>	81
Thumb Tab <i>Lawrence Weiner</i>	86
Paintings: "Poem Paintings" <i>Chris Johanson</i>	88
Photography: "Cover Life" <i>Mark Dion</i>	96
Drawings: "Indices" <i>Molly Springfield</i>	113
Endnotes <i>Rick Moody</i>	119
"Questions for a Reading Group" <i>Starlee Kine</i>	129
Index <i>Matthew Higgs</i>	135
Colophon: "Zachary Z" <i>Sam Green</i>	149

## Introduction

—  
Jonh Herschend & Will Rogan

Hello,  
 Welcome to this Object.  
 Also:  
 Welcome to this Exhibition.

You may consider this the front desk, or the docent, or the wall text. It is these things as much as it is the introduction to this book, a letter from the editors.

As editors of *THE THING Quarterly*, a periodical in the form of an everyday object, we have spent the last seven years producing something that is not a magazine at all.<sup>5</sup> Yet we insist on calling it a magazine. Even when many say, “What you are producing is not a magazine. A magazine is a particular object, with specific qualities, such as pages and binding.” Even then, in the face of these facts—facts that would be hard to deny—we still insist on calling *THE THING Quarterly* a magazine. Why? Because we are interested in the way text affects objects. We like the way things change when their context gets adjusted.

When we decided to make a book, our first instinct was to turn the book into an exhibition space. Both of us work within the art world and tend to approach projects with a more physical sensibility first, thinking out how our work will sit within the context of a gallery or exhibition space. We wanted to approach the book as an exhibition space, as an object, and reexamine the structures of both its contents and its physical self. This meant that all sections of the book would need to be addressed.

We all know that books are a delivery vehicle for information, but we wanted to make the case that books might be one of the best delivery vehicles. Along with this, we wanted to make a case for the physical attributes of books in general, things that can be done with books that cannot be done with e-readers: They can be used as a place to set a drink, if a coaster is not nearby. They can be used to help level a table. They can be used to prop doors open, and, in some cases, to hold them closed.

We at *THE THING Quarterly* are drawn to the physicality of things in general and the particular histories they carry with them: marks they receive over time and the

5. I teach at Pomona College, where I occupy the Roy E. Disney '51 Chair in Creative Writing. I'm the second occupant of the Disney Chair; the first was David Foster Wallace.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, I'm Wallace's footnote. Roy E. Disney was Walt Disney's brother and business partner, generally credited with building up the financial side of the business, rather than concerning himself with creative matters; Roy is his brother's footnote. Arguably, therefore, I may be a more fitting occupant of Roy's Chair

than Wallace, though he'll forever “own” it in the public imagination.<sup>7</sup>

6. David Foster Wallace is generally understood to be contemporary writing's master of the footnote as a literary device—to such an extent that he's often taken in some sense to be the technique's “originator,” which is, almost needless to say, absurd on its face.<sup>8</sup> He's instead the footnote's triumphant popularizer. As it happens, though, his monolithic use of

of print on paper, and reminds me of soy bacon and similarly baffling why would a vegetarian or vegan, particularly of the moral variety, need to resemble and taste like one of the greasiest meat products known to be easier on the eyes, RadioPaper is not backlit like an LCD but rather lit as paper does. Until the release of the Kindle Paperwhite in 2012, you separate light source to read it at night in bed, just like a paper book.

Kindle models, including the Paperwhite, make you pay an extra \$20 privilege of not having ads displayed on its home screen and screensaver, a galling instance of the protection-racket relationship that has developed advertising/marketing and Web 2.0 content. You've paid for the Kindle for the e-books, but you still have to pay protection money to Amazon of ads. This is where the Google-Facebook business model is taking us: ones are a "premium" service; one has to "opt out" of the ad-plastered and pay an admission fee in order to enjoy, if only temporarily, unspontaneous.

and DATs, Betamax and VHS tapes all met their fate in the landfill of his parking-lot Dumpsters are already overflowing with CDs and DVDs. The analog to the future of the book is the vinyl LP, which has settled into its current niche collectors' format for audiophiles and hipsters. The survival of despite drastically reduced market share, is remarkable. Whatever its merits, are several, the LP is a highly inefficient medium for consuming music, it's in the only sense that matters anymore—that of business. Books will be the same transformation. They will not disappear entirely, but they will all be "special edition" variety, something like the 180-gram vinyl LPs that are of quality and durability than those produced when the LP was the dominant every format. Indeed, they will be something like the book you're reading. They will be valued as objects, not as media.

ious process is going on here. The digitization of all cultural products is granting the physical copy an "aura" that, as Walter Benjamin famously argued, is dispelled by the mechanical reproduction of copies of an original artifact—a secondary aura, but an aura nonetheless. What makes this possible is that my physical copy of a certain book, print, or LP is not exactly the same. Mine may smell like smoke and have coffee mug rings and marginalia on it that may be pristine. My digital copy of the same cultural artifact, however, is not the same as yours. It's less a copy than an avatar of the Platonic ideal of the artifact's never really "mine" or "yours." We're just both able to access it through a device. This shift from the physical copy to the virtual copy is reminiscent of what infuriated English essayist Charles Lamb in 1822:

72

which stood there, in rude but lively fashion depicted, or the very colour of the cheek, the eye, the eyebrow, hair, the very dress he used to wear—the only authentic testimony we had, however imperfect, of these curious parts and parcels of him. They covered him over with a coat of white paint. By —, if I had been a justice of peace for Warwickshire, I would have clapt both commentator and sexton fast in the stocks, for a pair of meddling sacrilegious varlets.

The physical copy of Shakespeare (the man) had individual character ("in rude but lively fashion depicted . . . however imperfect"); the whitewashed version is like a digital copy, infinitely reproducible in a perfect, indistinguishable form. Something is perhaps gained here—some people prefer their cultural artifacts free of the visual and olfactory funk that can adhere over time to physical copies—but something is also lost.

When friends scoff at me for not only retaining my large collection of CDs, but also having the nerve to display them in racks in my apartment—the wasted space they cry, the Ludlite pigheadedness!—I ask them to imagine what their apartment would look like without books. The disappearance of books from the world is the endgame of a process of cultural erasure initiated by the emergence of personal computers and the Internet. The movement of all cultural delivery media from the street and the shelf to the cloud and the screen is "rational," it "makes sense." What's it to love about a world where everything is "on demand," "at your fingertips," ubiquitous? How can you resist having more space, less dust, lighter suitcases? There are, of course, other advantages: Dunderheaded oligarchs will no longer have to waste money on rows of fake book spines or instant libraries purchased from estate sales to evince sophistication to their party guests. Every household will be book-free in the future, so what's the point?

