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# Gérard Genette

## Paratexts

### Thresholds of interpretation

Translated by

JANE E. LEWIN

Foreword by

RICHARD MACKSEY

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## The publisher's peritext 1997

I give the name *publisher's peritext* to the whole zone of the peritext that is the direct and principal (but not exclusive) responsibility of the publisher (or perhaps, to be more abstract but also more exact, of the *publishing house*) – that is, the zone that exists merely by the fact that a book is published and possibly republished and offered to the public in one or several more or less varied presentations. The word *zone* indicates that the characteristic feature of this aspect of the paratext is basically spatial and material. We are dealing here with the outermost peritext (the cover, the title page, and their appendages) and with the book's material construction (selection of format, of paper, of typeface, and so forth), which is executed by the typesetter and printer but decided on by the publisher, possibly in consultation with the author. All these technical givens themselves come under the discipline called *bibliology*, on which I have no wish to encroach; here my concern with them extends only to their appearance and effect, that is, only to their strictly paratextual value. Besides, this paratext's dependence on the publisher basically assigns it to a relatively recent historical period, whose terminus *a quo* coincides with the beginnings of printing, or the period historians ordinarily call modern and contemporary. This is not to say that the (much longer) pre-Gutenberg period, with its handwritten copies that were really even then a form of publication, knew nothing of our peritextual elements; and below we will have reason to ask how antiquity and the Middle Ages handled such elements as the title or the name of the author, whose chief location today is the publisher's peritext. But what the pre-Gutenberg period did not know anything of – precisely because of the handwritten (and oral) circulation of its texts – is the publisher's implementation of this

## Formats

peritext, which is essentially typographical and bibliographical in nature.<sup>1</sup>

## Formats

The most all-embracing aspect of the production of a book – and thus of the materialization of a text for public use – is doubtless the choice of *format*. Over time, the meaning of this word has changed once or twice. Originally it designates two things: one is the manner in which a sheet of paper is or is not folded to end up as the “leaves” of a book (or, in common parlance, as the book's *pages*, one recto-verso leaf naturally making two pages, even if one of the two remains blank);<sup>2</sup> the other is the size of the original sheet itself, conventionally designated by a type of watermark (*shell*, *Jésus*, *bunch of grapes*, and so forth).<sup>3</sup> The manner of folding thus did not by itself indicate the flat dimensions of a book; but it quickly became a shorthand way of estimating them: a folio volume (folded once, hence two leaves, or four pages per sheet) or a quarto volume (folded twice, hence four leaves, or eight pages per sheet) was a large book; an octavo (eight leaves [8vo]) was a medium book; and a duodecimo (12mo), a sextodecimo (16mo), or an octodecimo (18mo), a small book. In the classical period, “large formats” (quarto) were reserved for serious works (that is, works that were religious or philosophical rather than literary) or for prestige editions that enshrined a literary work. Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, for example, appears in two octavo volumes, but his *Esprit des lois* in two quarto volumes; the

<sup>1</sup> Among the many works that deal with the history and prehistory of the book, I refer readers particularly to Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *L'Apparition du livre* (Albin Michel, 1958) [tr. *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing 1450–1800*, trans. David Gerard (London: NLB, 1976)]; A. Labarre, *Histoire du livre* (PUF, 1970); and H.-J. Martin and R. Chartier, *Histoire de l'édition française* (Promodis, 1983–87).

<sup>2</sup> The practice of folding and assembling sheets and binding the resulting unit with either a flexible or a stiff material actually predates the use of paper: it goes back to the third and fourth centuries, when the *codex* of parchment replaced the *volumen* of papyrus; but the techniques of producing paper helped to standardize – and therefore codify – the practice.

<sup>3</sup> [In *Lost Illusions*, Balzac mentions *Coquille* (Shell), *Jésus*, and *Raisin* (Grapes) as “names given to the different sizes of paper ... [and drawn] from the watermark stamped in the middle of the sheet” (Penguin, p. 108). The “Jésus” watermark was the monogram “I. J. S.”]

*Lettres persanes* is not awarded the honor of a quarto until the big collected edition of the *Œuvres* of Montesquieu in three volumes (1758). Rousseau's *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Emile* come out in 12mo; the big edition of the "complete" works of 1765 appears in six quarto volumes. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Paul et Virginie* likewise goes into quarto for the "recherché" and illustrated edition of 1806.<sup>4</sup> This way of assigning a work to a size is certainly not applied universally (the first edition of the *Fables* of La Fontaine, in 1668, is quarto), but it definitely predominates.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, when large volumes had become rarer, the dividing line between serious and nonserious shifted: 8vo was used for serious literature, and 12mo and smaller were used for the cheap editions reserved for popular literature. We know that Stendhal spoke contemptuously of the "small 12mo novels for chambermaids."<sup>5</sup> But even then, serious works that also proved commercially successful could be put out in a new edition in "small format" for a more casual and more ambulatory reading. The first separate edition of *Paul et Virginie* (1789)<sup>6</sup> was 18mo, "for the benefit," said the author, "of women who want my works to fit into their pockets"; the same explanation accompanied the fourth edition of Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* – "one of those books," says the foreword, "that people like to read while in the country and enjoy taking along when they go for a walk."

