



The Renaissance Collage: Signcutting and Signsewing

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Virescit Vulnere Virtus

—Motto on the Marian Hanging, Victoria and Albert Museum

As this volume demonstrates, collage has never been new. Art historians who claim it was a specifically twentieth-century phenomenon—one that, in spite of its name, involves artistic techniques more sophisticated than “gluing”—have argued that the patches of paper and cloth that Braque and Picasso began to attach to their canvases in 1912 functioned to disrupt the surface plane of their paintings, and so to destroy the entire regimen of values which depended on knowing the difference between an object and its representation. Whether they were stuck to a drawing or on a painted canvas, fragments of newspaper, wallpaper, and wood appeared to collide with each other and their backgrounds and prompt an exploration, not only of their own media, but also of the contexts from which they had been torn: and this, it is felt, is what constituted their modernity. Displayed less as a product than as a frozen moment in processes of fragmentation, juxtaposition, and recycling, and in the experiences of accident and incongruity to which these gave rise, twentieth-century collage seemed, to its practitioners, purchasers, and curators, to give expression to many of the defining features of modernity itself.

A hundred years later collage still seems new. Not, to be sure, the “paste-ons” of Picasso and Braque, nor even the collaged paintings of Lee Krasner; now it is digital media that allow our artists, as well as our children, to sample, cut, paste, and assemble their own forms of expression as they laugh at, redeploy, and make their own surroundings out of ours. It is certainly tempting to think that the new media allow collaging to be done on a vastly different scale, as the ubiquity of electronic and interactive screens

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turn our whole environment into a three-dimensional collage, whose fragments stir and bristle at the passage of our bodies, as pendant cut-outs once reacted to the air currents in the apartment of Henri Matisse.¹ A postmodern viewer now needs to be taught that the cutting and sticking of painted paper were once considered a radically unorthodox artistic technique; otherwise, if she is honest, she will find Matisse's cut-outs (which have now been carefully pasted flat, curated, documented, praised, and lovingly photographed at the moment of their emergence from the artist's shears) to be less revolutionary than quaint, products of a technique that is *striking because old-fashioned*. But perhaps we should also remind our youth, and ourselves, that even the touch-screen is a form of handwork, and that the mash ups and assemblages it permits have their predecessors in techniques such as the one recommended by Hannah Woolley when, in *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet* (1674), she briefly explains how "To adorn a Room with Prints"—not, as became popular half a century later, by arranging whole prints to form a "print room," but by cutting figures from prints themselves, and then gluing them to the walls in a free composition. "If you employ your fancy well," she continues, "you may make fine stories . . . also Gardens and Forrests, Landships, or indeed anything you can imagine; for there is not any to be named, but you may find it in Prints, if you go to a shop that is well stored, nor no Pencil can shadow more rare than that will shew."²

Let's imagine that you are living in seventeenth-century Hackney, as Woolley was when she wrote *A Supplement*. To follow her instructions you can start by leafing through books and other printed material at home (do ask before you cut into anything that is not your own!), and if nothing grabs your attention you can go down to the stationer's shop and see what is there: you don't even have to have your own ideas; you can gather motifs from what is on offer, cut them out, modify and assemble them according to your own fancy; you can invert them or overturn their logic; you are not just copying, you are capturing and emitting information; you don't have to wait for the twenty-first century, you are already processing the world and are part of its process. And if all this seems to be done on a small scale, once you have purchased your prints you can look about you at the layout of Hackney itself. Its main thoroughfare traces an old Roman road, and standing outside the stationer's shop you will see that the medieval churches and crumbling Tudor palaces are being incrementally replaced, their sites, bricks, and stones repurposed for the neoclassical buildings that will, briefly, accommodate the next generation of pleasure seekers. And everywhere you look there will be writing, in fonts old and new: memorials, advertisements, builder's initials,

pious or civic-minded inscriptions that interact with the fabric of the High Street, for as Morgan Ng argues in his essay here, the mass availability of printed texts quickly gave rise to “collage on an architectural scale.” The scale of our twenty-first century transformation of the world into a bulletin board upon which a continuously available stream of data is scrolled, flashed, juxtaposed, discovered, or recovered may be unprecedented, but the processes of collaging—of the cutting and pasting that make the present out of the past—are not.³ “Collage,” we should remind ourselves, and our daughters—“*not that new.*” Or—as Adam Smyth’s essay in this volume allows us to say, as it demonstrates that the work done on the Harmonized Gospels at Little Gidding positioned collage as that which “precedes writing as Christianity’s written mode”—*in the beginning was the cut.*

