

Many utopia writers emphasized the book's importance in any ideal world. Some imagined ways to enhance the book aesthetically. Many imagined new written languages ranging from sign systems analogous to Chinese ideograms to syllabic writing, modified alphabetic systems and phonetic languages. Though the utopia writers asserted the value of their imaginary written languages for enhancing thought and communication, each system, if implemented, would alter the reading process profoundly. In some utopias, technological media supersede the codex. Those who incorporated the phonograph foresaw three possible futures for the phonographic book: in some utopias, the phonographic recording and the printed book coexist; in others, the phonographic book completely replaces the codex; in yet others, the phonograph is combined with telephonic or telegraphic communication.

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the book in AMERICAN UTOPIA LITERATURE, 1883-1917

Would the book still be around in the utopian future? In other words, would the codex, a bound volume made from stitched and folded gatherings of paper divided into leaves, survive? Or would it be replaced with some kind of phonographic way of storing or telegraphic way of transmitting information? The turn-of-the-century utopia writers pondered such questions, and many came up with creative answers. While several evinced much scorn for other aspects of print culture — notably, the newspaper — most had considerably higher opinions of the book. In many of the fictional utopias, the book not only survives, but it undergoes great improvement in terms of aesthetics and readability. In some, however, phonographic recordings and telegraphic communication do replace the codex.

The utopia writers enhanced the book's importance with aesthetic improvements. Some gave utopian books fine bindings. In James M. Galloway's *John Harvey: A Tale of the Twentieth Century*, for example, the narrator meets a woman who shows him her full library and brings him a copy of Goethe, "elegantly bound and exquisitely illustrated, a gift worthy of a king." As a special feature, a "little golden case set in the leather on the side of the book, and closed by a slide" contains the giver's name and the book's presentation note.¹ In *Unveiling a Parallel*, Alice Ilgenfritz Jones and Ella Merchant imagined utopian shelves filled with books bound in either white cloth or white leather, their spines lettered in gold.² The description shows that elegant bindings not only enhance the appearance of individual volumes, they also give a striking appearance to a whole shelf of books. Anna Adolph's utopian community at the North Pole takes the idea of aesthetically pleasing bindings to its extreme. Upon entering the library, her narrator finds himself inside a picture gallery. Somewhat puzzled, he asks his utopian guide where the books are. She presses on one picture frame. The painting moves out from the wall and becomes a book. The cover of the book was the painting.³

The utopian book need not be judged by its cover, though. Other writers imagined ways to enhance the book page to make it easy on the eyes. Some suggested a printed page which was aesthetically pleasing and which reduced eyestrain. In David

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¹ GALLOWAY, JAMES M. 1897. *JOHN HARVEY: A TALE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*. (BY ANON MOORE, PSEUDONYM) CHICAGO: CHARLES H. KERR, 60.

² JONES, ALICE ILGENFRITZ AND ELLA MERCHANT. 1893. *UNVEILING A PARALLEL: A ROMANCE BY TWO WOMEN OF THE WEST*. BOSTON: ARENA, 25.

³ ADOLPH, ANNA. 1899. *ARQTIQ: A STUDY OF THE MARVELS AT THE NORTH POLE*. N.P.: FOR THE AUTHOR, 58.

Goodman Croly's *Glimpses of the Future*, Mr. Fanciful asserts that future books would be issued with multi-color pages. Sky-blue, leaf-green and the "neutral tints of water," he suggests, are the most amenable to the human eye. Unlike black ink on white paper which promotes myopia and "the use of spectacles," multi-colored pages sooth the reader's eyes. Mr. Fanciful suggests yellow ink on dark blue paper as the best combination to avoid eyestrain.⁴ Croly himself had experimented with multi-colored paper and ink in his short-lived periodical, *The Modern Thinker*. Each article was printed on different colored paper with different sized type and ink of various tints, color-coded to complement the paper. The only colors Croly did not use were black and white. In a later note, Croly explained that one of the purposes behind *The Modern Thinker* was "to call the attention of the public to the necessity for reform in our black-and-white printed literature," but, he sadly concluded, "The color theory on which the magazine was printed at the time attracted no attention."⁵

One utopia writer, however, may have been influenced by Croly's ideas for the colored page. Solomon Schindler's *Young West*, purportedly a sequel to Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, described the life of Julian West's son. Copies of *Young West* echo Croly's idea for colored pages as they graphically show what books may be like in utopia. The margins of each page of the volume are pastel-colored. The "Publisher's Notice" tipped into the book explains:

We beg to call the attention of our patrons to the *Colored Margins* of the pages of this book. They are a novel feature in book-making, which, we have good cause to believe, will become universal in the near future.

Is it not a deplorable fact that while reading invigorates the mind, it weakens the eyes? Or, that in the same proportion as the art of reading has spread and has become universal, eye-glasses have come into common use?

Can nothing be devised to aid the eye or at least relieve part of the strain to which it is subject?

⁴ CROLY, DAVID GOODMAN. 1888. *GLIMPSSES OF THE FUTURE: SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE DRIFT OF THINGS*. NEW YORK: G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS, 172.

⁵ CROLY, *DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY: GLIMPSSES OF THE FUTURE*, 173.

Reliable medical authority informs us that the reading eye wearies mostly from being compelled to gaze for a long time upon the sharp contrasts of white and black, also that the strain thus brought upon the eye would be materially lessened, if simultaneous with the printed page some color were brought within its focus.

Daily experience corroborates this observation. How refreshing when after reading for some hours we lift the eye to the blue heavenly clouds or allow it to roam over the green expanse of field and forest. In eye infirmaries, we are told, yellow is a favorite color, expected to soothe the nerves of the eye.

Upon this valuable advice we have printed this book at an increased expense with *Tinted Margins* in three colors.

The pastel blue, yellow and green margins are bibliographical niceties which disappear from the modern reprint of *Young West*. Reading the reprinted text without the colored margins or the tipped-in "Publisher's Notice," the modern reader has difficulty understanding why everyone in Schindler's utopia avoids eye strain and almost no one needs to wear eyeglasses.

