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On a day in February 2014, Jesse England left his apartment in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. He told no one about his travel plans and paid his bus fare in cash. He arrived at a public library and quietly sought out several books about a particular subject without the help of a computer terminal or a librarian.

Over the course of several hours he researched this subject, which was an area of knowledge he had not studied before in any substantial form. Notes were taken on a blank sheet of paper. Care was taken not to study within view of a surveillance camera. He did not check out any of the books containing information on this subject, nor did he utilize any networked means of currency transaction such as a debit or credit card.

The paper containing his notes was kept on his person. After returning home, he studied the notes again before burning the paper, crushing the ashes, and flushing them down the toilet.

DECLARATION

"I, Jesse England, gained new knowledge without the help of an internet-connected search engine. My actions were not recorded by the search engine company, nor was this information intercepted by the surveillance administration of my country. As I was not carrying my cell phone, my position could not be triangulated with the records kept by my telecom provider. My credit and debit cards were not used, to avoid the recording of time and location when money needed to be exchanged. All these measures were taken with the goal of seeking direct information acquisition without private and governmental organizations gaining knowledge that I was seeking new, potentially inconvenient knowledge."

Now that he possesses this knowledge he is willing to discuss the subject in question, but only through US Mail, which is the only method of remote communication not subject to unwarranted surveillance in his country.

For more information, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Jesse England, P.O. Box 81655, Pittsburgh, PA, 15217, USA. Offer good through August 2014.
Welcome to issue sixteen of The Blue Notebook

Many thanks to our writers for a great selection of in-depth essays and reviews for this issue, in order of appearance:

Tension, Style, and the Modern Psyche: A Stylistics Analysis of Philip Zimmermann’s ‘High Tension’ by Alison Gibbons. “Given the formal array present within the field of book arts, it is not surprising that form has been privileged in the critical discourse on artists’ books. There are numerous practical guides, visual catalogues and diachronic accounts of the genre’s development. What is lacking, however, are close textual analyses of artists’ books, critical readings that consider both linguistic structure alongside the visual and physical properties of such works in order to account for the unique reading experiences artists’ books can offer. This article seeks to redress such neglect in artists’ books research by presenting a stylistic account of Philip Zimmermann’s (1993) High Tension.”

Pete Kennedy’s article inspired by Lucy Lippard: “To codex or not to codex’ that is the question Lucy Lippard’s loose-leaf catalogues helped me solve. The article considers the need or no need to bind sheets to make a book. It comprises a brief summary of Lippard’s talk Exhibition Histories on 11.04.13, a consideration of B. S. Johnson’s book The Unfortunates, a mention of a book about solitary bees by Peter Chatwin and Pamela Martin and the work of Don Celender in the BABE show at Bristol’s Arnolfini in April 2013. Also, an introduction to some of my own artists’ books some of which incorporate loose leaves.”

Jeremy Dixon of Hazard Press reports on: Aliens, Sunset, and Radioactivity: visiting three artists’ books in Philadelphia. “I knew Philadelphia was famous as the city of love, but I was soon to discover it is also a city of poetry and artists’ books! This visit gave me the opportunity to combine my poetic interests with some research into artists’ books held in collections in the city.”

John McDowall’s essay is a version of an artist’s talk he gave in the context of the ‘Locating Boccaccio in 2013’ exhibition held at The John Rylands Library, Manchester, UK. “I focus on some artists’ books as exemplifications of the appropriation of existing works of literature, in which the materiality of embodied language and its supports have been engaged with. Reviewing some of these traces of the incorporation and the manifestation of an act of reading, and in particular the use of various modifying strategies such as transcription, re-ordering or erasure.”

Ciara Healy reviews a recent book work Ruskin’s Pond - A Photographic Study by John Woodman, and Mat Osmond’s article The Mingled Measure considers interpreting and adapting Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.

Many thanks to the artists who accepted Tom Sowden’s invitation to produce artwork for this issue:

Matthew Birchall, Amir Brito Cadór, Kate Bufton, Jesse England and Sara MacKillop. And, thanks of course to Tom Sowden for this issue’s cover.

Thank you, also to our referees, Dr Anne Béchard-Léauté (France) Maria Fusco (UK) Susan Johanknecht (UK), Jeff Rathermel (USA), Dr Paulo Silveira (Brazil) and Ulrike Stoltz (Germany) for their continual duties.

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We welcome your ideas for articles for future issues - submission guidelines can be found on our website at: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/bnotebk.htm

The address for the online colour version of this issue is: www.bookarts.uwe.ac.uk/blue_notebook/x180/878a/tbn15.pdf

And finally, many thanks as ever, to you, our readers and contributors for your ongoing support for The Blue Notebook through sending ideas for essays, articles, reviews and artworks, and of course subscribing.

Sarah Bodman

Sarah Bodman
Figure 1: Philip Zimmermann, *High Tension*, Montage '93 with Visual Studies Workshop Press. Courtesy of the artist.

**Tension, Style, and the Modern Psyche**

*A Stylistic Analysis of Philip Zimmermann's 'High Tension'*

Alison Gibbons

Artists' books or works of book art come in all shapes and sizes. They come in a variety of formats, from the traditional book we hold in our hands to a paper scroll on a roll of film as in Mandi Goodier's (2009) *Exposed 120: Memory Plus* or a collection of receipts such as David Vassie's (2011) *Receipt*. Artists' books can be physical objects or works of electronic or digital literature. They can be distributed as published multiples, as limited editions, or as one-off unique objects. Bodman and Sowden (2010) discuss issues such as these in the introduction to *A Manifesto for the Book*, a collection of interviews, essays and case studies that explore concerns surrounding the question 'What will be the canon for the artist's book in the 21st Century?' These matters are, of course, important.

Indeed given the formal array present within the field of book arts, it is not surprising that form has been privileged in the critical discourse on artists' books. There are numerous practical guides, such as Sarah Bodman's (2005) *Creating Artists’ Books*, visual catalogues like *1000 Artists' Books: A Showcase of Fine Hand-bound Structures*, *Exploring the Book as Art*, and diachronic accounts of the formal scope within the genre's development, compiling a canon of works in the process as offered by Johanna Drucker in her seminal (1994) book *A Century of Artists' Books*. As is evident from the cited examples, these books also tend to be written by artists' books practitioners themselves or academics working in the visual arts.

I myself am neither an artist nor a scholar of visual arts. Rather, I am a stylistician interested in the workings of language in literature; that is, how literary texts create meaning - how their linguistic structures create experiential effects and suggest interpretations to readers. In my own research, I work on multimodal printed fiction, literary works that employ words, images, and interactive tactility in the development of their narrative. In doing so, I offer textual analyses of the ways in which the formal structures of language work together with imagistic content in order to create certain reading experiences. As such, I was surprised to find a scarcity of close textual analyses of artists' books, which similarly interrelate different semiotic modes for aesthetic affect. In this piece, I seek to redress the lack of textual analysis in artists' books research by presenting a stylistic account of Philip Zimmermann's (1993) *High Tension*. As mentioned, artists' books do not come in uniform packages and therefore choosing a representative text of the genre is somewhat problematic. Nevertheless, I have selected Zimmermann's work for analysis since it is a fairly well-known text amongst artists' books, having won a prize at Montage '93, an International Festival of the Image held in Rochester, USA in 1993. Moreover, it features in Drucker's aforementioned overview to the genre in the twentieth century (2004 [1994]) in which the leading artist's book critic briefly cites it as an example. It was also considered by Hubert and Hubert in their book-length discussion of the readerly interpretation of artists' books (1999) in which they consider it to be an artistic rumination on memory. While neither Drucker nor Hubert and Hubert offer sustained attention to *High Tension*, its mention in both studies suggests it provides a suitable canonical example.

*High Tension* is a five-sided book that is almost fan-shaped, its pages all featuring what Drucker terms as a 'spiked outer edge' (2004 [1994], 84). Its small yet rectangular double-spreads are amass with colour and pattern. While each spread is the same size, the pages alternate between two diagonal layouts. The book thus makes an X-shape when being read, so that while any one double-spread is open, the reader can inevitably see parts of the previous and succeeding pages with their own arresting designs.

The narrative itself is limited to one short phrase per page. From its opening aperture, *High Tension* directly addresses the reader: 'Your heart pounds / Your breathing is shallow' (Zimmermann 1993, 1-2). The second-person reference beckons for reader engagement, its affective force manipulating the reader into self-implication with the 'you' role. Moreover, it is used here within categorical assertions that lay claim to the way in which 'you' feel through statements giving physiological effects of anxiety, thus engendering a sense of uneasiness for the reader. Zimmermann's choice of accompanying image is also vital in generating this emotive effect.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the reader is confronted by a sepia photograph of a train approaching. The narrative viewpoint of the image suggests a dangerous proximity, the train seeming to come towards the reader with alarming speed. The co-presence of the words with this image on the double page spread means that readers naturally create a coherent narrative context. In the active cognitive process of reading, the physiological effect that *High Tension* assigns to 'you' here (the pounding heart, the shallow breathing) is understood as a consequence of the oncoming danger as the train hurtles towards the viewing-reader-'you'. This implied narrative scenario occurs due to the coalescence of word and image and instantly makes *High Tension* a rather unsettling reading experience.
Figure 3: Philip Zimmermann, *High Tension*, Montage ’93 with Visual Studies Workshop Press, top left pp.7-8; top right pp.55-56; bottom left pp.45-6; bottom right pp.31-2. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 4: Philip Zimmermann, *High Tension*, Montage ’93 with Visual Studies Workshop Press, pp.19-20. Courtesy of the artist
Like the opening sequence, all the double page spreads of *High Tension* offer a form of sensory overload for readers. Figure 3 shows four representative spreads from Zimmermann’s text (which I chose more or less at random).

As can be seen, sometimes the scope of the overlapping page images come together to form something more coherent (perhaps there are only two different images present), while at other times, multiple images contend with each other. Throughout *High Tension* though, the shape and design of Zimmermann’s text means that the images are placed in an uneasy relationship with each other, and in terms of reader interpretations, such a relationship exists to create a tension rather than a resolution of textual meaning: what is the relationship between theatre goers and drugs? Telephone pylons, cooking settings, and neon strips? Nuclear power and vision? Questions such as these can only be asked when enough of the image can be seen to identify it, otherwise succeeding images work to add another clashing layer of colour and pattern. In other words, the imagistic design of Zimmermann’s text means that its multiple images compete with each other, presenting the reader with a barrage of visual stimuli not easily organised into a meaningful whole.

The narrative content of *High Tension* works similarly to its visual collage. Rather than enable coherence, the phrases of verso and recto pages also conflict with each other, some more than others.

On pages 19-20 (shown in Figure 4), for instance, you are told: ‘You don’t have any appetite and lose weight’ (Zimmermann, 1993, 19-20). In this case, not only are these two statements semantically in direct contradiction with each other, their syntactic parallelism and the repetition of the noun ‘weight’ foregrounds the relationship of opposition they contain.

These various tensions of word, image, and form create a sort of visual and semantic onslaught for the reader, maintaining the unsettling feeling that the opening of the book imparted. As Huber and Huber state, ‘All in all, the book suggests, both on a physical and psychological level, various conditions of ‘high tension’ (1999, 170). Drucker is in agreement, claiming that the ‘theme of *High Tension*, with its emphasis on pressure experienced at the intersection of many sources of stimulation and demand on an individual psyche, edges towards the paranoiac’ (2004 [1994], 85). My reading of the text therefore accords with these critics. However, by enacting a fuller multimodal stylistic analysis than these critics have previously offered, my investigation is able to expose as well as offer evidence for the experiential effects felt by readers of *High Tension*.