Certainly, though, collage has had its historical moments, and one of these was the European Renaissance. Again, this is scarcely an innovative thought. Even when collage is understood in its narrow sense, as the cutting and pasting of heterogeneous paper fragments onto an underlying support, you might say that it was always central to the production and reproduction of Renaissance culture. While a scholar like Ulisse Aldrovandi gave order to the natural world by cutting and pasting snippets of information about it into his massive notebooks, later scholars have also recognized and defined the period in terms of great material as well as intellectual repurposing. London’s Warburg Institute Library, where, according to a scheme worked out by Aby Warburg and his colleague Fritz Saxl, volumes are arranged on open shelves in such a way that a trip to the open stacks brings you not only to the volume you sought, but also to a small gathering of books with surprising connections to it, is an attempt to respond to this quality of Renaissance experience, and to the period’s own reception of the classical tradition as “a great Mississippi of texts, images, and objects, constantly intersecting with and transformed by other streams.”⁴ Warburg’s understanding of the way in which visual images do not reside in one place, but throw their meanings across time and space, led him to produce *Mnemosyne* (or “Memory”), a panoramic atlas of juxtaposed fragments of Renaissance visual motifs, that is said to have been left unfinished at his death, but was in any case designed to remain in perpetual flux. The contributors to this volume are all the heirs and beneficiaries of Warburg and the other great scholars of the Renaissance whose work was enabled by his library.

Still, it is fair to say that if we have long been familiar with the processes of intellectual and material cutting and stitching that produced manuscripts, we have been much slower to notice that early modern readers cut

as they read, and read by cutting, printed books. Librarians and archivists have, over centuries, preserved and described manuscripts into which printed matter had been sewn, stuck, or interleaved, as well as printed books with extensive manuscript commentaries and annotations, into which manuscript pages had sometimes been added; and they have also identified and named “hybrid” books, of which it cannot be said with confidence whether they are printed books with manuscript additions or manuscript books with printed additions. But catalogue descriptions of these “hybrid” books suggest that, in many cases, those who wrote the entries struggled not only with a lack of agreed upon terms to describe what they saw, but also against their own disapproval of the very form—it must, after all, be a rare archivist who can regard a sixteenth-century hybrid book as an embellished manuscript, without regretting the volumes that were sacrificed in its making. Contributors to this volume have sometimes found themselves needing to resist or correct the terms with which the books that concern them have hitherto been described or catalogued: volumes have been entered as “damaged,” or having parts missing; one has been laughed about as a “Frankenstein book,” and there are entries that list as “slip cancels” what are in fact not corrections to but significant augmentations of a work; while others make no mention of such salient facts as that the books have been embroidered or embellished with fabric. As Georgia Brown argues, beyond the problem of their cataloguing, “unconventional books” present us with practical problems that arise from the conceptual challenges they pose: where should they be stored (in the manuscript or rare books library, or the department of prints and drawings), how should they be displayed, and in what kinds of institutions should they be preserved? Perhaps these problems cannot be resolved until we have learned to see such books not as unconventional, but as being something closer to the norm.