There's no doubt that e-readers offer great portability and storage space for local form text files—carrying even five physical books, let alone fifty, is a serious inconvenience when commuting or traveling. But it's hard to escape the feeling that each of the fifty "books" you have stored on your e-reader has been devalued as an individual artifact. It's just one file in a list. For good or ill, there is something about the commitment required to accommodate the space and weight of a physical book that makes the medium more heft, literal and figurative. This has clearly happened with music since the dawn of the iPod. The MP3 collections of even the most hardened music enthusiasts are entirely interchangeable with those of other collectors. Showing your collection of music to a fellow fan—once a point of pride for collectors of all sorts—involves having her browse an onscreen iTunes library whose font and interface is exactly the same as yours.

HAND WRITTEN COPY

73



Top: Untitled  
Bottom: Untitled



ERRATUM.

The sentence on page 45 that reads "Delete it without reading the subject line" should read "Put it in, put it in, put it in," she moaned, but he would only bounce the head of his cock against her swelling clit."

MIRANDA JU

is one would do irreparable damage together these next few months repeating this again and again: Even though I'll have more—and indeed, the contrast is profoundly limited—I can't wind through the rest of the rounds us, it straight before a subtle temptation to parse the specials board in a restaurant as words flood our eyes. For beyond the distinction between (pointless) I recommend that Return to this text. Useful examples: receive an email. Delete it. Her hands you an open menu down on the table. Tell the someone sings a little arpeggio block the phone. Delete it and read it again, starting from the top. The next day, your cousin, a busy three dogs in Tucson, recommends experience in Afghanistan. You do. Instead, dip in to a paragraph on the of tahini and a cup of red miso in a vinegar. The dressing is delicious as

stories we imbue them with. And books are amazing vehicles for both of these kinds of artifacts. The book on your shelf with the decaying spine, for example, falling apart since you left it on the balcony of your hotel room and it was caught in a rain-storm and swelled up like a textual marshmallow. The book happens to be Haruki Murikami's *Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, which marked a sort of turning point in your life as a reader, so it stays on your shelf, even though you know that the pages are ready to explode with the slightest touch. It's a manifestation of your own history, a marker. A library becomes a history, weighted in moving boxes, that we drag around with us from one place to the next. We (by which we mean us in particular, John and Will, the editors of *THE THING Quarterly*) find the clunky, messy nature of this sort of history to be so much more compelling than a virtual history of files or photos that exist somewhere on a server in a cloud.

We won't make too much more out of this, because this book is intended to be a physical (and sometimes textual) argument for the points mentioned above. But the general notion is that we asked artists and writers, whose work we love and whose work also had some vested interest in physicality, to each take on a particular portion of the book—the endnotes, the epigraph, the endpapers, the footnotes, bookmark ribbons, thumb tabs, et cetera—and to create a new and original work that addresses the physical nature of his or her own particular section. Realizing that the content of the book would need to be addressed in a similar manner, we also asked the contributors to consider creating works that address the case to be made for the physical nature of all books in general and this book in particular. What follows (as well as what precedes) is the result.

Enjoy the Exhibition. Enjoy the Object. Put it to good use.

John Herschend & Will Rogan, Editors  
*THE THING Quarterly*  
 September 2013

\* *THE THING Quarterly* is like a magazine except that each issue is conceived of by a different contributor and then published on a useful object. One quick example: Issue 7, by Jonathan Lethem, consisted of a pair of clear glasses with text on each of the arms that read "Will you know a Chaldron when you see one?" and "With these glasses you will know a true one."—and a care and maintenance manual written in both English and French.

footnotes in the manuscript of his canonical book, the super-long novel *Infinite Jest*, was converted by his editor, against Wallace's initial preference, into endnotes—almost a hundred pages of them.

5. I never met Wallace.
6. Most of those inclined to recall the immediate pre-Wallace context for the literary footnote point to Nicholson Baker's *The Mezzanine*.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, Baker's prominent and dardling use of footnotes is probably even more integral, formally, to his book's intent and purposes than those in Wallace's fiction.<sup>7</sup> But it's silly to pit these two writers against one another; they're comrades-in-arms, I think, in employing the footnote ultimately as a signifier of cognition's bursting the linear framework of temporality—an urgent correction to the hidebound moment-to-moment progress of stuff across a printed page. What Wallace calls "brain

Untitled

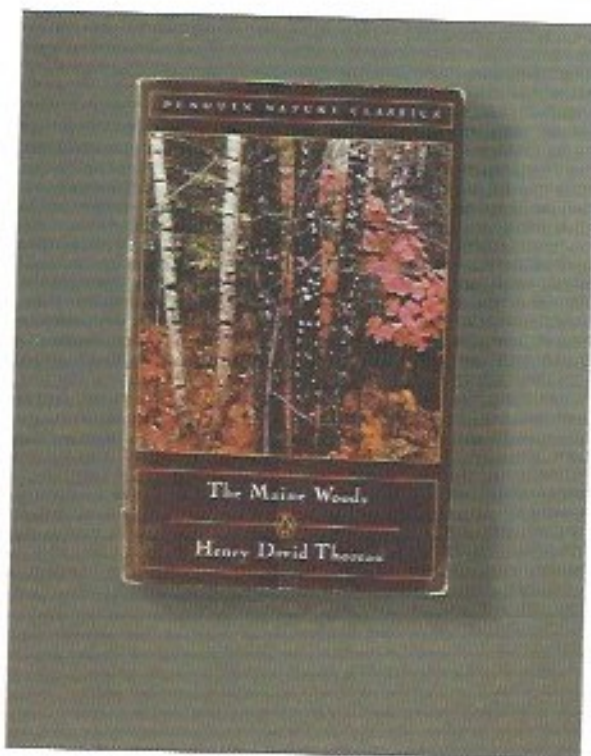
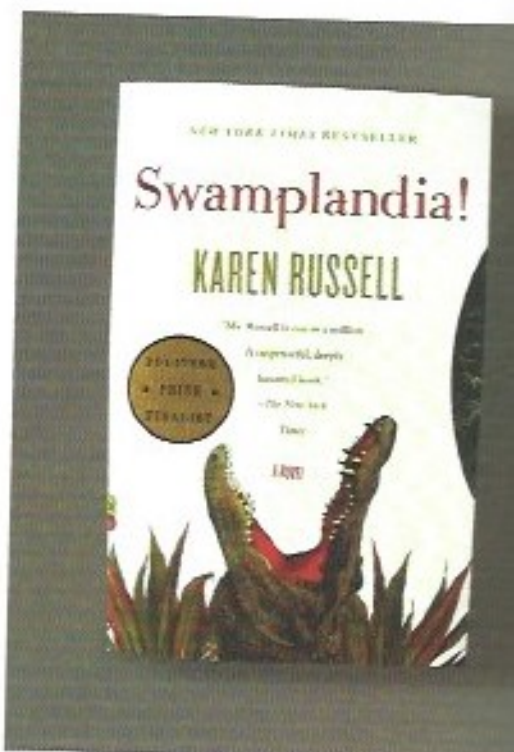
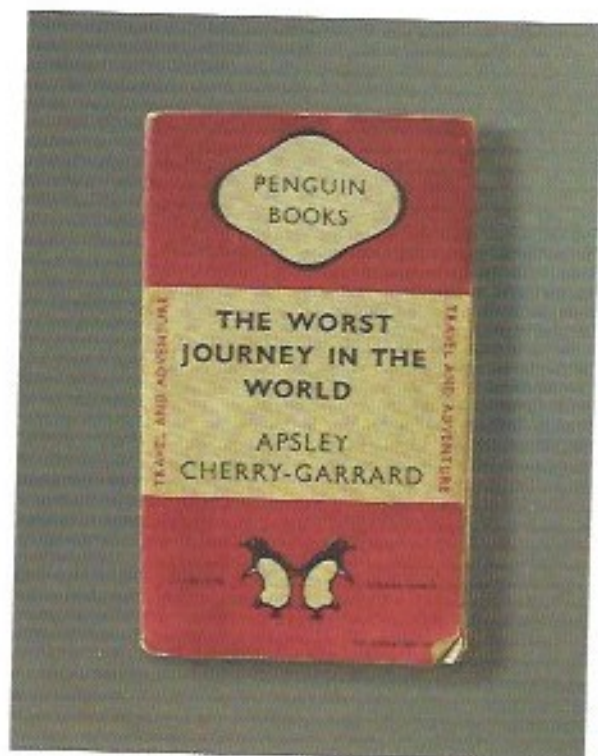
—  
Lawrence Weiner