Book illustration also approaches perfection in utopia. On Henry F. Allen's *Venus*, printing and illustration have attained a "very high standard of excellence."⁶ In *Fifty Years Hence*, Robert Grimshaw imagined the advances in printing which would take place in the utopian future. Printing would become "one of the most noble of the fine arts." Photographs printed in natural colors would become a common feature of the book trade. New zincographic processes would break down the boundaries between lithographic and relief printing. Furthermore, inexpensive illustrations would be produced with a level of quality formerly possible only with line engraving.⁷ Quite simply, the book would become a beautiful thing in Grimshaw's utopian future. Each of these improvements to the book enhances the aesthetic experience of reading. For the utopia writers who described the physical appearance of the binding and the printed page, the book is much more than

⁶ ALLEN, HENRY F. 1886. *THE KEY OF INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVE GOVERNMENT*. (BY PRUNING KNIFE, PSEUDONYM). ST. LOUIS: BY THE AUTHOR, 57.

⁷ GRIMSHAW, ROBERT. 1892. *FIFTY YEARS HENCE: OR, WHAT MAY BE IN 1943: A PROPHECY SUPPOSED TO BE BASED ON SCIENTIFIC DEDUCTIONS BY AN IMPROVED GRAPHICAL METHOD*. NEW YORK: PRACTICAL PUBLISHING, 43.

simply a vehicle for providing information to its readers. Instead, these aesthetic improvements allow the process of reading to be enjoyed and savored all the more.

Future techniques of book illustration would become so sophisticated that the lithograph would replace type, according to Croly's Sir Oracle who predicts that future books and journals will require neither compositor nor typesetter. Instead, artists and writers will collaborate, and "their sketches and text will be photographs put on gelatine, or some similar menstruum, and multiplied *ad infinitum*."⁸ Every page of every book, Sir Oracle predicts, will be lithographed, not printed. While the books in Croly's imagined future would be absolutely gorgeous, his idea takes printing back to the time before Gutenberg. Croly's lithographed books are reminiscent of the xylographic books which predate moveable type. Sir Oracle's beautiful book will exact a high price, for it will come at the cost of the text. The lithographed page, like the xylographic book, will change the relationship between text and illustration.⁹ With moveable type, a book's text is prepared for production separately from its illustrations. The illustrations are nearly always subservient to the text. The illustration only exists to add credence to the text. Where both are produced simultaneously — think about comic books — the text no longer takes precedence and may even be subservient to the illustrations.

While the utopia writers stressed how great advances in book illustration would enhance the book aesthetically, Emanuel found such improvements threatening. In *Messiah of the Cylinder*, Emanuel suggested further dangers associated with advances in book production. Shortly after arriving in the dystopia, Emanuel's narrator comes before a magistrate who makes use of the *Escaped Defectives Book*, a small publication containing "numerous miniature photographs in color." The narrator explains how the magistrate studied the book, "looking up at me from time to time. Occasionally, at his nod, one of the policemen would seize my face and push it into profile. At last the magistrate thrust the book away petulantly."¹⁰ For the utopia writers, better book illustration enhanced the aesthetic experience of reading, but for Emanuel better book

illustration has the potential to minimize personal privacy. Technological advances in reproducing photographs made it possible for everyone to be catalogued, recognized and tracked.

Croly's suggestion to eliminate moveable type was rare; much more often the utopia writers imagined new typefaces, an idea which paralleled their imaginary language systems. Written languages in the American utopia literature range from sign systems analogous to Chinese ideograms to syllabic writing, modified alphabetic systems and phonetic languages so perfect that they can represent all manner of human utterance. Though each utopia writer asserted that his imaginary language system could significantly enhance both thought and communication, each system, if implemented, would alter the reading process profoundly.

In *The Diothas*, John Macnie imagined a utopian language which could be printed in two completely different ways, in alphabetic or syllabic characters. The alphabet consists of thirty-six characters, twelve of which represent vowel sounds. The syllabary contains 250 characters which could be combined to form the five hundred or so syllables in the language. Among Macnie's utopians, the persistent effort to make the language more euphonious led them to suppress all "consonants not required for the separation of the vowel sounds." A large number of vowels combined with as few consonants as possible contribute to the language's euphonious quality and help keep the number of syllabic characters within reasonable limits. Since Macnie's narrator is a newcomer to utopia, he must learn the language. He has no trouble mastering the alphabet, but learning to distinguish the 250 syllabic characters takes him considerably more time. Without mastering the entire syllabary, he cannot read a syllabic text. Describing his utopian reading experience, Macnie's narrator finds the process of reading the syllabic text tantalizing, yet frustrating, for one unknown syllable renders an entire sentence incomprehensible.¹¹