Drucker is right to speak of ‘the paranoiac’. There is certainly a sense of paranoia in *High Tension* and its use of second-person and clashing images compel the reader to associate to some degree with the anxiety which emanates from it. It’s a short text consisting of one short statement on each of its 94 pages. Recourse to the full narrative makes this anxiety abundantly clear:

1. Your heart pounds  
2. Your breathing is shallow  
3. Your head hurts  
4. Your palms feel sweaty and clammy  
5. Your stomach is in knots  
6. You get dizzy spells  
7. Panic attacks wash over you like waves  
8. Your throat is dry  
9. You know your blood pressure is through the roof  
10. Your ankles are weak  
11. You can’t sleep at night  
12. When you finally fall asleep, you have nightmares  
13. And grind your teeth  
14. You find it impossible to concentrate  
15. You feel flushed  
16. You get the chills  
17. There’s blood in your stool  
18. Your hair is falling out  
19. You don’t have any appetite and lose weight  
20. You nervously eat too much and gain weight  
21. You feel nauseous  
22. Your mind wanders easily  
23. You get the runs  
24. You become constipated  
25. Mysterious rashes and sores appear  
26. You have wild mood swings  
27. You mope  
28. You make inappropriate comments in conversation  
29. You feel twitchy and jumpy  
30. You’re grumpy and snap at people  
31. Though the Cold War is over, you still worry about The Bomb  
32. You bottle up your anger  
33. You take solace in alcohol  
34. You realize you are starting to stutter occasionally  
35. You’re aggressive and self-destructive  
36. You have an increased sex drive  
37. You’re impotent  
38. You develop facial tics  
39. You throw your back out  
40. You miss deadlines  
41. You feel everyone is making demands on you  
42. You bite the hand that feeds you  
43. You become a junky because you don’t fit in  
44. You try to accept the fact that you will always be an outsider  
45. You feel you’ll never get out from behind the learning curve
You dream that they had a party and invited everyone except you
You worry that you have some horrible disease
You just want to be left alone
Technology scares you
You think people are gossiping about you
You become blocked in your artwork
You withdraw from those around you
You acknowledge that you have some strange new phobias
You’re convinced that resistance is futile
Life is out of control and
Yet it seems you are surrounded by a serene and tranquil world
Stress has you by the throat
You think: If I could reason it out logically, everything would be ok
You think: If I burnt some incense, everything would be ok
You think: If I went to confession, everything would be ok
You think: If I could get out of my rut, everything would be ok
You think: If I slept on a firmer mattress, everything would be ok
You think: If I could get my palm read, everything would be ok
You think: If I could be more flexible, everything would be ok
You think: If I only made more time to exercise, everything would be ok
You think: If I could just be more positive, everything would be ok
You think: If I was not afraid of confrontation, everything would be ok
You think: If I take up a relaxing hobby like origami, everything would be ok
You think: If I made a pilgrimage to Lourdes, everything would be ok
You think: If I did biofeedback, everything would be ok
You think: If I put work out of my mind, everything would be ok
You think: If I improved my diet, everything would be ok
You think: If I took up yoga, everything would be ok
You think: If I were more assertive, everything would be ok
You think: If I listened to relaxation tapes, everything would be ok
You think: If I had a better sense of humour, everything would be ok
You think: If I could accept my situation, everything would be ok
You think: If I took a long vacation, everything would be ok
You think: If I could find a good therapist, everything would be ok
You think: If I just did what I wanted to do, everything would be ok
You think: If I made more time for my family, everything would be ok
You think: If I was not afraid of what others thought, everything would be ok
You think: If I could find a new job, everything would be ok
You think: If I became religious, everything would be ok
You think: If I could stop feeling guilty, everything would be ok
You think: If I could only cry more easily, everything would be ok
You think: If I wasn't addicted to stress, everything would be ok
You think: If I were more assertive, everything would be ok
You think: If I listened to relaxation tapes, everything would be ok
You think: If I had a better sense of humour, everything would be ok

What doesn’t kill you makes you strong.
(Zimmermann, 1993, complete text)

Evident from the full text is the poetic quality of High Tension, which through repetition and parallelisms has a monotonous and forceful rhythm. As mentioned, High Tension opens with categorical assertions, directly addressing the reader. In the full text, these continue, initially cataloging an incredible host of physiological symptoms that you are experiencing, before beginning to integrate these with further problems in the form of psychic and behavioral disorders. The abundance of symptoms and disorders means that there must surely be at least one that readers can associate with, heightening their self-implication. The majority of these phrases begin with ‘you’ or ‘you’re’ in initial subject position, thus making those few that don’t deviant (namely, these deviations occur in lines 7, 12, 13, 17, 25, 31, and 49).

The end of what we might construe as the first section, then, offers a string of three deviant statements (Zimmermann, 1993, 58-60):

Life is out of control and
Yet it seems you are surrounded by a serene and tranquil world
Stress has you by the throat

The effect of this is to foreground these sentences within the reading experience. Since it takes initial subject position at the start of this deviant cluster, ‘Life’ is the first textual attractor. It is also interesting to note
that Zimmermann chooses his page break not after ‘control’, which would therefore allow line 58 to read as though it were a complete statement, but with ‘and’. The enjambment of this conjunction, which signals a coordinating clause overleaf (‘Life is out of control and’ appears on a recto page), suggests that this line uses iconicity, the form working mimetically with meaning: Just as ‘your’ life feels ‘out of control’ and impossible to restrain, the sentence too will not be contained to this page but spills uncontrollably onto the next double page spread. Line 59 furthers foregrounding by not only being deviant in its syntactic construction but by also featuring sound patterning. In ‘Yet it seems you are surrounded by a serene and tranquil world,’ Zimmermann repeats the ‘s’ sound, known as sibilance, so that the line delivers a soothing noise which seems to semantically accord with its meaning. Such serenity and tranquillity is instantly exploded though in the succeeded line. While ‘Stress’ continues the sibilance, it nevertheless becomes a threatening assailant. ‘Stress’ is made prominent through personification. As personified subject of the sentence, ‘Stress’ is an aggressor that ‘has you by the throat’. Moreover, the second person pronoun takes the object position, making ‘you’ the victim of Stress.

The second section of High Tension features the reporting clause ‘You think:’ followed by hypothetical constructions in which different solutions are raised which might make ‘everything’ ‘ok’. The relentless repetition of this syntactic structure creates a rhythmical effect when reading. The colon placed after ‘You think:’ produces a caesura (an audible pause in the verse line), which thus offers additional emphasis to the hypothetical ‘If’. This sonic stress in reading makes the repeated ‘If’ seem ever more hopeful while conversely the ceaseless repetition of ‘everything would be ok’ reduces the meaningful impact of the latter clause. Ultimately then, the syntactic parallelism, repetition, and sound patterning employed by Zimmermann here in the construction of this section implies that for all the hope of resolution dreamt up by ‘you’, such thoughts are merely pathetic hopes rather than actual solutions. Moreover, the repetitive force of this section enhances the anxious experiential quality of High Tension since its feels almost oppressive for readers, as they struggle to turn the pages with their changing angles and intermittent spiked edges.

Finally, the reader reaches the final double page spread, which visually returns us to the opening pages by depicting a hurtling train in close proximity to the viewing gaze. The image of the train thus works as a framing device for High Tension. Moreover, a related image – of train tracks in the same sepia tone – also appears exactly half way through the text (shown in Figure 5, overleaf).

Given the repetition of the series of sepia train and train track images at the opening, centre, and conclusion to the text, this becomes the most prominent and consistent narrative context for High Tension. Interpreted thusly, the text can be understood as the anxious stream of consciousness of ‘you’, the tumbling paranoiac thoughts motoring through your mind as you stand at the train tracks. This reading also connects to the rhythmical sound patterning of the text, the repetitive onslaught signifying not only the hostile and uncompromising nature of these anxieties but also mimetically enacting the sound of the oncoming train.

Such a narrative context, replete with emotional disquiet, suggests a sinister underside to High Tension: that the ‘you’ viewing the approaching train is contemplating suicide, an end to the life felt to be ‘out of control’. The last words of High Tension deviate from the preceding ‘You think:’ pattern and are therefore foregrounded: ‘WHAT DOESN’T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONG’ (Zimmermann, 1993, 94). In the text, these words are also capitalised for further emphasis. This cultural idiom ultimately has a positive message: that the hardships endured in life (whatever form they might take: physical, psychological, emotion) serve to make us stronger human beings. It is a cultural idiom about survival. Coupled with these lines, it is important to note that this closing image (as seen in Figure 6, overleaf) unlike the text’s opening image, in fact shows the train moving away from ‘you’, the reader/viewer/experiencer of High Tension.

This may in turn lead to a re-evaluation of the first image, and the potential danger evoked by the oncoming train. Based on the viewing position of both train images, the train was never going to collide with ‘you’, but hurl past you, a close encounter.

The final two lines of High Tension are ‘You think: If I wasn’t addicted to stress, everything would be ok / WHAT DOESN’T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONG.’ (Zimmermann, 1993, 92 / 94). Understanding these words in the context of the train images, High Tension becomes not just about the sensory overload of the modern world and an anxious self within that world. It is also about the compulsive impact of contemporary high speed culture on the human psyche. Your positioning as a viewer of the train, watching it hurtle past, makes it a spectacle, a rush of kinetic mechanical energy that you have sought out. Ultimately then, Zimmermann’s message is that in the modern age, we thrive on stress while being simultaneously tormented by it. Using close stylistic analysis, we might therefore read High Tension as a metaphor for the contemporary human condition.
Figure 5: Philip Zimmermann, *High Tension*, Montage ’93 with Visual Studies Workshop Press, pp.47-8. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 6: Philip Zimmermann, *High Tension*, Montage ’93 with Visual Studies Workshop Press, pp.93-94. Courtesy of the artist
Alison Gibbons is senior lecturer in English at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK. She has published internationally in a number of journals and collections, including New Perspectives in Multimodality (2009) and The Handbook of Stylistics (2014). She is co-editor of the first collection of essays on Mark Z. Danielewski (2011) and the Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature (2012) as well as author of Multimodality, Cognition, and Experimental Literature (2012).

Notes

References


Lippard reading notes at her Whitechapel Gallery talk, 11.04.13
Lucy Lippard’s Activism and Artists’ Books Activate Me

Pete Kennedy

‘To codex or not to codex?’ that is the question Lucy Lippard’s loose-leaf catalogues helped me solve. This article considers the need or no need to bind sheets to make a book. It comprises a brief summary of Lippard’s talk Exhibition Histories on 11.04.13, a consideration of B. S. Johnson’s book The Unfortunates, a mention of a book about solitary bees by Peter Chatwin and Pamela Martin and the work of Don Celender in parallel with BABE at Bristol’s Arnolfini in parallel with exhibition Histories. Also, an introduction to some of my own artists’ books which incorporate loose leaves…

My first substantive contribution to artists’ books in the 21st century is a loose-leaf book in a box sculpture. Some questioned its ‘bookness’ as the contents were unbound except for the box, which hinged on its left side fold and acted as the cover (see below).