86

87







## Indices

—

Molly Springfield

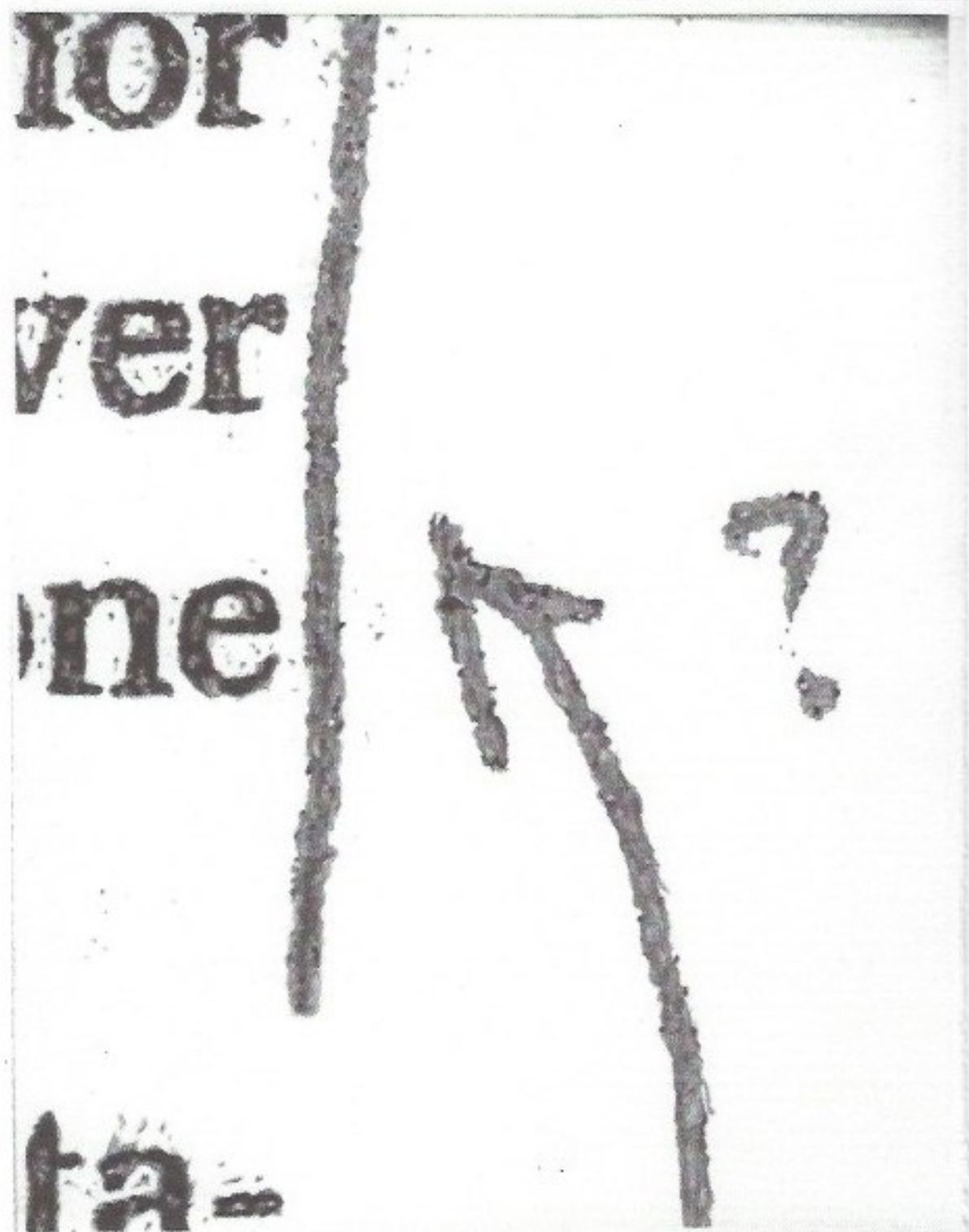
113



up  
and  
ther  
ties









# # 7



## Endnotes

—  
Rick Moody



Compiled and edited by F. D. Millsap, M.L.S., PhD

Part One: A Perilous Obsession

1. The barely concealed quotation here on page 33 is to be found in: Nicholas A. Basbanes, *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*, Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1991. In the opening pages, Basbanes alludes to the book-collecting obsession of one Silvestre de Stacy (1753–1838), who remarked thus about his own fine collection of printed matter, “Oh my darling books, a day will come when you will be laid out in the market stalls, to be thumbed by lesser men! For have I not chosen you one and all by the sweat of my brow! I do love you all.” That *Six Dynasties* author Trevor Cowles here attributes the entire quotation, without alteration, to a hard-to-love Southeast Asian counterinsurgency expert only deepens the mystery of Cowles’s singular project. Misquoting, plagiarizing, decontextualizing, asking scholars such as myself to rise to the occasion in the area of citation. These difficulties undergird the action of the book as a whole, as we shall soon see.
2. *Rapt neighborhoods of men*, from Dickinson, #246, which poetess has a rather odd tendency to recur, an almost Nietzschean tendency to recur, in this an ostensibly thrilling *page-turner* about imperial meddling in Asian sex tourism economies, the opium trade, and assassination for hire.
3. *And with more energy than before he began showing wine at the men*. A merely ligamentary passage, one supposes, and yet I hear the reverberations of *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. However, a colleague here in the Western Kentucky classics department, Samantha Mallory, insists the echo is from the Penguin edition of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* (trans. by M. A. Screech), p. 17, *In some it was their bellies that swelled up, and those bellies grew as convex as fat barrels. Of them it was written, Almighty and everlasting guts*. Such minor differences of interpretation in the academic relationship can sometimes fester horribly. But Prof. Mallory continues to come to my house on occasion and to bring her rather astounding *vegetarian shepherd’s pie*, the recipe for which I was strongly considering including in these endnotes. True, I did ask Samantha out on a date that one time, and she adduced a barrage of *prior engagements*. Once reflexive self-debasement and its attenuations had been put behind us, we were able to find the occasional working meeting invigorating, as in, e.g., a comparative list of intertextual citations in mostly subliterary popular fiction.

4. Peg Leg Howell, "Blood Red River." *The Legendary Peg Leg Howell*, 1943. Testament T-2204. Popular music is not much the demesne of the compiler of endnotes and/or bibliographies, but I make it my business to chase down every lead. When Cowles was first revealed to have plagiarized heavily from *Chronicles, Volume I*, by Bob Dylan, his chutzpah was widely admired in the kind of avant-garde circles who consider Dylan's reuse of public domain material itself canny and insightful. Peg Leg Howell is a recording artist occasionally played on Dylan's *Theme Time Radio Hour* program (see the multiple bibliographies), but the presence of a Howell reference here may also refer to Cowles's oft-cited first high school writing instructor, disabled Korean War veteran Ed Biletsky. (Interview with the author in *Black Warrior Review*, vol. LXVII, no. 4, pp. 22–23, ff.)
5. The celebrated *missing chapter* (beginning herewith) of Cowles's *Six Dynasties* certainly has taken many a reader by surprise. Getting to this crucial moment, ninety-two pages into the story, and then finding not only that the relevant chapter doesn't exist but that there are actual "torn-out bits," ragged pages, even in fine copies fresh from the publisher's warehouse, indeed this crucial moment must be extremely destabilizing even for a sophisticate, the kind of consumer who did not purchase *Six Dynasties* at the airport and who eschews the ease and portability of a digital device. Indeed, one can surmise that Cowles is here poking fun at the ubiquity of the e-reader, because the e-reader *fails to notice a physical intervention* in the text (the *tearing out*) at VIII (n.b., unnumbered chapters in the original text appear here in roman numerals throughout), because there is no physical trace of it, and thus the e-reader does not know about the loss, despite references later. Many