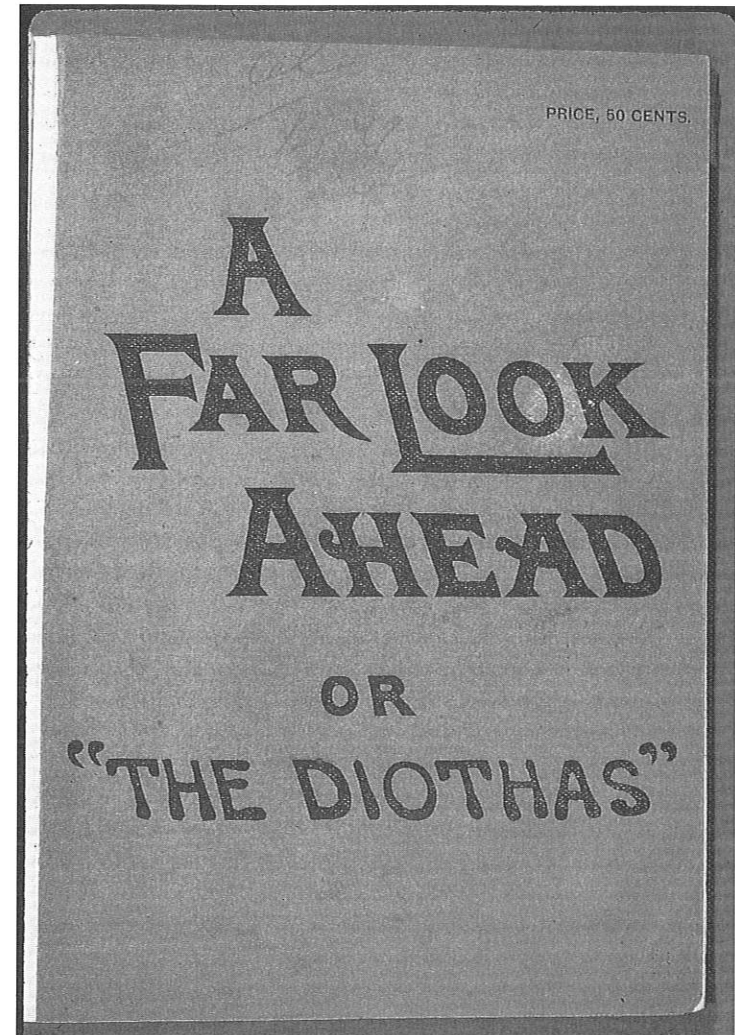
At first, the reasons for two sets of printed characters to represent the same language do not seem entirely clear. The syllabic characters do allow the beautiful sound of the language to be represented more accurately in print. But if representing beautiful sound is important, then the alphabetic language seems inadequate and superfluous. The syllabic characters have another advantage in that they can represent a text in a smaller space than the alphabetic language. One syllabic character, after all, could represent what might take multiple alphabetic characters. Macnie's narrator mentions that books printed in syllabic characters are much more compact than alphabetic books, but if compact texts are important, the alphabetic language again seems inadequate and superfluous. The true reason for the syllabary becomes apparent as the narrator explains how the syllabic and the alphabetic characters are learned:

⁸ CROLY, *GLIMPSES OF THE FUTURE*, 126.

⁹ FOR A GOOD OVERVIEW OF THE XYLOGRAPHIC BOOK, SEE FEBVRE LUCIEN, AND HENRI-JEAN MARTIN. 1976. *THE COMING OF THE BOOK: THE IMPACT OF PRINTING, 1450-1800*. DAVID GERARD, TRANSLATOR, GEOFFREY NOWELL-SMITH AND DAVID WOOTTON, EDITORS. LONDON: NLB, 45-48.

¹⁰ EMANUEL, VICTOR ROUSSEAU. 1917. *THE MESSIAH OF THE CYLINDER*. (VICTOR ROUSSEAU, PSEUDONYM) WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT: HYPERION, 1974, REPRINT, 54.

¹¹ MACNIE, JOHN. 1883. *THE DIOTHAS: OR, A FAR LOOK AHEAD*. (BY ISMAR THUISEN, PSEUDONYM). NEW YORK: ARNO PRESS AND THE NEW YORK TIMES, 1971 REPRINT, 186-188.



COVER OF JOHN MACNIE'S 1883 *A Far Look Ahead or the Diothas*.
COURTESY OF THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO.

The youth of both sexes were taught these [syllabic] characters by degrees; a complete knowledge of them being regarded as neither necessary, nor, indeed, desirable, till the attainment of majority. There was no deprivation in this, for almost the whole store of intellectual wealth accumulated during so many ages was open to them in the common [alphabetic] character. It was strictly prohibited to print in the common character any reading of a kind unsuitable for unripe minds.¹²

Two sets of written characters allow thought to be represented on the printed page in two different ways. A person's level of education thus determines whether he has access to certain texts, specifically books "unsuitable for unripe minds." Macnie does not elaborate on what he considers unsuitable reading, but another utopia writer may help shed light on the issue. In Paul Devinne's *Day of Prosperity*, the narrator travels to the future where he discovers what fine and decent books the utopian children read, and he comments, "In my days every child, at any street corner, might, for a few pennies, buy love stories or tales of robbery and murder."¹³ Macnie, too, must mean such cheap, sensational pamphlet novels. He could have simply banned unsuitable material from his imaginary world, but, like most utopia writers, Macnie recognized that few readers would accept the notion of censorship in any ideal world. If the use of two different written languages to represent one spoken language is not censorship, then it is the next closest thing, for the government determines the suitability or unsuitability of any given text and decides whether it can be printed in the alphabetic character or whether it must be printed in syllabic characters. The different typefaces thus control the reader's access to different texts.

Other utopia writers took different approaches to written language. On Allen's Venus, books are printed in a typeface which he called "a system of sign words ingeniously adapted to rapid expression of thought."¹⁴ Allen provided little additional description detailing his conceptual language, but from his brief description, the language clearly differs from Macnie's syllabary. While the syllabary represents individual units of sound, Allen's sign system is intended to represent ideas. More than any other known language, it seems closer to Chinese ideograms, a kind of writing which found favor with other utopia writers. F. W. Harris's interplanetary traveller found that the "written language of Saturn resembles the Chinese character language, only it is much more smooth and more complete."¹⁵ Ideograms have the potential to make printed text even more compact than syllabic characters. Allen's imaginary typeface allows one page of print to represent the same information which would span several pages in English. One Venusian periodical, Allen's utopian guide explains, holds "fully ten times as much reading matter" as an earthly journal of the same size.¹⁶ The advantages from compressing much information into a small space and therefore being able to

express much thought quickly may seem ideal, but, like Macnie's syllabary, Allen's sign system is not without disadvantages. To make a text so compact, each of Allen's ideograms must carry considerably more meaning than either an alphabetic or a syllabic character and thus characters can be extraordinarily complex. Such complexity makes an ideogrammatic language much more difficult to learn than an alphabetic language. Indeed, ideograms may speed comprehension — but only for those who can master the language. If the written language on Harris's Saturn resembles Chinese ideograms, the Saturnians must memorize thousands of signs before they can read a simple text. Ideograms may have the potential to accelerate thought, but a likelier result is that it would increase a society's illiterate or marginally literate population and make literacy an elite skill.