When you open the box, a flap on the right side drops down on the inner frame in order that the reader can more easily access the pages which have a set sequence above a sculptured series of surprises containing word & image as physical rather than printer’s ink. I was on the prowl for precedents when I saw Lippard’s catalogue for one of her numbers shows at Chelsea School of Art’s Archive. I realised that I had a powerful ally but I remained unaware how close to my own approach her modus operandi came. As I uncovered more about her I found someone who had constantly battered the status quo by action and output over a period of 50 years. I had found another subversive who didn’t accept the conservatism of the art world. “I’m much better reading my stuff than talking. The off-site show, more works outside than inside… I didn’t see myself as a curator working with artists beyond the exhibition, off into the city and all over the place. We spent years trying to escape the art world.”

Then she gave more detail about creating the exhibition catalogues which comprised a series of index cards, unbound and in any order, for her numbers shows, so called because their titles were approximate populations of the places in which they were staged: 557,087 was Seattle 1969, then one in Vancouver in 1970, 955,000.

Alan Watts said, ‘…in the same way the meaning of the word does not consist in any one of the letters composing it and the wholeness of the wheel is neither the hub, the spokes nor the rim’ (Watts, 1997) I would say that the bookness of the book is not dependent on any of its parts. Whereas a collection of (palm or papyrus) leaves can be put together in a pothi as non-attached components of...
a whole and bound externally by wood and wrapped in cloth, equally Lippard’s index cards have been recognised as a seminal ‘artist’s book’.

Selection from Lippard’s index card catalogue for the 955,000 show. (Butler, 2012)

They are also a magnificent repository of art in action wherein all of the artists wrote their submissions adding small sketches of their ideas. Lucy chided me gently for not opening up the topic of artists’ books during question time but I had not wanted to interrupt the flow.

Whilst considering the bookness of Lippard’s Catalogues I should introduce B S Johnson’s book The Unfortunates which is bound, but not bound as one unit. (Johnson, 1969), the image here - bottom left - is of a copy of Picador’s recent reprint of Johnson’s book.

It comprises 27 sections, each stapled separately held by a removable wrapper with two of the sections marked ‘First’ and ‘Last’. The reader is invited to read the rest in any order at random. I like the book because it is housed in a box covered in claret and blue, the colours of my home town team. The reference to football is not spurious, as Johnson for many years reported on Nottingham Forest’s games for his local newspaper. Also there is a ‘report’ of part of a game in the back inside cover of the box which seems to reflect how a game can be a microcosm of life. I like the idea of the random order but the version I have seems to be of rather mean dimension and the font too small. It was not meant to be considered an artist’s book. It is however a writer’s experiment with the form of the novel, a step outside the canon contained in a box, which the publishing world of the day saw as subversive and the avant-garde saw as trivial. They missed the point Johnson was trying to make. He was attempting to convey the emotions he felt at the demise of a friend’s succumbing to a terminal illness. The loose leaves represented thoughts crossing as they do in life, not sequentially but at random.

By the time I saw the book I had already made my boxed artist’s book called Apul-Gold Metamorphosis although mine was with careful attention to font size as well as considering paper, dimension and feel. It has alternate card and semi-transparent pages. The box is black with gold around the edges resembling an old bible but when opened it is more like a jewellery box with felt surrounds and gold ribbons. You can turn the loose pages which are, ironically, sequential because the holes in each page grow gradually to reveal a golden (moulded plastic) page with words on sculpted from twigs making the ‘word’ material or ‘real’. Behind this sheet is the final surprise, a sculpture of Apulhed.
Also my most recent book adorned with castor oil leaves on front and back which opens like a ‘normal’ book but inside houses seven prints in a pouch which are ‘bound’ in place by two strips of leather. All of the materials used were carefully considered to show textures and colours which resonate with the subject matter inside- the story of six mystics and their words kept in a pot like the Nag Hammadi scrolls and other valued writings in days gone by. Both of my bookartobjects were made with the clear belief that books do not have to be bound nor sequential which Lucy’s catalogue laid the foundations for with Johnson’s book adding more weight to the idea being published as a book in 1969.

A Tibetan woodblock print with sheets housed in a pouch bound by two leather strips.

An etching for the Angeli Silesi ‘poem’ showing leather straps undone.

At the start of her professional career Lippard came across the then all-powerful American critic Clement Greenberg who had championed the once revolutionary Abstract Expressionists, consequently he did not see the changes that Lippard championed as very important. She told us that Ann Gerber who helped organise the 1969 Seattle and 1970 Vancouver shows, hated Greenbergian culture and it seems obvious John Latham, a part-time lecturer at St. Martin’s School of Art in London in 1969 did too. His event/piece ‘Still and Chew’, organised with Barry Flanagan, was described on one of the Index cards and exhibited in some form in Seattle as an artist’s book. In August 1966 Latham had withdrawn a copy of Greenberg’s ‘Art & Culture’ from the college library and invited people to select a page and chew it and spit it into a flask. About one third was immersed in sulphuric acid then sugar to neutralise it; yeast was added and it fermented for several months until May 1967 when it was distilled and placed in a glass and returned to the library following their urgent call for its return. (About this time Dieter Roth was making his sausage books out of books he found distasteful.) The Principal, on hearing of Latham’s act, wrote to him terminating his contract. Ironic as the work was acquired by MOMA and has become part of the Numbers show history. But was it a book? Well it certainly was a book, Greenberg’s originally, then it was dematerialised and reconstituted. It was exhibited alongside other artists’ books. You might say reconstructing it made it more palatable? I too found Greenberg hard to swallow. A particular hero of mine is Chaim Soutine whom I consider the very best of painters. Greenberg’s chapter on Soutine was just so condescending that if it had not already been eaten I would have devoured it myself. As one of the instigators of the post-Greenbergian era it seems Lippard disliked the critic too. “…he was a vicious son of a bitch… I just asked him to define ‘quality’. He was always on about quality: what he liked was quality and what I liked wasn’t. And I went up to him and he said, ‘If you don’t know what quality is I can’t tell you. If you can’t tell the difference between red and green... or something really snotty.’ And I said ‘you mean Greenberg and Rosenberg?’ Because they were rivals - and everybody laughed.” (White, 2010).

Her self-effacing character was to become more apparent as the discussion went on but it cleverly masks her tenacity in the face of opposition honed in the battle with Greenberg and his kin. She became a subversive provocateur in a sea of change. With her inside information she must have known the art world as a closed shop and if you can’t join ‘them’, beat it, leave them for dead. I also recognised this stance in Dieter Roth as outlined in my article in the *Artist’s Book Yearbook 2014-15* (2013) He made what he called ‘copy books’, essentially his working notes just cheaply printed and published as a form of journal. My *Enbuk* utilises a similar format including the spiral binding he used and comprises six notebooks in a see through plastic box. It does not have the beauty of *Apul-Gold* but is in effect a chronicle about my process in the making of my project *Inside This Clay Jug* for my MA.

The *Enbuk* book in a box, six red comb-bound books of my copied notes.
So Lippard’s call to arms that her numbers shows represent, invites artists like Carl Andre, Eva Hesse, Sol LeWitt and Rob Smithson to participate. They had to describe their proposed exhibit piece in words and image so Lippard and her volunteers could fabricate them. This cut out the cost of travel and keep. For ‘Timber Piece’ Carl Andre stipulated 28 units of raw timber which Lippard arranged then he told her, “That’s not mine it’s yours”, as she had used finished lumber, and when she asked him why, he said he would have not have had them planed.

Lippard said Robert Smithson, one of the Minimalists, who was more interested in site art, thought he owned mirrors and if anyone else used them he seemed to get annoyed. He did a glue pour as a dummy run for his later more famous asphalt pour. She took photos as directed by Smithson, whose work was it really then?

Her drive and passion to communicate ideas outside of the gallery into a social event then her journey from conceptual art through ‘feminist’ art to environmental and global concern is well documented (see From Conceptualism to Feminism in Afterall’s ‘Exhibition Histories’) but her personality has infectious enthusiasm to share difference. Collaboration is her watchword. She strives to be considered outside the narrow world of art saying, ‘Institutions tend to infantilise the artists, who are on the verge of infantilist anyway.’ Renegades, freedom to think outside the box, beyond the safety of institutional boundaries. She demeaned the notion of an artist having an idea and not doing it because they couldn’t get a grant.

“I would never have done nothing if I waited for grants!”

“I KNOW that’s a double negative, but it’s meant to be funny, you know - laugh at your own jokes. Nobody else will.”

“Subversive public art - not obviously art - makes them think geographic, how local links to international.” Here she was talking about the work closest to her, skirting through her early numbers shows in the 70’s, her involvement with interventionist ‘art’ like the unsanctioned performances inside Tate against BP. Her own favourite was the Yes Men, a group of Impostors posing as ExxonMobil representatives who delivered an outrageous keynote speech to 300 oilmen at GO-EXPO in Calgary, Alberta about the virtues of a technology supposedly used to render human flesh into a new Exxon oil product called Vivoleum thus creating human oil candles. The Yesmen used corporate strategy advertising as art. She leapfrogged the feminist days onto her later concern with environment and global issues. Then she went on to talk about her village which is about 250 strong and how she feels that it is inappropriate to install huge sculptures there. She laughed when speaking of Zane Fisher’s installation in Santa Fe ‘Did a bookshelf in the red stone, got washed away.’

She talked fondly of the exhibition at Boulder where artists collaborated with scientists to create blue signs that were placed around the town to show the frightening level the water will reach as a result of global warming. Returning to the subject of books she said she was working on a new book. ‘Undermining,’ due out in
2014, a kind of artist’s book about the destruction of landscape by big business, she did not go into it much. One question from the floor elicited ‘The gallery system exists and we are all complicit in it. I like your Art, like the Liberate Tate intervention against BP. It’s really about making people think.’ (Shake, 2013)

Although, like David Jury says, artists’ books are not really ‘in the gallery’ (witness 2013 RA Summer Show debacle) and there is a real issue about how you exhibit the printed word, meeting Lucy Lippard really got me thinking to myself:

Open your eyes Pete, listen outside the box, sidestep the invidious political inculcations of the multi-nationals and political propaganda we witness daily in the media. Take a look at the real important issues that ‘they’ like to ignore, forget and overlook. Remember the ‘victors’ write the histories. That is the so-called victors like the Roman Empire and their lapdog pretenders the British and the American ‘Empires’. All of them responsible for war crimes which have been written out of history but are still haunting them like the Kenyans, the Aboriginals in Australia and America and of course the Vietnamese. Witness the conspiracy of silence, like solitary bees having to taste the chemicals which are decimating their population. When I was a student in the early 1970’s I did a series of graphic strips with Apulhed highlighting the wars in the Far East (originally named to denote countries east of ‘British India’) and Africa because I felt for the human tragedy. Later I re-directed my energies to more zen like acceptance of the world and its ways but in the intervening years the strife never left, maybe the venues shifted although in some cases, like Tibet, they stuck. So, what can we do? Well stop remaining silent, tell them you are watching, that you notice things, that you are recording it. Philip K Dick, Kurt Vonnegut and Harold Pinter always wrote against the wrongs committed in the name of ideals by all the power brokers, east and west, but most of us ignore and forget them because it’s inconvenient or depressing. It was a relief to witness recently Obama’s decision not to go ahead with military intervention in civil war, (akin to the horror of the First World War), in Syria and to first concentrate on diplomatic means notwithstanding the reasons which forced him into it.