have attempted to fathom the specifics of the "torn-out" chapter in *Six Dynasties*, the specific *plot points* excised therefrom, and the most compelling argument (Gaughan, "All Torn Up Inside," from *Oxford American*, Fall/Winter 2010, pp. 56–76) seems to be that the "torn-out" chapter consists primarily of an autobiographical aside by the author himself about a school shooting he is reputed to have witnessed in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, in 1988. It is true that the shooting, if Gaughan's reconstruction of the chapter is accurate, does little to move forward the grand, multihued plot of *Six Dynasties*, which in the prior chapter is concerned with the Nanjing Cartel, its internecine feuds, resulting in the eventual reign of a particularly bloodthirsty opium dealer called "Little Petals," but *Six Dynasties* loses heart about its own depictions of violence in subsequent sections, as if to say that any depiction of violence in turn *banalizes violence*, or at least *Six Dynasties* seems to advance this argument if you accept that the missing chapter concerns the Great Barrington school shooting. But what does the novel say if the Great Barrington chapter is sundered from the great

action of the whole? That violence itself causes violence to the book? That violence and the opposition to violence are each impossible to sustain intellectual positions? That only the physical book is capable of conveying the actual emotional freight of human violence? That the e-book tolerates violence more because it is one further removed from the physical world? That the e-book is *the supplement of a supplement of violence*, as a certain Gallic post-structuralist might put it?

6. Cf., *At length I fell asleep, with the volume in my hand; and never slept so sound before*, from Melville's *Redburn*. The question of whether a poison has been administered on the recto pages of the book-within-the-book here has been raised in certain circles. The transparent thrust of Cowles's scene, in which Yi Xin is somehow mortally wounded by the act of reading Lavette's *Manifests of War*, is, strictly speaking, impossible without some other somatic complaint, viz., stroke, blood clot, myocardial infarction. Spontaneous death from book ownership is not well known in the medical literature. The image would seem more probably related to, e.g., spontaneous human combustion, as it occurs in Brockden Brown's *Wieland, or Bleak House*, by Charles Dickens. In this latter case, the character is known as Mr. Krook. In simplified Chinese, *crook* would be thus, 弯曲, which is not far from Yi Xin's surname as indicated in *Six Dynasties*. Spontaneous human combustion (or SHC), meanwhile, as it is known among medical experts, has been documented in more than two hundred cases in recorded human history, though in many instances the body or bodies incinerated were, it's true, near to high heat or open flame. Cowles's preoccupation with SHC and its lore becomes plausible in view of the coterminous publication of Nickel and Fisher's report to the Internal Association of Arson Investigators of 1994. Nickel and Fisher find a correlation between drunkenness/intoxication and incidents of SHC, which is certainly the case with Yi Xin, who has been sampling the product, as it were. The hypothesis of readers like Rosenthal (in *Minutes of the Mystery Writers Association of Great Britain*, 1987, CXII: 4, p. 931), and Smiley (ibid.), is that Yi Xin's tendency to lick his fingers before turning each page makes inevitable the presence of an odorless, tasteless poison upon the corners of each and every page. No such murder could take place during the era of the e-book, when there is no real turning of pages.
7. Others have noted a long gap in intertextual references in *Six Dynasties*, between VI and XXII, as if Cowles had front-loaded the manuscript with literary references, only to tire of the task, like the famous novelist who is reputed to have said: *My novel is all finished, I just have to go back and put in the symbols*. My personal feeling is that Cowles actually piles up the

brother- and sister-in-law, are consigned for all time, having read of Lancelot and Guinevere and paid the eternal price. Now the anarchic libertinage of Cowles's chapter becomes more transparent, if not somewhat fated. It is not so much that Cowles *delights in the language of transgression*, as he warns you that the book has its effect, that there is no more dangerous persuasion than the persuasion with which we suffer at the hands of literary words. In such scenes: the blood spirals the wrong way down the sink.