Contrary to either syllabic or ideogrammatic languages, a phonetic language, other utopia writers asserted, could best represent speech and accelerate thought. In *A Dream of a Modest Prophet*, for instance, M. D. Leggett's planetary traveler discovers that on Mars, the "written and printed language is entirely phonetic." After learning the language's elementary sounds and the characters representing those sounds, he has no trouble reading any Martian book he chooses.¹⁷ The phonetic text makes it easier for Leggett's Martians to concentrate on the printed page, and they read almost as quickly as they can think.¹⁸ Since a phonetic language can use an alphabet to represent speech, it can keep the number of necessary characters to a minimum and thus avoid the disadvantages associated with those written languages which require numerous characters. A phonetic language may accelerate thought — yet not without a price. When a written language represents the sound of a spoken language, the subtle nuances which normally occur during pronunciation completely disappear. Thought may accelerate but only at the cost of simplifying and homogenizing expression. Leggett's phonetic language, therefore, may recoil upon itself, for simplifying expression may, in turn, simplify thought. Accelerating thought seems of little value unless it simultaneously heightens its complexity.

¹² MACNIE. *THE DIOTHAS*: 187-188.

¹³ DEVINNE, PAUL. 1902. *THE DAY OF PROSPERITY: A VISION OF THE CENTURY TO COME*. NEW YORK: ARNO PRESS AND THE NEW YORK TIMES, 1971, REPRINT, 99.

¹⁴ ALLEN, KEY, 57.

¹⁵ HARRIS, F.W. 1905. *LIFE IN A THOUSAND WORLDS*. CLEONA, PENNSYLVANIA: G. HOZAPPEL, 95.

¹⁶ ALLEN, KEY, 57.

¹⁷ LEGGETT, M.D. 1890. *A DREAM OF A MODEST PROPHET*, PHILADELPHIA: J.B. LIPPINCOTT, 18.

¹⁸ LEGGETT, *A DREAM OF A MODEST PROPHET*, 49.

By setting their utopias on other planets, Allen, Harris and Leggett gave themselves the freedom to imagine languages entirely different from earth-bound languages. Those utopias set in earth's future were more constrained, however, for their languages had to evolve from or somehow accommodate current languages. Many of the turn-of-the-century utopias reveal the prevalent hopes for a universal language to solve international communication problems. The most straightforward solution was simply to make an existing language universal. Not surprisingly, some of the American utopia writers asserted that the English language would become the universal language. James Howard Bridge made English universal in his utopia.¹⁹ So did Ignatius Donnelly. As Donnelly's narrator in *Caesar's Column*, settles himself at the hotel dining room table of the future and begins reading the news, he learns that a Zulu professor recently had written "a dissertation upon the genius of Chaucer ... which had created considerable interest among the learned societies of the Transvaal" and also that China's "Republican Congress ... had decreed that English, the universal language of the rest of the globe, should be hereafter used in the courts of justice and taught in all the schools."²⁰ Bridge and Donnelly anticipated the notions of Anglo-Saxon superiority which would become pervasive throughout the United States and England during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Other utopia writers, however, were less parochial with their ideas for a universal language.

Volapük, one particular attempt at a universal language, achieved extraordinary popularity during the 1880s and early 1890s. Though David Goodman Croly expressed some skepticism about the usefulness of Volapük, other utopia writers embraced it and eagerly anticipated its adoption throughout the world.²¹ John Bachelder in *A.D. 2050* and Solomon Schindler in *Young West* both foresaw adolescents learning Volapük as part of their utopian education.²² As he narrates the story, *Young West* explains that he was first taught English, his native language, and afterwards learned Volapük. Schindler carefully emphasized the importance of mastering one's native language as well as an international language, something which proponents of Volapük were quick to point out. One contem-

19 BRIDGE, JAMES HOWARD. *A FORTNIGHT IN HEAVEN: AN UNCONVENTIONAL ROMANCE*. (BY HAROLD BRYDGES, PSEUDONYM) NEW YORK: HENRY HOLT, 151-152.

20 DONNELLY, IGNATIUS. 1890. *CAESAR'S COLUMN: A STORY OF THE FUTURE*. CHICAGO: SYNDICATE PUBLISHING COMPANY, MASONIC TEMPLE, 18, 16-17.

21 CROLY, GLIMPSES OF THE FUTURE, 85-86.

22 BACHELDER, JOHN. 1890. *A.D. 2050: ELECTRICAL DEVELOPMENT AT ATLANTIS*. (BY A "FORMER RESIDENT OF 'THE HUB,'" PSEUDONYM) SAN FRANCISCO: BANCROFT, 34; SCHINDLER, SOLOMON. 1894. *YOUNG WEST: A SEQUEL TO EDWARD BELLAMY'S CELEBRATED NOVEL, LOOKING BACKWARD*. BOSTON: ARENA, 77-78.