Lippard and two others, Peter Chatwin & Pamela Martin, who exhibited a show in Colchester about the plight of solitary bees, have re-awakened my political voice. So I wrote this article which in a way expresses my own concern for the well-being of our planet and the need for creative thinkers who can look at issues and propose more creative solutions. In fact that for me is what art is really about. It’s to do with getting people to question their preconceptions and search for solutions which
Short termism was, we thought, eradicated in the 1960's but it wasn't and it still abounds. OK so he's got nuts for brains like some past American Presidents because he can't see that without the bees there'll be no nuts and the bees are dying by the score, a big score. Chatwin & Martin are working on a book about the plight of solitary bees with Martin's beautiful hand-written script, (so stunning it is almost illegible so in fact the word becomes 'art' almost obfuscating communication but you can decipher it with a lot of effort and of course modern art requires this contribution of viewer to make it their own (see Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco), and Chatwin's penetrating pictures of bee genitalia. Did you know there are thousands of species of solitary bee and all of them have differing genitalia so each species has to find its exact match?

When Lippard said 'long term thinking is in short supply' I noted it down without fully understanding her meaning but now, on reflection, I see that her activism has made her only too aware of what short term thinking manifests. Lippard opened my eyes to the need to get involved, to participate, to not just draw trees but to shake them. So, I was triggered into writing this article as an artwork in itself and an example of activism using the word rather than the sword. Like the late Seamus Heaney said in respect for his predecessors' manual labours:

'Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.'

So as part of my activism I was there - watching Lippard, and drawing her with my sword/pen but she has blown me away from my comfort zone.

Lippard now lives in a small village of c.250, (another Numbers show-250?) in New Mexico, USA where she would have the clout to bring in very big shows but also has the wit to see it must be preserved as a quiet space unadulterated by the huge piece suggested by an un-named sculptor that she knows.

Along with her not-books she also has her not-artist and not-curator hats. However it was her energy, vision and action that attracted artists like Smithson and Eva Hesse (who she assured me knew about the work of Joseph Beuys) to the numbers shows. It was she who orchestrated the incoming ideas into physical objects and their placement making her a curator. Maybe we could even call Smithson's non-site sculptures where he took his art outside the gallery, (his non-site meaning not on site or in sight in the museum but out-sited in the elements) 'not sites' like Lippard's not curating? His Spiral jetty in Salt Lake City has become a monument to his planning and vision now that salt crystals have overgrown it as it cuts a white spiral path visible from space against the red of the lake.

In a December 1970 show called 2,972,453 (Buenos Aires), Lippard included the work of Don Celender which I was lucky to see in the BABE show in Bristol's Arnolfini in April 2013, where a panel discussed his legacy.

Clive Phillpot and Gustavo Grandal Montero on the Celender discussion panel during BABE.

Although not one of the most famous 'Minimalists' Celender did some interesting survey art, art which many did not see as art and consequently a lot of his output which would have been considered ephemeral and hence jettisoned. His work questioned the ways in which 'artists' are accepted and recognised. He joins a group of creative people who have been recognised and lauded posthumously, a category which includes the likes of William Blake yet does NOT include many much talented others. Celender, like Lippard, challenged accepted norms but whereas she outgrew the tag of Minimalism it is doubtful that he did. Many of his projects remain untraced. One of his surveys strikes a chord with myself, as it is called, 'Who do you think was ignored?' My first 63 years have fitted into that survey for sure. Whenever that category befalls you like William Blake, Robert Walser and all, you must carry on because your contribution is unique and may cut in at a later date when its validity is realised. Indeed, fundamentally, making money or a name is not always why we entered the game. Although many 'famous' practitioners, like Koons and Hirst, do deliberately and cynically assess what would generate funds before embarking on their careers. Lippard's work was often as observer, commentator, assistant, but in the long run we can see her contribution to taking 'art' out of its incestuous circle into a wider field. She has moved amongst the small world of the art galleries and critics wearing a number of different hats, always challenging the canon. Now her sights have moved into the global arena with her fight against multi-nationals and her incorporating art from around the globe into her remit. Strangely when I arrived
home from meeting her I was looking at one or two of the drawings that I had done and I realised she looked identical to a beautiful African mask I own.

I admire Lippard's life work challenging the canon and her impact has hit me way beyond my expectation. I never realised when I felt so attracted to go see her at Whitechapel that my connection with her was so strong as fellow subversives keen to carry on pioneering new ideas through our work and taking on those who stand for standing still. Now I am ready to fight my own fight. You can see my weekly blogs at apulhed.wordpress.com

Pete Kennedy has a new book out called *G BATCH* - an introduction to his Clay Jug ideas. His weekly blog can be found at apulhed.wordpress.com

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**Bibliography**


‘When is a new 'BookArtObject' not an Artist’s Book?’, Kennedy, P., 2013, in *Artist’s Book Yearbook 2014-2015*, pp. 77-87


I knew Philadelphia was famous as the city of love, but I was soon to discover it is also a city of poetry and artists’ books! I was enrolled in a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Modern and Contemporary American Poetry (ModPo) taught by the University of Pennsylvania, and was visiting Philadelphia in October 2013 to attend related events and performances. To my surprise I also ended up on the panel of a live webcast answering worldwide questions about poetry – but that’s another story! The venue was the Kelly Writers’ House which is right in the tree-lined centre of the University of Pennsylvania (founded in 1740) and so I had the opportunity to combine my poetic interests with some research into artists’ books. My first port of call was the six-storey Van Pelt-Dietrich Library. The building is easily identifiable by the huge Claes Oldenburg sculpture of a split button outside. I was surprised how simple access to the library was; I didn’t need to book in advance, just presented my passport, signed a form, and I was allowed to wander around for the rest of the day.

The Rare Books and Manuscript Library is on the top floor of the building, and has wonderful views across the city, together with a long foyers where students sat on sofas reading or using laptops. After showing my passport once more and stowing my bags in a locker, I was buzzed through into the light-filled reading room, lined with rows of black, leather-topped reading tables. All the University’s collection is available on the library’s online catalogue, Franklin, and I could search through a database of over 1,000 artists’ books. After finding a book I was interested in viewing, I filled in a request slip and took it to a librarian, who found the book in the stacks and then brought it over to me. I quickly amassed quite a stock of books in front of me. The first book I will describe is one I chose purely because of the title, however it quickly became my favourite book of my first visit to the library:

1. **Your Co-worker Could Be A Space Alien**, 1985
Searching through the catalogue I had a vague memory of reading about this book somewhere else. So I ordered the book and it turned up wrapped in a sturdy cardboard folder. Inside was a rather humble sixteen page, black and white photocopied book, about 22cm tall by 18cm wide. It was produced in an edition of 200 by Tana Kellner and Anne E Kalmbach of Kake Productions in 1985. The artists are two of the original founders of the Women’s Studio Workshop, based in Rosendale, New York, which this year is celebrating its 40th Anniversary. The text of the book is taken from an article by Michael Cassels in an issue of *The National Enquirer* magazine from August 1984. The full title of the article is *Your Co-worker Could be a Space Alien Say Experts, Here’s How You Can Tell*. My favourite part of the design of the book is that the cover includes just the words *Your Co-worker Could Be A Space Alien*, and on opening it up there is a thin strip of paper inside saying *Say Experts*, which you then lift up to reveal the rest of the headline *Here’s How You Can Tell* on the page underneath. One of the pages I was most drawn to illustrates paragraph seven from the
Above: Swarthmore College Library stacks, below: Rare Book & Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania. Photographs by Jeremy Dixon
original article; Frequently talks to himself. “A space alien may not be used to speaking the way we do, so an alien may practice speaking,” Steiger noted. Above the head of a rather puzzled-looking woman a picture frame has been cut in half to form a strange thought-balcony containing randomly distributed typewritten symbols that seem to represent the chaos of an alien trying to practise human speech. The black and white photographs are wonderfully posed and a cut-and-paste, degraded-photocopy aesthetic runs throughout the whole book. I think it must be one of the very first examples of an artist’s book that has been generated through the medium of a found text, although it doesn’t mention this fact in the book and I only discovered this information through research. It is a found text book that doesn’t advertise the fact, and it has used the original source material to produce its own unique vision. It is also a very funny book that made me laugh out loud in the quiet of a library. It brought back memories of reading my childhood storybooks, although the feminist sub-text would probably have been lost on me back then. A pdf of the whole book is available to download here: www.wsworkshop.org/collection/your-co-worker-could-be-a-space-alien

Swarthmore College is a thirty-minute train journey from the centre of Philadelphia. It was founded in 1864 and offers a mixed liberal arts and engineering curriculum. The grounds look like they were lifted straight from a Hollywood film about American college life, a magnificent mix of old and modern buildings surrounding a grass mall that leads up from the train station to the brow of a hill. No wonder Swarthmore has been described as the most beautiful campus in America. I was able to appreciate its beauty even more as I wandered around lost for a while before a helpful professor directed me towards the College Library. Inside I found the wood-panelled Friends Historical Library where, again after just showing my passport and signing a form, I was to spend a wonderful afternoon with, what feels like to me, the Holy Grail of artists’ books:

2. Every Building on Sunset Strip, 1966
At the signing-in desk the Librarian handed me a copy of the 1966 first-edition of the book, produced by Ed Ruscha in a run of 1,000 books. I had previously only seen it in reference books, or vicariously on Abebooks.com (where even the cheapest, most beat-up copy I could find was still well out of my price league). The first surprise was that it had a slipcase covered in a heavy-duty silver reflective foil, which was so clean it looked as though it had been applied yesterday. The next surprise was that the spine and cover of the book simply reads the Sunset Strip, the longer title by which it is known does not appear until you open up the inside front page. The cover text is also printed in a silver ink to match with the silver slipcase. I was also not really prepared for how big the book is, approximately 760cm long when spread out completely, which I was unable to do even though I was taking up the whole of one huge study table. To take photographs of the open book I had to ask permission to stand on a chair, which caused a few swivelled heads from the surrounding family history researchers. Most of the book is white space, the images forming narrow bands, not much larger than strips of photographic film, at the top and bottom of the page. What I loved about seeing Every Building on Sunset Strip first hand is just how unprecious it is; some of the panorama photos are slightly blurred or don’t line up exactly, cars are cut in half, and some of the eight joins between the different sheets of paper have been slightly haphazardly aligned so that they overlap each other. It really felt like a book that was meant to be looked at and held and passed around, rather than an object to be reverentially whispered about without touching it too much. What also struck me about this book is that it is more of an abstract idea that has been condensed into a physical form. The fact that it is actually rather hard to read and make sense of as a conventional book, and that the landscape it describes is very difficult to scan and retain as photographs, doesn’t really matter. It is an object to study and ponder, to turn over and unfurl slowly, to try and flatten out as much as you can, to spin upside down, to read from right to left, or from left to right, or try and count some of the surprisingly few people. I wasn’t that shocked to find that I had suddenly spent three hours in its company and missed the change over of librarians. The book is so white and stripped down, and so mesmerising, it was almost like a meditative practice!