#### Part Two: A Remarkable Afterlife

8. *Moartea e un fenomen simplu in natură*, from Marin Preda's *Cel Mai Iubit Dintre Padmiteni* (*The Most Beloved of Earthlings*). The line, I am told, translates thus: "Death in nature is a simple thing." How Cowles came to be able to read Romanian is unknown. "He was dead with less commotion than a curtain is stirred by breezes offshore," says consigliere Bonaparte Rackstraw, in the Sicilian dynasty section, before cutting up his passport and vanishing. Clearly we are again in the company of that astounding loner Dickinson:

*Then lightly as a reed  
Bent to the water, shivered scarce,  
She consented, and was dead.*

9. The drowning passage of the third chapter of part two merits bibliographical attention. Agreed, as whole herds of English term papers will one day argue, there are similarities with the Pip (the cabin boy) subplot of *Moby Dick*. Another argument that ought to gain steam alludes to the Conrad of *The Secret Agent*. And yet I prefer to think of the relationship that Cowles may have had with the work of chronically depressed family-abandoner and sufferer with logorrhea Patrick O'Brian (né Richard Patrick Russ), whose *Master and Commander* has a like man-overboard passage, with strong *homosocial bonding*, wherein the unpleasant Stephen Maturin character is adrift briefly in the great expanses of the southern seas: *The mist had cleared away and the sky above was spangled with an impossible number of stars. Beneath him was the incomprehensible depth of the Pacific. Immensity above and immensity below.* Maturin rescued by the manly embraces of Jack Maubrey. Novels of the sea are novels about the conditions in which civilization does not apply, or such is the tradition, and while I do not choose to admit that I have collected all twenty of the O'Brian novels, the Aubrey-Maturin *roman-fleuve*, first editions each, it is in my case more a sign of a need for entertainment or a distraction from serotonin deficiency than it is some kind of rooting about in the literary anarchy of the high seas. Like L. Ron Hubbard, O'Brian did some time in military intelligence.

like a bad radio/Clear of voices and history, the staticky/Noise of the new." Cowles's *clamor and history, riot and calamity* is, therefore, part of what convinces me that Trevor Cowles, whomever he was or was not, was aided and abetted by a feminine collaborator, at least in later sections.

13. And then there is: *The grandmother didn't want to go to Florida, right there in the middle of the passage where the vulture, slipping and calling, begins to orbit over Jose Rosas. The source is obvious to all, or should be, and it has a great deal to do with the argument that Six Dynasties, for all its rivers of blood, is somehow enfin, a tract against violence and inhumanity both real and literary. We should find ourselves, in any valuable novel, appalled by loss of life and by cruelties to any personages contained therein. The O'Connor story should be among our guides.*
  
14. The last chapter of the novel is a conundrum, in that the action does not deplete itself at all. In a way, it cannot end, at least if you believe the tissue of fictions about Cowles's skiing accident and the amount of *apocrypha* that remained behind, to be attached to the existing manuscript. From this angle, *Six Dynasties* is not a book that ends but, rather, a book that simply stops. The last line that you have here (*As all great families are lost in the warp of time, as all families are misted in the thick fog of improbability, as all the unknowable clings to the legacy of a family like the blackness closes in on the starlight . . .*) does not resolve. And in just the same way, then, I cannot furnish you more than the source material furnishes me, and thus these notes end here as they must. I am mindful of the hints that Cowles, whoever he was, gave in his very few interviews, and, in particular, I have found myself, in recent weeks, reading and rereading the interview he did with *Greensboro Review*, days before his decease: *The book I'm working on now ends in the Americas, and it has to end in the Americas. I guess it's a dynastic book. It's about how crime is written into the fabric of the West, never more than a step or two from the corridors of power. There's all the political power, and then there's the criminal power, and they are quarrelsome relations. And that's true in Old Europe, and it's true in the New World. Maybe now it's more true than ever, the way the drug culture is wrapped up in the GDP. Nobody knows how this is going to end, because when it ends all contemporary stories end with it, my story too. Storytelling and the history of dynastic criminality are kind of the same thing. Maybe I'm the observer of this story, and maybe I'm in the story somehow, an effect of the story, and when you let go of the book, that physical object where we find all of the histories, then the players in the book vanish, and that's true not only of the characters in the books but of the authors as well. Ten days later, Cowles thought he would go west for a little ski vacation, never once considering: avalanche.*

1. On a scale of one to five stars, what would you rate this book? Would your answer change if it were one to five bananas? How about bicycles?
2. The protagonist is not likable in the traditional sense. Were you still able to relate to him? How so? Was it the way he wore his trench coat buttoned all the way to his throat? Did you see something of yourself in that? Because you do it too or because you wish you could? A list would be handy here.
3. In the book, the city is never named. Why do you think the author did that? How did he find other ways of communicating place to the reader? Do you feel that you're accepting the material for what it is or for your own associations that you're projecting onto it? For example, when the author of these Questions for a Reading Group read the chapter that took place entirely at Sea World, she pictured it as being told from the viewpoint of a fish that had belonged to her husband (now ex) when she first met him. He'd had several fish but this one in particular was a big ugly sucker who had to have his own tank or else he'd kill the other fish. His name was Lord Xenu, after the Scientology god. What do you think of that name? The author of QFARG used to think that she'd never be able to come up with a name that cool herself, but now that she's had some time to think about it, she's pretty sure she could. But then she would be stuck with a fish.
4. The part where the protagonist contemplates killing his mother: Discuss.
5. The part where the church steeple represents the shed where the protagonist glimpsed a breast, specifically a nipple, for the first time, through a hole cut into the wood that in itself represents his penis: Discuss.
6. During the flashback, when the astronaut seems in danger of running out of oxygen, did you, like a coward, flip ahead to see if he survived or did you bravely ride it out?
7. The author of Questions for a Reading Group once saw a woman on a train reading *Bel Canto* (by Ann Patchett). The author of QFARG could see that the woman was coming up on the emotional conclusion (the book was heavy with pages on one side, light on the other), and yet the author of QFARG refrained from exclaiming, "Oh it's so sad what happens. Isn't it just so sad?" Are you impressed or is that just the sort of quiet nobility you've come to expect from her?
8. In chapter six, the protagonist goes to a job meeting and notices a piece of gum on the bottom of his shoe. Being as it's a story about a man who feels stepped

on and all, what do you suppose that gum is meant to symbolize? What if you learned the author had a wife (now ex) who suggested he change the gum to something subtler? What if she did this while she was pouring herself a third glass of wine and the way she put it was, "Like an anvil falling on the reader's head?" Whose side are you on in this scenario? Do you find the anvil remark funny or at least apt? Or do you consider it the kind of feedback that, to put it in the language of those self-help audio books the author began listening to toward the end of their marriage as a way of demonstrating his superiority, was intended to wound instead of heal?