In fact, early modern readers cut their books for a variety of unexceptionable reasons: to remove newly proscribed material from prayer books and primers, or to censor material found to be personally offensive; to obviate the labor of copying when producing commonplace books and other compilations; to make mock-ups of page proofs; to reformat texts in order to rationalize the material they contained; to provide room for marginal or other commentaries; to add other material to and thereby expand a given text (this practice is associated with the eighteenth-century cleric, collector, and author James Granger, but was used by readers throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries); to organize their own researches (in this volume John Considine describes the use of paper slips as a form of information

management); to correct local errors; to illustrate or embellish presentation and other manuscripts with motifs cut from printed sources; and to create something for themselves or for their friends, families, and communities. Describing such practices in greater detail, and with a more thoughtful sympathy than has usually been extended to them before, our contributors have generated new ways of thinking not only about the texts and the period on which they focus, but also about reading and writing all told.

William Sherman, Heather Wolfe, John Considine, Jeffrey Knight, and Adam Smyth each demonstrate the ways in which readers used small, cut slips of paper not only to correct, but also to rearrange and reorder information in manuscript and printed sources, and between them they describe a series of places in which slips could be stored—in trays, on hooks, in specially made boxes, within the leaves of another book, pasted into guard books, strung on laces, pierced by metal files, stitched into bundles, stuck onto loose sheets with soluble glue, stuffed into bags, folded into packets, and even, in one instance, collected in a pie crust. Such practices, without doubt, significantly complicate the object on which historians of the book have hitherto focused. But they can also be seen to do more than this, perhaps even to announce the end of the history of the book, and the beginning, in its place, of an expanded history of writing. This discipline would be broader than the one it displaced not only because it would look at all kinds of texts, in all kinds of places, but because it would include practices such as sewing, cabinet making, and glue-boiling for which there has been no place within the history of the book. Thus in Whitney Trettien's essay a consideration of slips links writing to the embroidery work that is usually considered to be women's work, while in Knight's contribution the equation runs the other way, and we learn that sewing has long been part of the masculine preserve of textual compilation. Taken in either direction the textual slip becomes, as Trettien argues, "a transactional object that grants [women] cultural efficacy and promotes and preserves [their] work precisely by encouraging its cutting, pasting, and reuse across multiple media." But we don't need to pit these two accounts against each other when we can simply say that what they demonstrate is that sewing, like other technologies of cutting and pasting, is *a work of grammar*, where grammar means the organization and distribution of written information.

The first thing to note in all the cases described here is that, as Brown says, "hands can play a part in the apparently abstract processes of thinking and reading." Grammar is a manual skill: in it information is gripped with the thumbs, sorted with fingers, or smoothed with the palms

as it is cut and reformatted, and moved from books to bags to trays to backing sheets. The advent of digital media is now making it possible to ask *what happens to knowledge when it is beyond the book and responsive to our touch*, but the question is new only because we have not yet thought with sufficient breadth about the material and tangible history of our own literate practices.

A second common thread follows from this broadened view of grammar: if we put it in its strongest form we could say that *no one reads the same book twice*. As our contributors show, reading customizes, and sometimes it is the customization that is the act of reading. In 1961 P. H. Davidson described the copies of Thomas Milles's printed works, which he had embellished with manuscript additions and printed slips, as "unusual, possibly even unique." Many more such books have been identified since then, and in 2005 David McKitterick demonstrated the prevalence of what he called "transitional books, in which the two media were combined," arguing that they "were made over much of northern Europe for almost a century, and as prayer books they remained in use for longer still."⁵ But even this description is limited, since, as the essays gathered here show, cutting and pasting was not a historically transient phenomena that emerged and passed as Europe switched from a manuscript culture to one dominated by print, nor was its survival into later centuries restricted to certain genres. The case of how Thomas Milles modified his books—by printing them in small runs, adapting titles to their recipients, and adding in printed slips and manuscript commentary until no two copies were even similar, and each had become not only a provisional form of moving parts, but also a book *designed not to be sold*—provides, as Sherman and Wolfe demonstrate, a test case for exploring how some authors took full and direct advantage of the means of production. Together with the observation by Knight that, in the early modern period, books were made by readers and retailers, and could be *sewn to order*—and, for that matter, sewn to contain moving parts such as volvelles—such bibliographical composition can also provoke us to wonder just what it was that we used to think we recognized under the rubric of "the fixity of print."⁶

The customizing of books fits well enough into what has been identified by others as the pragmatics of Renaissance reading, whereby humanist scholars mined texts for knowledge to be excerpted and applied. But the essays gathered here push further than this in allowing us to appreciate the powerfully idiosyncratic nature of every reading and writing experience, even when it involves the compilation rather than the invention of thought.

