

The Journey The Makers The Book

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Negotiated Written Study

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The Writers

The Writers:

The Newspaper

We are standing on a precipice overlooking a valley of dense forest. Past it a wide open plain reaches to a horizon. There is no clear route down through the valley and the forest ... or in fact there may be any number of routes waiting to be discovered but maybe they are not yet visible.

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The journey from a physical vehicle of written communication to a digital one certainly did not start at this precipice, but it marks a turning point with our relationship with our greatest symbol of information and narrative: the book. At this point, the discussion of the book as we enter this new territory has been lead by the companies that develop, provide, and sell us this new technology and by the group that is most closely tied to the book, if not in our minds, then most certainly in their's: the writers. Within this discourse, there are book historians, that extract information from the physical codex, but for the most part the narrative writers are the vanguards in this discussion.

Perhaps there is also another group that should be included in the conversation. A group possibly better equipped to argue the merits and to accentuate the differences between the book of pulp and the book of pixel. Are writers the best guides to lead us down into the valley below?

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Writers can not be lumped together any more than any other profession, but it would be very difficult for them not to have some opinion and some amount of concern for the future of the physical book. The identity of the writing profession is inextricably linked to the object of the book. Sure there are journalists and writers

that may have worked exclusively with periodicals and newspapers, but when we think of a 'writer' we think primarily of the book. More so than even the single page or the pen, the book is the physical embodiment of that profession. Understandably then writers take a good deal of ownership over the subject of the book.

With the advent of the electronic book (e-book, eBook, digital book) there has been an increased traffic in the discourse surrounding the book and this has come primarily from writers. Logically this makes sense, because of their connection and also because that is what writers do – they write. This discourse ranges from intrigue over the new possibilities, concern for the book as object, and all out fear and panic.

Why so much concern? A main reason is the historical context surrounding this subject and what has occurred with the other physical entity of the written word: the newspaper. Over the past decade, at least within the United States, we have been witnesses to the continuous and rapid closing of newspapers and periodicals or their wholesale migration to the internet. There is even at least one website (oh, the irony) dedicated to tracking this demise [1]. It is not even a question of if but when:

'...it no longer requires a dystopic imagination to wonder who will have the dubious distinction of publishing America's last genuine newspaper. Few believe that newspapers in their current printed form will survive.' [2]

If there is legitimate concern for the book's future, I am not so sure it should be because of the apparent fate of the newspaper. While on the surface the relationship of newspapers to electronic media appear similar to the relationship to books and electronic media, there are, however, significant differences.

The documentation and the reasoning behind the demise of the newspaper could be an entirely separate piece unto itself. However, it does seem necessary to

touch upon some of the key issues and point out the differences, in order to give the codex/e-book discussion a historical context.

In 2009, writer Bill Simmons dedicated a series of podcasts to this subject. These include discussions with the following people:

Chuck Klosterman – Contemporary culture essayist. His writing career began with local newspapers before moving to New York. He has written for *Spin*, *Esquire*, *GQ*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Believer*, *The Washington Post*, in addition to publishing several books of essays. [3]

John A. Walsh – Executive vice president and executive editor of ESPN. He has also been managing editor of *US News and World Report*, *Rolling Stone*, and has held various editorial positions at *Newsday* and the *Washington Post*. [7]

Le Anne Schreiber – Recently retired ESPN ombudsman. She has the distinction of being the first woman department head at the *New York Times* when she was head editor of their sports section. She was also editor of the 'New York Times Book Review'. In addition to these editorial positions, she is an award-winning writer and journalist. [8]

Bill Simmons's own professional background began with the *Boston Herald* newspaper before he became the 'first Internet sports columnist to have some success'; enough success to be picked up by ESPN.com and to become their 'most popular writer'. He has also published two non-fiction books. [4] [5]

In the first of the series Bill Simmons and Chuck Klosterman set out some very basic reasons for the failure of newspapers with the advent of the internet. The first reason being that sites such as the immensely popular craigslist.com took away classified ad revenue from newspapers, simply put by Klosterman, 'Looking for a car, looking for an apartment is just easier on the internet, and it's just free.'

Simmons also points out that the newspapers also were not concerned about the internet until it was too late. The people running and working for newspapers had an air of superiority that allowed them to not take this new technology seriously. By the time they did decide to do something about this new outlet and to develop their online presence, a precedent had already been set that information on the web was 'free'. Looking back it seems bizarre that newspapers thought that putting all their content on the web for free was a good idea, but at the time that was the standard being set and they went along with it. It now seems obvious that the correct response was to charge for an online subscription as they do with their pulp version.

On top of that, newspapers' hallmark was their immediacy of information and commentary. The internet, however, provided even *more* immediate information and a more continuous stream of it. This was deeply troubling; the difference between the internet versus other 'new' media (television and radio) was that web-based content was more similar, ie. text and reading based. Once again, it seems bizarre that the newspapers would try to compete with the web's immediacy. Klosterman and Simmons seem to think that after arriving late to the internet that perhaps the better tactic would have been for newspapers to continue producing the same well researched pieces and doing longer, big-picture stories rather than try to top the speed of information. In other words, to differentiate themselves more; if you want the quick-fix information you go to these new internet outlets, however if you want the in-depth reporting you have come to depend on, then the traditional newspaper groups would continue to provide that.

A final issue that is brought up in this podcast is that, in America, the newspaper labor force was unionized whereas the internet was not. Simmons points out that this lead to an attitude akin to a 'tenured professor' amongst journalists. The unions guaranteed job security and a certain salary and if a writer chose to under perform that was their choice and there were few consequences. By extension, since these senior journalists were locked into their jobs, younger talent gravitated towards the

web because there were simply more opportunities. Now newspapers were not only losing advertising dollars, subscription dollars, being less immediate than their competitors, and not differentiating their product, but they now also were losing out on new and young talent that might attract a new generation of readers. [6] 'The average age of the American newspaper reader is fifty-five and rising.' [2]

Most of these issues are fairly particular to newspapers – books have never been about immediacy, they do not generate income from ad sales, and the state of unionization amongst writers has also not played a role in the book vs. e-book discussion. Really the only one point that is relevant, is that the mediums in discussion (newspaper vs. internet and book vs. e-book) are similar in that they are text and reading based. Or rather that is how we look at it now because the discussion of books and e-books is being run by writers.

The following episode with John A. Walsh reviews those same subjects, but Walsh further emphasizes the issue of the mentality of the entire industry very pointedly. Newspapers did not change as new media outlets came into being – not just the internet – but television and radio prior to that. 'Newspapers ... for the most part, believe that the internet is an electronic newspaper. They don't think it's a different being.'

This idea of Walsh's is something to consider as we move forward in our exploration of the book/e-book relationship. The internet and newspaper relationship, as stated above, is very different, but the *attitude* amongst writers and the publishing, industry, perhaps does not reflect these differences. We need look no further than the name: the *e-book*.

Walsh continues: 'I remember television in the early 50s were a lot of radio shows on TV ... the were old radio shows reformatted for TV.... It makes me crazy that people don't recognize the unique qualities of a new medium.' [7]

In her discussion with Simmons Le Anne Schreiber voices her main concern. It is not so much the how and why newspapers are failing but of the possible effects on journalism. If newspapers go entirely online or are replaced by web-based news sources, can the internet as a media generate the income for the kind of staffing that traditional reporting demands, in particular with foreign correspondence? Eric Alterman's New Yorker article gives some inkling to those costs: 'The [Los Angeles] *Times*' Baghdad bureau alone costs around three million dollars a year to maintain.'

Schreiber: 'My attachment isn't so much [to] holding the physical object in my hand. If the reliability of the best newspapers could be transferred to the internet, I'd be fine. So it's not about nostalgia ...' [8]

Interestingly how writers write about books and digital media it *is* about nostalgia. This is a problem when the main constituency (writers) for a media (books) has as the basis of their stance nostalgia, that coupled with a belief that, as Walsh states, 'They don't think it's a different being.' [7]

They see the book as a direct competitor to the pulp book. They do not see it as something separate and while they argue differences in the mediums, their arguments are rooted in surface differences. The reason they prefer one surface over another? Nostalgia. If one is looking for similarities and lessons to be learned from what is happening to newspapers I believe this may be it: nostalgia is not enough to save a media in the face of a changing media landscape. It was not enough to save newspapers and I doubt it will be enough to save books.

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The Writers:

The Conservative

Sven Birkerts, the author of the *Gutenberg Elegies*, represents an extremely conservative viewpoint in the book/e-book discussion. An American writer, Mr. Birkerts, is coming from a country that is deeply divided politically and ideologically. While certainly not a black and white situation, it can definitely be seen where there are two poles: the progressive/liberal viewpoint that sees society as something that needs to change and grow with an adapting world with new problems and issues, and the conservative viewpoint that is represented by a constituency that feels the correct response to these problems and issues is to resist change and to not just keep the status quo or to reverse the tide and retreat to what they commonly refer to as traditional ideals and values. These ideals and values are rooted in a Utopian view of the past and a fear of the future. Being it is an indeterminate past it creates an unusual brand of nostalgia based around mythic ideal.

I will not pretend to know what Birkerts's political leanings are, but his writings concerning the book and digital media come from what seems to be a similar place in the American consciousness. Reading the *Gutenberg Elegies*, I found it impossible not to constantly be reminded of the arguments against gay marriage, birth control, or the separation of church and state that are currently happening in the United States. There is such a fear and confusion over these issues that lead to anger. The root fear is that a particular brand of a way of life will be lost if change occurs. More troubling is the belief that their particular way of life is superior to others.

Birkerts, likewise, argues from a place of fear – that the recognition of digital media as a legitimate communication tool will lead to a loss of a way of life. Like the political conservatives, it is a way that is built on a mythical ideal of learning and scholarship that exists in some vaguely defined past.

'The formerly stable system – the axis with writer at one end, editor, publisher, and bookseller in the middle and the reader at the other end – is slowly being bent into a pretzel ... all the old assumptions are under siege.' [9, pg.5]

Ironically, many writers might use this as a rallying cry, a statement of independence and liberation, but when Birkerts writes this statement he writes it from a place of absolute fear – fear and nostalgia.

There is nothing inherently wrong with nostalgia. I believe at some point and time everyone in the modern world has wished for a simpler time, a simpler life, at a slower pace. But when exactly was that time? This is the danger of Birkerts brand of nostalgia – it is based on a past the never really existed.

'We have been stripped not only of familiar habits and ways, but of familiar points of moral and psychological reference. ... Not a brave new world at all, but a fearful one.' [9, pg.21]

I vacillate between being deeply concerned over this conservative rhetoric (in particular his mention of morality) and feeling saddened for this writer. It must not be easy to have such a mental and emotional block towards the world that is changing around you. Once again an entirely separate piece could be written examining the sociological and psychological elements of this writer and his attitudes, but my interest is of the book and media. Ostensibly that is what the *Gutenberg Elegies* is about.

In all fairness, I should point out that this collection of essays was published in 1994. The internet we are familiar with was still in its infancy. Discussions about 'new' media were still viewed through the lens of television and its effect on our society. Television by comparison to the internet was/is a one-way communication device that encouraged detachment from the surrounding world with no real reading or

written component (unless you had captioning turned on, I suppose) and, unlike radio, it was more difficult to engage in any other activity while you were engaged with it. From that standpoint, if the assumption was that any new media was going to be a continuation of what television provided, well, things did look a tad bleak.

Within the media context of the mid-90s then, Sven Birkerts could be forgiven for his knee-jerk reaction to the wave of new media. So when he writes about the critical writings of Mark Crispin Miller's *Boxed In: The Culture of TV*, this is his line of thinking: 'We cannot see the role that television (or, for our purposes, all electronic communications) has assumed in our lives ...' [9, pg.119]

If the newspaper powerbrokers, in John A. Walsh's words, see the internet as 'an electronic newspaper', then Birkerts has decided to see the entirety of electronic media as an advanced version of television. As most of us know that use digital media on a regular basis it has elements of the newspaper, the television, the telephone, the bulletin board, the radio, the printing press, and much more. But really it is something so very different than what has ever come before it.