23 QUOTED IN ALFRED A. POST. 1892 "VOLAPÜK." *ARENA* 5, 558.

24 POST, "VOLAPÜK," 566.

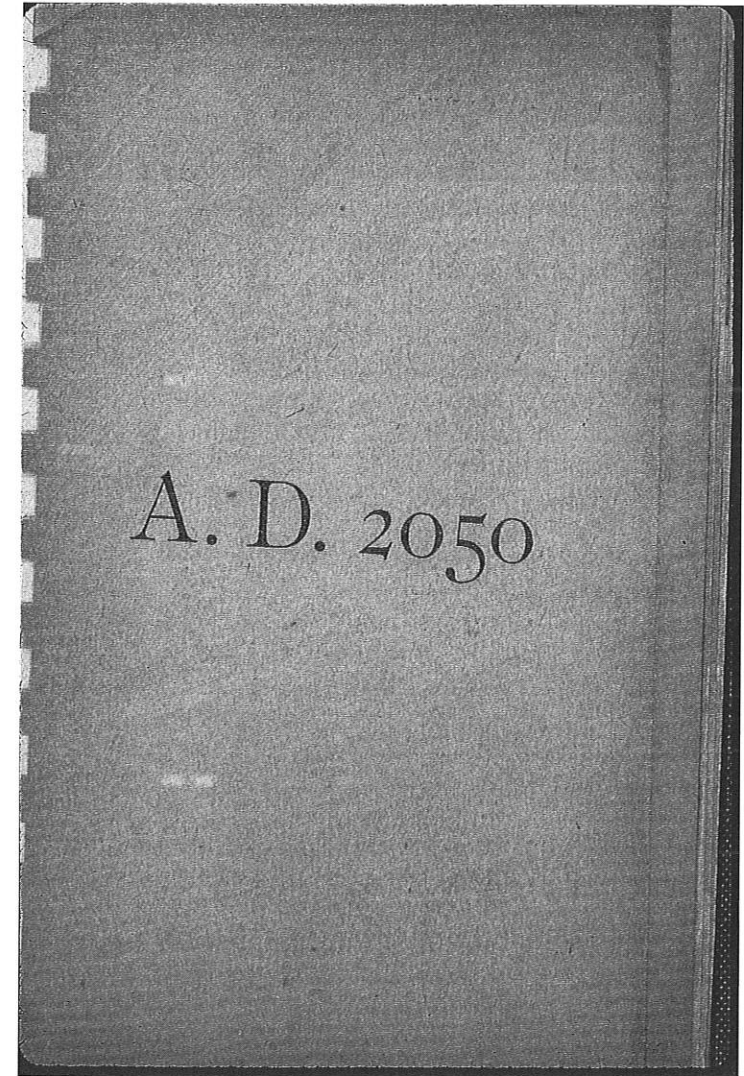
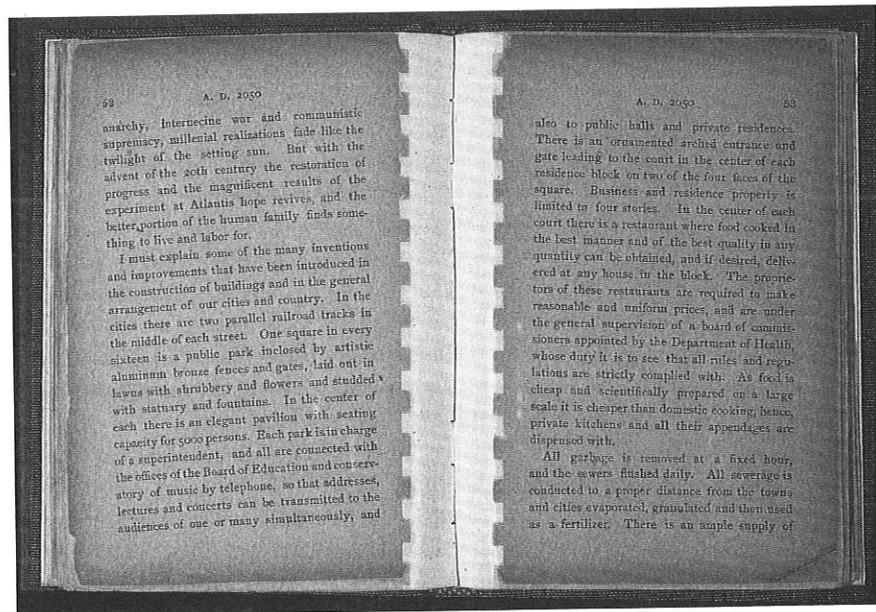
25 SCHINDLER, *YOUNG WEST*, 77-78.

26 ALEXANDER, JAMES B. 1909. *THE LUNARIAN PROFESSOR AND HIS REMARKABLE REVELATIONS CONCERNING THE EARTH, THE MOON AND MARS*. MINNEAPOLIS, 207-218.

27 POST, "VOLAPÜK," 561; NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, *DICTIONARY CATALOG OF THE RESEARCH LIBRARIES OF THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, 1911-1971*. NEW YORK: G.K. HALL FOR THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, 761: 78-85.

porary enthusiast commented, "Those who advocate Volapük have no expectation that it will ever supersede the languages of the earth, or even a single one of them. Its aim is not to supersede but to supplement; to provide a means by which the races of mankind may become intelligible to each other while retaining their mother tongues."²³ Volapük, according to another, could "bind all the nations together in common brotherhood. ... bringing into amicable association millions of people of every race and clime."²⁴ Since advances in the "rapidity of locomotion" would make people the world over "almost next door neighbors," Young West explains, "It would have been a waste of time, and an unbearable tax on memory, if a person should have been obliged to study half a dozen or more languages."²⁵ Still, Schindler stressed the importance for utopians to learn their native tongue. Other utopia writers, however, foresaw that a universal language could and should supplant native languages. When a universal language is first introduced to utopian society in James B. Alexander's *Lunarian Professor*, the people learn it along with their native language, but after fifty years, the native languages are abandoned, and students are taught only the universal language.²⁶

Based on English yet containing numerous words similar to German, Volapük really resembles no natural language. After its invention by the German Catholic priest, Johann Martin Schleyer, in 1879, Volapük achieved a widespread (though fleeting) acceptance. During the following decade and a half, hundreds of classes were taught and Volapük clubs were formed throughout Europe, America and Australia; Volapük grammar handbooks were published from Nuremberg to San Antonio; several successful international congresses were held; and many works were translated into Volapük — Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*, the Talmud and the U.S. Constitution, to name a few.²⁷ *Black Beauty* may have been translated into Volapük to encourage adolescents to learn the language, but this particular work, though a popular one, still seems unusual, for the novel is narrated as an autobiographical account from the horse's point of view. The translated version, in other words, implies that even the horse, of course, knows Volapük. Talk about a universal language! Though Schindler made Volapük an important part of the education



TITLE PAGE AND SPREAD FROM JOHN BACHELDER'S *A. D. 2050: Electrical Development at Atlantis, 1890*. COURTESY OF THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO.

of the future, by the time *Young West* appeared in 1894, its popularity already had peaked.²⁸