The foregoing examples no doubt suffice to indicate the paratextual value conveyed by these distinctions of format, distinctions that already had the same weight and ambiguity as our contrast between "trade edition" and "pocket edition" – with the pocket format capable of connoting equally well a work's "popular" nature or its admission into the pantheon of classics.

Aside from the contrast between trade and pocket edition, to which I will return, the modern, purely quantitative meaning of

<sup>4</sup> The other great deluxe edition of this text with the enviable fate was, from Curmer in 1838, a "large 8vo" in a printing of thirty thousand copies; it was hailed as "the most beautiful book of the century."

<sup>5</sup> "Printed by M. Pigoreau, ... where the hero is always perfect and ravishingly beautiful, very well built and with big, protuberant eyes," and "read much more in the provinces than the 8vo novel printed by Levavasseeur or Gosselin, whose author is trying to achieve literary excellence" (letter to Salvagnoli about *Le Rouge et le noir*, itself 8vo from Levavasseeur).

<sup>6</sup> [When first published, *Paul et Virginie* was volume 4 of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Etudes de la nature* (1787).]

the word "format" is certainly less freighted with paratextual value. The dimensions of our trade editions have become standardized or stereotyped at about the average formats of the nineteenth century, with variances, depending on publisher or series, that no longer have much relevance in themselves, except that during the past two or three decades publishers have gotten into the habit of using a relatively large format (about 6-1/2 x 9-1/2 inches) for supposed best-sellers, those famed "beach books" that (as has been said over and over again) have to be large enough for the cover in the store window to seem like a poster, and heavy enough for the book itself to prevent a beach towel from being gone with the wind. That practice could be considered a notable reversal of the classical contrast, though a limited one, as it is seasonal and is contradicted at least by the persistence, or resurgence, of prestigious large formats like the 7-1/2 x 9-1/2 that Gallimard reserves for graphically ambitious books such as Aragon's *Fou d'Elsa* or for certain very spatialized texts by Butor, such as *Mobile*, *Description de San Marco*, *6,810,000 litres d'eau par seconde*, *Boomerang*,<sup>7</sup> and so on.

The latest accepted meaning of the word *format* is obviously no longer connected either with the manner of folding (the generalized use of trimming has almost entirely erased our awareness of this feature) or, despite appearances, with the notion of size: the latest accepted meaning of "format" is the one that has become attached to the undoubtedly transitory expression *format de poche* [pocket size]. The contrast between "trade edition" and "pocket edition" is, as we know, based on technical and commercial features, the most important of which is certainly not size (ability to fit into a pocket), even if for some years size did constitute an undeniable selling point.<sup>8</sup> The contrast between trade and pocket,

<sup>7</sup> [In *Mobile*, for example, the white spaces on the page – their relations to the printed words – play a major role in the effect created and in the expression of theme.] *Boomerang* pushes the exploitation of graphic resources so far as to use three colors of ink: black, blue, and red. This procedure is no doubt costly, but it is potentially so very effective that one is astonished to see it used so rarely outside of textbooks.

<sup>8</sup> Those years were by no means softbound series' earliest years: the designation "pocket" was not used either in the nineteenth century by Tauchnitz or in the twentieth by Albatross (1932), Penguin (1935), or Pelican (1937); its first appearance was not until 1938 with the American Pocket Book and its symbol, Gertrude the Kangaroo. And Pocket was only one softbound series among several (Seal, then Avon, Dell, Bantam, Signet, and so forth), not all of which singled out size for attention. The nearly-twenty-year quasi monopoly of the

as a matter of fact, has much more to do with the old distinction between books bound in a stiff material and books bound in a flexible material – which has been perpetuated in English-speaking countries in the distinction between hardcover and paperback – and with the very long history of popular series, which goes back at least to the small Elzevier 12mo of the seventeenth century; then, via the 12mo or 32mo of the Bibliothèque bleue troyenne, to the eighteenth century; and then, via the railway series, to the nineteenth. This is obviously not the place to repeat a tale that has already been told more than once,<sup>9</sup> the tale of the history and prehistory of the “pocket-size” book, nor is it the place to reexamine the controversy that greeted the emergence of this phenomenon, at least among the French intelligentsia.<sup>10</sup> This controversy, just like the ones that accompanied the birth first of writing and then of printing, was located on a terrain that was typically axiological, not to say ideological: it all came down to knowing, or rather saying, whether the “culture de poche” (in Hubert Damisch’s phrase) was a good or a bad thing. Such value judgments obviously lie outside our present subject matter: good or bad, source of cultural wealth or cultural poverty, the “culture de poche” is today a universal fact; and – all evaluation aside – Damisch’s phrase has proven to be wholly accurate, for the “pocket edition” (that is, simply the republication at a low price of old or recent works that have first undergone the commercial test of the trade edition) has indeed become an instrument of “culture,” an instrument, in other words, for constituting and, naturally, disseminating a relatively permanent collection of works *ipso facto* sanctioned as “classics.” A glance over the history of publishing shows, moreover, that from the very beginning this was indeed the intention of forerunners like Tauchnitz (early nineteenth century: Greek and Latin classics) or, a century later, the founders of Albatross (1932; first title: Joyce,

French *Livre de poche* [Pocket book] (1953) is what made the reference to format a fixture in the French language.