One would think over the intervening years, Birkerts's stance would be a bit more even keeled as we have witnessed the development of the internet and other digital technologies. This has not been the case – see the recent articles referenced below [10., 11., 12.]. The premises of the articles are relatively identical and unchanged to the ones originally published in *The Gutenberg Elegies*. (Please note the irony that these articles are all made available via digital media.)

How does Birkerts view the book specifically?

'Screen and book may exhibit the same string of words, but the assumptions that underlie their significance are entirely different depending on whether we are staring at a book or a circuit-generated text.' [9, pg. 128]

On one level, he is correct. When discussing any form of art context is key. It is the difference between a urinal and a *ready-made* sculpture. In another sense, Birkerts could not be more wrong when it comes to reading. I can say this from personal experience. Sometime during the month of July 2011, I was enjoying a hot caffeinated beverage at one of my favorite coffeshops in Lincoln, UK. In my bag I was carrying around reading material exclusively for this particular piece of writing that you are reading. Wanting to cleanse my reading palate from this material for a bit, I pulled out my phone – a phone with a screen smaller than the palm of my hand. I activated the web browser and entered the url for grantland.com – a recently established website that features long-form essays primarily covering sports and contemporary culture. I scrolled through the home page table of contents and settled on Wright Thompson's 'On Whiskey and Grease: Drinking the last bottle of Jim Beam.' (I did say I wanted to cleanse my palate.)

A whole night of front-porch drinking led us here. My friend, Joe York, comes outside with a bottle of Jim Beam in his hand. The label is faded, creased. Two or three fingers of amber liquid sit in the bottom.

It's his grandfather's bourbon. [13]

I was no longer sitting in a coffee shop in Britain; I was back in America – back to a place where sitting on a front porch means something culturally – back to a place where they actually build houses with front porches. At that moment my immediate surroundings had melted away and it made no difference how I had entered that space as a reader. The context was irrelevant. I realize on a surface level if I had read those words on a papyrus scroll, an illuminated manuscript, or the walls of a bathroom stall it would have initially effected my interpretation before and after the reading, but once the reader breaks through the surface they are enclosed within the world of written language; it is like a diver breaking the surface of the ocean, once below everything above disappears.

Birkerts actually writes quite eloquently about the reading experience in his chapters 'Paging the Self' and 'The Shadow Life of Reading'. Sadly though he just will not allow himself to be seduced past the surface of the delivery device.

Awhile a back, friends of mine invited me to attend a hypnotist show. This was a typical type of comedic display that I think everyone is more or less familiar with even if they have not actually attended one, where the hypnotist makes the hypnotee do ridiculous actions for the amusement of the audience. Unbeknownst to me, I was 'volunteered' by my friends along with a dozen other people (who also did not have very good people for friends, I imagine). The hypnotist preps us by letting us know that we have to be receptive to the process or it is not likely to work. I definitely had that sense – that if one was so inclined it would be fairly easy to resist hypnosis.

The state of hypnosis or meditation or other mental states where we are not entirely mentally in sync with our physical surroundings do not seem entirely different from the state of in depth reading – the melting away of the outside world and the suspension of a concrete sense of time. We approach a book the way a willing participant approaches a hypnotist – we want to be seduced, to fall under the text's spell. It is also an easy thing to resist; a student that resents being force to read something they are not interested in, is probably going to have a more difficult time sinking into that state than a reader who is eager to be absorbed by the text. Likewise, Birkerts approaches an electronic device and seemingly shuts down and builds barriers between himself and the text. He has convinced himself that he will not fall under the spell of the screen and by doing so he has created a self-fulfilling prophecy.

'[The printed word] occupies a position in space – on a page, in a book – and is verifiably there. [The word on the screen] once dematerialized, digitalized [sic] back into storage, into memory can not be said to exist in the same way.' [9, pg.155]

This delves into the metaphysical territory of the classic question of 'If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?' Is a word in a book once it is closed any more or less real than a word on a screen after the device is turned off? Are either of these more or less 'real' than word that is heard aurally? What if one records that word? Does that increase its realness?

In all these instances, the word in question exists in different ways, but I question the relevancy of these types of arguments when arguing the pros and cons of the physical book versus the electronic book. Once the reader arrives at the destination of the narrative, how important is it the road they took to get there? I do not think the 'method of transport' is a strong enough argument to save the physical book.

'The words on the screen ... are felt to issue from a void deeper than language, and this, not the maker of the sentences claims any remnant impulse to belief.' [9, pg.155]

At this point, Birkerts abandons logic and fact to argue his point, and instead is reliant in a web of metaphysics and biblio-religious beliefs. I half expected him to declare the words conveyed by electronic media whisper forth from the netherworld and from the very lips of Lucifer himself. He does not ... well, not until the 'Coda: The Faustian Pact' at any rate. (And no, I am not joking). [9, pg.210] Admittedly he is speaking symbolically, but most of his diatribes do come from more of a place of quasi-religious belief than logical rhetoric, however at one point he comes closer to the actuality of the situation: 'This is not a matter of one being better or worse but different.'

Interestingly enough Birkerts does allow for the validity of the audio book and the general idea that it is not so much an issue of being better or worse but different from the book we read to ourselves. Unfortunately he seems unable to see the

electronic book in the same light. He does recognize its differences but throughout his writings he feels compelled to make a moral judgment upon it. [9, pg.141-150]

The physical book and the electronic book are different but not so much in the way Birkerts, or writers in general, look at them. Part of that reason is how this new media is currently being used and marketed, but part of it is also just how writers, editors, and the publishing industry have traditionally viewed the book. But we are jumping ahead a bit ...

Before we leave Birkerts, he brings up an issue that bears mention and consideration: the nature of hypertext (non-linear and interactive links) and its general failings in narrative. 'Non-linear' storytelling is a thorny issue. To begin with it is a bit of a misnomer, because all narratives have a beginning and an end; the reader begins at one point and stops at another. Non-linear narrative storytelling is the sense of that in between that beginning and end the narrative jumps around from point to point. The use of the flashback or the flashforward is nothing new to storytelling or the literary device of a story within a story. The hypertext narrative that is usually referenced allows the reader maybe multiple entry points or decisions to be made that allows the reader to different paths through the narrative and possibly to arrive at different concluding points.

To examine this phenomenon it would perhaps serve us well to look at another media form that has had to continuously wrestle with this issue of interactivity and narrative: the video game. Writer/journalist/critic Tom Bissell, in his essay on the *LA Noire* video game pointedly deals with the pit falls of interactivity in narrative. The video game industry has been walking this tightrope as games have become increasingly more sophisticated. For a video game to be entertaining as a game it needs to allow for certain amount of freedom on the part of the user. On the other hand, as Bissell states, 'Interactivity sabotages storytelling. There is no longer any use in arguing the contrary.' Too much player freedom and narrative falls apart.

Ten years prior, Marie-Laure Ryan had pondered the same issues – interactivity and immersion. She points out that, at the time, the academic community were all abuzz about hypertext because it represented post modern thought and theory brought to life.

'It is headed by Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva's notion of *intertextuality*, the practice of integrating a variety of foreign discourses within a text through such mechanisms as quotation, commentary, parody, allusion, imitation, ironic transformation, rewrites, and decontextualizing/recontextualizing operations. ... it is hard to deny that the electronic linking that constitutes the basic mechanism of hypertext is an ideal device ... for intertextual relations.' [15, pg.6-7]

Which is quite nice for post modern theorists but what about the reader and narrative? Ryan is skeptical of the benefits and believes restraint is in order:

'Perhaps ... aesthetic pleasure, like political harmony, is a matter not of unbridled license but of controlled freedom.'

She feels that the immersive experience had been short-changed by comparison to interactivity, however she sees the potential of both elements:

'If I appear harsher on interactive than immersive texts, it is not because I view the intrusion of the computer into literary territory as a threat to humanistic values, as does Sven Birkerts, ... but because interactivity is still in an experimental phase while literature has already perfected [immersion] ... It is precisely its experimental nature that makes interactivity fascinating.' [15, pg.12]

A decade later Bissell confirms this in his essay. There is a zone where interactive freedom and narrative can meet and while Bissell does not think *LA Noire* totally succeeds in mapping that terrain he is excited about how close it comes.

'As a story then, *LA Noire* is not successful. As a game too *LA Noire* fails ... But I love *LA Noire*. I think it's fantastic. What this suggests is that we need a new name for whatever it is that *LA Noire* does' [14]

'L.A. Noire comes closer than any previous digital experience to showing us where the hands are on the clock: half past movie, a quarter past video game, and a quarter to ... what, exactly? I have no idea *L.A. Noire's* failures are not that important when weighed against its successes, ...' [14]

Bissell gets it: we may have to throw out our old ways of thinking as we continue to engage with these new vehicles for storytelling.

He ends with this statement on *LA Noire*: 'It is, finally, a game that made me certain, after months of morose uncertainty, that any writer who is not interested in what we are now calling 'video games' is a bystander to one of the most important conceptual shifts between story and storyteller in a hundred years.' [14]

While he is writing about video games his thoughts and points seem almost more relevant to the discussion of the possibilities of the electronic book than the issues writers of traditional print media, like Birkerts, are currently raising. Ryan and Bissell see the possibilities; even if a totally successful piece that traverses interactivity, narrative, and the immersive environment has yet to be made. Even though there are various pitfalls, they still see this as valid, worthwhile, exciting material to explore, unlike Sven Birkerts, whose fear paralyzes him.

'There is no clear path to the future. We trust that the species will blunder on, but we don't know where to.' [9, pg.20]

Mr. Birkerts, we never knew. There never was a Utopian past where everything was 'the same as it ever was.' The fear is understandable. Fear of the future is the primal fear of the unknown. Some will be paralyzed by this fear and stay rooted to the

precipice, looking back over their shoulder from where we came. Others will start down into that valley and towards the horizon, nervously excited to explore, even if we cannot define everything we come across. We do not have that clear path that Sven Birkerts yearns for.

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The Writers:

The Historian

As stated at the outset of this section, it is unfair to lump all writers together (and Sven Birkerts represents the conservative end of the discussion). There are, thankfully, others that are engaging with the subject of the book and e-book. If Birkerts writes from an emotional alarmist position, then Robert Darnton comes from the position of the pragmatic academic. By 'academic', I do not mean he writes about the book from a theory-based point of view, but from the point of view of the academic as a profession.

Darnton's professional writing background began as a newspaper reporter, before he moved to academia as a history professor, with a focus on the history of books. He has held positions with Princeton University Press, Oxford University Press (USA), and the New York Public Library. He has also been involved with several e-book projects, notably Guttenberg-e which was a series of electronic monographs of history dissertations and, through his involvement with Harvard University, the Google Book Search project. This background gives Darnton an unique perspective on the subject of the book – both as someone engaged within a historical context, as well as someone with first hand experience on its digital developments.

His book, *The Case for Books*, spans this experience. Essentially being a compendium of various essays ranging from his 1982 essay on the study of book history, to his piece on Google's book digitization process (and the surrounding issues) published in 2009. It is a lot of terrain. Throughout, Darnton maintains a fairly even keel and is not prone to the emotional hyperbole or snap judgments of Birkerts. This does not mean he does not have his reservations and concerns but he definitely shows as much interest in the future, as he does with the history of the book and how they might work together.

'Far from deploring electronic modes of communication, I want to explore the possibilities of aligning them with the power the Johannes Gutenberg unleashed more than five centuries ago. What common ground exists between old books and e-books?' [16 pg.vii]

Let us begin with Darnton's view of the book as object. Like Birkerts, Darnton finds immense value in the object, however where Birkerts's pleas for the book were based around nostalgia and fear of change, Darnton argues for the preservation of books from the stand point of what it reveals as a historical artifact.

'It is important to get the feel of a book, the texture of its paper, the quality of its printing, the nature of its binding. Its physical aspects provide clues about its existence as an element in a social and economic system; and if it contains margin notes, it can reveal a great deal about its place in the intellectual life of its readers.' [16 pg.39]

Obviously Darnton has a great personal fondness for books and is not afraid to admit it.

