Notes on Gender in the New York Times Issue of Monday, April 15th / Marginalia: How I Learned to Love the Notes

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A1:

6 Articles: 5 male writers, 2 female writers. Women to write about politics and premature babies.

Very masculine line for Kerry: Kerry Sizes Up North Korea

Here are some headlines from former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton: “Hillary Clinton’s Last Tour as a Rock Star Diplomat”; “An Uncommon Résumé in an Unusual Time”; “Mrs. Triangulation”; and “Can We Get Hillary Without the Foolery?”

**Justices Weigh Issue of Patents on Human Genes** (A1 continued on A3):

This article is about a controversial issue: whether or not a company can hold patents on a human gene. To me it seems inherently immoral. The law doesn’t deal in morality, and in this case there seems to be enough legal grey area surrounding the arguments for justices to be beholden to make the decision based on each side’s relative merits (independent of the law.)

Both sides argue that theirs is the only course that will allow for invention. Pro gene patenting: without patents, companies will not invest in research only to be eventually undercut. Anti gene patenting: moral argument (this is a piece of us that companies should be able to own) + with companies having patents on genes, some companies could halt research and some screening could be prevented by patents. Examples of the latter are more readily available in the article.

This is where gender comes into play. The genes in question are used as indicators for increased risks of ovarian and breast cancer. Given the only evidence thus far has been how Myriad’s proprietary patents on these genes have adversely affected female patients, I wonder how this argument would meet the courts eyes if the genes were used to indicate prostate cancer. Hopefully this would be the same. It’s unlikely, however, that these genes would be sitting on a
shelf at Myriad Genetics. They'd probably be made more available. Either insurance companies would find a way to cover more of the cost (7,000$) or Myriad would find a way for the cost to be less prohibitive.

This article cited studies and had expert testimony for several men. Only one female expert was used. She was a doctor. She offered only anecdotal evidence.

**Intraparty Rifts Complicate Odds for Gun Measure** (A1 continued on A13):

I've been trying to figure out why women are acceptable political reporters. Given the trends in the rest of the Times—women reporting on education, babies, fashion—why is politics permissible? My expectation is, it has something to do with gossip. Politics, anymore, carries the feel of gossip. Reporters should be looking for the scoop on the scandal. Maybe this is something that we accept and expect of women? Otherwise, politics seems like something that I'd expect the Times to save for male reporters.

Senator Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, was the only republican cited as standing up to the base and advocating for gun control. Power to the practicality and morality of women!

**Courts in Slow Motion, Exhibit A: One Lawyer** (A1 continued on A16):

Sandra Fernandez and Douglass Rankin are both complicit in a crime. They're engaged to be married. How is it that she is found guilty of eight counts of official misconduct while he isn't charged? The only thing I can imagine is that she took a dive for him. Her career ended, while his advanced as a result of the crime. This is something not right. It may not be indicative of a double standard in the justice system, but it is certainly indicative of social norms.

The two are now married. She made a calculated decision to be a wife and homemaker. Her career is over. She won't be able to do anything. She is at the mercy of Rankin. What
happens when they split up? This is an exaggeration of the norm. The norm is: woman meets man, marries, puts career on backburner to raise family, can’t get a job after years out of work.

**Live Music’s Charms, Soothing Premature Hearts** (A1 continued on A12):

One thing that struck me as significant in this article was the idea that this music could be performed live by a musician, or simply be a constant well paced rhythm, or a lullaby. To me this could be used to break down some of the myths that keep women attached to the roll of motherhood (and gay men and women from adopting babies).

This article about the importance of music certainly offers support for ho important a mother’s lullabies are for premature babies. It also says that these can be analogously replaced by a couple of machines, or a live music with the appropriate vocal timber (or either gender). The feminist community has long debated motherhood. In our culture, mothers are beholden to their children from the moment of conception to their eighteenth birthday and sometimes longer. If we’re able to establish that the needs a child has during early development can be met by other means, maybe this sort of ‘maternal prison’ can be eased just a little.

**A4:**

**BBC Tactics In Covering North Korea Are Faulted** (A4 continued on A8):

Tomiko Sweeney is present first as a BBC journalist, then as John Sweeney’s wife, finally as a former LSE student. She’s depicted as the devious tool that played well in her husband’s game. There is more mention of her roll as a piece than any mention of her husband. Although they both declined to comment for the story, I walk away with a better idea of her deception than his.

NYTimes calls BBC out for not broadcastin a news investigation into their anchor, Jimmy Savile, in the face of numerous accusations of sexual abuse. Instead, Savile was given a
two-night tribute when he passed. This wash-over reinforces the common rape myth: he’s not that kind of guy. By denying the actions of privileged abusers, we perpetuate the idea that rapists and abusers are generally obviously perverse people—that we will be able to tell someone who is a rapist just by the way he or she appears.

