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# Inscription: The Journal of Material Text – Theory, Practice, History

*Inscription* will combine imaginative thinking and critical rigour to take the study of material texts in new directions. *Inscription* will be at home equally in the first century and the twenty-first, as well as all points in between, and will feature work by practitioners – book artists, printmakers and writers – alongside academic discussion. *Inscription*'s focus is not just on the meanings and uses of the codex book, but also the nature of writing surfaces (papery or otherwise), and the processes of marking in the widest possible sense: from hand-press printing to vapour trails in the sky; from engraved stones to digital text. The journal's theoretically aware, trans-historical, and cross-disciplinary remit will break with the conventions of academic ghettoization, creating connections between areas that have much to say to one another – bibliography, media theory, conservation, the history of the book, museum studies, and artist's book studies, for instance – enabling wide-ranging conversation and unexpected juxtapositions. *Inscription* promises not only to add to the field but to set new agendas for the next phase in the study of material texts.

In another break with the conventional academic journal, *Inscription*'s dos-à-dos format, inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's short story 'A Descent into the Maelström', means *Inscription* has two beginnings, no end, and a central colophon with the publishing information spiralling down into nothing. Each edition of *Inscription* will have a guest artist-in-residence, digital artist-in-residence, poet-in-residence and writer-in-residence; and each edition will be accompanied by a vinyl LP featuring an author reading from their work.

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# Welcome to *Inscription*

Adam Smyth

Where to begin? How to begin?

With a welcome. Welcome! You're reading *Inscription*, and we're delighted about that. Perhaps this copy has just arrived in the post and you are opening these pages for the first time. Perhaps you are browsing this snippet online, unable to see the whole text, weighing up the odds. Perhaps someone is reading this to you. Perhaps you're in a library looking for a particular article and this volume has just been carried up by a librarian from the deep stacks with an old reader's slip tucked between pages 12 and 13. Or perhaps it is decades from the moment now when I am writing: welcome 2147, or 2238, and welcome future-you, with all your unforeseen ways, turning the pages of a long-ago journal that, as I write, has three months until publication. Wherever or whenever you are: welcome, and thank you for reading the first edition of *Inscription*.

A welcome, and then a statement of purpose. *Inscription*: the act of inscribing; the action of writing upon or in something, especially in a durable or conspicuous way. Are we durable and conspicuous? Time will tell, but we are certainly invested in thinking about making marks upon or in surfaces or substrates. Inky revisions in a novelist's notebook. A chisel cutting into stone. Hurried pencil scrawls across scraps of paper. Pieces of lead type pressing ink on to paper. Spiralling digital text viewed on a phone. A goose quill scratching parchment. The repelling force of oil and water playing out across a lithography stone. Grooves cut into polyvinyl chloride (or PVC, or vinyl). *Inscription* will explore material texts and the processes of mark-making in all these varieties and specificities.

We want *Inscription* to range widely across boundaries of place and of period. In this first edition, we are in regional archives, artists' studios, family homes, national libraries, living rooms, parchment-making businesses. We are at dinner in the Askanischer Hof Hotel, Berlin, and we are out in the Australian streets with the birds. We move through early twentieth-century Prague, sixteenth-century Wales, nineteenth-century America,

eighteenth-century England, and the northern suburbs of Melbourne in 2020. But rather than offering only a linear chronological range – although that's a good thing, too – the articles and creative pieces contained in these pages invite us to rethink more profoundly the timeliness of material texts. Where, in time, do material texts rest? When is their moment? One of the rich potentials, and the joys, of thinking about material texts is that the punctual and sometimes punishing historicism of much academic criticism – the click of text being locked into context – can be suspended or complicated or augmented with an interest in other temporal frames: the *longue durée*; the Wordsworthian palimpsest (from the Greek *palimpsestos*, meaning 'scraped again'); the looping chronology of the recycled or the repurposed or the revised.