'...by indulging my fascination with print and paper, I may expose myself to accusations of romanticizing or reacting like an old-fashioned, ultra-bookish scholar who wants nothing more than to retreat into a rare book room. I plead guilty.' [16 pg.39-40]

However throughout his essays he builds his case for books best by explaining his field of study more than by relying on emotional appeals. In his essay, 'The Importance of Being Bibliographical', he describes the academic pursuit of analytical or descriptive bibliography. Not merely a list or notation of cited works, an analytical bibliography looks at different editions and variations between those editions and how they may have occurred. These variations are not necessarily at the hands of the author or editor but sometimes at the hands of the printer or

typesetter. Darnton relates this through examples in variations of the early editions of Shakespeare. Through the examination of the physical object of the editions, book historians can determine the print shop and sometimes even the individual compositor. He sites a particular example from 1619 that was the product of an individual known by book historians as 'Compositor B'. 'B' used earlier editions (not original manuscripts) as sources for his versions and on top of that:

'When he came upon a phrase that he considered deficient, he "improved it."' [16 pg.132]

It takes more than knowing the textual content on the page to be a good Shakespearean scholar, states Darnton, one must also know the source of the page and its lineage. To decode that page a scholar needs the object. Of course, analytical bibliography is not just of use to the student of Shakespeare:

'... the emphasis on materiality appealed to all bibliographers, because all of them studied books as physical objects. By learning how texts became imbedded in paper as typographical signs and transmitted to readers as pages bound in books, they hoped to understand a fundamental aspect of literature itself.' [16, pg.135]

In a separate essay, 'A Paean to Paper', Darnton writes a response to Nicholson Baker's book *Double Fold* about a scenario that occurred with newspapers and a new(er) media. The media in question was not the internet and the book was not about the business missteps taken by the newspaper companies, but about libraries transferring newspapers (and to lesser degree books) to microfilm. This primarily occurred in the United States during the 1970s and '80s. Libraries believed at the time that paper was disintegrating at a higher rate than it actually was, in addition, the institutions needed the space. This led to wholesale microfilming of these periodicals followed by their destruction by pulping. Unfortunately a lot of this occurred under faulty information: paper, even the cheapest paper, has turned out to be remarkably resilient to severe aging; Baker argues the cost of the project was

so significant that warehousing the hardcopies could have been economically feasible.

Darnton is critical of Baker's style of exposition, but concedes the information presented.

'...is it true? On the whole, I think it is, although it is less innocent than it seems. It should be read as a journalistic jeremiad rather than as a balanced account of library history over the last fifty years.' [16, pg.128]

Darnton's main reason for writing on Baker's book and for presenting it in this collection is to use it as a warning as we venture into the realm of the digital book. He sees the danger of a similar idea coming back around – why keep the physical piece when we have the digital facsimile? In his intro to this essay Darnton writes, digital copies are even more prone to decay and digitization can be just as faulty as the microfilming process proved to be. So far from presenting *Double Fold* as a history book, Darnton presents it as a cautionary tale for the future.

Through his essays on the physicality of the book Darnton builds a remarkably logical and cohesive set of arguments for the preservation of the book as historical artifact of our past and as record of our present for future generations.

'Books also refuse to be contained within the confines of a single discipline when treated as objects of study. Neither history nor literature nor economics nor sociology nor bibliography can do justice to all aspects of the life of a book. ... books belong to circuits of communication that operated in consistent patterns, however complex they may be. By unearthing those circuits, historians can show that books do not merely recount history; they make it.' [16, pg.206]

His views on books as objects, however offer very few reasons for why we should *continue* producing books. Once again, I believe that this come from his standpoint

as writer – a historian/writer – but still primarily how he views the object of a book is as a vehicle for the written word or as a historic artifact.

How then does Darnton view the e-book? Much of his writings are directly linked to his personal experiences with the Google Book Search program and his self-initiated Gutenberg-e program. He comes from a rarified space then, in that he is writing on a relatively new use of technology from a point of experience, *in addition to*, speculation.

Google Book Search is ‘... [Google’s] program to digitize millions of books from research libraries and to make them available, for a fee, online.’ [16, pg.xvii]

Darnton sets out the legal issues raised in relation to the project, some serious concerns over the control and access to information, and issues of privacy (an ongoing concern with anything that Google’s name is attached to). In addition to Google being able to track what you are searching on the internet or, in the case of Gmail, what you are e-mailing, they would now be able to track your reading habits as well.

There are advantages to this mass digitization and the largest is access. Everyone would have access to books that have up to this point been tucked away in research libraries, only available to a relatively few. What is the problem then between a library providing access to information versus a corporation?

‘Libraries exist to promote a public good: “the encouragement of learning,” “Free to All.” Businesses exist in order to make money for their shareholders ... if we permit the commercialization of the content of our libraries, there is no getting around a fundamental contradiction. ... No invisible hand would intervene to correct the imbalance between public and private welfare.’ [16, pg.11] [A]

Darnton does have his own visions of the e-book. In his essay 'Lost and Found in Cyberspace' from 1999 Darnton describes his own personal proposed project. The way he describes it, it would seem to be a labyrinth of hyperlinked academic ecstasy. Without going into the intimate detail of the project and the content, it is in essence a history text that would feature layers upon layers of information. It sounds intriguing, but what he is describing is an extensive foot noting system, except imagine that the footnotes to be incredibly large, essays unto themselves with their own footnotes as well, leading farther a field.

'They can continue deeper through the book, through bodies of documents, bibliography, background music, everything I can provide to give the fullest possible understanding of my subject.' [16, pg.62]

This method of hypertexting seems to have been a common vision of the e-book at that time for academics, as Marie-Laure Ryan noted. It's obvious why this would appeal to the academic researcher – it would eliminate the need to edit out all those anecdotes and all that tertiary information one comes across during the research process. All that information that was not explicitly related to the main subject or thesis can now just be hyperlinked onto it. It is a very writerly way at looking at the e-book, especially if the writer in question is not a fan of editing down their work. One can see the source of Ryan's concern for narrative cohesiveness in the face of such project proposals as Darnton's.

I realize academic research writing is different from other forms of narrative and that the audience for such a project would be people deeply interested in the subject matter and/or doing research of their own, however it might be trying even for them to dig their way through what he describes. Regardless, what he describes may only ever exist in proposed form, 'Ten years later, I am still writing it ...' [16, pg.59]

Darnton deserves credit for his own exuberance and willingness to embrace a new use of technology; ironically though, where Birkwerts and Ryan feared interactivity might lose the reader, in this case, it appears the writer may have lost his way.

Darnton's Guttenberg-e project seemed to hint at some more interesting directions for the e-book. Gutenberg-e was a program to create electronic monographs of history dissertations. A very forward looking project for 1997 when its grant proposal was submitted. The program was pitched as a solution to the difficulty and cost of publishing work of budding scholars in the conventional method. Its eventual demise (the program ended in 2005) feels as though it was the result of being a bit ahead of its time more than anything else.

'Inflexible notions of what constituted a book ... prevented the first Guttenberg-e monographs from getting widely received.' [16, pg.84]

At the end of 2010, the New York Times made the decision to include e-book sales in their best-seller lists, 'In an acknowledgment of the growing sales and influence of digital publishing ...' [18].

Today it seems the issue that plagued Guttenberg-e project from being accepted as a legitimate mode of publishing is a thing of the past. [19]

There were other issues as well, within the program:

'We tried to do too many things at once: to help solve the problem of the threatened monograph, to create a new kind of book, to legitimize it in the eyes of the history profession, to help young historians get over the first hurdle in their careers ...' [16, pg. 99-100]

For all the program's apparent flaws, it seems that there were a wide ranging amount of solutions by the scholars involved. Some Darnton describes as fairly

conventional and amount to no more than simple text on screen. He does, however, make reference to a piece by Heidi Gengenbach which employed '... audio, video, images, and hyperlinked texts in ways that invite the reader to jump around in many directions ...' [16, pg. 85-86]

Before going further, it should be noted that what Darnton is describing when he speaks of Guttenberg-e, is not what we think of as an e-book in 2011. At the time of its inception there was no such thing as an e-book reader. These were not pieces that were downloaded and read on handheld devices. These pieces exist online and to contemporary eyes, the results of Guttenberg-e are essentially just websites – websites with a lot of text – but still just websites.

While his description of Gengenbach's piece sounds incredibly dynamic when I actually went to investigate it, it was a bit of disappointment. She does use all those items that Darnton lists they are standard webpage hyperlinks (ie. click on a picture and an image opens in a new window, likewise the audio files are indexed separately are not necessarily integrated with the text). [20]

Credit must be given to Gengenbach for integrating items like audio at all and making use of media not available to print, and her use of hyperlinks work nicely when used in footnoting. Her overall navigation, however is muddled to put it as mildly as possible. At this point I surrender to her description on how the site navigation is structured. Please note, this is a small section of her 2,000 word 'Reader's Guide':

'Its grid format attempts to mimic some of the relational and historical underpinnings of that analysis; at the same time, it outlines multiple routes you may take when reading the text. The vertical divisions of the grid ... represent temporal and conceptual phases of our journey, our movements through time but also through stages of deepening mutual comprehension and relationship. From top to bottom, the grid's horizontal divisions mark consecutive levels of research, following

the typical (in reality, less tidy) progression from ideas through methodology to scrutiny and interpretation of historical evidence. (Alternatively, a bottom-to-top view suggests an architectural metaphor of floors or stories, with an evidentiary ground floor propping up the analytical and ultimately theoretical claims of the higher floors).' [21]

It is almost as if every fear and criticism of non-linear narrative has just been confirmed by the above paragraph (not mention every fear and criticism of the pomposity of academic writing). If all uses of digital media were this chaotic we would surely have to acquiesce to critics, such as Sven Birkerts.

There are missteps in any new journey, Heidi Guggenbach should still be credited for an attempt at something new. She still made use of media in ways not available with the printed page. Many of the other examples on the Guttenberg-e website could just as easily be printed as traditional books with no loss of content. There was never a stipulation that the monographs needed to use digital technology as anything more than a carrier for the writing. The majority of results, therefore, are indicative of those that determined the direction of these monographs: writers.

While Darnton writes almost exclusively from the vantage point of the professional academic, the items he has covered in his essays have validity within the wider world of books, e-books, and publishing. Admittedly some of his ideas may be better left as concepts, such as the endless layers of hypertexted information, and perhaps Guttenberg-e's ideas were greater than their execution. His essays, however, do show a real interest in what digital technology can bring to the written word, what issues to be aware of, and a well constructed argument for the preservation of the physical book.

As a book historian and one concerned with preservation he recognizes the inherent differences between the book and e-book and that one should not replace the other. However, as he builds a case for the book as a historical artifact,

and as he presents various possibilities and uses for the e-book, he does not give many reasons for why we should *continue* to create more physical books. The few reasons throughout his writings he does give in support of the codex are based around a vague nostalgia for the feel of paper, binding, etc. or the previously mentioned concept of preservation, ie. having a physical back-up to e-books.

'No matter how advanced the technology, I cannot imagine that a digitized image of an old book will provide anything comparable to the excitement of contact with the original.' [16, pg.55]

The context in which that sentence is written is one where he recounts the experience of holding Herman Melville's copy of Emerson's *Essays* at Harvard's rare book library. It is a beautiful and lovely thought, but once again firmly places the book into the realm of historical object. This will not necessarily encourage publishers from printing and binding more codices.

With the Gutenberg-e, the stress of the project was on it being a more accessible vehicle for writing than traditional publishing. Darnton has taken significant steps past Birkwerts in accepting the e-book as a relevant vessel of communication, but he still is firmly in the tradition of the writer/book relationship. He does not quite see the e-book as a distinctly different species from the physical book; He has not quite taken the step to view the e-book as a unique mode of communication and expression. Once again this is looking at the book and e-book as merely carriers for the work of writers.