**Coordinated Blasts Kill at Least 20 in Somalia’s Capital (A4):**

Abdikarim Hassan Gorod was jailed after interviewing Luul Ali Osman who claims she was raped by soldiers or police. She was also arrested. They had both been arrested for embarrassing state institutions. President Obama’s administration: “[the verdict sends] the wrong message to perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence.”

Somalian president, Hassan Sheik Mohamud, has made it his mission to fight al-Shabaab, an extremist group. Al-Shabaab stands opposed to basic human right and women’s rights. Comparitively, Hassan Sheik Mohamud is pro women’s rights.

**A7:** is an add for the Goldman Environmental Prize

The language here irks me. To begin, there are three men and three women. The words used to describe what each recipient has done to receive this award are different. The three women” led, mobilized, and organized. The three men: started, began, and spearheaded. The language here makes the men seem more responsible for their greatness. I’m not sure what the different actions involved in spearheading versus mobilizing are. I know I’d probably prefer being a spearheading (or at least known as such).

Another thing is that the women’s action tended to be defined by the negative. Two of the women had the words stop or shutdown in their environmental bios. Men who’d had similar impacts were described with words like started, protect, began, and grew.

**A9:**
In Testimony, Guatemalans Give Account Of Suffering (A9):

During the Guatemalan Civil War, 100,000 women were raped in a campaign of terror designed to scare the Mayan population into subservience. The government now refuses to recognize these rapes as crimes. Frequently, attackers live and walk the same streets as their victims, as freemen.

A10:

A Missouri School Trains Its Teachers to Carry Guns, And Most Parents Approve (A9):

In this article, two patterns are apparent. One is introduced to us newly: we trust women to talk about education of young children. The other we’ve already had a taste of: we accept women as witnesses when they’re in unavoidable proximity. Like the article about the BBC’s missteps—where women were only mentioned because they’re the CEO of the group and student organizer—the women cited in this piece were unavoidable experts. One was the principal of the school in question; the other was a member of its board.

There’s also a nod to employment stratification. Two persons are both administrative in the same school district. The woman is the principal and the man is the superintendent.

A13:

U.S. Rethinks How to Respond to Nuclear Disaster (A13):

There are three male experts and one female expert in this piece. This keeps with a trend through the whole issue. However, one thing that doesn’t keep is how quickly this expert is discredited. The female expert works for the Nuclear Information and Resource Service. She simply interprets the document in question. She gets two lines.

Then the last word is given to a guy who used to be an engineering officer on a nuclear submarine. He doesn’t cite anything. He just says she’s wrong. That’s the end of the piece.
Senator Rubio Voices Firm Support for Immigration Reform (A13):

Karl Rove recently pieced together an ad that plays on stereotypes of women. The meat of the ad calls Hillary a liar who covered up something concerning Benghazi? The pictures used and language: “shut him up” “chew him out”—were obviously saying something more inflammatory. He was pretty clearly saying she’s a ‘bitch.’ That felt like what he was wrapping the ad around.

A15:

Students Face Tougher Tests That Outpace Lesson Plans (A15 continued on A17):

Standardized tests have historically been a mechanism to keep the doors closed for women. Before Title IX, some tests administered in grade school were so biased as to ask young girls if they’d like to be the wife of the president, while asking young boys if they’d like to be the president. Thankfully, tests have gotten better since then, but it has been an uphill battle. For decades women scored significantly lower on many standardized tests because they were skewed to over-represent mathematical analysis. Now, young girls are equaled young boys in analysis and better in verbal intelligence (as has always been the case). AND, the tests are better at acknowledging both, so young girls are consistently out performing their male classmates.

A19:

Gitmo is Killing Me:

This reminds me of Alice Paul’s letter from Occoquan. The methods of force-feeding have changed, but they’re equally barbaric. Then, the accounts raised public sympathy and outrage. Now, this was printed and the President felt the need to address why he was force-feeding the prisoners. Then, the women were released shortly after this letter reached the public. Now, prisoners have been in Gitmo for a decade. It’s been a month since this paper printed this
account. This is not the first time this news has come to the public’s attention. There is still no foreseeable end to Gitmo.

**LEAD US, HOLY FATHER** (a Catholic prayer for guidance):

Beginning with an appeal to reconsider Roe v. Wade. Will the Catholic church give up on it eventually. I don’t expect that the strength of their morality will ever meet the rational arguments in favor of allowing a woman her rights. Although, they did get some help from Presbyterian, Todd Akin, last year when he said that “…if it’s a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to shut that whole thing down.” Trying to change a moral argument to a rational argument is difficult and will most always end in sounding sort of ignorant.