9. The chapter that is a single sentence where you nodded in acknowledgment that you got the Faulkner reference, even though it was yourself to whom you were nodding, seeing as to how you were alone in your room when you read it: Discuss.
10. What did you think of the character of Poorly Concealed Constant Erection Boss Man? How did he contrast with Especially Popular With The Female Employees Assistant Manager? Again, a list wouldn't hurt here.
11. Speaking of lists, what have you been making yours on? A computer? A note pad? The back of your divorce papers? That was a joke. It's possible that you just don't get the author of QFARG's sense of humor, which would explain why you didn't laugh at her anvil joke but did find the part in the book where the protagonist cuts off the waiter's necktie hilarious. (The author of QFARG does happen to use the back of her divorce papers to write her lists on but that is only because she is conscientious of the carbon footprint she is leaving on her planet.)
12. Toward the middle of the book, the protagonist sees an article in the newspaper that makes him burst into tears. You obviously know what the article is about (unless you stopped reading at this point and, if so, well, you should be applauded for even making it this far) but write the answer if you're one of those rule-following types. The author of QFARG, however, thinks a more productive (and fun!) activity would be if you imagined what else was in the newspaper that day. Who died? Who wed? Are their clues in the announcement that indicate whether they'll still be together next year? How about five years from now? Is one person strikingly more attractive than the other or is it about even? Don't bother pretending this isn't the first thing you noticed. If the answer is yes, what (nonfinancial) traits do you think the other one has in order to counter this imbalance? If you flip to the back of the book, you'll find a piece of paper that you can tear out and use to make just this list. It'll read "Acknowledgments" at the top.

13. The author got his MFA at a school in one of those towns that actual adolescents can't wait to get out of but thirty-year-olds return to be children in. It shows, right? All those forced regional references? The romanticizing of poverty? You know that part where the protagonist stops for an "old-fashioned jerky tasting at Mr. Otis's Replenish Lean-To and Fill'r Up Station?" That's a 7-Eleven. The author of QFARG has been to it several times, although not recently.
14. The part where the protagonist finally logs on to his boss's computer in order to read his employee progress report and sees that he and his boss are bidding on the same Eames knock off chair and ottoman on eBay: Discuss.
15. Who do you see playing the protagonist in the movie? Because you just know this is going to get optioned, right? Hell, that's basically the whole reason the author wrote it. That, and to "prove to himself that he could." He even kept a photo of which actor he pictured in the role in a frame on his writing desk, right next to his bourbon and childhood baseball glove. He'd put a new photo in whenever there was a new movie out about war or space or road trips. Once, when he had just put a photo of Clive Owen in the frame, his wife (now ex) took it out and replaced it with a photo of Mark, whose schedule she had begun to arrange her food co-op shifts around. He didn't look anything like Clive Owen, but he had nice eyes and was always able to carry all her groceries to his car in a single trip no matter how many bags there were.
16. The question of whether the protagonist's daughter is the one who committed the robbery was originally supposed to be left vague so that the reader could ponder the depersonalization of crime in this country. The author's wife (now ex) managed to talk him out of this by calling it "a portentous load of hack-shit." It was her idea to leave his daughter's wallet, open to her ID, on the bathroom sink while she took a shower. That earlier draft still exists on the wife's (now ex's) hard drive. She drags it back and forth between her desktop and the little trash bin icon all day long. One of these days she'll click "empty the trash" and her shoulders will loosen. The phone will ring and it will be an old friend whom she hasn't heard from since all the "ugly business" started, and they will go to lunch. The friend will recommend a face wash brand that she swears has made a noticeable difference in her pores and will lean across the table and insist that they be inspected up close.
17. The part where the protagonist comes across an old crippled man sitting on a bridge and, in an act of mercy, pushes him off and then later finds out that the old man was an actor in a movie about an old man who gets pushed off a bridge: Discuss.



18. The climactic moment of the novel is when the protagonist must decide whether or not to shave his beard. He started growing it with a bunch of other guys for charity reasons, and now it's time for them to all donate their shorn hair. But he's grown attached to his beard and the way he feels while wearing it, and he's not sure whether he'll be able to go through with the plan. Ultimately, the beard cannot take all the deliberating any longer and jumps from the protagonist's face and into the bathroom drain. The beard resurfaces months later on Wall Street, where it's taken a job as a hedge fund manager. Would you not agree —and if it's just now occurring to you, that's completely fine —that this is a tender nod to *Trading Places*, which the author and his wife (now ex) watched at three in the morning on TV the night they moved in together, falling asleep before they got to the end?
19. You know what's interesting? Even with Lord Xenu in his own cage, the other fish all still died. From too much food and then not enough. From a bacteria that got into the water. From a pump that broke the same weekend a trip together was taken for the first time. No matter how hard the author tended to life, he couldn't convince them to hold on. Finally Lord Xenu was the only one left and it was like he didn't require anything at all. The author stopped feeding him. The water turned black. His tank was moved to a corner of the room and became something that the eye works around instead of seeing. When the author moved out, Xenu was left behind in the apartment. He remains there still, holding his secrets safe in the dark until the author comes back for him.

**Zachary Z**

—  
Sam Green

#49

I was leafing through an old paperback copy of the *Guinness Book of World Records* (Editor: Donald McFarlan. *Guinness Book of Records - 1992 Edition*. Bantam, p. 453) recently and came across something that caught my eye—the “most contrived name”:

“in the U.S., the determination to derive commercial or other benefit from being the last listing in the local telephone book has resulted in self-given names started with up to nine Zs—an extreme example being Zachary Zzzzzzzzra in the San Francisco book.”

I was intrigued. A Guinness record-holder in my home city! This was exactly the kind of kooky-person-determined-to-get-the-world-to-notice-him that I’m generally a sucker for. So I went to the main branch of the San Francisco Public Library, spent an afternoon going through old phone books, and had the greatest time! (You know you are a true research nerd when you find yourself writing something like that.) The rise and fall of Zachary Zzzzzzzzra, as documented through fifteen years of San Francisco phone books, is epic human drama, evoking adjectives like Shakespearean, or biblical, or even operatic.

It all starts in the early 1960s with a fellow named A. H. Zzyzbohnm, who for many years was the last person in the S.F. phone book (figures 1, 2). Zzyzbohnm is definitely a weird name, but my guess is that it was real—it was his given name, and, by luck or fate, he ended up as the last person in the book.

