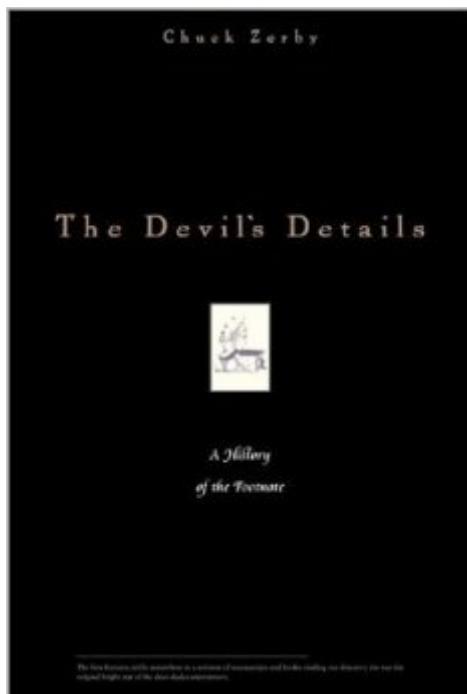


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The Devil's Details: A History Of The Footnote



Synopsis

This surprising history of the footnote starts with the assumption that footnotes are not solely the province of academics and bibliophiles. On the contrary, this book argues that footnotes can enchant and inform readers through tributes to people, characters, heroes, and lovers. Scholars have employed them, of course, but so have poets, novelists, memorialists, and pornographers. Written with clarity and erudition, this book presents the history of the first genuine footnote—an annotation in a 17th-century poem by England's first female poet—and other fascinating footnote tales, such as the discovery of a multivolume book that uses one entire volume for a single footnote and the use of footnotes to footnotes. This history pays tribute to the joy of reading footnotes and makes a compelling case that they are too important, too interesting, and too entertaining to be left to scholars.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Don't listen to the reviewer who purports to give Zerby 0 stars, that review isn't worth your while. Try this, instead: I'm trying to delve into the study of footnotes (non-scholarly). Grafton's work relies too heavily on scholarly use. Kevin Jackson's Invisible Forms only lends the footnote a chapter. So Zerby, as of now, is the happy medium. And yes, he rambles. Yes, the book weaves in and out of direction. But that's the point, and assuming you'd encounter otherwise is somewhat deluded. If you accept Zerby's offering for what it is, and roll with the punches the book provides, you might learn a thing or two about how the footnote has evolved (AND discover a few interesting original sources to

peruse later)!

The Devil's Details: A History Of Footnotes is a carefully researched and superbly presented study of the footnote -- an editorial convention most often seen in academic texts yet fast becoming more widespread than ever, particularly in the world of the Internet where a "footnote" can in fact be a hyperlinked note. Fascinating and informative with its close attention to minute matters, The Devil's Details is an enjoyable and even slightly whimsical study of an oft-overlooked aspect of writing and recommended reading for anyone wanting to improve the professionalism of their writings in print or on the Internet.

I have read this and Anthony Grafton's pompous long-winded history The Footnote: A Curious History, which somehow transformed itself from an arid PhD thesis into an arid book. Mr Serby's work is much slighter, but so much more fun to read. Unless you are writing a PhD thesis on footnotes yourself, I'd forget Grafton and go with this book. I would like to note that both authors completely ignore the use of footnotes in the scientific literature as if they didn't exist. I presume that neither author has the least training in the sciences.

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