“Core institutions of marriage and the family are under assault from those who embrace an ethic of radical individualism.” I’m not even sure what this means or what it’s getting at. Is this an appeal against gay marriage? Marriage and the family are historically institutions that have kept women down. Between domestic housekeeping and child-rearing, women have been a slave to those institutions for a long time. If radical individualism means thinking that this doesn’t necessarily have to be the case, then shit… you got me.

**A-Section Overview:**

There are 28 articles in the A-section (not including Dear Diary, Editorials, or Letters to the Editor). Men write 22 of them. 3 of the articles are co-authored by a man and a woman. Finally, women write only 3 of the 28 articles in the A-section. There is also a remarkable lack of expert female testimony. Most of the articles cited several men and only one or no women. The three articles by women were about: premature babies, Israeli/Palestine relations, and war crimes in Guatemala.

**B1:**
Pay Stretching to Ten Figures (B1 continued on B9)

All ten of these ‘titans’ are male. This can only be because the opportunities are not open to women. How do I know this? According to YAHOO FINANCE, female hedge fund managers out performed the hedge fund average. In 2012 hedge funds run by women made an average of 8.95% while the overall average remained near 2.69% (6.26% difference). Also, this trend has been occurring for the last six years.

More Cracks Undermine The Citadel Of TV Profits (B1 continued on B8)

A couple of times this article makes lists that seem to juxtapose things that are distinctly masculine versus things that are feminine. The first time he offers that in order to get ‘your home team’ you’d have to buy a bundle that included ‘ads for lingerie.’ If it’s ‘your home team,’ then whose lingerie is it? The answer: your wife’s—or some other woman.

He later makes a list of unalienable viewing rights that includes NFL next to the Oscars. Here, I wonder if I’m being too sensitive. Maybe I’m being sexist by inferring that his intention is a cross gendered appeal. However, with the earlier comment I feel confident saying that this is his intention. I understand. It’s relatable. I would be more surprised if a package didn’t offer football viewing than the Oscars.

Losing A Step, Nike Seems to Regain Its Edge (B1 continued on B6)

‘Chicks dig the longball’ was Nike ad campaign that began during 1998 when Sosa and McGwire were going back and forth for single season homerun records. ‘Chicks’ is a term that encourages objectification. I’m not sure I can think of a similar term to objectify men. ‘Hunks’ or ‘studs’ maybe? Neither of these is nearly as harmful because male-objectification is not as prevalent, and men have less to lose by being objectified. That’s why men can take words like ‘hunk’ and feel complimented before they feel slighted. The fact is: whether or not women view
a guy as having merit beyond his physical appearance, he’ll have all the opportunities afforded men. He won’t have to fight just to be taken seriously.

**Flaws Seen In Protection Of Animals On the Set (B1 continued on B7):**

There are four female experts involved in this piece. All of them are animal right’s activists or administrators of animal protection organizations. One of them was a whistle-blower who was fired. The only man involved was a lawyer. I’m not sure what this indicates. My expectation is: women have jobs working for not for profits partially because those are the jobs available and partially because of a heightened sense of duty or morality. I know that second one is sexist. That assumption is also why it’s easier for us to accept a woman who is advocating for animal rights.

**B3:**

**2013 Matrix Awards:**

Are these the women who connect the world? One is Editor-and-Chief of *Cosmopolitan*, another CEO of the Home Shopping Network, and an actress? This seems like a list of women who’ve advanced to the top of where men want women to stay in the work force. One of the presenters is a morning news host. Another presenter is the CEO of a cosmetic company. These ‘Women Who Change the World’ don’t seem to be changing anything about sexist expectations of a woman’s role in the workplace. One of the male presenters has a significantly cooler title than the woman he’s presenting.

**B7:**

**AMC Shifts Series to Saturday, but Not to Kill It (B7):**

When I read the line, “...a lot of *men* still like watching cowboys,” I immediately want to say, “But *women* like westerns too.” This is argumentative, and this article offers sufficient
evidence to claim a significant gender bias. The better question, from a gender observational standpoint, is: what is the reason for or cause of these discrepancies? Are these actually the result of some innate difference? No!

Gender is a social construction. Women may be less prone to watch hyper-masculine westerns. This is in large part due to socialization as children and through their lives. Women are raised to be gentle and calm and shy from confrontation. These are not the traits captured in a western. Boys are raised on the honor of sticking up for what you believe. The cult of killing and honor in gunplay is perpetuated in westerns. Most heroes are reluctant killers—only shooting a man for the good of the town, personal honor, or vengeance.