The next day, back at the Rare Books and Manuscript Library of the University of Pennsylvania, among a group of students intently transcribing the letters of Sir Walter Scott, John Pollack the Public Services Specialist, recommended I take a look at:

3. Radio-Active Substances, 1994-95
What arrived at my desk was a labelled cardboard protective box, about the size of a house brick. I picked the case up, and was immediately surprised by the book before I even saw it because the case seemed to also weigh about the same as a brick. On opening up the case I found a bespoke box made out of riveted and hammered lead with a hinged lid. The box in turn contained a 24 page, spiral bound book, 10cm tall by 16cm wide, again all made out of lead. The inside of the lid of the box held five test tubes, each one containing a printed scroll wound around a glass rod. Susan Kae Grant created the book in 1994-95 for the exhibition Science and the Artist’s Book held at the Smithsonian Institution and the Washington Project for the Arts in 1995. It was made in a small edition of 20 copies. Quotes and illustrations by Marie Curie are printed on
Protective case made to hold *Radio-Active Substances* by Susan kae Grant, Dallas, TX, USA. Photographed at the Rare Books and Manuscript Library of the University of Pennsylvania by Jeremy Dixon.

*Radio-Active Substances* by Susan kae Grant, Dallas, TX, USA. Photograph by Richard Klein
to the lead pages using a Tektronix Phaser 300i, and the Polaroid emulsion transfer photographs were scanned from a variety of historic sources. The text printed on the scrolls in the test tubes are paraphrased extracts from the biography of Marie Curie written by her daughter Eve Curie (who only died in 2007, aged 102). The immediate impression of this book, more than any other I have experienced, was its amazing tactility, its weight, and its sheer physical presence. The lead rubbed off on my hands and left white lines on the black leather of the table. The pages of the book were not rigid; they buckled and moved as I turned each one. I felt worried that the very act of reading the book meant that I was actually degrading the text and images it contained, it was almost as if the power of reading was slowly destroying the object. The book and box and test tubes seemed like a physical metaphor that evoked illness and destruction. The book is a holder and conveyer of secrets. I had a very powerful sense of danger, of radioactivity, and of the harm you could unknowingly do to your body. The book is a means of biography and of memorial, both intellectually and physically, to the incredible work undertaken by Madame Curie (the only woman scientist who was selected for the 1995 exhibition). This is a truly amazing book and I would urge anyone to go and try to seek out a copy. You can find out more about the 1995 exhibition on the now rather quaint website at: www.sil.si.edu/Exhibitions/Science-and-the-Artists-Book

So what did my time spent with these three (amongst others) wonderful and different books teach me? Well for a start, and most obviously, you don’t have to buy an artist’s book to have access to one, especially a rare, or a famous, or an expensive one! There are many great library and research collections available to visit throughout the world, so go out and discover your nearest one and learn to cherish it! Also the tactility and weight of some books can be just as important as their visual appeal. I would never have expected that holding a small heavy lead box would prove such an emotional experience. An artist’s book can be an idea to contemplate and doesn’t have to conform to the usual necessities such as the transference of information and knowledge; instead they can become a means of stimulating a physical and mental empathic response. These are qualities that you cannot experience through the medium of the Internet and computer screen, you need to be actually physically present and share space with the object. These three books really gave me a sense of the history of the art form, from the 1960s, 1980s, and 1990s, that I was not really aware of before. Sometimes I think it is easier to concentrate on the most recent and modern work and techniques, rather than acknowledge those pioneers who have come before. I also loved the fact that the editions of the three books varied so much, from 20, to 200, to 1,000 copies, and realised that decisions about the number of an edition also form a major influence on the creation of each book. I felt that I had personally benefited so much from my time in Philadelphia that I donated one of my own Hazard Press books to the Rare Books and Manuscript Library. It felt like the least I could do in return for all the wonderful help and support their staff had given me, both in time and in patience with a slightly clueless visitor. They remained calm and solicitous even when the roof had literally collapsed in one of their administration offices. Librarians are lovely people and have a depth of expert knowledge that you won’t find with a search engine. So if you haven’t already, I hope this article may inspire you to go and seek out your nearest special collection of artists’ books, or find one when you go on holiday. Please visit and choose a book at random, on a whim, attracted by a strange title or a catalogue description. All those books are waiting for a visitor to arrive and unwrap their custom-made bindings and folders and boxes and cases. Let them fly free and inspire! And if you find yourself near the University of Pennsylvania you could even visit mine!

Jeremy Dixon lives in South Wales making poetic art books. He has visited Emily Dickinson's grave and Dylan Thomas's shed and once shook hands with Princess Diana outside Stoke-on-Trent railway station. His poems have appeared online and in print. Find out more at: www.HazardPress.co.uk or on Twitter: @HazardPressUK

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THE SIXTH STORY.

An honest man, with a clean conscience, must always be prepared to suffer for what is right. He is not afraid of the world, nor does he seek its favours. He is content with his lot, and is satisfied with his work. He is not ambitious, nor does he hope for anything greater than his present position. He is not proud, nor does he think himself superior to others. He is not greedy, nor does he seek wealth. He is not vain, nor does he care about his appearance. He is not cruel, nor does he wish to harm anyone. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work. He is notlazy, nor does he avoid work. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work. He is not lazy, nor does he avoid work.
Some artists' books and literature

John McDowall

The exhibition Locating Boccaccio in 2013 held at The John Rylands Library in Manchester from July to November 2013 commemorated Giovanni Boccaccio's 700th anniversary. The displayed books, from the library's holdings and as loans from private collections, ranged from early manuscript versions to 20th century editions. Within themes such as Boccaccio as Mediator, Innovations in Print and Censorship and Erotica the exhibition traced the material dissemination and the influences of Boccaccio's work.

To complement this collection and to highlight the author's continuing significance thirteen national and international artists were invited to make new books in response to Boccaccio or to any of his writings. My contribution to the project was the bookwork Giornata prima.

I gave an artist's talk, titled Artists' books and literature, at the Library in November. Showing selected examples, I introduced the medium of artists' books, considering specifically works made in response to literature and in particular to the materiality of language and of the book. This essay, starting with an outline of the concept and development of my own book, is a version of this presentation. I will focus on some of the books shown as exemplifications of appropriations of existing works of literature in which the physicality of embodied language and its supports have been engaged with. The forms of these engagements include dialogues with the originating written texts in conjunctions with binding structure or with the addition of images. And especially by means of various modifying strategies of transcription, re-ordering or erasure.

Page to page

In Boccaccio's The Decameron one hundred stories are told within a framing narrative. Fleeing the plague seven young women and three young men spend two weeks in a country villa. To pass the time, every evening (except for Sundays and two days of work) each of them tells a story. Throughout the book there is also the flow of connections between the stories, of elements repeated, their variations and turnabouts. Mutability made even more complex by the errors that accumulated in the writing out of manuscript copies and then in the cutting of blocks and the typesetting of successive printed editions, and in the cuts censorship imposed at different times.

Giornata prima reflects the pleasure and also this unreliability of storytelling; it is from page to page and book to book a correspondence of story following story from teller to listener/reader over time from one version to the next. The book consists of reproductions of one page in sequence from each of the editions of The Decameron as found in the Brotherton Library University of Leeds, the Main Library University of Manchester and my own shelves. The first page is taken from the first book, the second from the next and so on until the end of the first day. The books were taken in order from left to right, from shelf to shelf, top to bottom. This procedure evidently leads to substantial disjunction in narrative continuity, as the text jumps forward and back, with repetitions and elisions. Sometimes skipping several stories at the turn of a page, and from one language to another.

Text, image, book

Ever since the very earliest books images have joined words on the page. Throughout much of this history the visual artist’s contribution has been made as supplement to an existing written text, often in the form of illustration of narrative. This relationship evolved to one of correspondence, a dialogue in which something new came in the reading of the meeting of these two modes of expression. A collaboration, and at times tension, on the space of the page, and through the medium of the book in which concept and content and the materiality of structure and print are integrated.

Julia Farrer’s response to Arthur Rimbaud’s prose poem Les Ponts (The Bridges) is a letterpress printed concertina folded landscape format book. The body of the book is presented loose in a cover (which carries title, translation of the poem and colophon) so that it may be removed and stood partly unfolded. Unusually, bound within the accordion structure are two single pages, as these are turned they reveal the text. On these pages are two of the six relief prints of geometric shapes which face each other in pairs. The book is an architectural convergence of subject and rhythm, of print, paper and fold.

For her book In this Dark Wood Elisabeth Tonnard has paired found texts and images. On each of the recto pages is a monochrome photograph of a lone pedestrian, on a shopping street, at night, seemingly in a U.S. city at an indeterminate period - the 1950s perhaps. The candid photos appear to have been taken at about the same location. Not many of these people notice the camera; in fact the thoughtful preoccupied expressions on their faces are an aspect in common through all the shots. Opposite each image, on the left hand page, is one of ninety different English translations of the first three lines...
Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward path way had been lost.
of Dante's *Inferno*. In these subtle variations of difference within repetition, from one translation to another, from one anonymous passersby to the next, each separate and yet now connected, is an effective, and affective, gentle melancholia.

**Translation**

This small format book consists of rectangular samples laid out in a grid as in a colour chart. To the bottom left of each one is a page number, sometimes the same number is given to more than one colour or to a colour repeated. A visual index at the back lists 35 colours, including metallic ones. For her book *Spring Snow* – *A Translation* Alison Turnbull has materialised every one of the more than 600 references to colour in the text of Yukio Mishima's novel *Spring Snow*. The author’s extensive use of colour to enrich the scenes and emotions described is transferred to a systemised format and yet is equally redolent. For rather than refer back to its source text, this work could be taken by its reader/viewer as a starting point or construction kit for new images and stories.

In my book *Atramentum* a materiality of language is made manifest by notionally pooling the ink of the printed text of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*. The percentage of page covered by the black print of the words was calculated as surface area and multiplied by the 1,382 pages of Burton's book. This total quantity of ink is reproduced in the form a single solid black circle (diameter of 180 cm), which was laid out as a sequential imposition in a new book of the same page dimensions as the published example consulted. Most of the pages are solid black, on some though the circle's edge appears to varying extent and in differing positions. The disc’s formal reductive finality presents a counterpointing rendering of Burton's exceedingly wide-ranging compendium from virtually all the books in a 17th-century library.

**Reader’s trace**

To make *A Room of One’s Own/One Thousand Libraries* Kajsa Dahlberg transcribed in pencil and overlaid all the marginal notes and underlining left by readers, from every page and every copy of Virginia Woolf’s essay which she found available in Swedish public libraries. These have been printed and bound into a new work, presenting the material trace of the ephemeral and personal act of reading, of reading this specific text, and also a collective reading over more than fifty years, in the particular context of the library⁴.

In France until the late 1960s new books were often sold uncut. It was for the reader to separate the pages joined regularly by the folds at the head and fore-edge, by carefully cutting with a sharp blade or by running a finger through, resulting in a neat edge or ragged with shreds of curling paper. This evidence of, conceivably, the owner's personality or location of reading and of, in some cases, abandoned reading. I have one such untrimmed book, *Dans le labyrinthe* by Alain Robbe-Grillet. Its title and exhaustive descriptions of objects, speech, events to present a strictly material reality, which in turn is the reality of the moment of reading, makes it particularly apposite. My book *In-octavo* reproduces parts of the text from the first 16-page signature of the novel⁵. Only the words glimpsed, as if the pages of the uncut signature are teased open, are printed - with the rest of the page left blank. The shapes of visible text vary, from a wedge at the lower outside corners to small arcs at the tail edges.