<sup>9</sup> See in particular Hans Schmoller, “The Paperback Revolution,” in *Essays in the History of Publishing*, ed. Asa Briggs (London: Longman, 1974), 283–318; Y. Johannot, *Quand le livre devient poche* (PUG, 1978); Piet Schreuders, *Paperbacks, U.S.A.: A Graphic History, 1939–1959*, trans. Josh Pachter (San Diego: Blue Dolphin, 1981); G. de Sairigné, *L’Aventure du livre de poche* (H.C., 1983); and the dossier published by *Le Monde* on March 23, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> See H. Damisch, “La Culture de poche,” in *Mercur de France* (November 1964), and the ensuing discussion in *Les Temps modernes* (April and May 1965).

*Dubliners*): to republish ancient or modern classics at low prices for use by a basically “university” public – that is, undergraduates. This was still, before World War II, the intention of Penguin and Pelican. The strictly “popular” orientation, introduced in about 1938 in the United States and facilitated by the war, was unquestionably secondary; and the present competition among the serious and indeed scholarly “pockets” (in France: Folio classique, Points, GF, among others) – everything that German publishing professionals call “books à la Suhrkamp”<sup>11</sup> – is little more than a return to the pocket book’s roots, a return inspired by the obvious (current) profitability of the university market. The very pronounced development of the critical and documentary apparatus, moreover, parallels the development manifested in semicritical trade series (such as the Classiques Garnier) or in relatively sumptuous series (such as the Pléiade) – one encountered as well in the publishing of art books or record jackets: erudition at the service of culture, or one could say, more caustically, erudition as a sign of culture – and culture as a sign of what?

Today, therefore, “pocket size” is basically no longer a format but a vast set or nebula of series – for “pocket” still means “series” – from the most popular to the most “distinguished,” indeed, the most pretentious; and the series emblem, much more than size, conveys two basic meanings. One is purely economic: the assurance (variable, and sometimes illusory) of a better price. The other is indeed “cultural” and, to speak of what interests us, paratextual: the assurance of a selection based on *revivals*, that is, reissues. Occasionally someone speculates about the possibility of reversing the flow – publishing works first in pocket size, then producing in more expensive editions those titles that have triumphantly passed the first test – but this seems contrary to all the technical, media, and commercial givens, even if in particular situations certain books have taken this paradoxical journey and even if certain pocket series welcome, as experiments, some previously unpublished works that are thus immediately canonized. For undoubtedly the pocket edition will long be synonymous with canonization. On that account alone, pocket format is

<sup>11</sup> [Suhrkamp is a German publisher of intellectual books packaged for a relatively wide readership – something of a German equivalent to Gallimard.]

a formidable (although ambiguous – indeed, because ambiguous) paratextual message.

### Series

That brief detour across the immense continent of the pocket edition has thus taken us, paradoxically, from the old notion of format to the more modern notion of series, which undoubtedly is itself only a more intense and sometimes more spectacular specification of the notion of publisher's emblem. The recent development of the use of series, whose history and geography I will not attempt to trace here, certainly responds to the need felt by big-name publishers to demonstrate and control the diversification of their activities. Nowadays that need is so powerful that the lack of series (books published not as part of any series) is experienced by the public, and articulated by the media, as a sort of implicit or *a contrario* series: for example, people speak of Gallimard's "white series" – an almost legitimate misuse of the term – to designate anything in that publisher's output that does not bear a specific emblem.<sup>12</sup> We know the symbolic power of this degree zero, whose unofficial name produces a highly effective ambiguity, "white" doing the work of a sign in the absence of a signifier.

The series emblem, even in this mute form, therefore amplifies the publisher's emblem, immediately indicating to the potential reader the type of work, if not the genre, he is dealing with: French or a foreign literature, avant-garde or tradition, fiction or essay, history or philosophy, and so forth. We know that for a long time, the catalogues of pocket series have included genre specifications symbolized by the choice of color (as early as the Albatrosses, then the Penguins of the 1930s: orange = fiction, grey = politics, red = theatre, purple = essays, yellow = miscellaneous), by the choice of geometric form (Penguin after World War II: square = fiction, circle = poetry, triangle = mystery, diamond = miscellaneous; Idées-Gallimard: open book = literature, hour-glass = philosophy, crystal = science, trio of cells = human sciences – a whole study, and an entertaining one at that, could be done of those broad symbolizations), or, in Points, by what is

<sup>12</sup> [The French word for "white" is *blanc*, which also means "blank."]

done with any given term, in color, on a fixed list. With these sometimes very emphatic forays into the area of generic or intellectual choices, the paratext that most typically derives from and depends on primarily the publisher obviously encroaches on the prerogatives of an author, who thought himself an essayist but ends up a sociologist, linguist, or literary theorist. Publishing (and therefore society) is sometimes structured like a language, the language of the Conseil supérieur des universités or of the Comité national de la recherche scientifique; it is, in other words, structured by subject (and for some very straightforward reasons). To be admitted into the pocket-book club, the main thing is not always to be a certain size but rather to fit a certain "profile," and to face up to it.