Material texts offer this potential because while they tell all kinds of stories – romances, tragedies, comedies – they can also tell us, if we learn to read the signs correctly, the stories of their own making.<sup>1</sup> These material narratives exist alongside, and sometimes in tension with, artistic representation – whether that's the novel's plot, or the painting's scene, or the record's bodiless voice. The vinyl you are, or will be, listening to is made from 74% co-polymer, 25% PVC, and 1% pigment, compressed into a 'puck' which was placed between two stampers to form under heat and pressure the vinyl disc that spins and gives voice. We hope you're enjoying it! The pages of a sixteenth-century Bible were made from paper which came from linen made from recycled second-hand clothes once worn by men and women and children who lived in the 1500s. Does it matter than the Book of Genesis was once a labourer's shirt? A parchment with beautiful historiated letters was some time before the skin of a sheep staring out mutely across green fields, before the creature was slaughtered, the skin stripped of wool, fermented in quick-lime, washed, stretched, perforated, pared, scoured, dried, rubbed. The lithographer's stone producing prints about today is studded with fossils of creatures from hundreds of millions of years ago. What role do these pre-histories

have in the texts we encounter? What kind of temporal flickerings do they create? How can we ever say we know when a text begins when surfaces carry with them these temporal depths – when the book or the print or the page in our hands might best be thought of as only the most recent form assumed by materials that have a much longer, and more tumultuous life story.

*Inscription* will explore material texts and acts of marking through exciting critical articles and creative work. We hope also that the material form of *Inscription* will itself provide a prompt to imaginative and expansive thinking about the ways writing (in the broadest sense) creates its effects. This is a journal, but it is also a variety of container or box for other things (like a fold-out print), and it is also a kind of sleeve for a vinyl record, and it is also a link or route to an online rotating record, rich in connotation but also not quite looking at us, turning both in on itself and out to reach the world, in the eye; a form associated with Robert Smithson's counter-clockwise coil *Spiral Jetty* (1970), and Ubu's stomach in Alfred Jarry's proto-Surrealist *Ubu Roi* (1896), and the whirlpools in Edgar Allan Poe's terrifying short story 'A Descent into the Maelström' (1841). The journal in your hands begins from both ends, or neither. Half of it is upside down, until you turn it round, when the other half is. The end is in the middle. We hope reading is stranger and more baffling and less knowable as a result of *Inscription*. You will have seen that *Inscription* has two editorial prefaces, and that one is considerably better than the other: this is deliberate.



Figure 1. Outside.