Even while Volapük's popularity raged, however, some observers were not entirely convinced of its value. The American Philosophical Society, for example, found Volapük inadequate as a universal language.²⁹ Other utopia writers imagined different universal languages. In *Fifty Years Hence*, Grimshaw foresaw a phonetic universal language which combined "the soft liquid beauty of the Italian, the dignity of the Spanish, and the majesty of the Greek; the adaptability to new ideas of the German, the delicate shadings of the French and the business-like exactness of the English."³⁰ Grimshaw's imaginary language, therefore, was more in line with the ideas of the American Philosophical Society which suggested that any universal language should be a phonetic conglomeration of English, French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian. Recognizing that speech had a greater capacity for expression than written language, Grimshaw added other written characters to his imaginary language to represent such sounds as whistling, clucking and kissing, barking, howling, groaning and laughter. Grimshaw's narrator explains that every "sound which can be imitated by the human voice may be so recorded upon paper that it can be read and reproduced by any one (not dumb) who can read and write."³¹ Grimshaw thus imagined a written language which can accommodate all forms of human vocal expression. Despite the added sounds, Grimshaw's imaginary language still does not remedy the problems inherent to phonetic languages.

In *The Day of Prosperity*, Paul Devinne made English the universal spoken language, yet he imagined a different sign system for printed language which he called "English stenographic script." Devinne's printed script allows the citizens of utopia to read and write as rapidly as they can talk.³² F. W. Harris similarly imagined a stenographic written language. On Stazza, another of Harris's multiple worlds, the alphabet consists of a series of strokes, curves and angles, somewhat resembling shorthand. Harris's planetary traveller explains, "This language is identical in print or script, and is superior to our method of expressing thought by handwriting."³³ Both Devinne's and Harris's

28 FOR A GOOD BRIEF OVERVIEW OF VOLAPÜK, SEE ECO, UMBERTO. 1995. *THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT LANGUAGE*. JAMES FENTRESS, TRANSLATOR. CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS: BLACKWELL, 319-321.

29 BRINTON, D.G., HENRY PHILLIPS, JR., AND MONROE B. SNYDER. 1888. "THE SCIENTIFIC VALUE OF VOLAPÜK." *PROCEEDINGS OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY*, 25, 3-13.

30 GRIMSHAW, *FIFTY YEARS HENCE*, 41.

31 GRIMSHAW, *FIFTY YEARS HENCE*, 41-42.

32 DEVINNE, *DAY OF PROSPERITY*, 166, 157.

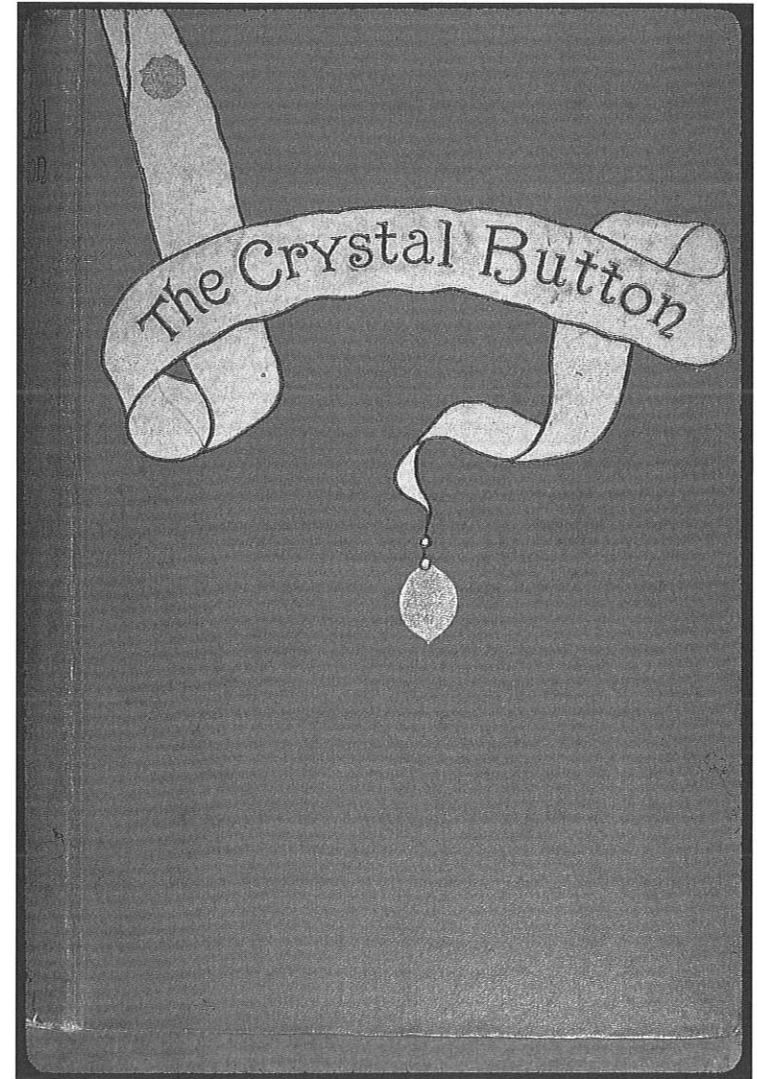
33 HARRIS, *LIFE IN A THOUSAND WORLDS*, 119.

34 FENOLLOSA, ERNEST. 1935. *THE CHINESE WRITTEN CHARACTER AS A MEDIUM FOR POETRY*. EZRA POUND, EDITOR. WASHINGTON: SQUARE DOLLAR.

Stazzian orthography, however, have a drawback, for they obviate the differences between manuscript and print which often represent different forms of discourse. Manuscript is used for more intimate forms — personal letters, diaries — while print indicates written material designed for a wider readership. Regularizing the appearance of script and print breaks down the differences between the forms of discourse which they communicate. Common to other utopian languages schemes, Harris's stenographic language sought to accelerate the thought process. Simplifying written communication reduces the amount of information the brain needs to process and thus, the argument goes, accelerates the thought process. Like the phonetic languages, regularizing script and print sacrifices expression in order to accelerate thought.