B9-B10:

Obituaries:

3 of the 4 obituaries were for famous men. Each of these famous men was at the top of their professions in worlds dominated by men. David Burge is a pianist who attributes his inspiration to many male composers. What accounts for the lack of female composers in his historical repertoire? Maybe the fact that women haven’t been included in the education necessary to attain the level of play those famous men have. Also, women aren’t accepted as innovators. When a female composer creates something new and great, it is difficult for her to get the recognition of similar male artists.

Robert Byrne was a chess grandmaster. This is an interesting phenomenon. Feminists would argue that the upper echelon of the chess world is dominated by men is solely a creation of an environment that hasn’t encouraged women to think analytically. I accept that this is largely the reason for this occurrence. Having done more research, I’m not sure how I feel beyond this.
Daniel Reich was a curator and art dealer. He had a gallery in Chelsea. It was my expectation that the art world of gay men may be more inclusive to women. If this is the case, this article certainly did not show it. The article named a slew of male artists and only one female (who wrote about the art).

Carmen Weinstein just passed. She had fought to have her mother become the first president of the Jewish Community of Cairo. I looked at Jewish Law. Actually, in a lot of ways they were a million times more progressive than the overwhelming majority of other cultures. The reason women weren’t allowed to lead wasn’t based in law. There was a concern that women being leaders—spiritual and otherwise—would distract them from their primary duties as mothers. This isn’t progressive. What is progressive is about everything else. Women could buy and sell jewelry in their own right. They could own property. Husbands could not beat their wives. Marital sex had to be with the consent of both parties, and a woman who was raped was not considered to have provoked it or wanted it. This last one isn’t even true in our culture today.

B-Section Overview:

In the business section there were twelve articles written by men, six written by women, and one article that was unattributed (for a total of nineteen articles.) The majority of experts cited were men. Female experts were accepted in the case of animal cruelty. The articles written by women were mostly about men and their contributions.

C1:

**Hey, Diana, Smokey, Stevie: You’re on Broadway!** (C1 continued on C6):

This article makes only a passing mention to some of the not finer opinions held about Berry Gordy. Many feel as though he was Diana Ross’ pimp. Many expect he was involved in a
sexual relationship with her when she was far too young to consent. Many feel as though he
gave her preferential treatment in “The Supremes” because of their sexual relationship.

Berry Gordy was a womanizer who had three different wives and many other mistresses.
He had eight children. I’m not sure it matters how Ross might have manipulated the situation to get ahead when she was too young to give consent in the first place.

**Racing Against Time to Save a Young Star (C2):**

The idea of a transformation from the unattractive and awkward before to Tina Turner is pervasive in our culture. Tina Turner isn’t often the eventual goal, but many products advertise a transformative like effect. This gives women an unrealistic idea of beauty and, in turn, influences their self worth.

The three having to lose their colored wigs to fit in with the fashion of the time reminds me of the ever-changing current of women’s fashion.

**C3:**

**Adoption Anxiety, Long Before the Child Arrives (C3):**

The way the author frames this play is definitively not progressive. The ‘troubled heroine’, the ‘problem that has become more widespread’, and the ‘anxious business of pursuing
careers’ are all pieces of language that give a solid nod to that age old idea: women should really be homemakers. You see all the ‘problems’ that arise as women enter the ‘anxious business’ of trying to obtain equality in the workforce? He acknowledges the sexist undertones finishing with, “… or should I say just earning their livelihoods.” Should you just say that? Yes! You should’ve said just that. But you didn’t. Why did this author feel the need to perpetuate sexist ideology that needs no more representation in our culture than it already has? I’ve been trying to understand this. The only thing I can come up with is he’s trying to mimic the tone of the play that raises these concepts on a basic level to address the ideas. I don’t know. It seems more likely that he simply expects this is an appropriate way to talk about a young, professional woman struggling with the process of adoption.

**Aliens Invaded, and the future Looks Like the Old West (C3)**

The three female characters described in this piece are representative of three different archetypes of acceptable presentations of women. The first is the ‘big-hearted’ madam. She fits into our idea that women are kind and compassionate and nurturing. When I imagine her, I imagine a million other mothering characters I’ve seen in movies. The second archetype is the vixen. You can identify her by the description of her costuming—‘nearly as revealing as the ones she didn’t wear….’ She plays ‘woman as a sex object’, the femme fatale. Finally, we have the damsel in distress. Pretty much anytime you have a female orphan adopted by a man, that orphan is in need of some sort of protection from her big and strong benefactor. In this case she’s an orphaned alien who is played by a female.