(Not to immediately digress, but part of the pleasure of going through old phone books was seeing all the wonderful and weird graphics and public service announcements. From 1963: “Four Thoughtful Items of Telephone Procedure” (item number 2: “Please be on the line when the party you want answers.”!) (figure 3)

For many years, A. H. Zzyzbohnm held the last spot. But then came 1967. Things were getting crazy everywhere that year—it was the Summer of Love in the Haight—so maybe it makes sense that the San Francisco phone book would get a little crazy too.

That year, A. H. Zzyzbohnm lost his spot to two people: Zachary Z Zzyzy and Zella Zyzzwump (figure 4). There’s no way that either of those are real names! The next year, 1968, the last spot in the book went to Zzyzzy’s Coffee Shop (figure 5). It’s very clear that at this point people had caught on to the fact that there was some value in this last spot, and the competition was on.

Donna 734Donahue	824-6021
Marcia 734Donahue	824-6021
627Taylor	PR 1-0478
Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490
EXbrk 2-0742	
HEmiok 1-0804	

Zylstra Dennis 754Donahue	824-6021
Zylstra Marcia 754Donahue	824-6021
Zysk T 627Taylor	771-0478
Zyski Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490
Zzyzboh A H 137Delmr	431-0804

1964

1965

FIG. 02

Donna 734Donahue	824-6021	Zylstra Dennis 754Donahue	824-6021	Zyski Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490
Marcia 734Donahue	824-6021	Zylstra Marcia 754Donahue	824-6021	Zzyzboh A H 137Delmr	431-0804
627Taylor	PR 1-0478	Zysk T 627Taylor	771-0478		
Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490				
EXbrk 2-0742					
HEmiok 1-0804					

1963

### FOUR Thoughtful ITEMS OF TELEPHONE PROCEDURE

Please answer promptly.

Please be on the line when the party you want answers.

Please speak distinctly and slowly, with the lips just clearing the transmitter.

Please replace the receiver gently when through talking.

Zylstra Dennis 754Donahue	824-6021
Zylstra Marcia 754Donahue	824-6021
Zysk T 627Taylor	771-0478
Zyski Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490
Zzyzboh A H 137Delmr	431-0804

67

1968

Zyski Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490
Zzyzboh A H 137Delmr	431-0804
Zysk T 627Taylor	771-0478
Zyski Donald L 336AltaMesaSSF	761-1490
Zzyzboh A H 137Delmr	431-0804

FIG. 03

#5#

The year 1972 was pivotal. That guy Zachary, who was second to last in the 1967 book, was back. But this time with four Zs, and he knocked Zzyzyzy's Coffee Shop out (figure 9). Thus begins the reign of Zachary Zzzzra. For me, looking through old phone books at the SFPL, this finding was a thrill—kind of like seeing Muhammad Ali beating Sonny Liston in 1965 or Elvis on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. It was the moment when Zachary Z revolutionized the game.

For most of the 1970s, Zachary ruled the back of the book (figures 7–14). I noticed that after a few years Zzyzyzy's Coffee Shop wasn't even listed anymore—I'm assuming it went out of business.

Sitting there at the SFPL, I imagined how proud Zachary must have been each year to have the phone book show up on his doorstep; he'd crack it open to the last page, and there he was—again! (Of course I can't help but imagine him partially as Navin R. Johnson, Steve Martin's character from *The Jerk*.) "Call me sometime," I imagine Zachary saying to some lady or comely young fellow in a fern bar, "I'm the last person in the phone book." I would bet that definitely got him laid.

But like all superstars, after a long run Zachary Z got soft. Or maybe the competition got meaner. In any event, the 1978 phone book must have been devastating for him. In 1978, he goes out on the stoop, opens the book, and . . . tragedy! (figure 15). Not only was he not last, but two m\*f\*ckers beat him out: Zzzztra Zwill and Vladimir Zzzzzzabakov (that's six Zs!). It was a double ambush.

Nineteen seventy-eight must have been a terrible year for Zachary Z. "Hey, call me sometime—I'm the third from last person in the phone book" just doesn't have the same panache. But, like any top competitor, Zachary picked himself up and came back harder.