While the turn-of-the-century utopia writers foresaw a variety of written and printed languages to accelerate thought, they ignored the other possible effects their imaginary languages might have, either negative or positive. None of the utopia writers imagined written languages with the capacity to enhance verbal complexity and heighten poetic expression. The Chinese ideogrammatic language could enhance poetic expression, as Ernest Fenollosa persuasively argued and as Ezra Pound put into practice.³⁴ Though Allen's written language seems similar to Chinese ideograms, he never discussed the poetic possibilities of the imaginary language. A syllabary, too, has great potential for poetry. In the Philippines, for instance, the Tagalog syllabary contains many characters with multiple meanings. The ambiguity inherent to written Tagalog lends a complexity to its poetry which would be impossible to achieve with an alphabetic language.³⁵ Yet Macnie never mentioned the poetic possibilities of his utopian syllabary. Macnie's utopian language is unique among the other imaginary languages, though, for it does make expression more complex. It does so, however, as a way to control thought, not to free it.

Despite the improvement many utopia writers imagined for the bound volume, others foresaw alternatives to the codex which would change significantly the way a written text is perceived and understood. The most frequent technological gadget the utopia writers included was the phonograph. Thomas Edison's invention of the phonograph predates most of the American utopia literature, and Edison himself anticipated many of its utopian uses. In an 1878 article in the *North American Review*, Edison suggested several imaginative uses for the phonograph. For one, books could be read aloud by professional elocutionists and recorded. Such phonographic books could then be played for the inhabitants of "the asylums of the blind, hospitals, the sick-chamber, or even with great profit and amusement by the lady or gentleman whose eyes and hands may be otherwise employed."³⁶ Here, Edison's list of possible users of the phonographic book quickly moves from those who physically cannot read to pretty much everyone. The phonograph greatly heightened efficiency by allowing people to perform two tasks simultaneously. The act of reading required a person to use their eyes to read



COVER OF CHAUNCEY THOMAS' 1891 *The Crystal Button*.
COURTESY OF THE NEWBERRY LIBRARY, CHICAGO.

as well as their hands to hold the book and turn its pages. The phonograph, however, freed both eye and hand, allowing people to devote their visual and motor skills to other tasks while still allowing them access to literature. Edison's possible uses for the phonograph essentially gives literature a second class status. He implied that the written text was not something which required active concentration. Instead, it was something which could be received passively through the act of listening. Edison foresaw the use of the phonograph to provide what we now call "background noise." He did not say that people should abandon reading, but by making literature conveniently available in recorded form, Edison created the opportunity for people to abandon reading in favor of listening.

Edison further suggested that the phonograph made it possible to record the spoken words of great statesmen for posterity: "It will henceforth be possible to preserve for future generations the voices as well as the words of our Washingtons, our Lincolns, our Gladstones, etc., and to have them give us their 'greatest effort' in every town and hamlet in the country, upon our holidays."³⁷ Edison thus imagined a world in which the phonograph became an essential part of the national tradition. In nineteenth-century America, it was commonplace for important political speeches and historic documents to be read on holidays. Readings of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July, for instance, took place across the United States. Edison implied that it would be preferable to hear a recording of a great statesman reading a work he had written rather than to have someone else read the work aloud. Since everyone across the country could listen to an identical recording, phonographs could thus help homogenize a patriotic tradition. Unlike the written text, the recording could reproduce the subtle nuances which only occur when a text is read aloud.

Edison's bookish contemporaries clearly found the phonograph's potential threatening, and the *North American Review* article unsettled the publishing industry. After its appearance, the editor of *Publishers' Weekly* queried, "Is the day coming when all our bookstores and all our libraries will be filled with nothing but sheets of tinfoil, grooved with simple lines?"³⁸ Well, yes, some utopia writers essentially answered. Those who incorporated the phonograph as part of their imaginary worlds foresaw three possible futures for the phonographic book. In some utopias, both the phonographic recording and printed book coexist. In others, the phonographic book completely replaces the codex. In yet others, the phonographic book is combined with telephonic or telegraphic communication.

In *The Crystal Button*, Chauncey Thomas's time-travelling narrator, Paul Prognosis, finds both printed books and phonographic recordings in his host's library. Paul Prognosis discovers that the books of the future are printed in some kind of stenographic language which he cannot read, so he resorts to the tinfoil rolls which

he can listen to and understand. Thomas's imaginary tinfoil rolls accommodate all kinds of information — history, law, physics and the sciences. There are apparently no limits to what kinds of information which can be recorded. As Paul Prognosis explains, the rolls hold "sets of encyclopedias, in which the sum total of knowledge in certain important branches of study is presented in brief. Here we find 'Flora and Fauna, Past and Present;' and here, a huge set of volumes with the single title 'Modes,' — not fashions, please understand, but the best possible modes and processes applicable to all mechanical arts, as epitomized from the annual reports of the Central Bureau of Demonstration."³⁹ All in all, the rolls contain "the expressed substance of all possible invention, filtered, refined and concentrated, and finally bottled in this compact form for ready reference."⁴⁰ The tinfoil rolls, therefore, are not limited in subject matter, but they are limited in terms of the amount of information they contain. The limitations, however, appear to be practical, not physical. Thomas's point is that the amount of historically-amassed information would become so huge that people would need some way to process it in the future. To be manageable, this vast amount of information had to be condensed and distilled. Thomas's tinfoil rolls, therefore, are a kind of listener's digest. Presumably, the full texts embodying the entirety of human knowledge were available in the printed stenographic books for indepth research, but the tinfoil rolls contained as much information as most people would ever need or want to know.

Some of the utopia writers foresaw worlds in which the printed books were completely eliminated in favor of recorded ones. The utopian library which Bridge imagined in *A Fortnight in Heaven*, for example, contains only phonographic recordings. Works predating the phonograph had been recorded by professional elocutionists (Bridge deliberately borrows Edison's diction) while more recent books were recorded by authors themselves.⁴¹ Herbert Spencer, to use Bridge's own example, could make phonographic recordings of his own works for posterity.⁴² In utopia, Bridge suggested that not only books, but also music, drama and lectures could be recorded, and all could be enjoyed in combination as an evening's entertainment at home.⁴³ While listening to a recording of Herbert Spencer

35 RAFAEL, VICENTE L. 1988. *CONTRACTING COLONIALISM: TRANSLATION AND CHRISTIAN CONVERSION IN TAGALOG SOCIETY UNDER EARLY SPANISH RULE*. ITHACA: CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS, CH. 1.