**C-Section Overview:**

There were fifteen articles in the C-section. Eleven were written by men, four by women. Since the majority of the articles in the C-section (THEARTS) were critiques, the disparities in
citation were not prevalent as there were only a couple of articles that allowed for citation. We saw that women are consulted in matters of fiction books.

**D1:**

**Hockey’s Eldest Statesman** (D1 continued on D8):

Even the title says, “Men become distinguished and earn respect as they age.” To make my point, I looked up NYTimes’ headlines about Kristine Lilly who was 36 as she prepared for the 2008 women’s World Cup of soccer. Her headline read: **Lilly, Matriarch of U.S. Team, Refuses to Fade to Gray.** Both articles talk about fighting the affect of aging. *His* fight is like a natural phenomenon. He matures with time but somehow doesn’t lose his competitive edge. Lilly is described as almost scraping to stay in the game. *Her* younger teammates her never seen someone train the way that she trains. Both articles mention the idea of children. His three boys are all hockey playing age. *She* doesn’t even have a child, yet in the first paragraph it says she’s talking about changing diapers (with some of her other older teammate?) This is obviously indicative of some strange, maternal double standard.


**D4:**

**Huskies Honored in Hartford** (D4):

"It's about inauthenticity and the idea that women should be constantly exploding in little bursts of exhibitionism. It's an idea that female sexuality should be about performance and not about pleasure."- Ariel Levy, author of *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture*. Raunch culture requires internalization of roles. This requires self-objectification. This means, to some extent, women are complicit in their own continued sexual objectification.
There are a lot of reasons Levy suspects this situation came about. This quote is all I want to offer here, as it pertains to Mardi Gras and girls throwing (and catching) beads.

**D7:**

**Bryant Goes Away, but Not Quietly (D7):**

I went to look at a poll of whether or not people believed the Kobe was guilty of rape. YAHOOanswers has a pretty awesome list of answers that use mostly all of the rape myths as justification. “The girl who charged him with rape, allegedly slept with everyone in that hotel.” “How can it be rape when they kissed and lasted for 5 minutes?” “…she had sex on that same day before the incident.” “…he doesn’t look like he would be a rapist.” They go on to cite her sexual activity and psychological issues against her. *These are risk factors for increased likelihood of being raped!* I’m sorry. This case aggravates me, and people acting more ignorant than they need to be aggravates me. I have a study that compiled 555 online headlines for this case, immediately after the verdict. About 25% of the headlines referred to her as the ‘accuser.’ Only 1% of headlines referred to her as the ‘alleged victim.’ 10% of headlines endorsed some sort of rape myth. I expect ignorance in people, but I want my news to be unbiased.

**D-Section Overview:**

In the D-section, there are thirteen articles that aren’t attributed to the Associate Press. Three of these articles are by women. Ten are by men. There is less of a need to cite experts, as most of the articles consisted of facts and not opinion. Regardless, when experts were cited, it was about a three-to-one chance that the expert was a man. There were several articles that dealt with aging players and their continued utility or lack there of.

**What would Kristof say about hyper-masculinity & macho-ism?:**
We don’t have to guess. In the article, “The Women’s Crusade,” Krostof is explicit with his expectation of male involvement in strife: “Now it is emerging that male domination of society is also a risk factor; the reasons aren’t fully understood, but it may be that when women are marginalized the nation takes on the testosterone-laden culture of a military camp or a high-school boys’ locker room” (Kristof).

I expect Kristof might apply this to any patriarchy. In this newspaper, there are a lot of examples of boys fighting. Whether it’s fans at a soccer match or government genocide in Guatemala, fight about flags in Indonesia or arguments about money in Europe; the one thing these instances all have in common is: the overwhelming majority of the players are men. (I forgot to mention the age-old conflict in Israel/Palestine area.) Would our societies be more tempered—more prone to work things out—if they were headed by mothers? I think probably so. I also think Kristof would agree.
Marginalia: How I Learned to Love the Notes

Jack Norcross
Annotation: A Juvenile Affair

I've been considering exactly what it is about annotation and notes that draws me. What is it about these scribbles that seems so integral to my experience? Why am I so irresistibly drawn to taking notes inside a text?

At first, I thought that the answer was the inherent rational argument made by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren in How to Read a Book. Their argument for the importance of annotation is based in structuring and creating an text that is easy to operate (with main points identified and the such). Their argument continues to a sexier thought though. Annotating is the act of engaging in conversation with the author. In order to make significant notes, you have to understand what you're reading to some extent, or you have to know what it is that you don't understand. Either way, the act of taking notes forces engagement with the text.