For although the slips used in the cases they consider may have been drawn from a common and mass-produced stock, in each case they are arranged to give comfort or pleasure or mastery to those who gathered them. Sometimes, indeed, the process of gathering seems to have assumed more importance than the product: so Smyth suggests that workers at Little Gidding valued the making and the memorizing of the Gospel harmonies as much as they sought their completion, and delighted in the slowed-down process of writing that was imposed on them by their decision to cut and paste the Gospel story, rather than rewrite it from scratch. Brown, too, helps us understand cutting and sticking as acts of individual worship and meditation as she describes the extraordinary work of an individual who “looked at printed objects and saw in color,” and, by cutting prints and backing them with a range of sumptuous fabrics, wordlessly annotated her chosen text until they became dynamic devotional images. And Penelope Myers adds one more twist to the customizing of texts with her consideration of the *sortes Virgili-anae*, a practice that involves opening a bound copy of Virgil and finding prophecy or advice in the verse upon which the eye lands. Myers argues that the practice “found a natural—yet distinct—place in the Renaissance culture of pragmatic reading” in that it represents a search, at one and the same time, for practical advice and prophetic prompting. And here both the book and the act of reading are invested with a uniquely personal power, for the message that comes to you, and you alone, is a product of your own action, and the compelling nature of the advice that it gives is a reflex of the belief you have invested in the book itself.

But with all this there is another claim to be made. Recovery, juxtaposition, assemblage, intersection, reorganization, customization: it is not hard to see the positive side of such activities, even if we want to lament the changes they wrought and the forces that made them necessary. But what about those forces of division—the cuttings and infractions, the undoing, the wearing and the tearing that appear to have so disassembled our cultural heritage that the collection and recollection of its fragments is not only an artistic principle, but also the sober and necessary task of our conservators and archivists? It is one thing for admirers of Matisse to believe that his scissors found and preserved the form of his otherwise ineluctable vision; perhaps his assistants were tempted to scoop up and preserve the offcuts as they fell, but if they did so they would only have been engaged in a type of autograph collecting—and no one (except perhaps they themselves) could have blamed them for putting the offcuts in the bin. But in most cases it is still hard to recognize what Adam Smyth and I have, for a while now, been

calling “the positivity of cutting”—hard, that is, not to worry about the destruction of the whole from which the part is cut.⁷

How can we learn to think of cutting as an intellectual gesture? Perhaps the first thing to remind ourselves is that cutting preserves: Trettien describes how embroidered motifs that were cut out from church vestments at the Reformation were repurposed for domestic uses and then passed from dresses to bed-hangings to slip covers down through generations. As both Trettien and Ng demonstrate in their essays, iconoclasm can be a force that preserves offending images by removing or repurposing them; just as many of the textual fragments that survive for our scrutiny in these essays have done so only because they were cut and pasted. You might argue that preservation is not the right term, for cutting in all its modes is committed not to the retention of writing in its original state, but rather to its *renovation*. Still, the fact is that cutting also marks for attention visual elements that may be permanently overlooked (and therefore improperly stored) at their original sites, and preserves what will otherwise be lost to the accidents of time and historical indifference. Cutting takes images whose mass production has led to their exhaustion, and brings them back to life by putting them outside the circuits of commodity production. And while it requires the destruction of one composite work, such as a book or a print or a vestment, it creates a new work, within which details of the old are revived and given a new purpose.

