

INVISIBLE FORMS : A GUIDE TO LITERARY CURIOSITIES PDF, EPUB, EBOOK



Kevin Jackson | 310 pages | 01 Nov 2000 | St Martins Press | 9780312266066 | English | New York, United States

Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities - Kevin Jackson - Google Books

One invisible form unfortunately left out by Jackson is a very important one: errata. Or was there an errata slip which slipped out of our copy? And, unfortunately, the book is in need of one. Not so much the book as a whole -- though the spelling *Alas t air Gray* did shock us -- but one ugly part of it: the Index. Jackson has a chapter on Indexes, revelling in the thrill that can be found in a good index and oh what a thrill it can be! And then he closes that chapter and the book with the words: Kind reader, now proceed to the index -- prepared, as is often the case, not by the

bumbling author but by another writer -- and regard it with renewed affection and respect. As inveterate index-perusers we had, of course, turned to it long before -- and been not only disappointed, but shocked. It is a bland name-index, with no embellishments. That we could tolerate -- but names mentioned in the text go unlisted Alasdair Gray and Les Murray among them.

Worse yet, names that are correctly spelt in the text are mangled in the index: Jean-Paul Satre? Harry Matthews? Raymond Roussel? Neal Casady? This is something we should respect? This is something we should show affection for? Phooey: this is crap. Bumbled, horrible crap. The anguish! The horror! Such a nicely done book, brought to such a shoddy, shameful close. Note that we refer to the November first US edition of the text -- though we suspect it is identical to the earlier British edition. We hope the Index is an American aberration; we fear it is not. Please tell us they at least fixed it for the British paperback edition Jackson is a wonderfully clever and literate fellow, and it a pleasure to read his digressions, observations, and explanations.

This Site. Marshall Brown. Previous Article. Article Navigation. Book Review June 01 William Flesch William Flesch. Modern Language Quarterly 64 2 : — Cite Icon Cite. Article PDF first page preview. Close Modal. Issue Section: You do not currently have access to this content. View full article. Sign in Don't already have an account? Client Account. You could not be signed in.

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Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities by Kevin Jackson

Invisible Forms by Kevin Jackson. Please note that these ratings solely represent the complete review 's biased interpretation and subjective opinion of the actual reviews and do not claim to accurately reflect or represent the views of the reviewers. Similarly the illustrative quotes chosen here are merely those the complete review subjectively believes represent the tenor and judgment of the review as a whole. We acknowledge and remind and warn you that they may, in fact, be entirely unrepresentative of the actual reviews by any other measure. The complete review 's Review :. In Invisible Forms , Kevin Jackson concerns himself with paratexts -- "all the minor elements and dressings which help serve up the principal content of a book to its readership".

He offers chapters on such subjects as introductions, titles, dedications, epigraphs, footnotes, marginalia, even indexes, as well as stretching his definition to allow for such things as an homage to Isaac D'Israeli and a discussion of Oulipian experiments. The book is very cleverly done, which makes it a pleasure to peruse. To cite only the most obvious example: the chapter on marginalia includes a great deal of ostensibly penned-in marginalia. Throughout the book there are such sorts of games, depending on the subject matter. The book is also extensively footnoted not just the chapter on footnotes , with all sorts of observations -- often of a personal nature, such as Jackson's admission that he finds the title of Michael Ondaatje's *Coming through Slaughter* "so spellbinding that I don't want to risk reading the novel in case the contents don't live up to it.

The book is terribly erudite -- or rather: wonderfully erudite, with Jackson not demanding too much from his readers, while still citing an almost overwhelming and almost invariably entertaining range of examples. Others appeared after publication of the book, notably Alasdair Gray's *The Book of Prefaces* see our review though Jackson should have known about that one. Still, Jackson's generally brief yet broad introductions to the various invisible forms are almost all of interest and use. Some are particularly good -- stage directions!

Others are a bit disappointing: blurbs could be covered in more depth especially the back-cover endorsements from authorial friends and publishing lackeys, which Jackson largely ignores , and the discussion of dedications also seems not to cover all the possibilities. More Details Original Title. Other Editions 3. Friend Reviews. To see what your friends thought of this book, please sign up. To ask other readers questions about Invisible Forms , please sign up. Lists with This Book. This book is not yet featured on Listopia. Add this book to your favorite list ». Community Reviews. Showing Average rating 3. Rating details. More filters. Sort order. Oct 20, MJ Nicholls rated it it was amazing Shelves: non-fiction , sassysassenachs.