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A. Darnton's writings on Google are very informative, breaking down complex legal issues into layman's terms, displaying the pros and cons, and presenting various safety precautions. I highly suggest that those interested in the future of information, its accessibility, and copyright, further investigate the Google essays in *The Case for*

Books as well as a follow-up article published in 2011 for *The New York Review of Books* website. However, they have more to do with what the future library may look like (and who might own it) than what the future book may look like. [16, pg.xvii-58; 17]. The Google Book Search issue has more to do with the digitization of printed books, not so much about new visions of the book. On a related note, Google has recently launched a new endeavor, Google eBooks. A cloud based system that is not tied to a device, unlike the Amazon Kindle or iPad apps. It is similar to Amazon in that it is an online bookseller but with the added bonus of providing free access to the public domain books that were digitized during the Google Book Search project. Once again it is not a new vision for the form of the book, but more of a new vision to the bookstore and library. [18]

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The Writers:

The Reader

Alberto Manguel, the third and final writer on books that we are to examine, writes from a bit of a different vantage point than the other two; despite (obviously) being a writer himself he writes primarily from the view of the reader.

'My starting point seems always to be reading ... as a child I realized I was a reader and I had very little interest in being a writer and stepping onto the other side of the page. ... I am a reader and what does that mean?' [23]

He also does not write as exclusively as the other two writers on the relationship between the book and the e-book. Overall he seems to recognize that reading, narrative, and storytelling are subjects that transcend any single mode of delivery, be it codex, scroll, clay tablets, or the digital devices of today.

'Our literature reaches farther back than the beginnings our memory permits us, and further into the future than our imagination allows us to conceive, but that must be the only barrier.' [22, pg.138]

This does not mean that Manguel does not recognize that the act of reading has changed through the centuries or that it will not continue changing as we shift into new eras of reading. In some ways, in fact, if Darnton is a historian of the book, then Manguel may be considered a historian of the reader. This is of course an over simplification since there is much obvious overlap between these two subjects.

'... our history is not linear. It's, if anything, circular or in the shape of a spiral. That is to say, we go back to things we have abandoned, we rediscover that which we have forgotten, and we make new use of things we have used before.' [23]

This concept of history permeates Manguel's writings on the book and reading. It seemingly gives him comfort in this transition to digital media. He sees deep historical connections and lineages. This is not to confuse Manguel with the views of Birkwerts. Where Birkwerts equated digital technology to the television (a passive screen-based technology), Manguel see contemporary technology as having strands of reading culture woven throughout it – an active, text-based technology.

He makes note of the historical antecedent when describing reading on a screen and how the reader moves through the text:

'The scrolling text (like that of the Roman or Greek scrolls) unfurls at a pace that is not dictated by the dimensions of the page and its margins.' [24, pg.126]

When he brings up concepts such as hypertext, he writes of medieval manuscripts with concentric spaces, with the main text in the central column 'surrounded by gloss, which was in turn surrounded by further annotations, which then received the reader's scribbles on the margins.' [24, pg.123]

Likewise, he makes mention of Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch*. A novel that can be read any number of ways – front to back, by following a non-linear sequence suggested by the author, or one randomly determined by the reader. These examples of Manguel's that predate the personal computer display the two primary uses of hypertext: either as an elaborate footnoting process or as way to weave a non-linear trail through a text. [B]

In another section, Manguel writes of a 'rotary reading desk', invented by the Italian engineer Agostino Ramelli in 1588, 'which allowed a reader access to ten book at almost the same time...' [24, pg.190]

He then goes on to compare this to his own computer and its [even more extensive] ability to access multiple texts simultaneously. Everything old is new again.

He does see the inherent differences, advantages, and disadvantages between the codex and the world of digital text. While his computer with its search functions allow him to find and retrieve information in an easier fashion than his physical books, he worries about the new generation of readers: 'The electronic text, in its very accessibility, lends users the illusion of appropriation without the attendant difficulty of learning.' [24, pg.191, 289]

More often though Manguel seems to delight in finding those lines that cross through the spiral of history linking us with those items in the past. His big picture view of the history of reading shows, that regardless of the delivery device, humanity will continue to transmit stories to each other. It is simply what we do. What we also do is create new technologies and these two activities are not at odds with one another.

'The misplaced fear of technology, which once opposed the codex to the scroll, now opposes the scroll to the codex. It opposes the unfurling text on the screen to the multiple pages of the humanist reader's hand held book. But all technology ... has a human measure; it is impossible to remove the human strand even from the most inhuman of technological devices. They are our creation, even if we try to deny them ...' [24, pg.196]

Manguel instead wonders how and what role these two medias will take. For he believes that the codex will survive in the age of digital media. If Darnton sees the codex as an artifact for historic preservation and study, and Birkerts sees it as a religious relic not to be subverted, then Manguel see it as a living organism capable of adaptation.

'Whether for the future humanist reader, the book in its present form will remain unchanged is an idle question. ... The question I ask myself is this: In these new technological spaces, with these artifacts that will certainly coexist with (and in some cases supplant) the book, how will we succeed in still being able to invent, to remember, to learn, to record, to reject, to wonder, to exult, to subvert, to rejoice? By what means will we continue to be creative readers instead of passive viewers?' [24, pg.270]

How will the book continue to challenge the reader and how will the e-book? What territories will they carve out and how will these territories overlap? I like that Manguel asks these questions as a reader foremost. He comes at it with a slightly different edge and angle. Where Birkwerts has no faith in the modern reader to adapt to the new technologies, Manguel has the utmost faith that the consumption of and reflection on stories will persevere because that is how we make sense of the world around us.

'I believe that we are, at the core, reading-animals and that the art of reading, in its broadest sense, defines our species. We come into the world intent on finding narrative in everything: in the landscape, in the skies, in the faces of others, and, of course, in the images and words that our species creates.' [24, pg.ix]

He instead ponders what role those carriers of storytelling will take and what their relationship to us will be. How will it all be interconnected – the new technology, the traditional ones, and us the readers? Through it all he does have the utmost faith that the old technologies will continue to have a role:

'For many years now we have been prophesying the end of the book and the victory of the electronic media, as if books and electronic media were two gallants competing for the same beautiful reader on the same intellectual battlefield. First film, then television, later video games and DVDs and virtual libraries have been cast as the book's destroyers, and certain writers – Sven Birkerts, for example, in *The*

Gutenberg Elegies – do not hesitate to use apocalyptic language full of calls for salvation and curses against the Antichrist. ...

Essentially, nothing precious need be lost.' [24, pg.193-4]

I, for the most part, agree with Manguel's thoughts. He feels the roles will be sorted out as we move forward and that the book will definitely be a part of the future world of reading. I am also optimistic, but I do not necessarily think it should be left in the hands of the writers, or that it is necessarily a given that the codex will persevere. Writers have been the ones heading this discussion on the roles of the book and the e-book, however a much more interesting and challenging future awaits these deliverers of narrative if another perspective rises to the forefront.

'Each technology has its own merits, and therefore it may be more useful to leave aside this crusading view of the electronic vanquishing the printed one and explore instead each technology according to its particular merits.' [24, pg.283]

Exactly, but writers are not the preeminent source on the nature of the book. Yes, they provide the content, but they do not truly engage in the form. The form is what separates the codex from the e-book.

Writers have nostalgic feelings for the form, they may even value the form as historical record, but rare is the writer that truly engages and accentuates the form. The same can be said for these new technologies. For this we have to look at a somewhat forgotten player in the history of the book. We need to 'go back to things we have abandoned' and 'rediscover that which we have forgotten'. [23]

Or in the case of the vast majority of the reading and book buying public – that which we were never aware of.

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B. At this point, I must apologize and insert an editorial. One will often see Cortázar's novel referenced as a hypertext precursor. As someone that has read this novel, I would like to note that whether one reads it linearly or non-linearly it does nothing to effect the fact that it is remarkably unmemorable – with the exception being this literary quirk that seems not only unnecessary but not at all integrated. As a quick synopsis: it is a novel with little plot revolving around a group of Parisian bohemians that are indistinguishable from each other (except the main protagonist is Argentine) and their conversations, which are not nearly as profound as the author seems to think they are. In my humble opinion, there better examples of South American literature (Borges), Parisian bohemia (Miller), and literature that plays with structure (Perec). But to each their own. [25, 26, 27, 28]

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2

The Other Maker

The Other Maker:

The Book Artists, The Artists' Books

'In ancient Anglo-Saxon, the word for poet was *maker*, a term that blends the meaning of weaving words with that of the material world.' [22, pg.10]

'Makers shape things into being, granting them their intrinsic identity. Still in the corners of their workshops and yet drifting with the currents of the rest of humanity, makers reflect back the world in its constant ruptures and changes, and mirror in themselves the unstable shapes of our societies, ... and by asking over and over again "Who are we?" and by offering the ghost of an answer in the words of the question itself.' [22, pg.13]

There are at least two roles of the maker(s) for any book: the maker of the content and the maker of the form. Typically the writer is associated with the first role. The second role is filled by visual practitioners or craftsmen, who are responsible for the page layout, cover design, printing, and binding. Within the commercial world of publishing this is distributed across several individuals and/or companies.

Traditionally in publishing its thrust is to provide a physical and saleable vehicle for the content. More times than not, beyond the cover design (or dust jacket) the connection between the content and the form is to be so subtle as to be invisible.

If the codex and the e-book are to carve out unique niches for themselves there will be a need develop a more robust connection between written content and visual form. And in the case of the codex, I feel, it is imperative. The creators of the content, the writers, have up to this point been unable to provide significant reasoning for the continued design and production of physical books. As we have seen, there is a heavy reliance on nostalgia.

We will return to why we should change our view on the book and e-book relationship in a later section, and in particular on changing our reliance to the

writer-based view of both technologies, but at this point I just wanted to note the fallacy of relying on nostalgia.

Is there any form of media that has a significant role in our society whose primary attraction to the user is nostalgia? Part of the problem with nostalgia is that the user can only feel truly nostalgic for things they have experienced first hand. As a new generation of screen readers emerge they will have less and less of a connection to the book. Nostalgia will be a non-existent draw to the book. Instead the physical book will need to be reinvented to separate itself from the past – to keep itself fresh and relevant.

Likewise, publishers cannot rely on the written content and/or an author's popularity to maintain the relevance and to sell physical books as they have done in the past. For simple delivery of textual content, all signs are pointing to digital formats being the preferred method. Simply, it fits the contemporary mobile lifestyle better. The codex will have to relearn what it does better than other media. Future readers should feel that when they 'pick up' an e-book and when they pick up a physical book they will have distinct, discernibly different, and fresh experiences. If the book (in both forms) remains merely a presentation of an author's text then it has failed. I am afraid at this juncture the burden of proof is now on the codex and not on the e-book to declare its continued legitimacy as a valid form of media.

Returning to the two roles of the maker of book ... if the content maker is not providing the requisite impetus for the continued relevancy of the physical book, then we should turn to the second role – the visual practitioner. This is not to take away from the unfathomable cultural value and importance that the written narrative and content holds, but it will continue regardless of whether the codex perseveres. No, this issue is primarily about the form of the delivery system, not the written content contained therein – which makes it even more curious that writers have been leading the discussion up to this point.

The individual that has embraced the full potential of the second role is the book artist. Primarily operating outside the mainstream publishing industry, the book artist has also fused content with form to a greater extent than any other book professional. Thereby, the book artist becomes unique hybrid of the first role of content maker and second role of form maker.

Coming from a multitude of backgrounds – fine arts, graphic design, the printing industry – the book artist continually produces a unique and fresh take on the object of the book. These products collectively fall under the term *artists' books*. These book artists and their books may show us a path forward for both the physical and possibly, even the digital book.

What are artists' books and how does their engagement of the form of the book differentiate them from typical books?

As with most things in this world, if you ask a dozen people to define something, you will most likely end up with a dozen definitions. However, you will also hopefully find the commonalities that will allow for a general picture to develop. Let us begin with the most concise definition presented by AA Bronson, founding member of the Canadian artist collective General Idea and executive director of Printed Matter ('the world's largest non-profit organization dedicated to publications made by artists' [29]):

'An artist's book is an artwork for the printed page ... it's not a catalogue, it's not about art, it's not about the artist – it's the artwork itself, whatever form that may take. ... it is conceived as an artwork rather than some sort of document.' [30]

As straightforward as that definition is there are other writers that would quibble with nearly all of Bronson's qualifiers – even the mention of the printed page – yes, artists' books have been playing with the idea of a book beyond the printed page well

before our current e-book revolution. Regardless, this definition is a fine starting point for discussion.