### The cover and its appendages

Except in technical bibliographies and, naturally, in the 10/18 series, which has made its measurements into an emblem, the folding and dimensions of a book are generally not stated, and the reader must make them out for himself. To pass from size to emblem, therefore, is to pass from a feature that is all-embracing and implicit to a feature that is localized and explicit. The place for the emblem is the publisher's peritext: the cover, the title page, and their appendages, which present to the public at large and then to the reader many other items of information, some of which are authorial and some of which are the publisher's responsibility. In the rest of this chapter I will draw up a rough and probably incomplete inventory of these items of information; in the next few chapters, I will return to the most important ones.

The printed cover – a cover made of paper or board – is a fairly recent phenomenon and seems to date from the early nineteenth century. In the classical period, books appeared inside a leather binding that was mute except for a short version of the title and sometimes, on the spine, the author's name. Said to be one of the first examples of a printed cover is that of Voltaire's *Œuvres complètes*, put out by Baudouin in 1825. At that time the title page was the main site of the publisher's paratext, but once the possibilities of the cover were discovered, they seem to have been exploited very rapidly. So here is a basic list (unless I have omitted something) of what may appear, in no special order, on a



cover, with all periods and all genres mixed together – and presented with the understanding that all these possibilities have never been exploited at one and the same time and that nowadays the only items virtually (if not legally) obligatory are the name of the author, the title of the work, and the emblem of the publisher.<sup>13</sup>

Cover 1 (front cover):

- Name or pseudonym of the author(s)
- Title(s) of the author(s) [e.g., professor of ..., member of ..., etc.]
- Title(s) of the work
- Genre indication
- Name of the translator(s), of the preface-writer(s), of the person(s) responsible for establishing the text and preparing the critical apparatus
- Dedication
- Epigraph
- Likeness of the author or, for some biographical or critical studies, of whoever is the subject of the study
- Facsimile of the author's signature
- Specific illustration
- Name and/or colophon of the series
- Name of the person(s) responsible for this series
- In the case of a reprint, mention of the original series
- Name or trade name and/or initials and/or colophon of the publisher (or, in the case of a co-publication, of both publishers)
- Address of the publisher
- Number of printings, or "editions," or "thousands"
- Date
- Price

Usually these localized verbal, numerical, or iconographic items of information are supplemented by more comprehensive ones pertaining to the style or design of the cover, characteristic of the publisher, the series, or a group of series. Simply the color of the paper chosen for the cover can strongly indicate a type of book. At the beginning of the twentieth century, yellow covers were synonymous with licentious French books: "I remember,"

<sup>13</sup> See P. Jaffray, "Fiez-vous aux apparences ou Les politiques de couverture des éditeurs," *Livres-Hebdo* (March 31, 1981).

writes Butor, "the scandalized tone of a clergyman, in a British railway car, who thundered at a friend of mine: 'Madame, don't you know that God sees you reading that yellow book!' That accursed and indecent signification is certainly the reason Aubrey Beardsley named his quarterly *The Yellow Book*."<sup>14</sup> More subtly and specifically, not too long ago the cover of the French translation of Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (*Docteur Faustus*, Albin Michel, 1962) showed a sheet of paper very faintly imprinted with a musical score.

Covers 2 and 3, the inside front and back covers, are generally mute, but this rule admits of exceptions: magazines often put publisher's information there, and that is where the volumes in the small-sized series *Microcosme du Seuil* always include an illustration that can – or rather *cannot not* – serve as a paratext. In the volume *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, two handwritten instructions were placed there, the first of which I mentioned in the previous chapter: a real (albeit fictional) genre contract.

Cover 4, the back cover, is another strategically important spot, which may contain at least the following:

- Reminder, for the benefit of those with deep amnesia, of the name of the author and the title of the work
- Biographical and/or bibliographical notice
- Please-insert [see Chapter 5]
- Press quotations or other laudatory comments about earlier works by the same author or, indeed, about this work itself, if it is a new edition or if the publisher has been able to obtain such comments before publication (this latter practice is what the British and Americans customarily refer to by the evocative term *blurb* or, more literally, *promotional statement*, an equivalent of the French *bla-bla* or *baratin* [patter]; sometimes these even appear on cover 1)
- Mention of other works published by the same house
- Genre indication, like those I evoked apropos of pocket-book series
- Series statement of principles, or intent
- Date of printing
- Number of reprintings
- Mention of the cover's printer

<sup>14</sup> M. Butor, *Les Mots dans la peinture* (Skira, 1969), 143.

- Mention of the designer of the cover art
- Identification of the cover illustration
- Price
- ISBN (International Standard Book Number); the ISBN system was created in 1975; the first numeral indicates the language of publication, the second the publisher, the third the book's own number within this publisher's output, and the fourth – I am told – is an electronic control key
- Magnetic bar code, in the process of being generalized for obvious practical reasons; this is undoubtedly the only piece of information the reader can do absolutely nothing with, but I imagine that bibliophiles will end up investing a portion of their neurosis in it
- "Paid" advertisement – that is, paid to the publisher by a manufacturer outside of publishing (for I doubt that a publisher will ever accept an ad from a competitor); it is up to the reader to establish an ad's relation to the theme of the book; an example: an ad for American cigarettes on Dashiell Hammett's *Sang maudit* [*The Dain Curse*] (Carré noir, 1982).