Jackson has a delicious wit on a par with his friend Gilbert Adair and a rigorous head for exciting and curious trivia. This collection illuminates its forms with playful textual examples woven into or forming the texts themselves , making for an addictive and delirious reading experience, and a book that will no doubt remain unsurpassed in its field. I will wait patiently for his opus on the avant-garde. A must for all ye word-goblins! A fascinating excursion into all the bits of books other than the actual text itself.

It includes a bibliography in the chapter on Bibliographies that shows that each of these "forms" has one or more books dedicated to itself alone. There are books on bibliographies, books on indexes and indexing, books on footnotes and footnoting, and more. I have a copy of that too, in three volumes, and one of the oldest books in our house. We have the fourth edition, published in , and it's on my list to read now.

I've only dipped into it before, reading an essay here and there it's that kind of book , but Kevin Jackson has piqued my curiosity. In addition to the interesting histories and facts about these literary forms, it would be useful to any aspiring writer, as it could give most people a better knowledge of most of them, and in one volume, rather than having to get a separate book for each. It is also full of droll and erudite humour. Anyone who has worked in academia in the last 30 years and has gradually seen the proportion of administrative to academic staff rise enormously will be amused, or perhaps dismayed, by a footnote on footnotes, discussing the profusion of footnotes and other references in academic books: There used to be a method, no doubt encouraged by bean counters, whereby the 'objective' worth of an article or book was supposed to be gauged by the number of citations received in other books or articles.

The effect was predictable by anyone who isn't a bean counter: academics would set up little back-scratching groups or cartels of citation. Indexes have taken many forms, and some have taken a narrative form, telling a story in themselves. Jackson notes that some publishers, no doubt inspired by their bean counters, had left indexes out of some of their academic books, not so much because of the extra expense of including them, but to foil academics who, in search of a couple of citations, would simply browse the index in a bookshop instead of buying the book.

There are several chapters devoted to pseudonyms, heteronyms and fictional books and authors. One example of a fictitious book that he gives is *The Necronomicon*, frequently mentioned, with an elaborate pedigree, in the horror stories of H. Lovecraft, and Jackson tells of people who have gone into bookshops to order copies, only to be told that it doesn't exist. Since this book was published 20 years ago, a more recent example has occurred.

When my son worked in a bookshop a few years ago a customer came in and asked if they had one of these books. My son said they did not. The customer then asked him to order it, and my son said he could not, as the book did not exist. The customer angrily waved a copy of *The Da Vinci Code*, pointing to where the book was mentioned, and my son explained that it was a work of fiction, and the protagonist was a fictitious character, and that the books that the story mentioned were fictitious works. The customer got even more angry, and threatened to report him to the management for refusing to order the book.

Jackson gives more examples of fictitious authors, some of whom published real works. There were three Portuguese poets who did not exist. Another imaginary character turned up in several books, as various authors joined in the fun. A quick read was informative and illuminating, but one could have weeks or even months of fun following up some of the more obscure allusions. Oct 25, Tim rated it really liked it. Quite a pleasant "Invisible Forms are the parts of books that we see every time we take a hardback or paperback from the shelf and flick through it: titles, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, footnotes, indexes and so on - in short, all the minor elements and dressings which help serve up the principal content of a book to its readership. Quite a pleasant diversion, that feels like a literary education and contains many a good laugh.

Put me to sleep happy for many a night. Sep 02, Xanthi rated it it was ok. I read this one during my breaks at work. You do not currently have access to this content. View full article. Sign in Don't already have an account? Client Account. You could not be signed in. Sign In Forgot password? Don't have an account? Sign in via your Institution Sign In. Buy This Article. View Metrics. Citing articles via Google Scholar.

Email alerts Latest Issue. Introduction: Logic and Literary Form

Project MUSE - Invisible Forms: A Guide to Literary Curiosities (review)

Jackson's slightly too facile joke shows both the strengths and the weaknesses of his literary agility. Jackson's happily named "invisible forms" are invisible because they tend to do their work in a conventional or generic manner, at least as regards their almost physical presence. They belong half to the world of design: the book needs a title; its back cover needs a blurb; it could use an author's note; and so on. Truly unperceived forms—say, catchwords or collating marks—are of little interest to general readers and of none to Jackson, although they are actually more like the purloined letter to which he compares his topic. That topic is really the use of potentially visible forms, their potential energy all the greater because we do not expect them to come to any special notice. This book aims to make them fluoresce as a genre, because in fact its subject is the vivid variation on the prosaic theme. Jackson, who guides both by example and by precept, generally succeeds in using the forms he mentions: lecturing us on lectures; dedicating his chapter on dedications to Ernest Klein, whose own dedication to his parents, murdered at Auschwitz, brought Nicholson Baker to tears; crowning his chapter on epigraphs with a wreath of mottoes; marking up his chapter on marginalia with a lot of often hostile notation in various hands this chapter, which oddly does not mention Poe, who published his own marginalia, although Jackson cites him a great deal elsewhere, is a weak anticipation of the unrelated H.