Johanna Drucker, who has written as extensively as anyone on the subject states '... an artist's book is a book created as an original work of art, rather than a reproduction of a preexisting work. And also, that it is a book which integrates the formal means of its realization and production with its thematic or aesthetic issues.' [31, pg.2]

And further admits that it is difficult 'to make a single, simple statement about what constitutes an artist's book.' [31, pg.2]

One important delineation Drucker makes is between the *artist's book* and the *livre d'artiste*. A confusing delineation being that each term is a literal translation of the other. What is known as the *livre d'artiste* came about at the end of the 19th century in Paris. These essentially were lavishly produced books with content from 'a rising star or established star in the world of the visual arts or poetry.' [31, pg.3]

These would be your *Matisses*, your *Miros*, your *Ernsts*, your *Picassos*, etc.

Drucker explains the reason of the delineation:

'The books are finely made works, but they stop short of being artists' books. They stop just at the threshold of the conceptual space in which artists' books operate. First of all, it is rare to find a *livre d'artiste* which interrogates the conceptual or material form of the book as part of its intention, thematic interests, or production activities. This is perhaps one of the most important distinguishing criteria of the two forms, since artist's books are almost always self-conscious about the structure and meaning of the book as a form.' [31, pg.3-4]

By contrast, Riva Castleman in *A Century of Artists Books*, produced by New York's Museum of Modern Art for their exhibit of the same name, writes almost exclusively on *livre d'artistes*. In general, what Castleman presents is a very MoMA-esque take on artists' books; a lot of Paris school for the first half of the century and a lot of New York school for the second half of the century – in other words, the established canon of modern art. While the canon has had some role in the history of artists' books, critics such as Drucker have shown that there has been a more significant showing (both in quantity and conceptual quality) by artists without the same level of name recognition.

While I tend to side with Drucker in regards to the delineation between *livre d'artistes* and artists' books, there are some ideas we will come back to in regards to *livre d'artistes*; ideas that are worthy of consideration when considering 'new' approaches to the book.

Some writers also show certain proclivities to certain types or genres of artists' books. As we have seen Castleman favors works of the established canon of modern art and Drucker prefers the more contemporary conceptual works. The book *Artist/Author* focuses more on contemporary mass-produced pieces, some of which fall in line with Drucker's focus, but some of which are pieces produced by fine arts publishers that are slickly produced and designed works. This particular book features seven different writers (and therefore seven different takes on artists' books), however regarding the selection of pieces Cornelia Lauf admits, 'The books chosen for *Artist/Author* are a matter of personal taste. ... Almost all of the books are offset.' [33, pg.76]

She justifies this by contrasting the mass production of off-set printing to the lavishly produced *livre d'artistes*. However, to have a book published by off-set printing (prior to print-on-demand services) an artist would need a fair amount of money in hand to self-finance the endeavor or a someone willing to publish it for them. This then somewhat excludes lesser known or more independent artists; artists who rely

on xerography, mimeograph, desktop printers, or other printing methods executed directly by the artists themselves. However, like the Castleman/MoMA take on artists' books there are intriguing ideas to be extracted from these works featured in *Artist/Author*.

Regardless, whether the works termed artists' books fit within a tight definition or not, what most interests me for this discussion are works that exploit the form and draw notice to it, because in this way it draws out the uniqueness of the codex (and other alternate book formats such as the accordion) as a form for not only creative expression but as a possible physical embodiment of the content contained within. A form that is, thereby, not so easily replaced by other media formats. The more we exploit the inherent attributes and possibilities of not only the physical book, but the e-book as well, the more these two medias will have unique and valuable roles in the future of our literary and artistic worlds.

To further develop an understanding of artists' books a brief examination of its lineage and history is in order.

Before moving on though, Dr. Stephen Bury, librarian and art historian, provides a fine summation to the question of defining artists' books:

'Artists' books are book-like objects over the final appearance of which an artist has had a high degree of control; where the book is intended as a work of art in itself. They are not a book of production of an artist's work, about an artist, or with just a text or illustrations by an artist. In practice, this definition breaks down as artists challenge it – pushing the book format in unexpected directions.' [34, pg.1]

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22. Manguel, Alberto, *The City of Words* (Continuum: London, 2008).

29. <http://www.printedmatter.org/>
30. podcast: 'Portrait of an Artist as a Book' (The Art Show, 5 May 2009).
31. Drucker, Johanna, *The Century of Artists' Books* (Granary Books: New York, 2007).
32. Castleman, Riva, *A Century of Artists Books* (The Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1994).
33. Lauf, Cornelia, 'Cracked Spines and Slipped Discs', *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books* (Distributed Art Publishers: Berkeley, 1988).
34. Bury, Stephen, *Artists' Books: The Books as a Work of Art, 1963-1995* (Scolar Press: Aldershot, 1995).

The Other Maker:

The Lineage

'Every genre creates its own prehistory. Edgar Allan Poe invented the detective story, and in doing so allowed us to include in the definition tales as old as the Bible.' [24, pg.28]

One can stretch the history of artists' books back as far as one's own definition will allow. As Castleman points out, 'The earliest forms of visual communication were pictures, or more exactly, signs representing things.' [31, pg.15]

Then following a series of evolutionary steps:

'... the Roman alphabet, the familiar one you are now reading, is a listing of abstractions that, when recited consists of one or two connected sounds imitating what the letters sound like when combined into words. No wonder such an alphabet encouraged pictorial embellishment.' [31, pg.15]

In some ways, then, the very nature of the text/image relationship is fused at the genetic level within our alphabet. Though this does not necessarily mean that the book containing this alphabet is a self-referential artwork.

Illuminated manuscripts, however, do display elements of Drucker's definition: '... a work by an artist self-conscious about the book form, rather than a merely artistic book.' [31, pg.21]

Culturally the Judeo-Christian relationship to their 'Book of God' and the scribes responsible for the book's form were very conscious about the book form (this is applicable to other religions, as well), it would be, however, hard to argue that these scribes considered themselves 'artists' in the way that we view that word today. Castleman explains, '... text and pictures were so closely associated that the

total work was clearly understood to have come from an initiating higher spirit, not from those who made it a physical entity.' [31, pg15]

Within the prehistory of the artists' book, Laurence Sterne's novel, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, will be often mentioned. Bury recognizes its influence but discounts it as an artist's book because it is not by an artist but by a writer. Regardless, it does display a willingness to accentuate and draw a reader's attention to the book and page as form itself by such methods as the infamous black page and various typographical interventions. *Shandy* is noteworthy in that it's a work that is familiar to 'the world of letters', thereby acting as a historic link, and perhaps a conceptual one as well, for those not well-versed in the nature of the artist's book.

Stéphane Mallarmé, the symbolist poet, is also mentioned as a noteworthy precursor. In his poem, 'Un Coup de Des', he left instructions on how it should be implemented on the page, drawing attention not just to the words but their physical interaction with the page and its white space. In addition, Mallarmé wrote on the conceptual framework of The Book [his capitalization] in essays hypothesizing about uniting the book and the poem into one untied form. [31, pg.33-34]

While Mallarmé may have been writing about such fusions, more than implementing them, a century before his posthumous publication of 'Un Coup de Des' in 1896, William Blake had already married word, image, page, and book using a method he called 'illuminated printing'.

Amazingly holistic compositions for his poems were self-printed and bound into book form.

'His capacity to mobilize the space of the page, the tones of the paper, the colors of ink and paint, to perform a drama of monumental proportions within the

relatively small scale of his book's communicative power. ... Blake's work serves as embodiment of independent thought realizing itself through the forms and structures of the book.' [31, pg.25-26]

This is the mode of thought that is once again necessary to reinvigorate and embolden our creative manifestations of the book – whether it is to strengthen the relevancy of the codex or allow the e-book to develop its own unique voice.

The other precursor to the modern artists' book that bears mention is William Morris. If Blake's work was the product of a singular spiritual vision, then Morris's was one of unified and tightly ordered structure. Establishing the Kelmscott Press to execute his incredibly complex and detailed visions of 'The Ideal Book'. Notably, *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer* is pointed to as an incredibly unified creation, where content and visuals are merged throughout the whole of the book. Morris's medieval tastes are particularly appropriate to Chaucer's narratives. Morris's books are also incredibly lavish displays of the book arts.

Through Blake and Morris we see the book taking on a level of importance in form that equals or envelops the content. These works accentuate and elevate what a book is and can be; something that has become far too uncommon within today's mainstream book industry.

Moving into the early twentieth century, almost all avant-garde movements had some form of the artist's book or at least some printed and bound element that's relatable, such as journals or one-off publications. This lineage of printed material runs through the French Symbolists (such as the works of the previously mentioned Mallarmé), the Russian avant-garde, the Futurists, the Dadaists, and the Surrealists. All of these movements produced bodies of work that rightfully deserve more attention than is allowable here.

For my purpose, I would like to make note of a few significant elements that developed through these movements. For instance, artists' books that broke with the tradition of the exquisitely/expensively produced works of William Morris. The Russian Futurists in particular had 'the desire to produce inexpensive works with available means in a format over which the artist or writer had total control.' [31, pg.47]

This element is of particular importance to artists' books moving forward in history – this spirit of the democratized art work – available for a modest sum to a wide audience. It is also worth noting that as we move forward into the future, we do have a historic precedence that books that engage the form need not be a cost prohibitive endeavor.

Another noteworthy development in several of these movements was the emergence of expressive typography. Through the work of Italian Futurist, Filippo Marinetti, in his book *Zang Tumb Tumb*, the journals of the Dadaists, or the Russian Futurists there was a breaking away from the pictorial image and the liberation of the alphabet within the confines of the page and the book.

The turn of the century also brought about a development of the image – the practice of collage. While the Cubists may have been the first to use it in conjunction with painting, both the Dadists and Surrealists developed it into a process of image making unto itself. No longer did one need to possess the skills of the draughtsman or trained illustrator. By appropriating and recontextualizing images, the book and its textual content could be embellished, interpreted, and challenged in new and unexpected ways. With these creative developments, as well as, developments within printing, boundaries of who could engage with the book as a creative medium were opening up. [35, preface]

Livre d'artistes ran counter to pretty much everything stated above. These endeavors were expensively produced, usually by printing houses with highly skilled

craftsmen in the book arts. The 'illustrators' were usually famous or up and coming artists. The text likewise was usually well known classic texts or by a known and noteworthy living writer. And as such there was little interaction between text and image – falling into the tradition of illustrated books with text on one page and the illustration on the facing page.

Ironically, the *livre d'artiste* practice was going on concurrently to the avant-garde innovations mentioned above. Many of the avant-garde's ideas towards the book would prove more influential and relevant to the artistic movements and frameworks that followed in the second half of the century than the *livre d'artiste* practices. *Livre d'artistes*, however, made use of an idea that is worth exploring further: artist and author collaboration. This idea could bear new, intriguing fruit for the future book.

The publisher Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, for example, who 'enjoyed working with avant-garde artists and writers' published works by poets and Guillaume Apollinaire and André Breton in conjunction with artists working in the new styles of cubism and surrealism. [32, pg.29]

And while the surrealists did not integrate text and image within the same page to the extent the Dadaists did, as writer Renée Riese Hubert points out, through collaboration they often would integrate and cloud the *roles* of artist and author. In the case of the book, *Les Malheurs des Immortels* by Paul Eluard and Max Ernst:

'It becomes clear, then, that the poems are themselves collages of small groups of words composed by each of the two authors who hardly bothered to correct, let alone censure one another.' [36 pg.59]

They also subverted the traditional methodology of illustration:

'Since the collages were completed before the poems, each time Eluard added to the unfinished text he had to respond to an image as well as to words; ...' [36, pg.59]

This type of collaboration could push both practices of writing and image making for the book in new directions. And, likewise, could stretch the format of the book in different ways as well.

This is not to say, the collaboration of author and artist is totally unheard of in contemporary times. It is, in fact, quite commonplace in both children's books and graphic novels. And both can skirt the boundaries of artists' books. The works of Chris Ware, are notable for the use of incidental space, often self-consciously referencing the book itself or even the reader; these concepts owe much to artists' books. [37] While this exploitation of the book form is not commonplace in the genre, as models of artist/author collaboration (or, as in Ware's case, artist as author), both graphic novels and children's books deserve mention in this discussion of approaches to the book's form.