I've surely forgotten some of the items that may go on cover 4, but it is necessary to say that sometimes, *a contrario*, cover 4 is almost mute, as occasionally with Gallimard, Mercure, and Minuit, especially for poetry series: this reserve is obviously an external sign of nobility.

The *spine*, a narrow site but one with obvious strategic importance, generally bears the name of the author, the colophon of the publisher, and the title of the work. And here a technical quarrel rages between those who favor horizontal printing and those who favor vertical, and, among the latter, between those who favor an ascending vertical (most French publishers) and those who favor a descending vertical (a few French and most foreign publishers, who argue that this arrangement is compatible with the position of a book lying flat on its back, allowing both its front cover and its spine to be read); there are, in addition, a few cases of coexistence between horizontal and vertical. John Barth claims to have had, while writing *The Sot-Weed Factor*, two equally important aims: the first was to construct a plot even more complicated than the plot of *Tom Jones* (mission accomplished); the second was to write a book long enough, and therefore thick enough, so that its title could be printed in a single

horizontal line on the spine. I don't know if the original edition fulfilled his wish, but the paperback editions scoff at it. In any case, one need not write a long text, one need only choose a short title. The ideal would undoubtedly be to make the one proportional to the other and, at any rate, to prohibit titles that are longer than their texts.

Finally, the cover can include folds, or flaps, atrophied vestiges of an earlier tuck-taking,<sup>15</sup> which nowadays can accommodate some of the items I have already listed (or reminders of them), particularly the please-insert, the statement of principles of the series, and the list of works by the author or in the same series. Here again, a mute fold, like every wasteful act, is a sign of distinction.

But as a matter of fact the cover is not always – and in the current state of development of the publisher's presentation, is less and less often – the first manifestation of the book offered to the reader's perception, for more and more publishers are clothing the cover itself wholly or partially with a new paratextual support: the *dust jacket* (or *wrapper*) or the *band* [see Chapter 1, note 11], generally one or the other. The material feature that these two elements have in common, which allows us to look on both of them as appendages of the cover, is their detachable character, as if they were constitutively ephemeral, almost inviting the reader to get rid of them after they have fulfilled their function as poster and possibly as protection. Originally the band was even fastened together<sup>16</sup> – perhaps to keep people from thumbing through the book in the bookstore (a purpose served nowadays by some transparent and generally mute wrappings) – which made its conservation even more problematic, after the book was slid out or the band broken apart. Some functional features are plainly connected to this physical feature: most likely the paratextual messages that appear on the jacket and band are

<sup>15</sup> [These are the flaps (re)folded in from the front and back covers to give an effect very like a dust jacket, but these flaps are integral with the cover binding.]

<sup>16</sup> The technical term is "bande de lancement" [launching band] or "bande de nouveauté" [new-publication band]. The term clearly indicates the provisional nature of the object, which is not meant to accompany the book beyond its early editions and whose typical message – today outmoded, doubtless for obvious reasons – used to be: "Just Published."

be forgotten after making their

the jacket is to attract attention, atic than those a cover can or ustration, a reminder of a film or ly a graphic presentation more l than the cover standards of a lers's *Paradis*, in 1980, offers an no illustration, but the title and or were ostentatiously displayed und. The jacket likewise included, o this), the genre indication *roman*

so not appear until later, with a r simply when it seems warranted is is the preeminent example) the l even for an edition in the process t can be a convenient way of

ne, and one and/or the other of its nt one or another element of the jin to list the thousand and one to point to the rare case of certain the insides of which were printed , and to the case of the *Pléiade* g the spine to reveal, like some k itself.

metaphors of clothing – is a sort of e lower third of the book, and its general, purely verbal – but the n or a likeness of the author on the nd. The band may repeat in larger or; it may display the name of a already won;<sup>17</sup> or it may carry a : Noel Burch, *Praxis du cinéma*:

: *Les Jeunes Filles en fleurs* was awarded the successful rival, *Les Croix de bois* by Roland with a band that bore in large letters "Prix rs, "Quatre voix sur dix" ["Four votes out of