Jackson's Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books [] ; and adorning his chapter on footnotes with [End Page] a sheaf of asterisks, obelisks, dieses, and sections all anchored in a gravelly substrate of citational scree at the bottom of the page in which the Project MUSE promotes the creation and dissemination of essential humanities and social science resources through collaboration with libraries, publishers, and scholars worldwide. Forged from a partnership between a university press and a library, Project MUSE is a trusted part of the academic and scholarly community it serves. Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus.

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Invisible Forms - Kevin Jackson

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This translated into 'boring' for me. Still, I persisted and finished the book. Dec 28, Gerry LaFemina rated it liked it. Clever, meta--this book talks about the various aspects of writing that we don't consider: the art of the footnote, the role of pseudonyms, the way of the blurb. It's often humorous and always enlightening, but I wish I hadn't read it straight through. One of those books to read a chapter every now and then as a literary palate cleanser. View 1 comment. A wonderful exploration of literary forms you might not consider to be literary forms. Mr Jackson shows a wide breadth of knowledge and taste in this survey of previously unappreciated genres such as footnotes, appendices, marginalia and so many others. His style is breezy and informed and you never feel as though something is too unimportant to be considered, nor does he make the reader feel like an idiot: he really seems to enjoy this sort of thing and his is the kind of enjoyment that is infectious. A wonderful exploration of literary forms you might not consider to be literary forms.

His style is breezy and informed and you never feel as though something is too unimportant to be considered, nor does he make the reader feel like an idiot: he really seems to enjoy this sort of thing and his is the kind of enjoyment that is infectious. My only problem is that it really is the kind of book that deserves to be read in chunks over time rather than in a linear sequence like I did over a couple of days. Alas, I realised this too late. Dec 17, James Henderson rated it really liked it *Shelves: lit-criticism*.

It is specifically about the 'other', the 'invisible' forms or parts of almost every book that are there "in plain sight"; ignored or assumed away when considering the book, but not by Kevin Jackson. He discusses dedications, titles, epigraphs, footnotes, preface "Curiouser and curiouser", said Alice and that was my initial response to this unique book. He discusses dedications, titles, epigraphs, footnotes, prefaces, afterwords, indexes and even the imaginary: imaginary books and authors.

Marginalia is not left out in this delightful compendium of useful and whimsical knowledge and trivia. The epigraphs for the book are worth considering: There are books in which the footnotes, or the comments scrawled by some reader's hand in the margin, are more interesting than the text. The world is one of those books. James Joyce, responding to accusations of triviality. The contents of *Invisible Forms* exist in that realm somewhere between the trivial and the whole world. It is an interesting place, one that invites the reader in for a dip now and then. Watch out that you are not engulfed by the world of *Invisible Forms*. Dec 04, stevenallenmay rated it it was ok.

It was okay. I have read a good deal of Basbanes and Dirda, so this was a bit of moping up what others have provided, better written in many cases. But it's an okay supplemental book to have around - should you have the space to have this book around. Aug 08, Elizabeth rated it it was amazing. Really interesting! This entertaining and often accurate book addresses those more or less peripheral aspects of printed volumes that tend to be found, metaphorically and literally, in the outlying areas of the individual page and of the codex as a whole. Both consider prefaces, titles, [End Page] dedications, epigraphs or mottoes, and notes, as well as such frontier regions as pseudonyms and blurbs ranged by Genette under the category "peritext" in the chapter in which he judges the covers of books.

In addition, Jackson considers indexes, bibliographies, his precursor Isaac D'Israeli whose often reissued compendium *Curiosities of Literature* Jackson alludes to in his subtitle, though he makes no mention of a worthy descendant whose title is closer to his own, William W. Walsh's *Handbook of Literary Curiosities* [], and—most relevant to his own colorful ambitions—"follies. That chapter is largely about the French group Oulipo, whose members accept arbitrary constraints on the forms in which they write, constraints that force them into a resourcefulness that sometimes yields deep originality and power. Georges Perec's *La disparition*, which eschews the letter e except in its author's name, is its most famous example; Perec said that in general he could not have written without constraints.

The chapter is in twenty-six sentences, following the letters of the alphabet; Jackson relies rather heavily on semicolons, however; this makes the exercise a bit less impressive. He ends it with a sort of valentine to Perec, writing after a semicolon, "Who knows, he might have smiled at a piece about his work which ends with the word 'ends'" More likely Perec, a connoisseur of the use-mention distinction, would have preferred a sentence that ended by both using and mentioning the uninflected form of the word with which this sentence also will end.

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