While this is likely the reason that annotating came back into my life and definitely the reason learning annotation is the only logical next step for me in academia, as I evaluated my history, I began to realize that this is not the reason for my attraction initially. In order to learn what it is that drew me to annotation in the first place, I have to go back to the most painfully romantic high school love imaginable & her favorite novel.

Sarah Lindsey Flesher was a fifteen-year-old girl with knowledge of pain and an unparalleled intensity. She knew how to love something so completely, but she was sad a bit-sordid. She always seemed a bit more privy to the pain of the world with the resentment of a much
older woman. When she said she loved this book, I thought I knew what I was getting into.

*House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski is classified as an experimental novel. It's formatted as a commentary that digresses into journal. The commentary is on a movie review (also present) and many supporting articles. All of these are imagined, as the movie they're based on does not exist. The imagined movie that serves as the inspiration for this imagined world is a documentary of a family in a house. The house is larger on the inside than it is on the outside, and it is constantly changing shapes.

Needless to say, in order to maintain this fantastical world with journey's into the house, academic debates about the significance of the house, a drug addict reading a dead old man's crazy life work, and about a million tangents; a strong structure is necessary. Maybe the fact that this wild and solid structure was already demanding made it easier for Danielewski to feel free to pile on many hundreds of notes. He did, and I read them all.

I was predisposed to appreciate notes from having studied the Bible. When I had turned twelve, I was bought a Zondervan's *Annotated Scriptures & Concordance*. I learned to associate notes with new intelligence. *House of Leaves* took my understanding of annotation and turned it on its head.

*House of leaves* had notes to mark allusions made in the text. The narrator who is reading the manuscript would throw tangential stories or simply react to what was happening in footnotes. Some notes would provide historical context; others would cite a bogus study or imagined intellectual debates over the topic in the film.
Most of the notes were offered as footnotes on the pages to which they pertained, but *House of Leaves* also had several extended appendixes and companion materials.

Danielewski used notes to build a cult of intellect around his work. It worked. I felt definitely smarter and somehow more informed when I was done, though only having read a piece of fiction. *House of Leaves* became my favorite novel. All other novels (without notes) paled in comparison to this slightly avant-garde, encyclopedic masterpiece. Thus began my love affair with annotation, one that would last significantly longer than my affair with Ms. Flesher.

SIDENOTE:: I am currently reading David Foster Wallace’s *Infinite Jest*. I read somewhere that his usual style for notes is footnotes? I wish that were what he did in this novel. Flipping back and forth between my place and the end of the book is getting aggravating. I’m also mad because I don’t have the tools to make the sort of notes I want to.

RE:: “What I Really Want Is Someone Rolling Around in the Text” by Sam Anderson:

I don’t know when. It’s possible I’m holding on to some memory from being a child that colored in my parent’s books. It’s possible I couldn’t keep myself from it, and wrote in the margins of textbooks at school. Whatever the reason, I have a distinct memory of being reprimanded as a child. I was clearly told to never write in books. This stuck with me longer than most of my arbitrary inhibitions. It wasn’t until I’d been a flippantly drunk, often homeless, travelling musician for two years, when at the age of twenty-two I finally threw
this. I began to write in Murakami’s *Kafka on the Shore*. I’m not sure I would have understood it even a little had I not. I haven’t put down my pen since. The only reason I make it through some things without marking them up is: I’m riding the bus and can’t write while moving.

In this article, Anderson talks about his own love for marginalia and how it grew. He mentioned *How to Read a Book*, which I read most of. He said he wasn’t able to get into it; it was too dated, yet the quote he remembers is fifty pages into the text. I suspect he did a little bit more reading than he’d like to let on. I understand why, though, this book is dense. The only reason I was able to read as much as I have is in direct conflict with one of the rules of good analytical reading. I was being argumentative. Adler, the author of *How to Read a Book*, is a snob and an elitist. I don’t like him, so it was easy for me to keep reading in order to hate on his smugness and privilege.

That is neither here nor there. Anderson’s description of the evolution of his marginalia is something to aspire to. He talks about using stars and dots and lines and brackets, checks, dashes, squiggles and parentheses. Learning how to organize this many symbols must take time. It’s where I want to be now. I want to have a collection of colored pens to use for annotating and marginalia. I want to know that red ink in my book is indicative of structural notes and blue ink references allusions. I want to identify passages that are simply linguistically awesome with some other color of ink and have conversations with the author in black. I want to go at a book with Coleridgean tact. Now, I can mark up a book in a way that’s
significant to me. Then, I’ll mark books beautifully and give them as gifts. My notes and marginalia will provide valuable insight and will be formatted clearly so it can be significant to anyone who cares to read it.