"Contre toute théorie" ["Against all theory"]) or allographic (Denis Hollier, *Politique de la prose*: "L'empire des signes, c'est la prose" ["The empire of signs is prose"] – Sartre). In all these cases, especially the last two, the paratextual function is obvious: it is the function served by the epigraph, which we will meet again in its canonical place, but here an epigraph both fleeting and more monumental. Hard to say whether it thereby gains more than it loses, or the reverse. A book of Queneau's, I can't remember which one, bore this dialogue on its band: "*Staline*: Qui aurait intérêt à ce que l'eau ne s'appelât plus l'eau? *Queneau*: Moi." ["*Stalin*: To whose advantage would it be if water were no longer called water? *Queneau*: Mine."] Nor can I remember which book of Jean-Claude Hémery's bore on its band this pre-1968 slogan: "A poêle Descartes!" ["Descartes to the stake!"]. For other recent examples see Jan Baetens's article "Bande à part?"<sup>18</sup> which rightly (particularly in connection with certain initiatives by Jean Ricardou) speaks of a "textualization" of the band: an authorial takeover of one of the publisher's elements, imbuing that element with the spirit of the text. For Ricardou's *La Prise de Constantinople*, for example, the title's transformation on the back cover into *La Prose de Constantinople* [*The Storming of Constantinople* / *The Prose of Constantinople*] was mirrored by a transformation of the slogan on the band from (recto) "La machine à détraquer le temps" into (verso) "Le temps a détraqué la machine" ["The machine for turning time upside down" / "Time has turned the machine upside down"]. Or, for Ricardou's *Lieux-dits, Petit guide d'un voyage dans le livre*, this ambiguous invitation, entirely adapted to the text: "Devenez un voyageur à la page" [*Localities: A short guide to a journey within the book* / "Become a traveler on the page / in the know"]. Since that time Ricardou's publisher, Seuil, has more or less abandoned the expensive practice of using bands, so in 1982 Ricardou printed on the cover of *Théâtre des métamorphoses*, in trompe l'oeil, this false band: "Une nouvelle education textuelle" ["A new textual education"]. Perhaps that is the solution of the future – I don't mean the slogan, but the technical procedure, altogether parallel to the conversion undergone by the please-insert, which not long ago consisted of an expensively inserted sheet but which now appears on cover 4.

<sup>18</sup> Jan Baetens, "Bande à part?" *Conséquences* 1 (Autumn 1983).



Let's not take leave of the detachable elements without saying a word about certain expressive or historiated slipcases, preferably for bound books whose covers can't really take any lettering. That support, too, could well be textualized someday. On the other hand, a practice that is on the way out – undoubtedly for economic reasons – is the use of the attached *ribbon*, or *bookmark*, which could also include information, valuable or not, specific or not.

A very special case – and an especially important one, given the role this series has played in French culture in the second half of the twentieth century – is that of the jackets of the Pléiade series,<sup>19</sup> which have other characteristics besides being (recently) slit at the spine. Because these books have mute bindings, their jackets obviously play the role of cover, generally (the standards have varied for a half-century) bearing not only the name of the author and a titular apparatus (to which I will return) but also the name of the person responsible for establishing and annotating the text, and a likeness of the author. And because the multi-volume editions, such as those for Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, Zola's *Rougon-Macquart*, or Proust's *Recherche*, obviously require several likenesses, collecting and arranging these pictures must occasionally pose some problems for those in charge. For example, five pictures of Zola and twelve of Balzac had to be found, and an arrangement had to be decided on – an arrangement that cannot fail to generate inferences (intended or not) about meaning. Because *La Comédie humaine* is a whole whose arrangement is not chronological but thematic, perhaps the arrangement of Balzac's pictures was left to chance; and Zola's pictures do not seem to have been chosen to correspond to the temporal progression of the volumes. In the case of the *Recherche*, however, the choice and arrangement of pictures give the impression that the 1954 editors<sup>20</sup> selected for the first volume a picture of Proust as a young man; for the second, a worldly Proust, flower in his buttonhole; and for the third, an aging Proust,

<sup>19</sup> [The Pléiade series (published by Gallimard) is comparable to the Library of America in textual authority and quality of paper and binding. There are, however, two main differences between these series: the Pléiade volumes are smaller, and whereas the Library of America publishes works by American authors exclusively, the Pléiade publishes both French and non-French classics.]

<sup>20</sup> [The 1954 edition of the *Recherche* was the first to be based on Proust manuscripts that had not been available until the early 1950s.]

devoted to his art; and the connotations are obvious, albeit invalidated by the actual dates of these pictures, which are 1891, 1895, and 1896, respectively; that is, all three date from well before the *Recherche* was planned and thus have no link to the chronology of its writing. For the reader, who certainly pays less attention to the dates given on the flaps than to the look of the pictures themselves, a significant connection is irresistibly established not so much with the chronology of the book's composition as with the internal chronology of the narrative – that is, the age of the hero. For the reader, therefore, these three pictures evoke at the same time the aging of Proust and the aging of the narrator-hero, thus inevitably drawing the *Recherche* toward the status of autobiography. Actually, I by no means wish to claim that such an interpretation is wholly illegitimate (I will come back to this) but simply that it is generated, or reinforced, surreptitiously by a paratextual arrangement that in theory is wholly innocent and secondary. I do not know what choice will be made with regard to photographs for future editions. And with the cover illustrations chosen for the volumes in the GF set, which is apparently committed to Bonnard as the Folio set was to Van Dongen,<sup>21</sup> there will no doubt be other kinds of evocation, apposite or not. In any case, we may well miss – if they are not revived – the subtle montages that, thanks to Pierre Faucheux, adorned the covers of the Livre de poche set: montages of yellowed photographs, manuscripts "en paperoles," and hints of the Gallimard white cover. But in the meantime, with a boost from the justified popularity of genetic criticism, the "manuscript page" has become a cover stereotype. There is no escaping it.