Furthermore, if the cut often involves the injury or destruction of the entity on which it works, it simultaneously reduces clutter. As Ng argues, collage can be an orderly, deliberative, “even surgical procedure,” an intellectual anatomy or meditation that clears the air, and gives us space to think anew. The cut discriminates, liberates, shapes, and entails; it fashions the future and offers a new beginning, and even in its sharper guises the cut may be an injury that frees. *Virescit Vulnere Virtus*, says the motto adorning a hand that prunes the vines in the emblem on the central panel of what are now known as the Marian hangings; “Virtue flourishes by wounding,” or, as we might say, “injury strengthens the worthy” or even “strength comes from cutting” (see the frontispiece). Embroidered by or for Mary Stuart during the years she spent under house arrest with the Earl and Countess of Shrewsbury, the emblem is sometimes read as expressing a wish that the barren Tudor line be cut back, so that a fruitful branch of the Stuarts could flourish in its place: if, as is reported, Mary sent an earlier version of the scheme to the Duke of Norfolk, she may have intended as much. But the motto, like the sentiment, is ancient; and the biblical reference that it engages and relates to the vine suggests a loving discipline rather than the cutting back of

rivals: “I am the true vine and my Father is the Husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and very branch that beareth fruit he purgeth [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit” (John 15: 1–2, KJV). And this is best gardening practice—correct pruning does not just remove the barren and the dead, but also cuts the fruitful branch, that it may flourish still more.

How can literary scholars think about the cut as that which promotes new growth? To pose the question like this is already to begin to answer it; and several of these essays, but most particularly Smyth’s account of the ways in which the work at Little Gidding places book manufacture on the volatile border between destruction and creation, suggest directions in which an answer might be elaborated. But there is, in addition, a vein of theoretical work that will help the conversation in the future. Since most literary historians have not had time to read Derrida carefully I will, very briefly, redact that work here. But first I can simply say that in order to reconceptualize the cut we need to stop thinking in wholes. What, after all, would be a whole tree or vine? At what point would we need to stop its growth and seal it off from the environment from which it draws its life, and the parents and ancestors from which it takes form, in order to say that such and only such is its whole and proper body and state? It was a similar problematic to which Derrida pointed when he famously argued that there is nothing outside the text—by which he meant not that there is no real world, but that any text is so embedded in the world that there is no way of extricating it without “carrying off at the same time an unformed mass of roots, soil, and sediments of all sorts,” and no way of reading it that does not graft it into and onto foreign soil.⁸ Actually, you don’t need Derrida to get so far: you can read, instead, Smyth’s description of the Little Gidding texts, where every word announces itself as a “momentary configuration of mobile letter parts” which have been withdrawn from other duties and assembled—perhaps temporarily—to perform the new work of praise; or Ng’s description of the ways in which the Protestant Reformation occupied and reconfigured ecclesiastical buildings in Northern Europe, rendering the built environment into a “volatile palimpsest, subject to constant physical change and semantic reappropriation”—although here we need to remember that the environment has never been stable, and that what appears to be the sudden eruption of fractures and displacements is in fact the local appearance of a more permanent instability.

Still, if you can’t draw the line around a text without breaking off some part of its context and history, you *can* always make a cut—and here,

if you are following Derrida's thought, you can bracket, at least theoretically, your concern about damage to the whole, for not only does the letter *always admit division*, but there can be no understanding of literary fiction or of any other text ("not to mention of what I call writing or the trace in general") unless you can face up to "a certain divisibility or internal difference of the so-called ultimate element (*stoikheion*, trait, letter, seminal mark)." Derrida—who is here not only putting Lacan in his place, but also playing with and resisting the fashion for Democritus and the atomistic thinking that retains, as an irreducible unit, what Lucretius calls, by way of translating *stoikheion*, the *elementa* or letter—elaborates his suspicion of even these tiny entities: "I prefer to call this element (which, precisely, is no longer elementary and indivisible) a *mark*."⁹ Now, if it is to function as such, a mark must be capable of being repeated and recognized as the same from one context to another. Derrida called this iterability *grafting*, and argued that it was already writing: "To write means to graft."¹⁰ It is iterability that gives linguistic marks what appears to be an ideal identity and, "since one associates indestructibility with indivisibility," the impression of an irreducible solidity. But this appearance is false, for "the identity of such a mark is *also* its difference and its differential relation, varying each time according to context, to the network of other marks." The "ideal iterability" that makes a mark a mark, by releasing it from one context to play a part in another, also ensures that the mark has no identity, "because by means of this essential insignificance the . . . ideal identity of each mark (which is only a differential function without an ontological basis) can continue to divide itself and to give rise to the proliferation of other ideal identities."¹¹ Which is to say that writing as grafting proceeds without a rootstock—"the graft is not something that happens to the properness of the thing. There is no more any thing than there is any text."¹² In brief—or to cut the matter into a shape where we can grasp it—Derrida's argument is that the letter as mark is divided before it sets off, and further divided and therefore diverted on impact.