There is, however, still much exploration to be had within author/artist collaboration outside of these two genres. This exploration could be another route toward reinvigorating forms of literary expression. Image-makers and wordsmiths may have the abilities to push the other into different territories. This could by extension stretch the shapes of the book and e-book into challenging and unique forms. These forms might even better embrace the term *surrealist* than the *livre d'artistes* that existed during that artistic movement's heyday.

Moving forward, new ideas and concepts were developed within artists' books as new art movements pick up the codex for their own purposes. We also will see, however, how many of these early elements of artists' books were developed and often proved equally as influential to these new forms. For example, the idea of

democratic multiple had a particular allure to artists in the second half of the twentieth century.

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22. Manguel, Alberto, *The City of Words* (Continuum: London, 2008).
24. Manguel, Alberto, *A Reader on Reading* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2010).
29. <http://www.printedmatter.org/>
30. podcast: 'Portrait of an Artist as a Book' (The Art Show, 5 May 2009).
31. Drucker, Johanna, *The Century of Artists' Books* (Granary Books: New York, 2007).
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34. Bury, Stephen, *Artists' Books: The Books as a Work of Art, 1963-1995* (Scolar Press: Aldershot, 1995).
35. Gallagher, James, *Cutting Edges* (Gestalten: Berlin, 2011).
36. Hubert, Renée Riese, *Surrealism and the Book* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1988).
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The Other Maker:

The Recent Past and Conceptual Directions

Artists continued creating publications throughout the mid-twentieth century; avant-garde groups such as CoBrA, Lettrists, Situationists, and Fluxus were particularly attracted to self-publishing. There are, however, two artists that are credited as the true beginning of the contemporary era of the artist book: Ed Ruscha and Dieter Roth. They embraced mass production through modern mechanical means (a break from fine arts printing), while still investigating the book as singular art form. So as they were still experimenting with form and content, they were also now experimenting with audience. While the general public could attend a museum and view a painting or a sculpture from a well-known artist, relatively few could own one. With mechanized printing, however books could be produced at an affordable per unit cost.

Edward Ruscha's *Twentysix Gasoline Stations* was initially printed in 1962 in a run of 400 and sold for around \$3 ... and then in '67 he reprinted in an edition of 500 ... and in '69 an edition of 3,000 ... [33, pg.33-34] This constant reprinting kept the cost of the art down and kept it continually accessible as *Twentysix Gasoline Stations's* fame grew. This flies in the face of how the art industry is set up to work, with its pillars of rarity (or uniqueness) and artist popularity to determine monetary value.

'The book as a vehicle for art ideas and as an art form has many advantages, most of which can be summed up by the word accessibility.' [38, pg.19]

Ruscha's book is exactly what it says on the cover: a series of straightforward photos of twenty-six gasoline stations. The art is not the photos themselves but the actual book and how the photos are presented within the serial nature of the codex. In addition, his use of the book is as straightforward as his photos – it is not exquisitely produced as the *livre d'artistes* were or even as the works of Morris or Blake. Ruscha did not print it himself or have it produced by finely trained craftsmen. It was printed

and bound in fairly non-descript methods of mass production, and yet, he still drew out the essence of what a book is (ie. as a series of pages/images) and created something quietly beautiful. It's power lies not in it being a rarified object, or a piece of fine craftsmanship, but within the conceptual simplicity itself. I point out these aspects of Ruscha's piece to draw attention to the fact that there are infinite methods of exaggerating a book's form and sometimes it is the simplest solutions that best accentuates a book's unique qualities as a media format.

Dieter Roth represents an interesting figure in the world of contemporary artists' books. His early works embraced the book arts and the concepts of craft and assemblage within the book format, but then in the 1950s he also began to embrace mass production. Roth also is an interesting figure, because he used the book as a primary dedicated mode for his artistic expression.

What is most important, in regards to the future developments of the book, is Roth's conceptual basis for his books – regardless of if they were limited edition or mass produced:

'There would be no way to translate a Dieter Roth book into another medium – the idea of the works is inseparable from their form as books and they realize themselves as works through their exploration of the conceptual and structural features of a book.' [31, pg75]

This idea is the foundation upon which future books should be based to secure their relevancy and, likewise, in developing robust e-books. We should continually be asking ourselves, are they inseparable from their form?

From the 1960s onward artists' books have grown and expanded into a myriad of complex directions – varying from inexpensively produced volumes of Xeroxed pages bound with a staple to exquisitely hand-bound volumes made with absolute premium materials; some maintain the traditional codex and others have been cut,

folded, and transformed into sometimes literal architectural structures. Content has likewise included a near infinite array of text and/or image relationships reflecting all manner of artistic and social movements.

It is not my goal to produce any kind of true distillation of this recent history. As stated earlier, I am more interested in pointing out ideas that could be drawn upon as we look for different viewpoints in approaching the book. It is clear that the thought process when considering the form of the book is considerably different when comparing the visual practitioner with the writer – if indeed, the writer truly considers the book as a form at all. There are, however, a few more concepts and approaches beyond the ones already mentioned that are valid to the reinvention of the book.

'Sequentiality is one of the key attributes of the book and many artists harness it ...'
[38, pg.36]

While other media do rely on sequentiality, sound and video, the book is unique in that its spatial structure has sequentiality built within it. This makes it ideal for as a carrier for the written narrative, but book artists draw more attention and accentuates this element in more overt ways.

A very simple, yet successful example of an artist's book harnessing the book's sequential structure is Jon Voss's *Wartelist*. On the front cover is a drawing of a man sitting at a bus stop. On the inside back cover is the other half of this drawing with a bus arriving. The book is purchased unbound. The reader can purchase as many interior pages as they like. All of the interior pages have scenes of empty road that join up to both of the interior cover scenes. In this way, the reader determines not only the structure of the book, but also the structure of the narrative, by determining the time and distance between the man and the bus. [31, pg.262-3]

By unbinding the book, several artists have challenged the inherent sequentiality of the book and the structure of the narrative as well. In Peter Beaman and Elizabeth Whitely's *Deck of Cards*, '...they rely upon narrative conventions (the idea, of unified place, time, action, and characters) as a way for their parts to be read in relation to each other.' [31, pg.278]

Five major characters appear throughout the deck. Some cards have quotes of dialogue not attributed to any particular character. 'Other sections are more descriptive and proselike ...' [31, pg.279]

Similar to some of the hypertext experiments mentioned earlier – one could imagine this being done entirely digitally – but the physical interaction allows for a kind of control by the reader that is not as alienating as a screen-based interaction would be. The reader may shuffle the cards and see what randomly comes up or they could spread them all out and construct it with intention. Likewise, they could deal the cards as one would for a game and have multiple people construct the story. All these interactions could be mimicked within the digital environment, but there is an ease of control with which the card format allows the user to shift and mix the various elements. There is also a satisfaction, that is not replicable by digital interaction, in physically constructing a story. The interaction of the cards is decidedly different from the interaction of flipping pages in a standard book when reading; the cards force a consciousness of the physical structure, whereas when we are reading a book the interaction with the codex and the page is almost completely unconscious.

These examples begin to touch upon possibilities of what can be done with the sequential format of the physical book. However, even the most simple and commonplace method can draw delight from the sequential book format – who doesn't love the simple animation of flipbook?

'All books are visual. Even books which rely exclusively on type, or on unusual materials, or those which contain only blank sheets have a visual presence and character. All books are tactile and spatial as well – their physicality is fundamental to their meaning. Similarly, the elements of visual and physical materiality participate in a book's temporal effect ...' [31, pg.197]

Another method of drawing out a book's essence and accentuating its form is through its very materiality. Both physical books and e-books can play with sequentiality in their own unique ways, but when it comes to materiality it is the most obvious and primary attribute that separates the two media. By exploiting this aspect of the book – and likewise by exploiting the e-book's digital and immaterial nature – we can further draw separation between these two book formats. This separation will help develop the view that the book and e-book experiences are distinct and not competing. This is an important aspect that we will return to: development of a distinct and non-competitive relationship.

Marcel Duchamp's *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même* (also known as *The Green Box*) explores materiality through documentation. A cabinet of curiosities containing personal notes and materials to his *Large Glass* project, *The Green Box* contains close to 100 facsimile notes loosely bound together in the titular box. It is the diversity of the materials and formats that provides its richness. As Drucker writes: 'The box and archive format provides a voyeuristic satisfaction. [It is] of something preserved from a past whose only traces are these material bits and pieces.' [31, pg.99]

Duchamp's piece is related to a particular subgenre of artists' books: the visual journal. Many of these may not be considered artists' books in the strictest sense because they lack the conceptual approach of being conceived as an original piece of art – but others, such as *The Green Box*, through their presentation come together as well formulated and unified pieces. Regardless, of if they are technically artists' books, they often are appealing on a physical level because of

the diversity of materials, whether they are collaged elements, drawings, text-based or often a combination of all these things. Looking at journals from a content stand point their appeal is obvious: voyeurism. Jennifer New puts it a tad less blunt, 'This is the appeal of visual journals to outside viewers – the opportunity to see how a person operates.' [39]

The book through it's materiality becomes a compact, definable representation of something that we know can not really be quantified: our lives.

Exploitation of a book's material and form does not have to be a particularly exotic endeavor. The unusual use of the physical page or the binding can produce unique effects to the overall book experience. Edward Ruscha used a basic accordion fold binding for a remarkably appropriate effect in *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*. By stitching together his photos of the street into one long continuous 'strip', the material form mimics the experience of traversing and visually scanning the actual terrain in Los Angeles.

Within the work produced by book artists there is a deeper and different understanding into the nature of what makes a book a book, in comparison to the traditional writer. An artist's book can do this through a multitude of ways: provide an accessible/democratized form of art; provide a platform where the roles of artist and writer work in tandem (or completely merge) to produce both content and form; accentuate the book's inherently sequential nature or, likewise, purposely push against it; or exploit the form through materials ranging from the finely wrought tradition of the *livre d'artistes* or to the simplest element like the binding of *Sunset Strip*. Regardless, the most successful work of book artists constantly make us see this commonplace object in new ways and created a symbiotic relationship between form and content – so symbiotic that they become inseparable.

In addition to their work with books, the ideas that eddy around book artists are also immensely valuable. To conclude this section, let us take a look at some of these

thoughts by book artists and the people that have written about and/or collected this unique and often overlooked tributary of book history. These concepts will lead us into the next section as we look at why it is important that we set out unique roles for the book and e-book.

'That an artist in the late twentieth century finds the book an appropriate medium is a strange phenomenon: what does the book format allow the artist to do that a film, video, performance, painting, sculpture or suite of prints cannot? ... at the time rival information technology and mass media freed the book from the incubus of being the main channel for communication, opening up the book format for redebating.' [34, pg.4]

'The compelling quality of artists' books is the way in which they call attention to the specific character of a book identity while they embody the expressive complexity of the book as a communicative form ... the best artists' books are those which integrate production and content so dynamically that such distinctions are moot.' [31, pg.359]

'... since artists are used to making objects, they usually don't forget to consider that a book is an object.' [40, pg.143]

'The book is the means for a private transaction between the "author" and the "reader", the response lies entirely in the hands of the reader.' [38, pg.20]

'... it is only moments before the artist's use of the computer's wide ranging capabilities transcends the printed page forever. The ultimate artist's book will be an unlimited publication, available to be seen and even kept ... but no longer an object to be held, touched, wondered at, and treasured.' [32, pg.72]

'The way in which books contain and present information makes them unique. ... It is a journey, and the physicality of the object that contains it plays an essential role.'
[41, pg.10]

Finally this last thought comes from book artist Werner Pfeiffer when he spoke at Olin Library, Cornell University in 20 October 2010. For brevity's sake I will partially paraphrase. Pfeiffer recounts the incident of where 'some two-bit preacher in Florida threatened to burn a Koran as a public demonstration.' (Unfortunately this preacher went ahead with his action several months after the initial threat.) Pfeiffer points out the irony that he saw in the event: On the one hand, this man's fame spread not through book media but through electronic media – '... it was the digital world, it was the internet, it was the [twenty-four hour] news channels ...' – that made it an instant sensation; on the other hand, it was not a Kindle or an iPad that he held up with his fingers over the delete button threatening to destroy the e-book file of the Koran – 'No, it had to be the old brimstone – fire and smoke ... which makes this kind of act such a vile thing.' [42]

It was not by coincidence that it was a book artist to make this observation. It is this innate sensitivity to the roles and identities of separate media platforms that we need. We need a guide with knowledge and sensitivity to the terrain we are about to explore. From a writer's perspective the primary function of a book is as a carrier of their art. They do not see it as a creative endeavor in and of itself. Book artists, and other visual practitioners, do. In the next section, we will see why the writer's view is problematic and why all of this matters, in regards to, the future of the codex.