Paradoxically, the effect of this whole group of peripheral elements has been to push the cover strictly speaking (?) back toward the inside of the book and to make it into a second (or rather, a first) title page. In the early days of the printed book, the title page was the preeminent place of the publisher's paratext. The printed cover came along to repeat the title page, or relieve it

<sup>21</sup> [The covers of the volumes in the GF and Folio sets of the *Recherche* are reproductions of paintings. In the next sentence of the text: "paperoles" were the sometimes very long pieces of paper that Proust attached to the galleys of the *Recherche* as he endlessly reworked and extended his text, to the despair of his typesetters and publisher; and Gallimard was the initial publisher of all volumes of the *Recherche* except the very first *Swann* (published by Grasset in 1913).]

ns. Today the jacket, the band, and the  
ng the same thing for the cover; and this is  
n – some will say an inflation – of at least  
is, of the possible supports) for a paratext.  
er stages in this evolution, involving the  
boxes, covers for the boxes, and so forth,  
ployment of ingenuity invested in the  
intended solely for bookstores and ulti-  
le: posters, blow-ups of covers, and other  
point we leave the peritext behind.

### page and its appendages

its various appendages, the publisher's  
most obviously on the very first and very  
generally unnumbered. I will inventory  
is most common today, at least in French  
e of most of these items of information is  
f whim.

and 2, called the *flyleaf*, remain "blank" –  
nted. Page 3 is reserved for the "half title":  
ne title, possibly shortened. I do not know  
ludant custom, but the minimal naming  
page the optimal site for the inscription,  
gain on its own account. Pages 4 and 6 may  
ms of information from the publisher, such  
es, the mention of deluxe editions (and, in  
editions, the identification number), the  
works by the same author (which we will  
list of works published in the same series,  
n (copyright, which gives the official date of  
; reminder of the law concerning reproduc-  
ve power has stood the test of time; for  
of the original title and copyright; in the  
y of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication  
d sometimes – too rarely – an identification  
Yes, too rarely, for this identification seems  
ry. The reader has the right and sometimes  
eturn to this) to know the typeface used for  
his hands, and he cannot be expected to be

able to recognize it by himself. Page 5 is the *title page*, which –  
after the colophon of medieval manuscripts and the early incuna-  
bula – is the ancestor of the whole modern publisher's peritext. It  
generally includes, besides the actual title and its appendages, the  
name of the author and the name and address of the publisher. It  
may include many other things, particularly the genre indication,  
the epigraph, and the dedication – or, at least in the classical  
period, the mention of the dedication (along with the name and  
titles of the dedicatee), giving notice of the actual dedication to  
follow, that is, the dedicatory epistle, which generally begins on  
the next right-hand page.<sup>22</sup> But above all, as we will see below,  
the classical title – generally more expanded than ours – often  
constituted a veritable description of the book; a summary of its  
action, a definition of its subject, a list of its appendixes, and so  
forth. The classical title could also contain its own illustration, or  
at least its own ornamentation, a sort of more or less monumental  
portico entrance called a frontispiece. Later, when the title page  
got rid of this decoration, the frontispiece took refuge on the left-  
hand page facing the title page, before disappearing almost  
completely in modern times.<sup>23</sup>

The final pages, too, may include some of the information just  
mentioned, except, no doubt, for the legally required data. Only  
the final pages include the printer's colophon – the printer's mark  
indicating that his work has been completed: the name of the  
printer, the date of completion, the serial number, and perhaps  
the date of the book's *dépôt légal*.<sup>24</sup>

### Typesetting, printings

But those localized peritextual elements do not exhaust the  
repertory of the publisher's paratext borne by the book. We have

<sup>22</sup> The right-hand, or *recto*, page is the side that generally has the advantage,  
perceptually speaking, at least in our system of writing. The left-hand page is  
called *verso*. [In French the right-hand and left-hand pages are also referred to,  
respectively, as "la belle page" and "la fausse page."]

<sup>23</sup> We should remember that, under the *ancien régime*, the pages immediately  
after the title (or sometimes the very last pages) were in principle reserved for  
publication of the *privilege* [license to print] by which the king granted the  
author and his bookseller exclusive right to sell the work. Certain modern  
critical editions reproduce this document's text, which is never devoid of  
historical interest.

<sup>24</sup> [Legally required deposit in the Bibliothèque Nationale.]

still to consider two features that constitute the basis of the book's material realization: the typesetting and the choice of paper. The typesetting – the choice of typeface and its arrangement on the page – is obviously the act that shapes a text into a book. This is not the place to discuss the history or aesthetics of the art of typography; I will simply note that typographical choices may provide indirect commentary on the texts they affect. No reader can be completely indifferent to a poem's arrangement on the page – to the fact, for example, that it is presented in isolation on the otherwise blank page, surrounded by what Eluard called its “marges de silence,” or that it must share the blank page with one or two other poems or, indeed, with notes at the bottom of the page. Nor can a reader be indifferent to the fact that, in general, notes are arranged at the bottom of the page, in the margin, at the end of the chapter, or at the end of the volume; or indifferent to the presence or absence of running heads and to their connection with the text below them; and so on. Likewise, no reader should be indifferent to the appropriateness of particular typographical choices, even if modern publishing tends to neutralize these choices by a perhaps irreversible tendency toward standardization. When one reads a Montaigne or a Balzac, for example, it is certainly a pity to be deprived of the very distinctive look of a classical or romantic written form, and here one understands the requirements of bibliophiles keen on original editions or, more modestly, facsimiles. These considerations may seem trivial or marginal, but there are cases in which the graphic realization is inseparable from the literary intention: it is hard to imagine certain texts by Mallarmé, Apollinaire, or Butor deprived of this dimension, and one can only regret the abandonment – apparently accepted by Thackeray himself in 1858 – of the Queen-Anne-style characters in which the original (1852) edition of *Henry Esmond* had been typeset. Those characters gave the book its “bewigged and tapestried” look and contributed greatly to its effect as pastiche. It must at least be admitted that two versions of that book exist: one in which the imitative intention is extended to the typographical (and orthographical) paratext, the other in which the imitative intention is limited to theme and style. This very division becomes paratextual.