I suspect this practiced succinctness and/or structure is a result of intentional planning and practice. I also suspect it will become easier to achieve with some of the new annotation technologies that Anderson discusses. If annotation software successfully connects the academic communities’ collective marginalia, I may have to learn how to use an e-reader. Having the ability to engage in discussion with as many people as have cared to take notes in real time, would change the way I think about marginalia and make it easier to adopt some of the structure that interests me.

Marginalia is the ultimate in reading and what Anderson refers to as ‘one of the Seven Undying Cornerstones of Highly Effective College Studying.’ I recently talked to Anat and her partner about getting a subscription to the New Yorker. I caught myself telling them that they should get an issue and mark it up, ask questions. I stopped mid-sentence assuming they were already doing this with the things they read because they were both in college already. They informed me that neither of them did this as a common practice. I told them they should and hope that they do.

Some lines from this article that seem a sin not to post here: “[marginalia is] a way to not just passively read but to fully enter a text, to collaborate with it, to mingle with an author on some kind of primary textual plane.”
"marginalia is — no exaggeration — possibly the most pleasurable thing I do on a daily basis."

"[e-readers with insufficient note taking interface] disable the thing that, to me, defines reading itself."

AND etymology of the word 'marginalia': "a self-consciously pompous Latinism intended to mock the triviality of the form."

RE: How to Read a Book by Mortimer J. Adler & Charles Van Doren:

The importance of annotation is discussed only briefly in this 346-page manual (not including appendixes). However, while annotation and strategies may only be explicitly discussed for a very brief time, the entire manual is a how-to for recognizing significant concepts, making significant judgments, drawing 'syntopical' connections (connecting topics between different reading to create a bigger picture informed from several angles). Anderson felt annotation was the thing that defined reading itself. Adler and Van Doren agree, to an extent. Therefore, their how-to-read manual becomes a how-to-recognize-noteworthy-ideas/structure/concepts in whatever you're reading.

They have several suggestions as to how to implement annotating strategies. Underlining main points or forceful statements. Also, vertical lines in the margins provide similar affect on lengthier passages. Since I read a lot of fiction, I've extended these to include sentences that are particularly well put together or stories I feel did well at representing the essence of a bigger picture, theme, or emotion.
They recommend using stars sparingly to make note of arching primary points in an author’s argument. I think I may change this to adopt the footnote style of annotating. Instead of stars, I’ll leave little numbers that will correspond to notes kept in a separate source. For reoccurring concepts, prevalent themes and the like, I’ll keep an index of page numbers on the back cover or something. I don’t like the idea of crowding my margins with page numbers, and I don’t like the idea of feeling limited as to how many passages I can note. I don’t know what significant until I finish a book. Often authors hide layers and layers into their novels. If I were to make a judgment call on what to note and end up missing a whole theme because it wasn’t readily apparent in the beginning, I would have wasted my energies noting only the surface of the novel. (I think the reason for this discrepancy is: Adler and Van Doren are writing primarily about reading non-fiction analysis that purport to make deductive arguments.)

I love their notes on the importance of inspectional reading and outlining structure. The truth is that, as I read DFW’s Infinite Jest, I can understand more of the genius of this novel for having read Adler and Van Doren’s manual. DFW is intentional. Most of his narrative makes an argument, if you’re able to see the overarching structure and connect concepts between parallel storylines. As far as my own future with annotation, I’m sure it will benefit from having read this manual. It is likely that it will benefit more from a knowledge of the process of reading than it will from any of the specific note-taking stratagems offered.
RE:: "Improving The Conversation On the Web" by David Stritfeld

Holy crap! I didn't know that the platform that served as the foundation for the Internet initially allowed for annotating cites. This would have been awesome. I wish Marc Anderson and Eric Bina would have had the wealth of database space we enjoy today, so Mosaic could have kept its annotation feature. Today, at least some pages or some browsers would allowed for sharing notes.

The article makes it clear that this was a widely popular feature and was only cut when the creators realized that the database they would need to host comments would be prohibitively large. Today we have the ability to comment, and it's likely that if annotation had survived as an open-source to provide feedback on the internet it would be subject to the same ignorance and digressions our comment bars are subject to today. However, Hypothes.is, the app in question, doesn't seem to be interested in exposing annotation to the masses of more inflammatory web content.