36 EDISON, THOMAS A. 1878. "THE PHONOGRAPH AND ITS FUTURE." *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, 126, 533.

37 EDISON, "THE PHONOGRAPH AND ITS FUTURE," 534.

38 "THE PHONOGRAPH AS A REVOLUTIONIST," *PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY*, NO. 329 (4 MAY 1878): 441.

39 THOMAS, CHAUNCEY. 1891. *THE CRYSTAL BUTTON: OR, ADVENTURES OF PAUL PROGNOSIS IN THE FORTY-NINTH CENTURY*. BOSTON: GREGG PRESS, REPRINT 1975, 134-135.

40 THOMAS, *THE CRYSTAL BUTTON*, 134-135.

41 BRIDGE, *A FORTNIGHT IN HEAVEN*, 55.

42 BRIDGE, *A FORTNIGHT IN HEAVEN*, 80-81.

43 BRIDGE, *A FORTNIGHT IN HEAVEN*, 56.

reading the text of, say, *Study of Sociology*, hardly seems like good family entertainment, Bridge really was not arguing that families should gather around the phonograph to listen to the likes of Herbert Spencer. Rather, he was suggesting that all forms of discourse — from novel to socio-political treatise — could be transferred from the printed page to the phonographic record.

Bridge's phonographic records eliminate the traditional relationship between the reader and the book — except for one particular aspect. Bridge's imaginary phonographic works, like books, are personal possessions. People acquired them, brought them home, and listened to them whenever they wished on their home phonographs. Other utopia writers, however, found private ownership of such items superfluous, especially considering the advances in telephonic and telegraphic communication which would occur in the utopian future. In *A Round Trip to the Year 2000*, for instance, William Wallace Cook explained that when utopians wish to listen to novels, all they need to do is contact the "Novel Bureau." The Bureau asks what kind of novel they want, makes a selection for them, and broadcasts a recording of the selected text.⁴⁴ In the future Cook imagined, the book loses all physicality for everyone except those employed at the Novel Bureau. Written works only exist as sound transmitted across the airwaves. According to Cook's description, listeners do not even have the opportunity to choose a specific book title. Rather, they simply request the kind of novel they wish to hear, and the Novel Bureau makes a specific choice for them. Telephoning the novel bureau may be convenient, but the act gives the government opportunity to control the public's thought.

Though several utopias integrate the phonograph, it is remarkable that more did not. Rather, many more utopia writers made the codex an important part of their imaginary worlds. Their description of the utopian book — though multi-colored, printed with innovative typefaces, and lavishly illustrated its printed page may be — shows that they recognized the book's importance to any ideal society. After all, how many turn-of-the-century utopia writers published their works as phonograph recordings?

⁴⁴ COOK, WILLIAM WALLACE. 1903. *A ROUND TRIP TO THE YEAR 2000: OR A FLIGHT THROUGH TIME*. (REPRINTED. WESTPORT, CONNECTICUT: HYPERION, 1974), 174

Formal formalist lines
whose function is to sort of clarify.
Formulations. Expressionism. Parts
of
an incomplete whole.

Exemplary disagreement is the goal,
informal discussion among the eyeballs breaking
new ground.

A higher function, of course,
than life in the streets.

ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN

Historically Gaelic, the vernacular language of a significant proportion of the population of Ireland, used a variation of the roman alphabet which consisted of just eighteen basic letters — the vowels and some consonants carried diacritical marks of accent and aspiration which extended the range of sounds they represented. With the introduction of cast metal moveable type the particular requirements of printing Irish language texts were met either through the production of specially prepared fonts of irish character types based on distinctive Irish manuscript models or alternatively through the use of existing or adjusted roman fonts. This account seeks to examine some of the significant attempts made at accommodating roman fonts to the perceived requirements of the Irish language in the context of the various social and political considerations which were inevitably imposed on this process.

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SIMPLY A *dot*

There is an element relating to the orthography and phonetic composition of the Irish language which, although most basic and simple in form, has nonetheless, been central to a debate that ultimately determined the visual manifestation of that language, namely — the dot.

As an indicator of aspiration of affected consonants, in this Irish context, the dot had a rather diverse origin made all the more complex as it evolved from its use in early manuscripts through the development of printing to more recent times. Placed over a letter, it was initially used by the early scribes as a method of indicating the deletion of an error, thus avoiding the tedious and awkward need to erase a mistake by scraping. In time this device was used to indicate a softening or adjustment in sound of certain consonants. Alternatively the early scribes indicated aspiration of other consonants by placing an h above the affected letter. Later, as printing from case metal movable type developed, the fonts used by the Irish Franciscans in Louvain in the early part of the seventeenth century contained ligatures of consonants which incorporated the suprascript h, but more usually such printing types prepared in the irish style simply used a suprascript dot to indicate this form of aspiration. (figure 1). This method could also be employed through the preparation of specially adjusted fonts of roman type, while those wishing to use ordinary available roman type for printing Irish placed the letter h after the affected consonant. The use of the h in this manner as distinct from the dot came to represent a wider more significant debate which, over the years, struggled with the question of the appropriate form for printing Irish language text — the roman versus the irish characters.

The first recorded book printed in Gaelic used roman type (figure 2).¹ It was printed in Edinburgh by Robert Lekprevik in 1567 just four years before the *Aibidil Gaoidheilge agus Caiticiosma* was printed in Dublin using a font of type which made use of specially prepared irish characters. (figure 3). Unlike in Ireland, the use of roman type was to continue as the popular and predominant form for printing Gaelic in Scotland.

Theobald Stapleton was one of the earliest outspoken supporters of the use of roman type for Irish. His *Catechismus, seu Doctrina*

NOTES

¹ KNOX, JOHN. 1567.
FOIRM NA NURRNUIDHEADH.
TRANSLATED BY JOHN
CARSWELL. EDINBURGH.