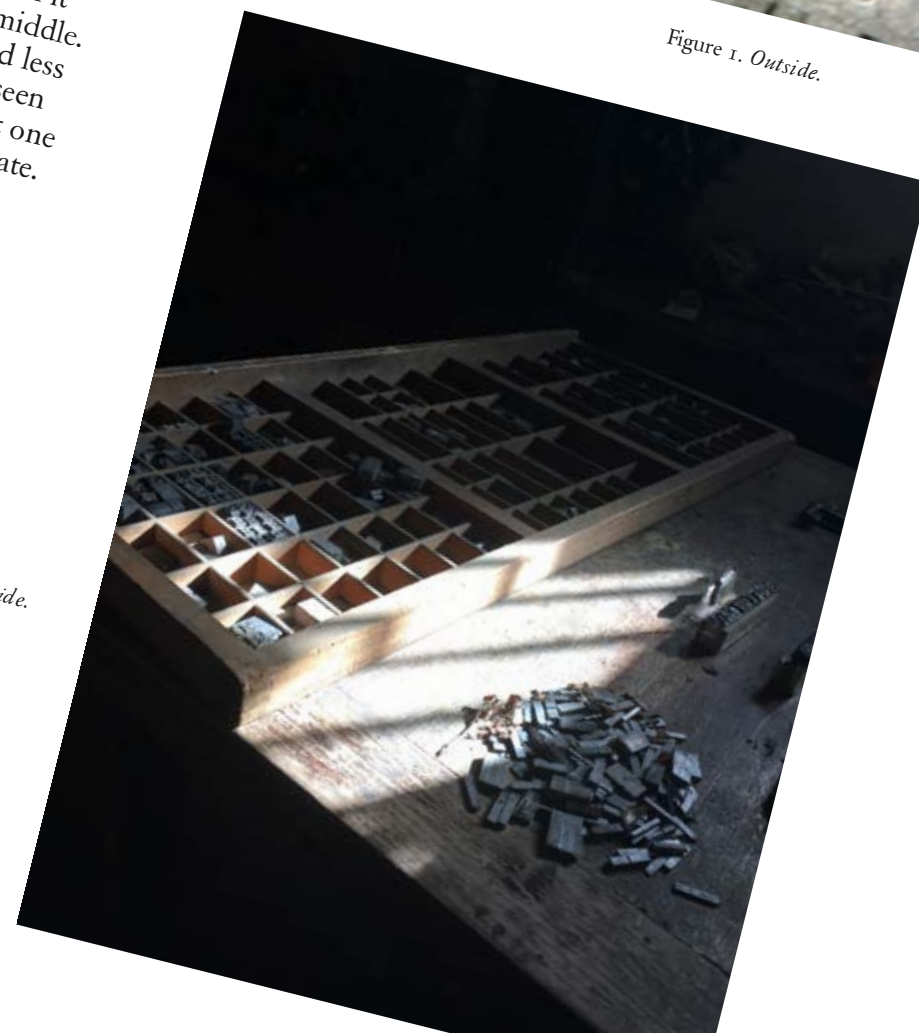


Figure 2. Inside.

1. As D.F. McKenzie observed, 'every book tells a story quite apart from that recounted by its text'. D.F. McKenzie, *Making Meaning: Printers of the Mind and Other Essays*, ed. by Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), p. 262.





# On Stone

Serena Smith

## Encounters

Under a clear blue sky the dragonfly takes its last migration through breezeless air. Touching down momentarily on still water, too late to know that this salty pool won't quench a thirst, its fragile wings are pulled down into the sedimenting basin of an isolated lagoon. Just out of reach from the coast nothing leaves the stagnating pool and warmed by the sun the water slowly evaporates.

Under the same sky 150 million years later, in a territory now under the jurisdiction of a place called Bavaria, the once calm reef is now land with a settled population. Business thrives in a town becoming renowned for its rich deposit of finely sedimented limestone and quarry beds are excavated to feed a growing demand for this now valuable natural resource being traded in the printing industry. And once again, by chance, the small creature's last journey comes to light, each detail of its flesh depicted in the smooth surface of the soft limestone matrix.

Not looking for fossils, the miners of Solnhofen wouldn't have known the part their labouring bodies played in writing history; nor how the invention of lithography marked a shift in the trajectory of communications, changing both the relationship between image and text in the printed document, which information could be disseminated. Brought to life through this process was a means of sharing knowledge, and a unique visual language. But as with all technology, in pursuit of speed and efficiency, industry moved on from its Jurassic ancestry – leaving to a different timeline errant offspring that came to light in the process.

\*

*1. Though obtainable on the Continent, lithographic stone is becoming increasingly difficult to buy in the British Isles as its use has been supplanted by plates. However, its unique properties for artists make it well worth finding. Some printers still have stocks which usually cost about 6d. per pound. When selecting stone choose sizes which your press can manage comfortably, and make sure they are of good thickness – minimum 3" if possible!*

Allured by their qualities, since then I've grown closer to these objects, become familiar with their nature, and learnt to work with their constraints and potential. Having trained in this artisan world of lithography, now inscribed into my body is the lingering habit of these practices. And sedimented into my thinking is the abiding presence of lithography stone. Material where tentative lines of thought meet the flow and resistance of corporeality, the nature of lithography stone continues to shape my drawing practice, as both a device that facilitates acts of **inscription**, and materialize language. *Interfolded with my human agency* and inflecting the forms it creates are the material and temporal dimensions of this raw matter, its capacity to capture both the indexical movements of a tracing hand, and the imagined presence of less tangible worlds.<sup>2</sup>

1. Stanley Jones, *Lithography for Artists* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 20.  
2. Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 31.



3. Elizabeth Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art: Deleuze and the Framing of the Earth* (New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 45.

4. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur. Mitchel (London: Macmillan & Co., 1911), pp. 3-4, 32.