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31. Drucker, Johanna, *The Century of Artists' Books* (Granary Books: New York, 2007).

32. Castleman, Riva, *A Century of Artists Books* (The Museum of Modern Art: New York, 1994).
33. Lauf, Cornelia, 'Cracked Spines and Slipped Discs', *Artist/Author: Contemporary Artists' Books* (Distributed Art Publishers: Berkeley, 1988).
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42. podcast: 'Reexamining the Book: Making Book-Objects and Artist Books' (CornellCast, 13 December 2010).

3

The

Significance

The Significance:

The Models for Media

'... the primary cause of my keen and abiding love for artists' books may have something to do with a fantasy I have. In this fantasy, artists' books save the publishing industry from ignominious extinction, prevent illiteracy from sweeping the world, and enable genuine authors of actual writing to recapture the book market ...' [40, pg.144]

Why is it important or of any real concern to truly differentiate between the book and the e-book as media platforms? Why does this matter? Can we not continue producing books and e-books whose primary function is to act as nothing more than carriers for the written word? Well, yes, we can, and to some degree we will; there will probably always be a market for the pulp paper back and the e-book equivalent. If that is all we choose to use these platforms for, in the long run, this will spell the demise, for the most part, of the physical book and will also create a wasted opportunity and limited creative potential for the e-book.

Through examining the role of book artists and artists' books, it is obvious that the book as a creative endeavor is still full of possibilities and potential. Artists' books also show that the form can be more than merely a passive carrier of content; the form and content can, in fact, be so intertwined as to be inseparable. Book artists engage with books not because they feel a sense of nostalgia or feel that they are of value as historical artifacts or keepers of records, as writers do, (though they may also have these feelings), but because it is an engaging and living art form full of infinite possibilities. Publishers and producers would be better served by following a book artist vision of the book rather than an author vision of the book.

Here is why this is so important. It all comes down to how we view different forms of media and their relationship to each other.

To my thinking, there is two models in play for the relationship between old and new media formats. The first we will call the Replacement Model. This is where a newer form of media replaces the one that came before it, for example, the codex replacing the scroll or the DVD replacing the VHS cassette. For one reason or another the new form of media fulfills the same purpose as the older form of media, but is deemed superior by the majority of users.

Let us look at another example:

vinyl record --> compact disc --> mp3

These are all delivery devices that carry the same content. While the experiences are different, either they're not different enough, or the new technology offers advantages over the previous technology that outweighs whatever the user may be giving up (once again in the perception of the vast majority of the users).

I owned Yo La Tengo's *I Can Hear the Heart Beating as One* in all three of the above listed formats. While I enjoyed the vinyl LP's art work, packaging, and listening experience, I could not play it in my car like the CD, and when it came time to move to the UK the mp3 beat out both of the previous technologies for it's portability. I can carry around my entire music collection in something smaller than a cigarette packet while I'm here. In essence, it's the same content and while how I experience the content is a bit different, it's not *that* different and once again the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Shipping costs alone to bring a record collection of any size across the ocean would be cost prohibitive and ridiculous for the average student – not to mention the storage space.

The second model I will call the Alternative Experiences Model. In this model when the newer media format comes about it does not necessarily replace the older one. This is because the experiences are different enough that the older format retains its relevancy and the two formats continue to coexist. One example may be

painting and photography. Ironically, during the advent of photography, there were some that thought this relationship would follow the Replacement Model. The assessment was that photography could do what painting did but better, more accurate, and more replicable. In some ways this was true – we no longer see a great many paintings of battle scenes and historic events as we did before photographic technology. So some of the more 'journalistic' roles that painting held were usurped by the camera but painting within the fine arts continued to develop and explore its medium in new ways that the camera could not. If Impressionism marked the beginning of the modern movements of art, it also marked a more painterly methodology of painting than the styles that preceded it. [43, pg. 463].

Here is another example of an Alternative Experiences Model:

theatre | book | film

All three of the above medias can carry, or more accurately interpret, the same content but they offer completely different experiences. One could go and see Shakespeare's *The Tempest* performed live or read the text within a book or see a cinematic interpretation, such as Peter Greenaway's *Prospero's Books*. All three provide vastly different ways of experiencing Shakespeare's words. Because of this, none of these media types can or will replace the other. This is where the writer and book artist viewpoint comparison comes in.

The e-book versus the paper book discussion has been framed as a Replacement Model discussion, even by the people that are firmly pro-paper book. The voices arguing for the paper book have a very similar tone to the pro-vinyl contingent that used to argue for the continuation of records. They would focus on details of the experience that quite honestly were nice, poetic, and, indeed, nostalgic. These details really did not outweigh the advantages and conveniences afforded the newer media modes (once again to the vast majority of consumers of music).

By contrast, theatre and film are viewed as separate distinct art forms – not strictly as carriers of another art form. Vinyl and mp3s are viewed not as art forms but almost exclusively as vehicles for a separate art form – no matter how amazing the packaging or the album cover design. Right now the book/e-book discussion is framed, using the Replacement Model, as vehicles for a separate art form: writing. They are considered carriers of the same content, not as experiences that reinterpret the content in significantly different ways. Partly this is because a device, such as, The Kindle does not reinterpret the content in any significant way, likewise, with most mass-produced books of the publishing industry. However, I believe it is still possible and advisable to reframe this discussion as an Alternative Experience Model discussion.

As we have seen, book artists approach the form of a book on a much more structural and visual level than the writer; artists' books and the book artists that create them have the ability to reframe this book/e-book relationship by providing inspiration to designers, publishers, and even writers to create new books and e-books where the form is exploited more robustly and tied to the content in interesting and unique ways. They can do this by producing projects that accentuates a book's 'bookishness' and by producing e-books that accentuate their multimedia nature. In the previous section we explored a handful of ways this can happen.

There will be a transition. Painters began to produce paintings that were more about painting in the post-photography world. Photographers, likewise, eventually began producing photographs that exploited the uniqueness of photography instead of mimicking traditional painting themes. We now need to revisit what makes a book unique as a form, as an object, as a mode of expression – both in the physical form and in the digital form. Conveniently, as we have seen, there is a whole lineage of book works to draw upon; in some ways the future of the book is already way ahead of where painting was in the face of the photograph, thanks to

book artists. However, these ideas and concepts must begin to migrate from the art world to the larger world of publishing if they are to truly be effective.

As stated earlier, there were certain roles of painting that were usurped by photography. Theatre also held a more dominant role in our society before the advent of film. Painting was never replaced by photography and theatre still exists as an alternative art and entertainment form in the post-film world. Physical books are, most likely, destined to decrease in the shadow of the e-book, but they do not need, and should not, come to be viewed in the same way we view vinyl records or VHS tapes.

In my mind's eye, I would like to imagine a world where we compare books and e-books in the way we do with books and films – ‘Yes, *Blade Runner* is really a fantastic film, but you should also read “Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep” as a comparison.’ And, likewise, a world where writers and artists create works so singular to their art form that a book/e-book transference would be out of the question – ‘I can not fathom how one would even go about making a cinematic interpretation of *Ulysses*.’

It is truly an exciting time for the book. An exciting time for those that work with the book as a medium and for publishers and writers that are willing to open themselves to new viewpoints and possibilities. Whether one chooses to work within the world of the physical object, with board and pulp and binding and ink, or in the digital world of sound and motion and interactivity, or even possibly to bridge those two worlds in some new and intriguing way, there is no shortage of possibilities. We only limit ourselves through the narrow lens of how we have done things in the past. This is a journey where adaptability and (re)invention are key elements to the future. I do not believe in the ‘death of the book’ and I believe in the possibilities of the e-book and these beliefs do not need to be at odds. As we journey into this new territory we may have to reconfigure how we use our older tools and art forms but that does not mean they are outmoded or irrelevant.

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The Significance:

The Work

Over the past year, I have been working on a body of practice-based work, in addition to the research and written work for this paper. I wrote my initial outline proposal back in January 2010. Re-reading it today it is interesting how much has changed but also how many of the ideas have carried all the way through.

The seeds of the project began a number of years ago when I stumbled upon a book called *Delight* by J.B. Priestley in a used bookstore in Brooklyn, New York. Priestley, as far as I was able to discover, was a fairly forgotten writer in America and never achieved quite the level of fame he had in the UK even at the height of his popularity. *Delight*, like almost all of his work, was and is out of print in the US. This work was a unique catalogue of short one to two page essays on the things in his life that gave him 'delight'. The writing was highly evocative and had a wonderful character to it. The theme was timeless and I felt it would make for a good basis for a project of some sort. At the time, I was employed at an exhibition design firm in New York with little extra time for a large-scale project. So *Delight* waited patiently on my book shelf.

Through a series of various events in 2010, I decided to pursue my MA in Design. It also coincided with the electronic book gaining more and more traction. At the time, I was quite disappointed with what was being offered by the Amazon's Kindle, the leader in e-book readers. As Nicholson Baker writes:

'The problem was not that the screen was in black-and-white; if it had really been black-and-white, that would have been fine. The problem was that the screen was gray. And it wasn't just gray; it was a greenish, sickly gray. A postmortem gray. The resizable typeface, Monotype Caecilia, appeared as a darker gray. Dark gray on paler greenish gray was the palette of the Amazon Kindle.' [44]

This was what was to replace the book? It seemed unfathomable.

I had also started exploring multimedia applications. I progressively felt that the e-book was an incredibly wasted opportunity. There was an entire palette of tools that had not formerly been available to the world of literature, illustration, and book design sitting there unused. Once you move from paper to screen you now have sound, motion, and interactivity available. Why leave these languishing on the sidelines? And it seems inexplicable that *color*, which is not exactly an exotic commodity in either print or screen-based media would be left out of the equation by Amazon and their new vision of the book.

Of course, by the time I began my MA course Apple had released the iPad, a device with the ability to make use of all of these capabilities I had imagined. (Curious side note: as of the writing of this, the latest version of Kindle is still the same 'greenish, sickly gray'.)

I knew that with the speed at which programs were developed that within the end of my first semester, products would be available making use of the elements I had mentioned in my proposal. Probably the first one that came to my attention was Enhanced Editions' version of Nick Cave's *The Death of Bunny Munro*. [45] It was more of an e-book that offered audio book and video book options, than an integrated composition of all of those elements. What I had in mind was something like the way artists' books integrated text and image. In fact, looking back on my initial proposal, I had name-checked William Blake and Guillaume Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* as inspirations.

There was also a curious video posted on vimeo.com by the company IDEO. This was an updated investigation on the hypertext e-book that we had explored at the beginning of this piece. The ideas were not necessarily new to the hypertext discussion, they merely had a new iPad-esque veneer applied. The video presented three conceptual proposals and all three seemed to seem to be more interested in

interactivity for the sake of interactivity. Narrative was definitely to take a backseat, not to mention the actual act of reading was most definitely tertiary. To repeat the quote from Tom Bissell in an earlier section, 'Interactivity sabotages storytelling.' [14]

Sometime during the spring semester *Alice for the iPad* appeared by Atomic Antelope. They did something interesting. They used a very subtle form of interactivity that did not really distract from the narrative. What they added used iPad's physical interactive capabilities to create something akin to a pop-up book using the original John Tenniel illustrations. [47, 48]

These are just a few of the items that began appearing over the past year. In the end, I decided what I wanted to focus on was the use of the cinematic arts to illustrate and inform Priestley's text. I decided early on I did not want to get embroiled too much in the interactive aspect. Part of this was pragmatic – the technical skills needed to implement such things, in addition to the design, would have been more than I felt could be implemented with my skill set coming into the program. However, I also was not interested in fragmenting narrative. I do believe that are elegant solutions to interactivity such as the above mentioned *Alice*, but it was not my primary interest.