FIG. 14

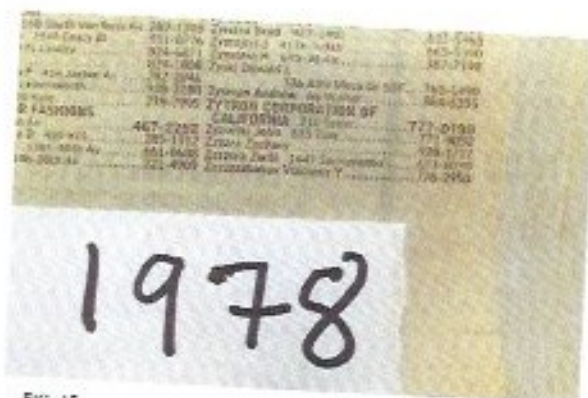


FIG. 15

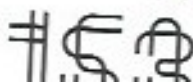




FIG. 06

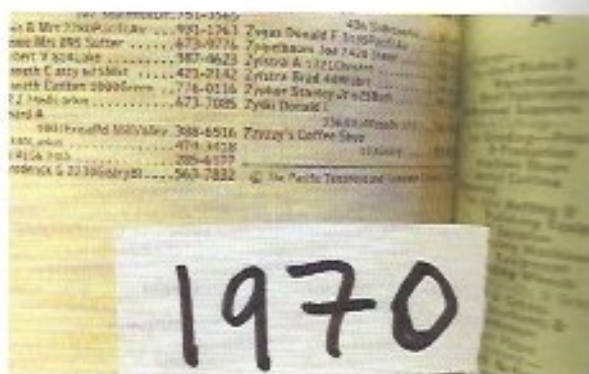


FIG. 07



FIG. 08

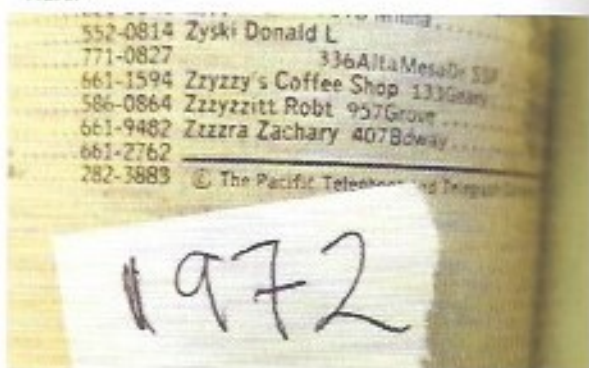


FIG. 09

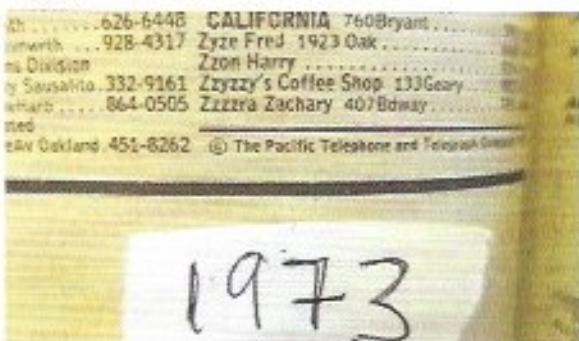


FIG. 10

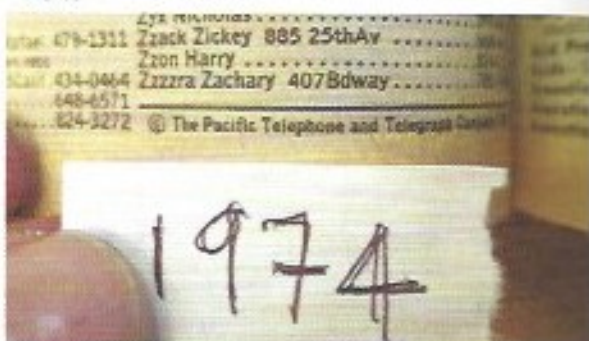


FIG. 11



FIG. 12

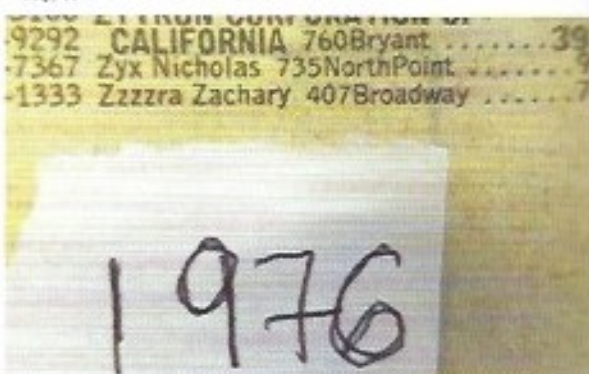


FIG. 13

674-9213	ZYTRON CORPORATION OF	474 9213
584-2336	CALIFORNIA 210 Spear	909 0517
552-6047	Zyzinski John 835 Turk	504 2316
346-1152	Zzzzzzzzz Zachary	552 6748
776-9388		532 7797
346-1730		621 1211
621-5965		581 7041
387-2140		929 7297
626-2808	The Pacific Telephone and Telegraph	621 7114

1979

FIG. 16

324 9097	Zyzelbaum A 275 Diamond	352 1777
282 1773		
929 7297		
333 7715		
621 7114		
346 1730		
621 5965		
775 1912		
387 2140		
626 2808		
436 8187	Zytron Andrew 251 Texas	436 8187
771 0190	ZYTRON CORPORATION OF	
777 0190	CALIFORNIA 210 Spear	
771 9052	Zyzinski John 835 Turk	
523 1717	Zzzzzzzzz Zachary	

1980

FIG. 17

474 9213	Zydek Andrew Mrs 1070 Green	474 9213
909 0517	Zydel K	909 0517
504 2316	Zyden Joe 174 Oxford	504 2316
552 6748	Zyzinski Bob 17706 Market	552 6748
532 7797	Zzzzzzzzz A 275 Diamond	532 7797
621 1211		
581 7041		
929 7297		
621 7114		
346 1730		
621 5965		
775 1912		
387 2140		
626 2808		
436 8187	Zytron Andrew	436 8187
771 0190	Zytron Corporation Of California	
777 0190	CALIFORNIA 210 Spear	
771 9052	Zyzinski John 835 Turk	
929 1997	Zyzo Zap D 4184 Central Av	

1981

FIG. 18

352 1777	Zyzelbaum A 275 Diamond	352 1777
282 1773		
929 7297		
333 7715		
621 7114		
346 1730		
621 5965		
775 1912		
387 2140		
626 2808		
436 8187	Zytron Andrew 251 Texas	436 8187
771 0190	ZYTRON CORPORATION OF	
777 0190	CALIFORNIA 210 Spear	
771 9052	Zyzinski John 835 Turk	
523 1717	Zzzzzzzzz Zachary	

1982

FIG. 19

In 1979: Zachary Zzzzzzzzz! (figure 16). That's nine Zs. Zachary was back! And dominating so hard that his rival Vladamir Zzzzzzabakov vanished from the book—didn't even try to compete. This is the full flowering of Zachary Z, and I would compare him during this period to Bob Dylan circa *Blood on the Tracks* or Buckminster Fuller during the 1960s and '70s: a player at the top of his game.

But then, after two glorious years with the full nine Zs, Zachary himself disappeared from the book. Appropriately enough, by 1982 the last spot belonged to the Zzygo-Dial-A-Joke Network (figure 19). I guess that made sense; after all it was the 1980s.

What happened to Zachary Z? It's a real mystery—kind of like “What happened to the Incas?” I did some digging around and did find a *Time* magazine article from 1979 with a little info on him: Zachary was originally Bill Holland, a painting contractor who wanted to be the last person in the phone book for business reasons.

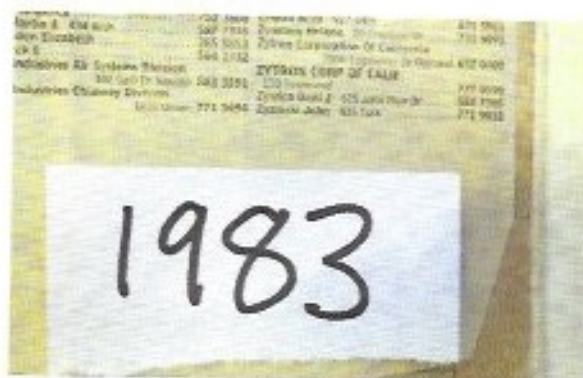


FIG. 20



FIG. 21



FIG. 22

But there was nothing else in the article—nothing about what happened to him. In a way, deep in my reverie that afternoon looking through phone books in the main branch of the SF Public Library, it didn't matter to me. I loved that Zachary Z had made such a noble effort to get the world to notice him, and here I am forty years later doing just that.

Outside the library, on a lark I phoned 415-928-1717 just to see if perhaps Zachary was still there. According to the *Time* article, Zachary was born in 1920, so he'd be pretty old by now. Not surprising, the number was disconnected. In some ways, Zachary's struggle to be recognized by the world ended the way it will eventually end for all of us: in the sad fate of being more or less forgotten. But there will always remain those traces he left across a decade and a half of San Francisco phone books. So in honor of his ambition, his sense of individuality and style, and also his smarts, I would like to give Zachary a symbolic salute here, at the end of this book:

#\$\$\$



Zzzzzzzzra Zachary .....928 1717