

Book Review

Rinne, C. (2025) Footnotes: Ein Supplementarium. Schweifhefte, Heft 18.

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Academia is an earnest business. Even this review—a miniature piece of quasi-academic writing—has had a whole series of false starts, first in my head and then also on the screen: I simply could not decide how to be playful, in line with this issue's theme and the editors' instructions, but without sounding unseemly silly.

It is no secret that scholars before me turned *not sounding silly* into a practice, if not exactly art. I, too, have contributed to maintaining this status quo: by taking myself way too seriously, to be sure, but also by extolling the virtues of method, especially when not knowing what else to say, by learning to formulate complex¹ thoughts and do so using appropriate—not too profane, Foucault forbid—vocabulary, and by faithfully following all the other shop conventions.

Is there a better way to perform academic seriousness than to indulge in the genre of the footnote? It allows us scholars so much! An editor—wrongly, of course—insists that a paragraph be cut? Move it to a footnote. The anonymous reviewers impose superfluous literature? A footnote can certainly take it. Others have dealt with your research question in a way that contradicts—or perhaps even challenges—your arguments? Acknowledge this in a footnote, neutering potential criticisms in advance.

The footnote is so important to what scholars do that being funny about it does not come easy to us.

Enter Cia Rinne, a Gothenburg-born and Berlin-based poet and artist who works across languages and media. Rinne's *Footnotes. Ein Supplementarium*, which came out in 2025, playfully deconstructs footnote-related scholarly earnestness.

Footnotes is the 18th edition in the *Schweifhefte* series of small artist books published in Berlin by Annette Gilbert, Michael Glasmeier, and Christian Schiebe. The series editors refer to Rinne's publication as 'Schweif 18.' The publishers are so delightfully analogue that the series does not have a website; neither can I direct you towards an online shop where its books can be acquired.² Even an ISBN is non-existent.

Schweif 18, the publication by Rinne, comprises 12 pages, each of them blank but for a footnote at the bottom. The volume—oh, how this brochure deserves this word!—is overflowing with meaning. For one, it gently pokes fun at (or shall I say, more academically, *offers a meta-reflection on?*) the academic practice and its arguably³ key manifestation: the footnote. It does so by claiming things like

'this footnote should clarify everything' (p. 2);

'this footnote has excellent reference[s]' (p. 3);

'this footnote is afraid it will not contribute to proving the author's point in any way whatsoever' (p. 6);

'this footnote contradicts the previous one' (p. 7);

'this footnote would like to open up a discussion on its own' (p. 9).

These and other footnotes, in tandem with the blank pages, are unashamedly playful: I was giggling while reading the book for the first time. But then this joy gave way to doubt and disbelief. Are these footnotes what I actually do in life? Do these micro-performances contribute to knowledge? What are footnotes for—if the mess of reality or, in the words of Davis Ross, the 'Musicality of Reality' (Epp, this issue), is like a giant field of footnotes?

And then suddenly: who does this Cia Rinne think she is, to make me doubt my whole being like that?⁴

Well, she is the author of four volumes of minimalist poetry, such as *notes for soloists* (Rinne, 2009) and *l'usage du mot* (Rinne, 2017), as well several libretti, most recently *Wasting My Grammar*, a vocal score for the ensemble Neue Vocalsolisten that was written in 2023 and premiered at the Eclat Festival of New Music in Stuttgart 2024. For her poetry, she received the prestigious Bernard Heidsieck Literary Prize—Centre Pompidou in 2019. Her artistic work has been exhibited across Europe: for instance, the 2024 exhibition 'I Am Very Miserable about Sentences' at the Marabouparken in Stockholm. To research, she is not foreign either: she has studied philosophy at the Goethe University Frankfurt, collaborated on documentary projects, including the important *The Roma Journeys* (Eskildsen and Rinne, 2007), and serves as this journal's Advisory Board member. That is to say, she knows the drill.

And isn't it amazing that Rinne's tiny book has made me and will hopefully make you question ourselves and perhaps even engage in a little silliness? What is wrong with sounding—or being—silly anyway? You know the answer. The only thing left for you to do at this point is to read the last footnote.⁵

1. Okay, comlex-ish... This footnote is meant to show that I actually do not take myself too seriously.
2. This footnote is meant to provide additional information: some Berlin galleries—like Galerie oqbo—carry *Schweifhefte* publications in their stores.
3. 'Arguably' is used here to emphasize that no empirical research has been conducted to support this argument: in other words, it is purely speculative. This footnote is thus meant to relieve myself of any responsibility.
4. This footnote is for those who find my writing unnecessarily vague: the sentence above was a joke.
5. '[T]his footnote,' to quote Rinne again, 'wants to end on a positive note' (p. 12).

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Author's Bio

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