I selected five chapters from *Delight*: 'Fountains', 'Smell of Tahiti', 'Walk in a Pine Wood', 'Wood', 'Orchestras Creeping in to Piano'. Each was chosen because it presented different elements and challenges or used the five senses in different ways. 'Fountains' was highly visual in its imagery and its use of childhood memories. 'Smell of Tahiti' was by far the most narrative in describing a very specific event and, in addition, had fabulous olfactory descriptions. 'Walk in a Pine Wood' was interesting in that it was all about evoking a certain aura or vague feeling. 'Wood' was both an intellectual meditation and had a tremendous feel for texture and material. Finally, 'Orchestras Creeping in to Piano' obviously revolved around the sense of hearing and an attempt to capture in words the experience of listening to music.

Originally the intention was to produce all five as interactive pieces ... in one semester. Looking back, my enthusiasm was possibly admirable, definitely optimistic, and more than a bit unrealistic ... OK, entirely unrealistic, bordering on delusional. I began producing pieces for the production of 'Fountains' during the first semester. Taking a metaphorical and literal approach to collage, I produced a body of paper-based collages. I shot wide array of video and photography and made various audio recordings. At the same time, I was teaching myself video editing and animation software. Planning-wise I produced mood boards and written 'scripts' for each 'page'. These items were descriptive of what would happen, but not as specific as actual storyboards (I wanted room to maneuver and improvise during actual production). There was also various technical research on things like screen size and iPad capabilities; I decided to match the video to the iPad specs, but decided, in the end, to use Flash (which as of this writing is not supported by the iPad).

At the start of second semester, I was ready to begin production and began to stitch all the elements together. There were a couple goals in all of this: I wanted 'Fountains' to be something that could not have been produced in a traditional book format – it needed to embrace the media. I also did not want it to try and replicate the book – no cartoony turning of the pages. It was not to be simulation of the codex and the page; it was to be a distinct and separate entity.

I referenced and consulted works of cinema as much as I did artists' books and graphic works. Interestingly enough though, the final product which uses various collages makes use of a lot of paper *textures* all throughout it. This occurred in all five pieces. It is almost like I could not keep my love of the book and paper from seeping into my work. I do not have a problem with this. It does not in any way try to emulate a book and the collages are animated and maneuver on the screen in a way not possible with static paper. Quite honestly a 'techy' look would also not

have be appropriate to the word and world of *Delight*, a work published in the 1940s that is often evoking memories of an even deeper past.

In addition to incorporating sound and motion, I also began breaking up the linear text. Dividing the text into three pages or screens, each page has a succession of images, sounds, and video clips with corresponding phrases that faded in – building each composition over a sixty-second duration. At the end of each page's segment, the remaining text fades onto screen completing the text block.

In some ways, this works on a similar system as the artist's book, *A Humument* by Tom Phillips. Phillips, however, took an existing book and painted and drew over it leaving only select words and phrases. Through this the original text is a mystery and he creates an entirely new narrative. [49] My treatment of Priestley does eventually reveal the original in its entirety but breaks Priestley's prose into poetic forms before its final culmination.

How disruptive is this text treatment to the narrative flow? Well, I certainly do not think it would work for an entire novel, but 'Fountains' is 366 words, which is fairly evenly distributed on each of the three pages. 'Fountains' is also not so much about one cohesive narrative but a culmination of memories and meditations upon the subject. Regardless, I imagine some readers will not necessarily find it to their liking; it forces them to read the text in a non-linear manner dictated by me, the designer, but I imagine others will find it a new and interesting entry point into the text. Since the text corresponds to the images and sounds, I could imagine a more advanced system where every time you open the page it randomly begins with a new text and image succession, thereby every time the reader opens the book they approach it from a new direction. Regardless, in the end the text is presented as the author originally wrote it. For me, that was something I still wanted to be respectful to.

The other four chapters were eventually tackled in a completely different method. With time quickly fleeing and a little over a month to go, I decided that even producing one more chapter in the method I had done with 'Fountains' was not feasible (remember, I had actually produced almost all of the visual and sound materials the semester prior). I took a different tactic. I would spend one week on each piece. I would abandon any aspect of interactivity and see what I could come up with using strictly sound, video, and text; even the minimal amount of interactivity I had used on 'Fountains' was still being tweaked as I began work on these last four pieces.

I added another little twist to this. I was still interested in producing a 'multimedia' exploration to illustration, but in addition, to working in screen-based media, I was curious in adding tactile elements. These were to take the form of found objects to be housed in boxes. Inspirations were Duchamp's *Green Box*, Flux Boxes, the works of Joseph Cornell, cabinets of curiosities, and the novel *So Many Ways to Begin* by Jon McGregor. [50] It also was equally informed by my own experience of working in the exhibition design industry for a dozen years – objects have a certain power to themselves and I was curious about the interaction between time-based media and three dimensional objects – especially as I looked towards the final exhibit at the end of the year. I was also unsure after a week how 'finished' the media components would be. Honestly, I thought the objects would be needed to tell the story, thinking that I would end up with possibly disconnected film and sound snippets.

If I had overestimated my abilities in my original planning, then I might have underestimated them in completing these short video pieces. In the end, all four chapters were completed as six to eight minute 'film-poems', to steal a term from Scottish avante-film maker Margaret Tait. [51, pg.10] Each one consisted of the entirety of the text, so the act of reading was always implicit to the pieces. In fact, if one removes the text the pieces would fail to work in a real cohesive narrative sense. In this way, they are not films in the ways we normally think about films. I

believe, they work well then as discussion points for text and media possibilities; they do not have the high level of finish of projects with a longer production times, mind you, but the fact that the text/image/sound relationship work to inform each other and are integral to the piece as a whole is a success of some kind.

Concerning the individual chapters – ‘Walk in a Pine Wood’ was all about ambience, so most of the imagery is purposely vague, dark, and mysterious. Text and layers of imagery slowly fade and mesh together disappearing in abstract images of pine needles and trees. ‘Smell of Tahiti’ follows a stricter narrative/storytelling bent. The imagery in this one follows a more traditional text/image relationship – a more straightforward illustration of the text. I am vaguely unsatisfied with this one because of that. The imagery could have pushed the text in a different direction, a more unexpected direction. ‘Wood’ is a break from the previous two, where text and video were integrated within the same field. ‘Wood’ is paced differently. I was trying to literally to go for something more ‘blocky’ and the text is often composed on still-images that breaks up the various video footage. ‘Wood’ allows the reader to read the text then ponder the imagery at a separate point in the timeline, markedly different than the other two, where text and image coincide. I am not sure one method is superior to the other, just different. Regardless, of either methodology, they are all decidedly different experiences than the static page.

The final piece, ‘Orchestras Creeping in to Piano’, takes another tactic on text and image relationship. Admittedly, this was partly born out necessity. J.B. Priestley describes a process of building that occurs as instruments accompany one another. Knowing that it would prove difficult – strike that – near impossible – to get the requisite permission to film and record an actual orchestra, I knew I would need to come up with a different method.

The idea came from sitting in on a talk given by audio collagist DJ Shadow. The talk itself was not all that insightful (mainly him being a bit of an old man and

complaining about the current state of hip-hop), however it got me to thinking about his process of making music. In essence, he built 'orchestras' through layered samples and loops. So on a much more simplistic level, I selected a series of pieces that in my mind typified the instruments described (though only one would be classified as 'classical music'). Looping the sections that exploited those sounds best, I created the audio composition, then I filmed myself creating an abstract drawing that mimicked the music – a different color and line for each instrument. When it came to video production, I once again referenced the layering quality described by the text; as the audio composition became more complex, the video composition matched this complexity. This piece, I am, perhaps, most pleased with. It is an interpretation of the text in an unexpected manner. It uses all the elements of sound and motion to convey the meaning of the words, but also takes the text into a different an unexpected direction.

Sound in the other pieces were also used to create both soundscapes and to use music to convey certain emotions – 'Tahiti' actually might use music the best in this regard – conveying the transition from dreariness to exaltation. 'Walk' is primarily soundscapes with intro and outro music for mood and 'Wood' plays with swapping sound and vision, ie. the video may be of a modern workshop but the sound is of young man explaining the trees of a forest and the process of coppicing. I also selected music that used a lot of wooden percussion to further express the aspects of the titular material.

Obviously, through these five treatments, I was only scratching the surface on the possibilities available. The combinations of motion, sound, and interactivity with text and narrative are as vast as those explored on the printed page. I had already mentioned my limited use of interactivity, likewise, typographically, I was pretty restrained with my treatments. Beyond the illustrative treatments in 'Fountains', I primarily kept the type straightforward – fading onto and off the screen. Obviously there is a lot more terrain to be covered in this regard. Regarding sound, I stayed away from voice over – primarily because I wanted the focus to be on reading with

the sound and image responding to and with the text, not repeating it. That was just my take, others may decide to embrace or experiment with using different languages, voices, and characters.

Regardless of the methodologies chosen, my primary goal was to create a Alternative Experience to the physical book. I contend the reading of a text from a Kindle versus that of a physical book is only marginally different. Through my experiments with Priestley's work I can see there is a tremendous amount possible within this new world of reading. As stated throughout this paper, this is not a one-sided endeavor – physical books will need to work harder to create a separate space for themselves as well. If both are to continue developing and co-occupying the same landscape, they will need to develop in the way painting and photography did – by exploring their unique aspects and accentuating them.

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The Significance:

The Final Pages, The Turning Pages

When I began this project, I was interested in the development of the electronic book. I am still very much interested in that endeavor, however through the course of the year, in my mind it became obvious that creative practitioners will produce a vast array of exciting solutions using the media in new and insightful ways. Ways that we have yet to even ponder.

Yet as I came upon the time to write this piece, I realized the onus was not on e-books to make themselves relevant – once again over the course of the year that has apparently been accomplished – but for physical books to proven that they are *still* relevant. This is how this paper developed the way it did. Where originally I looked to artists' books to inform and inspire my practice based work in the e-book, I realized they could also be used to inform and inspire new and relevant forms of the physical book.

Whether the physical book and e-book relationship is ultimately determined to be a Replacement Model or an Alternative Experience Model has yet to be decided. I do believe it will require the majority of readers and publishers to shift their viewpoint of the book from merely being a carrier of writing, to being an art form capable of standing on its own.

As stated throughout, this will not come from writers who have been leading this conversation; to them – beyond extraneous feelings of nostalgia – this is what the book has always been, a servant to their art. No, we must shift our viewpoint to that of the book artist. Someone who sees a book as a world of creative possibilities to inform, to intrigue and to elicit delight, not just through it's content on the page, but through it's form and through the marriage of the two. A marriage that must be seen as an inseparable whole. One that cannot be simply copied and pasted into an electronic format.

Likewise using this method will only help aid us in creating more robust e-books, as well – to avoid cartoonish mockeries of turning pages and images on our screens of books sitting on bookshelves. To begin to view the e-book as it's own separate form of expression and communication. The book artist view can only help to nurture all forms of the book in our future.

As we begin to venture down within that valley into the future, and traverse that terrain to the horizon, we will need to look at where we have been before. We may have to alter our old tools to fit new functions, but as Manguel states,

'Essentially, nothing precious need be lost.' [24, pg.194]

and we may need to create new tools, as well. Perhaps,

'... a device that, like Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, will allow for a sort of mini-opera, in which all the senses must come into play in order to re-create and enhance a text.' [24, pg.194]

Regardless, we are extremely lucky to live at this point in history where we have the choice to work with and engage both old and new forms of books.

Is the electronic book the new cinema and is the codex like theatre? Will it also continue to persevere in the face of a new technology? Or will the electronic book replace the codex as the codex replaced the scroll that came before it? One thing is for certain we will continue making books and continue reading them regardless of their form. And in my opinion, we can never have too many ways to engage with reading, text, and narrative.

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