**Re-ordered**

In Karen Reimer’s *Legendary, Lexical, Loquacious Love* all the words of a historical romance novel have been reorganised in alphabetical order, every occurrence of every word is set out as if in a un-contextualised concordance. This imposition of a conventional rational system of order completely disintegrates the original narrative and yet results in a new and seductive text. The book, an ordinary smaller size paperback, is arranged in chapters, one for each letter, though there is no X but one Z - zealous. He and she appear often, and no many more times than yes.

For his book *Re-writing Freud* Simon Morris has digitally shuffled all the words of Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* and then carefully re-set the randomly ordered single text block of 223,704 words to match the original layout⁶. This has been printed and published with a subtly modified reproduction of the cover of the originating Penguin book. Leafing through, and at first glance, chapter, page and subheadings, paragraph breaks, quote insets and such look as expected, but on reading no syntactical sense is encountered. And thus, Freud's elaborate, cogent and influential treatise on the giving of meaning to the irrational is returned to the non-sense. Yet there is meaning and the poetic to be found in this single instance of a, practically, infinite number of combinations.

**Elision and erasure**

On the thin paper of the book *Ghost in the Fog: XXV The Corrections* by Barrie Tullet and Philippa Wood are equally light graphics, sparingly scattered on otherwise
Kajsa Dahlberg A Room of One’s Own/One Thousand Libraries, 2006

Karen Reimer (writing as Eve Rhymer) Legendary, Lexical Loquacious Love, 1996
blank pages. These diagrammatic lines, proofreading symbols and transcriptions of comments and directions are the trace of the work of the translators and editors of the book *How to Address the Fog: XXV Finnish Poems 1978-2002*. The text itself, subject of this attention, is absent, leaving these neat tracks of the immaterial movement of reading, amendment and re-reading seemingly floating in the space of the book.

The marks apparent in Riccardo Boglione’s *Ritmo D: feeling the blanks* are those of punctuation; lines of commas, periods, colons and apostrophes fill the pages. The space between each is irregular; they are set out in paragraphs, justified left. For his book Boglione has taken out all the words of Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*, the punctuation remaining as a skeleton of the work. Poets and artists have used the strategy of removing the words and leaving the punctuation in position typically to highlight, through their absence, some reflexive connection to the original source material. In this case the spaces that the words occupied have also been removed leaving only the space between the words and punctuation points. Boglione states ‘showing its mere punctuation was to unveil a sort of potential (though unlikely) rhythmic paradigm’. And indeed these lines, echoing the original’s scansion, do have resemblance to musical graphic scores.

The book has the look and feel of a traditional Gallimard *collection blanche* including the typeface and layout of the cover, inside though, nearly every page of text has to some extent been erased. What is left evident is not the clean blank space of digitally excised words but the rough, scratched unevenness produced by the use of an ink rubber. Jérémie Bennequin’s book *Ommage à la recherche du temps perdu, Du côté de chez Swann* is the reproduction of the results of a daily practice of erasure. Every day the artist set out to laboriously rub out one page of Marcel Proust’s novel, if a day was missed, that page was left intact. Traces of print are visible to varying degrees on different pages/different days, from fragments of words to partial or whole lines, and always the damaged surface of the paper. I see this exercise in the marking of time as comparable to Hanne Darboven’s work and her procedure of writing out, though of course, to reverse material result.

Each one of these books is the incorporation and the manifestation of an act of reading. The appropriated source text was, and then became another work, to be read in turn, an event. And as with the palimpsest, traces of the previous works are, to varying extent, also always present.

Especially evident in the experience of artists’ books is an awareness of holding a book, of reading and of return to the book. This is a consciousness of not just the physical object, its structure and sequence of pages but an engagement that comes from intrigue, for expectations are sometimes surprised or subverted. Just as an age of uncertainty led to Modernism and the loss of transparency of the medium, and on to further more self-conscious, and self-reflexive practices, so there is often an inherent or intended instability resulting in the taking up and repositioning of the materiality of language from these works of literature.

Conversely this concern with the tangible has led, in most of these examples, to loss and disappearance; a loss of order as words are rearranged or from sight under fields of ink, folds of pages and various forms of erasure. A diminution of a kind might also be perceived in the repetition of successive underlining, and in the repetition with difference of translations and of repositioned pages.

‘Things flow about so here!’ as Alice said.

*John McDowall* is an artist and printmaker and has curated a number of exhibitions. His work, mainly in the medium of the book, reflects the influence of cinema and experimental writing and explores some of their shared characteristics, encompassing the movement and connections between instances of these.

He is a practice-based PhD candidate at the School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, University of Leeds. And is joint coordinator, with Chris Taylor, of *PAGES*, a programme of artist’s book-focused initiatives which includes the annual Contemporary Artists’ Book Fair.

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Notes

1. Locating Boccaccio in 2013 was curated by Rhiannon Daniels, Guyda Armstrong and Stephen Milner and was at The John Rylands Library, 150 Deansgate, Manchester from 11 July to 20 December 2013.

2. The pairing of text and image, usually in the form of the photograph, was prominent in much of the documentary, information and instruction based art of the 1960s, and since.

3. The images were selected from Joseph Selle collection at the Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, New York.
Riccardo Boglione *Ritmo D: feeling the blanks*, 2009

Jérémie Bennequin *Ommage à la recherche du temps perdu*, 2012
The archive contains over a million negatives from a company of street photographers working in San Francisco from the 1940s to the 1970s.

4. ‘What interests me the most is the description of a subjective position in relation to a larger system. For me this works in several layers: in Woolf attacking a patriarchal system; in the reader’s reactions on her text; and in their relation towards the library as an institution.’ - Kajsa Dahlberg in a conversation with Niklas Östholm, online, Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, November 2007.

5. An octavo book is typically 20 to 23 cm in height. The sheet is printed with eight pages each side, folded in half 3 times to make a sixteen-page signature, all the sections are then gathered, bound and cut.

6. For his 2003 project The Royal Road to the Unconscious, taking Ed Ruscha’s book Royal Road Test as model, Simon Morris and his students physically cut out every individual word from The Interpretation of Dreams, having enlarged and copied each page onto two sheets of A3 paper.

7. Examples include Jaroslav Kozlowski’s 1972 book Reality which contains the punctuation taken from a section of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Argumentstellen by herman de vries reproduces a single full stop to a page, selected from Wittgenstein’s Tractatus; proposition 2.0131 is given at the back of the book.


9. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix comments on some interesting aspects of the project. Is the artist obliterating Proust’s work or a single printed copy, and by so doing his erased volume becomes unique but then is reproduced again in multiple form. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix Von der künstlerischen Aneignung literarischer Werke in Künstlerbüchern: zwischen Zerstörung und Einverleibung.

10. A catalogue raisonné (Elke Bippus et al.) of Hanne Darboven’s bookworks sets out, in addition to numerical systems, the wide range of literary texts that she worked from. Lucy Lippard in a 1973 Artforum article (p35) states that ‘It is impossible to look at her work without becoming physically involved in the process of writing’. Anne Mœglin-Delcroix also references this piece in her essay on literary appropriation.

11. An analogy, and a subject extensively investigated by Gérard Genette in his Palimpsestes. La Littérature au second degree; a study in literature of texts which have in a myriad of ways drawn on previous writing.

12. On the subject of diegetic frames in fiction, Patricia Waugh writes ‘They become more perceptible as one moves from realist to modernist modes and are explicitly laid bare in metafiction,’ and that at times this will ‘involve a confusion of ontological levels…’ Metafiction (p30-31).

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Jaroslaw Kozlowski Reality (1972) zpap.


Journal article


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www.indexfoundation.se/upload/pdf_AconversationwithKajsaDahlberg.pdf
Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution two very different relationships with Nature have developed in the West: one of co-existence and one of control. These opposing approaches are connected to the pendulum swing between rationalistic and romantic viewpoints, an inevitable consequence of the dialectic movement of Western history since the Industrial Revolution. However, over the last century this fluctuation has slowly begun to solidify into the notion that there is a place for nature and a place for culture. As we become irreparably more urban, nature becomes increasingly confined to the rolling hills of ladybird books and biscuit tin lids. It has all but lost its companion, culture, to the smoggy sprawl of the city. They are slowly and inevitably, becoming binary opposites in the contemporary collective conscience.

In recent years, many artists and writers have attempted to overcome this separation in order to show that it is a false construct. John Woodman's dual bookwork Ruskin's Pond A Photographic Study (2010) and Of Truth of Water from Modern Painters (Editor) is one such example.

The bookwork is made up of two hardbound volumes, both covered in illustrated dust jackets with photographic reflections of trees and leaves from Ruskin's Pond in Denmark Hill, London. These photographic images, taken by John Woodman over a period of a year, capture sequences of changing light, the movement of the seasons and weather conditions on the surface of the water.

Ruskin's Pond A Photographic Study is a 60-page meditative and interwoven representation of technology, nature and culture. Operating together, these images visualise a critical discourse that began with the poetry of Clare, Milton, Blake and Ruskin himself. They engender and provoke a sense of wonder, becoming the here and now of nature as opposed to the 'representation' of it. This is because they offer a concrete experience in their own right, as credible an equivalent for the events that unfold in front of and inside of the rolling camera. The camera being the machine that absorbs images at the same speed as perception, as well as, perhaps, our own consciousness.

The second volume in this body of work is titled Of Truth of Water from Modern Painters and includes introductory essays by Heather Birchall, Howard Hull and Mark Haywood. This book reproduces three chapters from Volume 1 of John Ruskin’s major work Modern Painters, and focuses in particular on how painters have represented water. The three accompanying essays elucidate on Of Truth of Water and relocate Ruskin’s ideas within a contemporary context, thus reconnecting Ruskin's respect for Nature with culture.

Published by Unipress Cumbria, these two volumes collectively contribute to the revival of the aesthetic and theoretical interests Woodman held when making his real time film works in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A period of time, like now, of economic instability, social discontent and a burgeoning frustration that social and environmental issues are of little relevance to political agendas of the day. Whilst Woodman's work is not political, the fact that his early films are now gaining a renewed recognition amongst new audiences is a hopeful indication that the relationship between nature and culture has become a philosophical and creative concern once more.

Woodman spent many months between 2008 - 2012 recording the effects of light and changing seasons on Ruskin’s ponds at Denmark Hill and Brantwood using a fixed frame, hand held camera in both video and photographic formats. Compositionally, the images in this book reference Palmer, Turner, Constable and Impressionists such as Cezanne, Pissarro and Monet. All of whom engaged in some way with the relationship between light, water and perception. Their aesthetic is almost impossible to erase from the consciousness of the contemporary Western artist and the ways in which they represented and depicted spaces using paint is echoed in Woodman's photographic compositions.

With every turn of the page, these images of ripples and shadows become more beautiful and mystical than one could initially have imagined them to be. This is because the viewer observes not only what is occurring on the page but also what is taking place within themselves. Light moving slowly across the surface of water can induce a change in one's breathing, a momentary transcendental state of acute awareness, a form of enchantment.

This sense of enchantment bears a close relationship to the writings of Paracelsus, who cultivated a form of perception that involved meticulous attentiveness to the singular specificity of things, and, in doing so, opened up the possibility of seeing one thing mirrored in another. He marvelled, for example, at how the light of the stars could be repeated in the twinkle of the eyes of those we might love:

Just as the sun shines through a glass, so the stars penetrate one another in the body. For the sun and the moon and all planets, as well as all the stars and the whole chaos, are in man.