This language is likewise generated by the mutual agencies of a thinking body and lithography stone; and by way of preparing the stone for drawing, I hope to share with you something of this complex relationship between a body moving through time, and a limestone matrix. Underwriting these thoughts is a view grounded by Elizabeth Grosz's description of art as 'always the coupling of extracted elements from the lived experience and their integration into the lived experience and lived behavior of organisms'.<sup>3</sup> My intention here is to explore this transformative *coupling* of geological matter and personal, and physical affects. Assembled to illuminate this task is a collection of observations that consider aspects of lithography stone as geological trace, material, and artefact. Inscribed into these pieces of sedimented matter are both complex narratives yet to be written and enduring encounters erased in the telling. And, like the stones themselves, this story too is a fragment, a singular glimpse of a longer tale: one that cannot be recounted in its entirety but is witnessed as discrete moments from an accumulated in 'partial views' of scenes and events that now distill their elements into narratives brought into being through the interstices of written text.<sup>4</sup> At play here: the virtuality of duration, its tangible accomplice *inscription*, and the substrate of lithography stone, in an operation that brings together worlds of geology, autobiography, technology, and writing.

Threaded through this observation of encounters between cosmological residue, human hands, and material agency are the words of philosopher and feminist theorist Elizabeth Grosz and vital materialist thinker Jane Bennett. Inhabiting their voices is the legacy of Henri Bergson's post-Darwinian thinking on time and the evolutionary forces of life. Grosz's development of Bergson's ideas lends concepts to my reflections and allows me to think of lithography stones in several ways: excavated and transformed into printing matrices, they are *framed* pieces of the world, brought from the landscapes of matter into the complex

territories of language and culture, that in the hands of lithographers become sites of rhythmic contact and 'durational entwinement' between living body and enduring matter.<sup>5</sup> Cut from successions of sedimentary formation, they are static fragments divided out from the temporal flow of matter that bring their past lives into contact with the present moment.<sup>6</sup> And thus, as sites of perceptual encounter that *straddle the virtual past and the unfolding present*, they are both substrates for acts of *inscription*, and thresholds between intersecting worlds and intersecting chronologies.<sup>7</sup>

Whilst my aim is to give you some intimation of a complex relationship between two material bodies, our protagonist and object of attention for the next few pages is the stone itself. Lingering in the background of these reflections is a proposition raised by Henri Bergson in his introduction to *Creative Evolution* that asks: 'If the intellectual form of the living being has been gradually modelled on the reciprocal actions and reactions of certain bodies and their material environment, how should it not reveal to us something of the very essence of which these bodies are made?'<sup>8</sup> In response, Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter* lingers with scrutiny on these bodily relations and their material environments, and puts forward a view that pays more sensitive attention to the liveliness of the *nonhuman* bodies. Endowing matter with a critical agency, she releases it from instrumental servitude to re-set the balance of these relations, and suggests alternatively that 'in the long and slow time of evolution [...] mineral material appears as the mover and the shaker, the active power, and [...] human beings, with their much-lauded capacity for self-directed action, appear as its product'.<sup>9</sup>

5. Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, p. 17; Elizabeth Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 5.

6. Bergson; Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside* (Massachusetts: MIT, 2001), p. 122.

7. Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, p. 121.

8. Bergson, p. xi.

9. Bennett, p. 11.



Figure 1. Sedimenting Limestone.

2. Before attempting to grind the stone, first examine the surface for the following possible faults in its structure: large deposits of iron salts (usually brown in colour) and other crystalline substances and all-over chalky textures (usually of a lighter colour than the stone itself). Such faults may affect an image, although some stones contain fine black fault lines which are harmless.<sup>10</sup>

10. Jones, p. 31.

11. H. Schonger, (n.d.), *Lithographien-Schiefer Solnhofen, Germany Limestone Quarry* & use of Limestone in Lithography 74872 (Germany: <Periscopetfilm.com>).

## Sediment

Glimpses of the ways in which these slabs of prehistoric time made their way into the studios of printers and artists can be seen in a black and white film of the Solnhofen Plattenkalk.<sup>11</sup> The handheld footage begins by silently panning the landscape, to show a town of white stone buildings clustered alongside a plain banked by the low rise of promontories. In bright sunshine the camera slowly takes in cliff faces. Surveying these vertiginous towers, its flickering grain captures shadows cast by exposed and eroded limestone strata before tilting down into the territory of the opencast mine. Here, framed by the camera is makeshift scaffolding comprised of a network of snaking wooden pathways that partially enclose the site and mark the zone of the miners' activity. Sturdy enough for hand carts, and in parts laid with a narrow-gauge track, this moveable architecture is suspended between footholds and crevices in the rock. In places, the balanced planks of these walkways follow the contours of dry-stone walling, painstakingly constructed to cover the crumbling earthen residue basin of the mine, beneath the shattered shelves of this precarious structure, lies the history of lives shaped by these rocks, left by the cleaving edges of picks, hammers, and crowbars. Written into these lower reaches of the ageing facades is the history of uneven territory broken and re-configured by the arduous labour of miners.

