

Electronic *Dangerous Citizens*

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The electronic version of Neni Panourgíá's *Dangerous Citizens* was one of those Eureka! moments. Rebecca Kennison had asked me to be on a panel discussing open access, as I recall, and, since I know very little about that, I arranged to meet with her to find out whether there might be something I did know that might be relevant to her session. At the end of the hour, as I was about to leave, Rebecca said something like, "I don't suppose you ever have any Columbia faculty authors, but if you ever did . . ." I fished around for a moment, and then the light came on: Do I have a book for you . . .

What is so unusual about *Dangerous Citizens* is that, though since the eighties I have been publishing books that discuss what has become visible in earlier media regimes from the standpoint of the new one computers are introducing, it is really the first book I have worked with in which the author's imagination and her topic seem so deeply intertwined with the computer as a medium and what she could do there that this gets in the way of the production of the ordinary pages of an ordinary book.

The hallmark of this mediatic imagination is an element that Neni calls "parerga," supplemental texts that are not part of the body text but are not commentary or annotation, either. She takes them to be a disruption of any idea that her topic, the history of the Greek Left, can be safely reduced to a single, integrated storyline. It is a horrific story of internment and torture, lying directly in the genealogy of the Guantánamo internments—indeed, it was in key periods largely paid for by U.S. Marshall Plan dollars—and it is a history of crypts, sealed places in memory that people avoid in order to survive together in their daily lives.

Neni is an anthropologist, in particular, a "native ethnographer" of Greece. She works on her own culture and indeed draws many of her informants from her family and friends. The story she tells is often one of betrayals and secrecy—the silences speak as loudly as the words do. The parerga seek to emphasize all the levels that go into her research: the precise words of her informants and the emotional coloring and interpersonal tensions of the situations in which they were uttered; their memories (sometimes inexact); attempts to establish a historical timeline of "what happened"; the theoretical dimension that a correction from examining the actual concentration camps in Greece can offer to Giorgio's Agamben's theories of biopolitics, bare life, and the camp as *nomos* of modern political society; the history and potentialities of anthropology overall. No one lives history the way it is told in history books. You don't know it that way: you snatch at moments of story, you try to make sense using what frameworks (always partial) you have. Since anthropology is an attempt to create knowledge about people, Neni feels that this fractured and multiple form is an appropriate way to express it.

There is no reason that trauma, multiple temporalities, and psychic fractures cannot take the form of a single string of words and letters marching from left to right across a printed page, and then from left to right again in line after line down the page. One's eyes cannot, in fact, focus on more than one thing at a time, though once words and thoughts enter into the vast neuronal networks

of the brain, there need be nothing linear at all about their processing. Indeed, at the moment of writing I'm rereading *The Sound and the Fury* in consequence of having seen a stunning performance of its first chapter at the Holland Festival, and it a whole lot less linear and more fragmented than anything in *Dangerous Citizens*, with the mediatic aid merely of italics, a typographic resource that has been around since the early modern period.

But Faulkner (or at least his publisher) had a very canny sense of how those words were to be put on the page. There are many signs that today authors, abetted by the computer, imagine this multiplicity of experience in other forms. For Neni's book, we went round and round trying to figure out how to handle the multiple texts. At first she wanted the parerga to appear on recto pages, the main text on verso pages. That I emphatically vetoed because of the weight that falls on the recto given the shape of American books, and thus the need to have the continuous line of the main text, the reader's "throughline" through the book, appear there. In that position. Then we thought about putting them at the bottom of the page. Finally, we thought about the margins, which is one of the places where Neni had initially imagined them.

But here came the problem. In the last book in which I had put notational elements in the margins—the critical edition of Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound's "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry"—the physical manuscript page had more or less controlled the length of the parergal elements. Fenollosa wrote his essays on the recto pages of a little blue notebook; on the verso pages he put diagrams, comments, statements about how he might expand the essay, lists of characters. The physical page of the notebook set a limit to how long he could go on there without starting another page. But Neni was probably simply clicking on the Insert Footnote feature in Word, while, moreover, keeping two sets of notes, as it allows—footnotes for a few short citational and definitional notes, endnotes for the parerga. And, as the publishers of footnote-happy authors know, Word blithely ignores the model of the physical page implicit in the word *footnotes*. In some places in *Dangerous Citizens*, there are ten or more pages of parerga to three lines of main text. It is not physically possible to put supplemental material of this length either on an opposite page, at the bottom of the page, or in the margin without reducing it to, perhaps, six point type.

The designer of the book, Toni Ellis, found the parerga so annoying when I explained the author's idea and her wish to have as many of them as possible on the same page as the main text that for months she simply put other tasks first. Finally I coaxed her to come up with the very beautiful design in which the physical book will appear: parerga of up to 300 words are in the margins; all others are in the back, with a cross-reference by number (e.g., Parergon 5.3) in the main text.

Here, I'm hoping the electronic version will be a godsend, although apparently there the parerga are a large challenge, as well. After literally years of discussion, I think that version may finally fulfill the author's vision for them.

Let me, after opening with anecdotes, say a few brief things about the electronic collaboration.

I am very pleased and intrigued that this is an inter-institutional collaboration. For years I have been quoting media theorist Friedrich Kittler's quip to the effect that the university press is the

diplomatic wing of the university. Heretofore this has applied largely to recruiting authors from different faculties and making them feel connected, via their books, to the press's home university. But now a press can, via such digital initiatives as this one, also partner with libraries in such diplomatic work, highlighting their roles in a system that contains many other universities.

This electronic version is not intended to supplant the print version (indeed, it will include links for purchasing the printed book), nor will it be identical to the printed version. In it, it will be possible to read the text of the printed version in different ways and use it in different ways—importantly via searchability for words and phrases. But we also hope to include more than the print version can—links, color images, maps, videos of the author visiting the most horrific of the remote prison islands, audio (possibly including links to Greek poets reading the poems included in the *parerga*), interactivity via a blog, and maybe still other things that the creativity of Rebecca Kennison and her team at the Columbia CDRS can devise.

I feel very privileged to have this opportunity to learn with and from them.

—*Helen Tartar*

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