© John Woodman. www.johnwoodman.net

© John Woodman. www.johnwoodman.net
Both the image, its reflection and the artist therefore tread what Robert Macfarlane describes as a ‘visionary threshold’ – an uncertain space where separation is impossible. For Deleuze, enchantment takes place when things overlap, when wondrous marvels of metamorphoses happen between animal, human and machine. The textures of light and time in Woodman’s images combined with Ruskin’s writing suggest that natural magic is, and always has been, all around us, even in our cities. Far from being mundane, the shifting narrative of this collection of images combined with the inclusion of eloquent historical and contemporary texts; celebrate what Virginia Woolf once called ‘Earth Life.’

We see this idea most clearly midway through Ruskin’s Pond A Photographic Study when Woodman photographs it in summer. Here we can imagine that we can glimpse the skimming dance of water boatmen, their tiny feet never breaking the fragile membrane of the water’s surface. Beneath them the dark gathering of last winter’s rotted leaves, above them the passing clouds. They converge on invisible pathways, and for a moment the chronological perception of time becomes diluted and transparent.

In offering us a bookwork that presents pockets of the world from such a vantage point, Woodman focuses not only on visual transformation, change and transience in light and time-space, but also the concept of ‘loosing’ himself, and us, his audience, during that experience. Throughout the book the orientation of our perception is forced to shift, sometimes it feels as if we are beneath the surface of the frozen pond looking up at the light of the sky between the trees. We must re-locate ourselves relentlessly with every turning page in order to understand where we will go next.

Like Woolf, Deleuze and Paracelsus, Ruskin recognised that the material advances of mankind would irrevocably threaten the fields, forests, riverbeds and coastal paths that fuelled his imagination. As John Clare’s poem Decay (1832) points out, nature needs protection from the onslaught of modern civilisation:

Mere withered stalks and fading trees,
And pastures spread with hills and rushes,
Are all my fading vision sees;
Gone, gone are rapture’s flooding gushes!

But this doesn’t mean it has to be separated from us, where it would inevitably wither. For Ruskin, nature needed to be protected by culture. In other words, its salvation would be through education, through writing, through art, through looking. It needed to be re-enchanted. Ostensibly one of the first ecologists, Ruskin would often make his students stand knee-deep in water during his classes so that they could really grasp the extent to which nature is integral to everyday life, how it is a part of culture.

Woodman continues this argument, gently and contemplatively. Ruskin’s Pond and Of Truth of Water collectively offer a glimpse of a world which becomes more than we would ordinarily see at night and twilight, in the midday sun, at dawn. The shifting shadows he captures hint at a dynamic system far greater in complexity and beauty than we would otherwise normally see at a glance. This real-time process of truly looking, reveals the world not so much as it should be, but the world as it already is.

Ciara Healy
Since moving to Wales from London in 2010 Ciara Healy has been exploring cultural, linguistic and creative links between the West Coast of Wales and the West Coast of Ireland through writing, book arts and curating. She is currently Head of Critical and Contextual Studies at The School of Creative Arts, Coleg Sir Gar/University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

In 2011 she was one of three writers to be awarded the WAI & Axis Developing Critical Writing on Contemporary Visual Arts Programme. Since then she has worked with established critics JJ Charlesworth, Cherry Smyth and Chris Sharratt. Her own book works have been exhibited internationally and are housed in national and international collections as well as private collections in Ireland, the UK and the USA.

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out of whom truth and good
... held by a man, John, you
and your sister

... than horse
... but start for the plentiful
... I do not
... but I shew to you this good
... worth at least
... rather than find
... a people. Yet

... Bridge...
... patch to
... open
... of the great
... time, you would
... this night.
The Mingled Measure
Interpreting and Adapting S. T. Coleridge's
'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

Mat Osmond

The following text is a re-worked version of a talk that I first gave at Falmouth University's 2011 Illustration Forum: Metamorphosis: Interpretation and Adaptation in Illustration. Shortly after that forum some of the themes I look at here were given a new and urgent contemporary twist in Nick Hayes' 2011 graphic novel 'The Rime of the Modern Mariner'.

I haven't added a discussion of that here, having recently talked about Hayes' book at length in another article - 1000 Ladders: Ecocide, Empathy and the Eco-Fable. I'm currently in the early phase of a practice-led PhD, titled Stories for Seeing in the Dark, which looks to that leaky territory emerging between self-published authorial illustration and artists books – my preferred term for which is 'graphic literature' – and asks what it may bring to the work of cultural recuperation that we see reflected in the current proliferation of eco-genres: eco-art, eco-poetry, eco-criticism etc. It's this theme that I have principally tried to open up in the following discussion of Coleridge's Rime, and some of its interpretations.

A hard lesson
In Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1798 maritime ballad The Rime of the Ancient Mariner we encounter the anguished voice of a medieval sailor, tormented by his own wanton killing of an albatross. As the plot unfolds we hear of how, cursed by this action, he and his shipmates endure an inexorable descent into horror, falling under the enchantment of a nightmare spectre-woman, the white-faced Life-in-Death. Only when the mariner is touched, in a fleeting moment of self-forgetfulness, by an upwelling of love for the myriad sea creatures that surround him, can he recover his withered ability to pray. That very instant he is delivered from the curse fallen over him. The body of the murdered albatross, hung round his neck by the ship's crew, now drops into the sea. He is free.

But the mariner's ordeal is far from over. Upon his return to land, he is thenceforth condemned to wander the earth, forever searching for the next one marked out to hear his convulsive reliving of the tale, and in the hearing, to be taught the lesson that he himself has learnt at such terrible personal cost: "He prayeth well, who loveth well...All things both great and small".

Capturing the mariner's smell
Mervyn Peake, in discussing his Gormenghast novels, spoke of the need to match his characters' voices against their physical appearance – and of how he would sometimes keep a drawing of a character beside him as he wrote, "trying" as he put it, "to imagine if that kind of remark could possibly come from that sort of terrible mouth". In Peake's illustrations for The Rime perhaps we could say the reverse process applies, and we see him conjuring a visual characterisation of the haunted voice at the centre of Coleridge's poem, and of the hallucinatory realms of being that this character traverses. Peake once stated that it was for "the illustrator to make his drawings have the same smell as the book he is illustrating".

The eight drawings Peake made for the 1943 Chatto & Windus edition of The Rime (which can be viewed at http://www.mervynpeake.org/illustrator.html) have been spoken of as the darkest of the poem's many visual interpretations; how successfully their darkness evokes the smell of the poem itself, and to what extent they might have confirmed Coleridge's reluctance to see it illustrated at all, through their saturating of its imagery with the unmistakable smell of Peake's own imaginative voice, are questions I want to look at obliquely, in briefly considering two children's books that also - I'd suggest - offer creative responses to The Rime. In particular, I want to look at how their contrasting handling of the poem's central theme of endarkenment and enchantment might illuminate something about the process of interpretation itself.

The Dark Island
In C.S. Lewis' 1952 children's book The Voyage of the Dawn Treader, part of his Narnia sequence, is a chapter called The Dark Island. It tells of how, far out to sea, Lewis' protagonists encounter what appears at first to be a dark island or mountain, standing alone in the middle of the open ocean. As they approach it turns out not to be land at all, but a zone of impenetrable darkness. After some hesitation they row into it, and in the disorienting space inside, where both time and distance become confused, they pull from the water a stranded mariner. As he lies wailing and raving on the deck of their ship, the mariner tells of how he has been trapped in here for countless years. He then falls into despairing, hysterical laughter as it transpires that they too are now imprisoned in darkness - for they, like him, have strayed into a world where dreams become reality, where the ability to separate the two is lost, and where all who enter become fools enchanted by their own nightmares. And that is where they would have remained, were it not for Lucy, the youngest of the crew, who calls out in desperation: "Aslan, Aslan, if you have ever loved us at all, send us help now!".
Aslan, Lewis’ Christ avatar, promptly appears as a distant speck of light that projects a bright beam onto the ship, setting it apart from the surrounding gloom. From within that speck emerges an albatross, which circles the ship whispering words of encouragement to Lucy, before guiding them back to daylight, and back to the real. Once delivered from their own fearful imaginings, the crew turn back to see only the clear blue sea and sky. The darkness no longer exists, or is perhaps revealed as never having existed.

**Modes of enchantment**

I was first drawn into *The Rime*’s world through discovering Ted Hughes’ great essay on Coleridge’s troubled relationship to payer and to the supernatural, *The Snake in the Oak*¹¹. When I came across C.S. Lewis’ reworking of the poem’s imagery in this short tale of soul retrieval, it struck me that Lewis presents us with a kind of mirror-image interpretation of the mariner’s plight, to that suggested by Hughes.

Lewis and Hughes concur in reading the poem in terms of a spiritual crisis: for both, the mariner embodies a condition of inner desolation, helpless to deliver itself, which can only be redeemed by an experience of grace. But as to the nature of that desolation, as to its cause, and to its appropriate remedy, their responses to the poem might be said to take up opposite positions.

Coleridge’s lasting obsession with themes of enchantment comes to one of its fullest expressions in *The Rime*, a poem that he revisited and continued to fiddle with throughout his life, seemingly baffled by just what it was he had written¹². C.S. Lewis’ story likewise concerns a specific kind of enchantment: that of the enthrallment of delusional self-suggestion, those ensnaring fantasies which - Lewis implies - we are apt to fall prey to in the absence of a guiding higher power.

By contrast, in Hughes’ empathic critical reading of the poem, the mariner’s hallucinatory ordeal is seen as a necessary and *curative* descent - a visionary encounter which briefly prises loose the dead grip of his human-centred worldview. The “thousand thousand slimy things”¹³ that surround the mariner at his nadir are, in their very hideousness, a mirror for the anthropocentric blindness benighting his perception of the non-human, corporeal world. The mode of enchantment that Hughes presents us with, here, is far from the solipsistic lapse into self-suggestion caricatured in Lewis’ little sermon. Rather, it is the universally recorded process of involuntary descent which characterises a shamanic calling.

Hughes thus reads the mariner’s ‘curse’ as a redemptive enchantment, one that comes to awaken him to what the ecological philosopher David Abram has more recently called a “more-than-human” living cosmos¹⁴. It is an awakening that the mariner - and by extension Coleridge – tragically recoils from at the last minute, as the poem retrenches to the daylight certainties of the author’s Christian conditioning. In the process, Hughes suggests, both mariner and poet are condemned to a state of perpetual wandering, forever possessed by a rejected but unretractable experience. The poem’s weak, sentimental conclusion thus abandons both in the grip of an aborted healing. Having rejected a shamanic calling, they are now forced to relive it, over and over, in each compulsive retelling of the journey.

The profound difference between these two imaginative responses to the poem’s central metaphors perfectly frames Hughes’ own understanding of interpretation. Speaking of *The Rime*, he reflects: “Poems of this kind can obviously never be explained. They are total symbols for psychic life. But they can be interpreted – a total symbol is above all a vessel for interpretations: the reader fills it and drinks”¹⁵.