Much less significant, no doubt, is the role played by the

different choices of paper that constitute the deluxe printings of an edition;<sup>25</sup> some people reserve the term *original edition* for these printings. The difference among copies depending on whether they are printed on vellum, on Japan paper, or on ordinary paper is obviously less relevant to the text than a difference in typesetting, no doubt because, if the typesetting is only a materialization of the text, the paper is only an underpinning for that materialization, even further removed from the constitutive ideality of the work. Here, therefore, the real differences are only aesthetic (attractiveness of the paper, quality of the impression), economic (the market value of a copy), and possibly material (greater or lesser longevity). But these real differences also – and perhaps especially – serve as the grounds for a fundamental symbolic difference, one that results from the fact that these deluxe printings are by nature “limited.” For bibliophiles, this limitedness somewhat counterbalances the ideal and thus potentially limitless nature of literary works that deprives them of almost all the value of ownership. This limitedness – in other words, this scarcity (emphasized, moreover, by the allocation of a number) – is what makes each copy of a deluxe printing absolutely unique, if only in this one slight detail. Each copy may in fact be unique in two or three other ways, but these no longer pertain exactly to the publishing of the copies: a personal binding, a handwritten inscription, an inscribed or illustrated bookplate, handwritten notes in the margin. The publisher itself, however, may contribute to such exercises in value-increasing singularization. The most arresting example – but perhaps not the only one of its kind – is that of those fifty folio copies of Proust's *Jeunes Filles en fleurs* printed in 1920 (after the book received the Goncourt prize), each of which included some pages

<sup>25</sup> Nothing is more confusing than the use of the word “edition”: it may extend to all copies put out by the same publisher (“the Michel Lévy edition of *Madame Bovary*”), even if the text was modified several times during a reprinting, or it may be limited to each block of a thousand or five hundred copies of a single printing (a limitation sometimes favored by publishers for promotional reasons). Technically, the only accurate terms are *typesetting* and *printing*, or *impression*. From the same typesetting, one can get an indefinite (unless the machinery wears out) number of printings and therefore of sets of copies that are, in theory, identical. But each printing may be the occasion for minor corrections, and the classical period did not refrain from making corrections even in the course of one printing, a practice that introduced textual differences into copies from a single set. See R. Laufer, *Introduction à la textologie* (Larousse, 1972).

of the genuine manuscript, which in this way was exhaustively distributed (apparently without the author's having been consulted) among these particular copies, not all of which have yet been recovered: an odd blend of publishing and the trade in autographs.

In the case of deluxe printings, the irony is that, for obvious technical reasons, notice of these printings ("proof of printing") is printed in *all* copies, including the ordinary ones that are not in any way affected by it. But it does not follow that readers of these ordinary copies have no interest in the notice, for to them it is a piece of bibliographical information like any other, and perhaps the occasion for regret – and the thought of their regret can only increase the pleasure of the privileged few. For it is not enough to be happy; one must also be envied.

## The name of the author

### Place

Nowadays it seems both necessary and "natural" to record the name – authentic or fictive – of the author in the peritext, but this has not always been so, if we judge by the common use of anonymity in the classical period. That common classical practice (which I shall say more about below) shows that the invention of the printed book did not impose this particular paratextual element (the name of the author) as quickly and firmly as it imposed certain others. Recording the author's name was even less necessary and natural in the era of ancient and medieval manuscripts, a period lasting for centuries, when there was, so to speak, no place available to put such information as the name of the author and the title of the work, except for a reference incorporated, or rather buried, in the opening (*incipit*) or closing (*explicit*) sentences of the text. It is in this form of an incorporated reference (which we will meet again in connection with titles and prefaces) that we have the names of, for example, Hesiod (*Theogony* line 22), Herodotus (first word of the *Histories*), Thucydides (same location), Plautus (prologue of *Pseudolus*), Virgil (closing lines of the *Georgics*), the romance-writer Chariton of Aphrodisias (at the head of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*), Chrétien de Troyes (at the head of *Perceval*) and Geoffroy de Lagny (Chrétien's successor for *Lancelot*), Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung (whose names are recorded at the juncture of their respective works, at line 4059 of *Roman de la rose*), "Jean Froissart, treasurer and canon of Chimay," and of course Dante (canto 30, line 55, of *Purgatory*). I don't count the mysterious Tuold of *Roland*, whose role in that work (author, narrator, copyist?) is not defined. And quite obviously I omit dozens of others, but it is nonetheless the case that the number of authors' names recorded