But once again, in the term "diverted," we have been forced to use an infelicitous concept, for if the philosophy of Lucretius does not interest Derrida for long this is because his own concern is not with an element or entity that gets blown off course, but with the division that gives rise to the appearance of the entity in the first place. If you look at computer generated fractal images, you can see something like this effect in action: for here the recursive repetition of a simple mathematical gesture can produce infinite patterns while also producing the same single pattern at different scales. Derrida illustrated the matter differently: in the two essays in which he attends

most closely to the splitting of the letter, he elevated literary fiction as a field in which we can trace, as in a cloud chamber, the determinations, diversions, and chances of the letter in the effects of these divisions and combinations.¹³ For if the literary text situates marks to look like the play of solid entities, it does not let us forget the precariousness of the contextual circumscription that allows for this appearance. Furthermore, even as it serves as the frame and medium that allows us to understand the seriousness and consequence of its own determined but chance-led division, the literary text is *itself* a singular but recombinant mark: literary “oeuvres befall us. They speak about or unveil that which befalls *in* its befalling upon us.”¹⁴ That the power of literature is recursive in this way has been noted before, and is sufficiently understood. Less familiar—still, indeed, almost unrecognized—is Derrida’s striking proposition that the source of that power, and the force that produces its unpredictable products, is fission.

Once you have learned to recognize it, the figure of cutting is everywhere in Derrida’s own writing, from his consideration of “breaching” (*Bahnung*, literally, path-breaking, the cutting or opening of a conducting path in the psychic apparatus) in “Freud and the Scene of Writing”; through *Dissemination*, where he elaborates what Phillip Sollers identifies as *scission*, the violent, arbitrary cut of beginning; to his argument in “The Purveyor of Truth” that the letter can always be divided; and then on to *The Truth in Painting*, whose first section has the text written as if it were a series of frames or ornaments that had been cut, sometimes in the middle of a word, to surround blank canvases; *Glas*, where cutting is intensified into a principle of mincing or “morselling”; and “Circumfession,” where the cut is explored through the figure of circumcision.¹⁵ From these and other meditations on the cut I want to pick out just two. The first, which has fascinated me for a very long time, is from Derrida’s reading of Adami’s portrait of Walter Benjamin, in *The Truth in Painting*: “Why de-tail [de-tailler: cut out]? For whom [pour qui]?” Derrida poses the question in relation to Adami’s tendency to “detail extracts”; and he answers it in part by claiming that “picking out the enlarged detail comes . . . from cinematographic and psychoanalytical technique.”¹⁶ But as I have remarked elsewhere, “picking out the enlarged detail” is *not* a technique that is special to psychoanalysis or cinematography—it is what we all do when we read (from Latin *lego, legere*, “to gather or pluck”), and also what we do when we write.¹⁷ That details “enlarge” as they are picked out is perhaps what is meant by the mysterious rhetorical trope of *enargia*—the type of *detailing* that gives light and lustre to an argument. Reducing resistance, shortening distances, jumping media and connecting

new component parts, we might say that cutting is exothermic—it produces more energy than it takes, and sheds light into the surrounding areas.

The second morsel that I suggest we cut from Derrida, and renovate for our own purposes, is from *Glas*: “what causes writing is what separates and sows, scatters, signcutting and signsewing. What desingularizes, unseals, desiglums, opens the eyes by blinding.”¹⁸ Which is to say: cutting is the cause of writing; it brings signs into being; that is, it forges connections (“desingularizes”), opens the text, enlarges on its details (“desiglums”), and, even through injury, allows us to see.