**The Iron Woman**

In 1993, the same year that he wrote *The Snake in the Oak*, Ted Hughes’ children’s book *The Iron Woman* was also published. Like C.S. Lewis’ story, Hughes’ also tells of a young girl called Lucy – and of her encounter with an enraged metal earth goddess. From the moment of her first physical contact with this strange being, Lucy becomes acutely attuned to the destruction and suffering being visited on the non-human environment by industrial pollution. She finds herself infected with an excruciating sympathy with the poisoned wild creatures surrounding her, a condition of heightened sensitivity that is both passed on, and triggered, by physical contact. Personified in the form of the giant Iron Woman, this violated non-human realm goes on to wreak an ironic revenge on the polluters, bringing them to awareness of the damage they have been causing by initiating an epidemic of empathy, one that eventually transforms all of the men in the country into wild creatures, in which form they are forced to experience the consequences of their actions, first hand. The story concludes with the Iron Woman’s weird, visionary purging of our culture’s obsession with growth and profit – her breaking of the toxic spell which has darkened our hearts, and despoiled our world.

Perhaps it stretches the point to read *The Iron Woman* as an interpretation of *The Rime*, although Hughes’ story contains some intriguing echoes of his meditations on Coleridge’s poem.¹⁶ Either way, I’d suggest that in *The Iron*
Woman we see Hughes’ adaptation, for a child reader, of that same state of cultural and spiritual desolation which he reads into Coleridge’s great ballad, in an ecological redemption story that enacts its own hallucinatory, curative enchantment.

But the parallels here reveal, perhaps, a more simple and all-pervasive truth. What is true of The Iron Woman is of course equally true of all three of the interpretations discussed – Peake’s drawings, Lewis’ story and Hughes’ critical essay: in each case we see something grown from a permeable comingling of imaginations within the vessel of poetic metaphor. The resulting smell, in each case, is layered, complex, full of contradictions. We’ve heard a good deal now concerning the death of the author – perhaps in that rich, shifting stink, we might say that we smell the inexplicable life of a great poem.

Mat Osmond works on the MA Illustration: Authorial Practice at Falmouth University, and on its sister award, the MA Art and Environment. He is currently undertaking a part time practice-led PhD at U.W.E., titled Stories for Seeing in the Dark, which looks to the practice of graphic literature and asks what it may bring to the contemporary search for cultural recuperation in the face of ecological crisis.

Mat’s own practice consists of illustrated narrative poetry, self-published in the form of small-edition pamphlets by Strandline Books, as well as being published by third parties such as The Dark Mountain Journal and the Cornish Red River Poets’ anthology Murder of Krows. Recent examples of this work can be seen here: http://shop.dark-mountain.net

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Notes


2. The Dark Mountain Project Blog, Summer 2014 http://dark-mountain.net/blog/

3. I have borrowed this phrase from Audrey Niffenegger, who spoke at the 2009 Falmouth Illustration Forum of her alienation from mainstream graphic novel culture, and proposed the term ‘graphic literature’ as a better description of what she was doing.

4. The notion of a cultural ‘recuperation’ in the context of our collective adaptations to ecological crisis is proposed by David Abram in his 2010 book Becoming Animal. Abram acknowledges the crucial importance of direct political-environmental activism, but suggests that
there's another and equally important work to be done: "a necessary work of recuperation" fostered through our coming “more directly into felt relation with the wider, more-than-human community of beings that surrounds and sustains the human hub-bub." Awakening to such cosmic citizenship, Abram suggests, has real and practical implications for the way in which our collective body-politic breathes. Abram, David, Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology (U.S.A., Pantheon, 2010), p.9-10


7. Yorke, Michael, 2009


9. R. Woof, S. Hebron, S. Perry


13. Coleridge, S.T., Part Four


15. Hughes, Ted, 1994, p. 393

16. This rather speculative idea struck me when I read of Lucy's initial encounter with the Iron Woman, who first comes to her in a dream: not yet in her metal giantess form, but as a dark, oil-slicked animal – a seal, perhaps – with "black, shining eyes", that comes into Lucy's bedroom in the dead of night, there becoming a girl her own age who lays an oil-slimed hand on Lucy's shoulder, shaking her and crying out: "Wake up! O wake up! Oh, please wake up!". It's hard not to read, here, an echo of the nightmares that Hughes recounted, that same year, as having tormented Coleridge during his intense struggle with The Rime: how he was repeatedly visited, in dream, by a "most frightful" woman "whose features were blended with darkness", and who in one dream caught hold of Coleridge's right eye, "attempting to pull it out". Hughes, Ted, The Iron Woman: A Sequel to the Iron Man (London, Faber and Faber,1993), p.11/ Hughes, Ted, 1994, p.427
ARTWORK CONTRIBUTORS

Matthew Birchall (endpage 52). Hairballs can take anywhere between a couple of seconds to several minutes to make, depending on the amount of hair harvested and also the mood I’m in. One particular hairball took almost 15 minutes, I was in deep thought and had lost track of time, this particular hairball became too perfect a ball and I immediately disliked it. It wasn’t what I wanted from a hairball.

I started making hairballs nearly two years ago, before this a just gathered hair and left it in piles, whether on a plane, in a restaurant, library, someone else’s car. It is very therapeutic and I recommend it to everyone.

‘It’s vile Mat! It’s absolutely disgusting!’

I can understand that finding a hairball inside your shoe might be annoying, but the act of placing a hairball in a shoe, wallet, purse, bag, glove box, or inside a mobile phone or on a dog, can sometimes bring the greatest joy.

I am currently working on a Photo book, which features a selection of hairballs. matbirchall@gmail.com
www.matthewbirchall.co.uk

Amir Brito Cadór (page 50) is a Brazilian artist, researcher and professor at the UFMG. Andante editions is a kind of one-man-band, publishing his artists’ books since 2010. He made some line drawings to include in his latest book, Learn to Read Art, a kind of museum guide to contemporary art. The Ed Ruscha drawing was made after the lithograph Twentysix Gasoline Stations (1970) and now it is inserted on the page of Marcel Broodthaers’ book Un Coup de Dés Jamais N’Abolira Le Hasard (1969). http://andantelivros.blogspot.com.br

Kate Bufton’s work (page 44) is an ongoing exploratory development, manipulating the shape and form of old books. The physicality of old books is an important inspiration for her work. The stained pages hold many unknown possibilities. The rough textures and musty smells help with progression throughout her practice as she continues to explore their physical structures. By altering the original form of books through various cuts and folds they are transformed from a carrier of text to an object of art.

Since graduating from university in 2010, Kate has continued further study and recently completed an MA in Creative Education. She is currently working as an Artist in Residence at a local high school where she is able to continue with her practice whilst also working closely with the students.

Kate also delivers a variety of bookmaking and sculptural workshops in libraries, bookshops and more recently at Chester Zoo, UK. Kate’s workshops run alongside her exhibitions and she continues to sell her work at book fairs and high-end art fairs.
www.katebufton.co.uk

Jesse England (page 4) is an artist and educator working with contemporary media concerns. His output comprises a variety of gadgets, books, videos and assorted ephemera which comment on the changing landscape of contemporary media generation and consumption. Since 2004 he has exhibited his works across the USA, Europe, and Australia, including the Viper festival in Basel, Switzerland, the PDX Film Fest in Portland, Oregon, and Tele Visions in Sydney. He received an MFA from Carnegie Mellon University in 2012, and is currently based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His work can be found at jesseengland.net

Sara MacKillop (page 37). Pens 2014. This image is one of a collection of found images I collect from art materials and stationery catalogues. It is slightly adjusted. sara.mackillop@yahoo.co.uk
TWENTYSIX GASOLINE STATIONS
REFEREES' BIOGRAPHIES

Dr Anne Béchard-Léauté is a Lecturer at the University of Saint-Etienne, France, where she teaches design and translation for the Department of English and the Visual Arts Department. She co-heads the MPhil in Artists’ Books and Art Book Publishing (Master 2 Professionnel Edition d’art / Livre d’artiste) with Dr Valentine Oncins. It is the first course of its kind in France.

In 1999 Anne obtained a PhD in Art History from the University of Cambridge and has since developed a special interest in intercultural studies and the relationship between languages and design, including editorial design. She has translated a number of design and art history books, mainly for Phaidon and Thames & Hudson. She is currently writing a book on Georgia Russell’s book sculptures.

Maria Fusco is a Belfast-born writer, based in London. Her collection of short stories The Mechanical Copula was published in English by Sternberg Press (Berlin/New York, 2010) and in French by editions ere (Paris, 2011). Her screenplay for the film Gonda was commissioned by Film London, and is directed by Ursula Mayer. She is founder/editor of The Happy Hypocrite a semi-annual journal for and about experimental art writing: www.thehappyhypocrite.org

In 2009-10, she was the inaugural Writer in Residence at Whitechapel Gallery in London, and in 2008-9, the inaugural Critic in Residence at The Kadist Art Foundation in Paris. Maria is a Chancellor’s Fellow at Edinburgh College of Art and was Director of Art Writing at Goldsmiths, University of London. Recent book works include With A Bao A Qu Reading When Attitudes Become Form (Los Angeles/Vancouver: New Documents, 2013). www.mariafusco.net

Susan Johanknecht is an artist and writer working under the imprint of Gefn Press.

Her recent publications include Baring Antebellum and Bishopsgate Within. CITY A.M. She is currently co-curating Poetry of Unknown Words with Katharine Meynell, which is a development, transcription and homage to Iliazd’s La Poesie de mots inconnus (1949). The first section of this on-going project was launched at the Saison Poetry Library, South Bank in March 2012. Susan Johanknecht is Subject Leader of MA Book Arts, Camberwell College of Arts.

Jeff Rathermel is an artist, educator and arts administrator who lives and works in the United States. He is Executive Director of Minnesota Center for Book Arts (MCBA), the nation’s largest and most comprehensive institution dedicated to contemporary artists’ books. In addition, Rathermel is a visiting assistant professor at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota and a faculty member at the College of Visual Arts in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

He holds Bachelors and Masters of Fine Arts degrees from the University of Minnesota where he studied printmaking, hand papermaking, digital arts and traditional binding. He has curated and organised countless book art exhibitions and his personal artwork has been shown and collected internationally.

Dr Paulo Silveira lives in Porto Alegre, Brazil. He has degrees in: Fine Art (drawing and painting) and Communications, and a PhD in Visual Arts - History, Theory and Criticism, from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

Paulo is Professor for Art History of the Instituto de Artes at UFRGS, and also a member of the Comité Brasileiro de História da Arte, CBHA (Brazilian Committee for the History of Art). He is the author of A página violada (the violated page) 2001, and regularly writes articles on contemporary art and artists’ books. He is a member (heading the artists’ books section) of the research group Veículos da Arte - Vehicles of Art.

Ulrike Stoltz is an artist who lives and works in Germany and Italy. Her focus is on books, typography, texts, drawings, and installations.

Ulrike is the Professor for Typography and Book Art and Design at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany (University of Art and Design, Braunschweig). Her last academic research project was on non-linear reading in books. Publication: “Kreuz & Quer / Hin & Her. Zappen bzw. nicht-lineares Lesen im Buch. Ein Kaleidoskop. Offenbach am Main und Braunschweig 2011.”

Her latest artist’s book (as practice-based research) with the title “Wer A sagt…” is a letterpress printing experiment: The book consists of all letters of the alphabet, one printed on top of the other, each page having one more letter. Thus, the last page has 25 print runs on the recto and 26 print runs on the verso. The printing ink has no pigments (i.e. varnish) thus creating a delicately growing transparency.

Co-founder and member of Unica T (“a ficticious person making real books”) for 15 years, until the group split in 2001. She has continued in artistic collaboration for almost 30 years with Uta Schneider as <usus>. www.boatbook.de / u.stoltz@boatbook.de