Hypothes.is skirts to some degree skirts the issue of potentially ignorant annotations by offering itself primarily to academia as a tool for raising the level of discourse. The idea is simple: if you provide academia with a means of annotating the overwhelming wealth of scholarly articles that are published on a weekly basis, articles that are better written, contain more pertinent information & stronger arguments, or generally meet a higher standard of discourse will receive a highly level of attention from other scholars & more annotation as a result. The better articles will become easily identifiable by the amount of annotation or quality of the annotations attached.
Anderson mentioned the idea of interactivity in marginalia. This takes it away from fiction and applies a larger potential benefit, the ability to move the conversation forward. Maybe someday discovering will be happening at ever increasing rates because inventors and scientists aren’t combing through articles of menial importance. Also, the moment something is published it becomes a global conversation. The synergistic possibilities are remarkable.

If applied to fiction, as Anderson is most keen on, this could open the eyes of millions of privileged American and European students who go through high school reading with a primarily ethnocentric scope. Can you imagine if notes taken from a culturally relevant viewpoint challenged them as they read? Or if Alice Walker went through the common curriculum and annotated for gender significant concepts? This could be a way to quickly close the gender and racial gap in our education, by allowing them to be acknowledged and challenged in real time.

One semi-unrelated note: the article mentions the program RapGenius.com. RapGenius started as a site for annotating the lyrics of rap songs. It has began to be much more. The interesting thing about it is: musicians began to come to this site to annotate their own lyrics. I’m not sure how I feel about this, but there is a distinct discrepancy between this and the idea that once an author has published a work, its meaning becomes subject to any engaged reader’s interpretation. That is: it doesn’t matter what an author meant or why he/she wrote what he/she did. At least, it doesn’t matter more than what a reader (or in this case listener) takes away from it.
RE:: Book Lovers Fear Dim Future for Notes in the Margins by Dirk Johnson:

Johnson cites Paul F. Gehl, a curator at the Newberry, who blamed generations of librarians and teachers for “inflicting us with the idea” that writing in books makes them “spoiled or damaged.” He talked about how common of a practice marginalia used to be. I am beyond frustrated with every one of my teachers who told me this was bad. I suppose I understand that writing in rented books isn’t right, but they presented it to me as a moral imperative—the way Gehl frames it. If a book were written in it would be ruined, no longer good for anything but the garbage. This myth kept me from years of engaging authors, organizing my thoughts, caring to go back and look at that passage I’d really liked (not to mention hours of searching for my references when writing literary analyses in high school).

I love the copy of Shakespeare that was passed around a prison that housed Nelson Mandela. Is his choice to put his name next to a quote about cowards some misplaced sense of cowardice? An odd idea of humility? Or was he offering his agreement. Did he simply want to say that he did believe that ‘cowards die many deaths.’

Studs Terkel demanded that his audience mark up his books. He agreed with Adler and Van Doren that reading cannot be a passive process. He told his friends that reading a book should be a raucous exercise.

The historical value of marginalia is remarkable. This article points that out by discussing annotated scripts from the shelves of Thomas Jefferson. Obviously, any clear insight into the unpublished thoughts of histories great thinkers has an immeasurable value to
academia and society. I secretly hope that one day I’ll have made enough of a splash to have a library of opinions that history appreciates and preserves.

Johnson suspects that the dedication to annotation will be driven ever forward as the digital world gets a better glimpse. He posits that the true problem is going to be in determining how to keep digital notes. I guess this is the same problem that the creators of Mosaic had. It seems to me, though, that this shouldn’t be much of a problem. What it is—a sacrifice. It’ll cost money to have the servers. While things are being figured out, computers and articles will load a little more slowly. Besides that, I believe we have the tools to do it. I believe we have at least one programmer on this ball with the savvy to write strong annotation software that is easy to use. I think, soon, we’ll even have the desire to do it.

**RE:: Marginal** by Ian Frazier:

This article was really brief, but it talked about some of the great writer’s scribbled notes in the margins of books (both good and bad). It was cool to see Jack Kerouac’s connection to Henry David Thoreau’s line: “...a traveller must be born again on the road.” Of course, of Kerouac’s famous novels, *On the Road* is arguably the most deeply imbued into our nation’s culture. Had he not felt able to underline this line in pencil, we would never be able to fully appreciate the directness of the connection between two writers who lived over a century apart.

I’d like my marginalia to exhibit tastes from many different famous marginalia-ists. I’d like to have the argument of Samuel
Taylor Coleridge, the benefit of the doubt given by Mark Twain. I'd like to leave the narrative timeline that Hughes left in Plathe's Ariel. I want to offer the criticism of Nabokov next to the praise, adoration, and displayed learning put on paper by Kerouac—the constant worshiper of an open mind.

In the end, I want my marginalia and every other sort of annotation I provide to be more than any one of these. I want to create something beautiful—a guide to reading, a map of my thoughts, a challenge to any author, and hopefully something beautiful that any reader can appreciate.

Peep this: http://www.niemanstoryboard.org/category/annotation-tuesday-2/