Derrida’s work allows us to question two of the assumptions with which, as literary scholars, and even as book historians, we tend to go about our business: that each printed book is a totality, whose ideal form is somehow established at the end of the production process, beyond which point it can only be compromised by further material alteration; and that the printed book is the best stronghold for the information it contains. A finished book magically prohibits the thought that its contents might be better appreciated and used, and perhaps even better preserved, outside the protection of hard covers. The contributors to this volume have, each in their own way, seized on and elaborated these thoughts, and so recovered the activities and assumptions of some early modern readers as they cut and adapted their books to local circumstances. But read together, they do something even more, which is to allow us to understand cutting as a process whose dynamic energies feed and affect the production and consumption of texts all told. Cutting is not the exception but the rule; it is done with knives and scissors but also with eyes and minds, when we read and write, and also when we dream, or journey, or send books in parcels. Performed idiosyncratically or as a result of training, cutting is evidence of the unexpected openings and connections that circumstanced reading (and there is no other reading) makes possible, and it emphasizes the mobile and fugitive nature of the text, which must be continually shredded if it is to survive.

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Notes

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- 1 See *Henri Matisse: The Cut-Outs*, ed. Karl Buchberg et al. (London: Tate Publishing, 2014), *passim*.
- 2 Hannah Woolley, *A Supplement to the Queen-Like Closet* (London: Richard Lownds, 1674), 70–71.
- 3 For this description of postmodernity I am indebted to Francesco Casetti, *The Lumière Galaxy: Seven Key Words for the Cinema to Come* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), *passim*.
- 4 Anthony Grafton and Jeffrey Hamburger, “Save the Warburg Library!” *New York Review*, Sept. 30, 2010.
- 5 David McKitterick, *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order, 1450–1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 65–66.
- 6 For an expanded description of how Renaissance readers made their books, see Jeffrey Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 54–86.
- 7 See Juliet Fleming, “Afterword,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 3 (2010): 543–52; and Adam Smyth, “Shreds of Holiness: George Herbert, Little Gidding, and Cutting up Texts in Early Modern England,” *English Literary Renaissance* 42, no. 3 (2012): 452–81.
- 8 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* [1967], trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 161 (translation modified).
- 9 Jacques Derrida, “Mes Chances: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies,” trans. Harvey and Ronnell in *Taking Chances: Derrida, Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. H. Smith and W. Kerrigan (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 10.
- 10 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* [1972], trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 355.
- 11 Derrida, “Mes Chances,” 16.
- 12 Derrida, *Dissemination*, 335.
- 13 These two essays are Jacques Derrida, “The Purveyor of Truth,” trans. Willis Domingo et al., *Yale French Studies*, no. 52 (1975): 31–113; and “Mes Chances,” 1–32.
- 14 Derrida, “Mes Chances,” 17.
- 15 For works by Jacques Derrida not already cited in this essay, see “Freud and the Scene of Writing” [1967], in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); *The Truth in Painting* [1978], trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); *Glas* [1974], trans. John P. Leavey Jr. and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); and

“Circumfession” [1991], in *Jacques Derrida* (in collaboration with Geoffrey Bennington), trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). John Caputo has well summarized positivity of cutting in relation to this last text: “circumcision is to be thought in terms of the cut that severs the circle of the same. . . . This circumcision cuts the signature open to the call of the other, so that the signature is like the Wandering Jew in the diaspora, never to come home again. Now, bad as this may seem [to those philosophers who aspire to homecoming] this cut is not a loss but a gain. For by preventing the closure of the signature, the cut provides an opportunity to discover, to invent, to come upon (*inventir*) something new, the coming of the other, yes, to the incomming of the other.” *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. John C. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1995), 198.

16 Derrida, *Truth in Painting*, 178, 181.

17 Fleming, “Afterword,” 544.

18 Derrida, *Glas*, 171b.