Calibrating the rise of the cliffs are chronological planes of succession. Horizontal divisions mark repeated cycles of sedimentation, evaporation, and hardening, of pools of silt, a rhythmic sequence replayed over millions of years. The outcome, a rock formation; a compacted stack of sedimented time. Each individual bed denotes a span, and each the singular record of a unique microclimate in its final moment of distillation. These are origins imagined and re-told through the analysis of Kathryn Yusoff, that thinks that categorises and names these dusty residues. And a practice, under the analysis of Kathryn Yusoff, that thinks and operates through a grammar that stratifies planetary



sediment, enabling matter to be regulated, mastered, dislocated, and mobilised within economies of extraction. Captured by this process are bodies and matter, in relations that entwine their coupled material as both mineral resources and indices of value.<sup>12</sup>

In this cinematic experience, as with my recollections, encounters with these past events are glimpsed through captured moments; they are virtual memories transformed into sequential legibility by way of a narrative device. The slow evaporation of silt, the flickering play of celluloid film, and the *inscription* of this text: successive, multiple, and diverse environments. These are disparate parts of a continuum that might evoke time's virtual flow not as 'homogeneous, smooth, or linear', but akin to the strutters and surges of Jurassic temporality that shaped the stratified cliffs. An arc of time that left in its wake not a seamless cloak of divisible matter, but an eroding landscape of creases, fissures, and 'spreading cracks'; an unfolding and irregular duration described by Elizabeth Grosz as 'a mode of "hesitation", bifurcation [...] or emergence'.<sup>13</sup>

3. Check with calipers that the stone is equally thick at all four corners. Check with a steel rule for lateral and transverse hollows, placing the edge of the rule down the middle of the stone and putting a small piece of tissue paper between it and the stone. If the paper can be moved easily under the rule, then there is a hollow. If the paper is held fast the stone is flat.<sup>14</sup>

## Temperament

Undocumented by the monochrome footage are the variations in the seams of deposit, and the distinct patination of each quarried layer. Left by disparities in the mineral composition were rich palettes of colour, denser in tonality in the lower beds. Compressed by gravitational force, these deepest levels yielded heavy blue stone, whereas from the upper ledges came a

13. Bennett, p. 59; Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside*, p. 114.

14. Jones, p. 31.

15. 'Noise' is an unwanted by-product of image-capture devices and refers to signal interference or excess.

16. Bennett, p. 14.

17. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 69.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

12. Kathryn Yusoff, *Geologies of Race: Unearthing the Ground of the Human* (Weimar: Internationale Kolleg für Kulturtechnikforschung und Medienphilosophie, 2019), 11:37 <imeo.com/379990947> [accessed 15 June 2020].

friable, chalky substrate. Extracted from the levels in between, a spectrum of fine-grained stones more suitable for lithography, ranging in hue from dark grey to pale yellow. My own small stack gathered over time is likewise of variable nature; some worn thin with use, others misshapen fragments from larger stones, each one distinct in dimension, texture, and pigmentation. This inconsistency, however, is not superficial. Lingering from their nascent microclimates is an accumulation of small differences that affect each stone's response to the lithographic process. Far from being voiceless substrates, two stones drawn, processed, and printed identically will produce two significantly different sheets of information. In the mute ecology of these objects there is a willful deviancy, a reverberating echo that tacitly appears in printed lithographs as noise.<sup>15</sup> The unstable contingency of each stone's mineral make-up, giving the potential for the stone to talk back, contests its fracture under the geared mechanics of a conchoidal press. A mutant capacity for a 'nonhuman vitality' celebrated by Jane Bennett, that is not always in tune with technology's pursuit for a predictable and more biddable accomplice.<sup>16</sup>

## Material Culture

Perhaps we might think of these 'slices of the world' not as blank matrices, but as a collection of found photographs. Glimpsed on their time-worn faces, the speculative hints of data; a patina that indivisibly fuses the so-called 'clouds of fantasy and pellets of information'.<sup>17</sup> Photographs however, it has also been said, are *easily* taken, the small gestures of hand and eye, having only *tenuous* knowledge of what they record.<sup>18</sup> Cutting to a scene of action in the film might tell us more about the not so easily acquired knowledge and skills needed to quarry this material. With heads bowed, a row of four men stand on the dusty floor of the mine, in *taçit* synecopation swinging their mallets against bolsters wedged between two layers of the stratified rock.<sup>19</sup>

19. Michael Palanyi, *The Tread of Dimensions* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 14.

A second line of quarriers in the next frame, hands grasping the slender poles of pickaxes, again moves in time to dislodge the limestone bed, before one breaks out of formation to gently tap the floor, loosening the dense shelf from softer mudstone beneath. Whilst in abundance forward to the finishing room, each slab selected for lithography is inspected, cut to size, and its edges dressed by hand with a bushing hammer. Whilst in abundance when the recording was made, the methods needed to extract this fragile and valuable resource from its natural habitat were necessarily laborious.

4. Wash off old ink with a mixture of 5 drops of carbolic acid to 30cc of turps substitute, so that when grinding commences the stone is free of old ink, then remove old gum Arabic with warm water.<sup>20</sup>

These were tasks that demanded the meticulous attention of bodies intimately attuned to the resonant character of the material, bodies that could intuitively control the velocity of a cleaving mallet, ears that could hear changes in the timbre of a stone splitting from bedrock, lungs that could tolerate the rising powder of rock dust in baking sun. Hands shaped and callused by daily labour, corporeal instruments of sonorous expression, such as those that first without measure the level of a rock's colour and texture', eyes the complex interplay of a rock's colour and texture', that could detect small variations, such as those that first encountered the reptilian teeth and avian tail feathers of Darwin's missing link, the *Archaeopteryx*, the contours of its body documented in exquisite detail by particles of chemically precipitated calcium carbonate.<sup>22</sup>

Part bird, part dinosaur, one such specimen of this iconic creature resides in the Natural History Museum in London. Now perhaps understood as pivotal evidence of transitional change between species over time, when this curious hybrid first appeared in 1861, speculative discussion on the historical development of form was lively in the field of comparative anatomy. Contemporaneous to this scientific debate, in the light of the publication of Senefelder's technical handbook on lithography in 1796, stone was in demand in the print industry leading to industrious excavation that the Solnhofen quarries. An ecology of extraction that dynamically affected both the pace of print technology, and research on evolution.<sup>23</sup>

It was in the serendipitous encounter between these two worlds that *Archaeopteryx Lithographica* came into the light, the fragile barbs and filaments of its feathers,



Figure 2. Sedimenting Limestone.

20. Jones, p. 31.

21. Grosz, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, p. 55.

22. Nicholas Chare, 'Writing Perceptions: The Matter of Words and the Rollright Stones', in *Art History*, 34 (2011), 244–267 (p. 248).

23. Alois Senefelder, Friedrich Schlichtegroll, Samuel Prout, Jacques Callot, Rudolph Ackermann, *A complete course of lithography: containing clear and explicit instructions in all the different branches and manners of that art: accompanied by illustrative specimens of drawings. To which is prefixed a history of lithography, from its origin to the present time* (London: R. Ackermann, 1819).



24. Bennett, pp. 18, 21, 9.

25. Jones, pp. 31-32.

clawed fingers, and bony tail indivisibly imprinted into lithified silt, the fleeting moment of its death giving substance to Charles Darwin's published claim to the theory of natural selection, and the proposition that at the core of all life are complex relations that bring about gradual processes of becoming. These radical theories were subsequently formative for Henri Bergson's philosophical expansions of life, to consciousness, time, and the vital impetus of the Elizabeth Grosz's ecologies of vibrant forces of life, and Jane Bennett's ecologies of virtual forces of life, she describes as confederations of diverse elements, and groupings of stone lithography, and the disparate environments of stone lithography, and the disparate marriage of prehistoric bird and evaporating silt.

### Climate

Such finds are, however, rare. And at first glance the large stone I have maneuvered into the graining sink ready to be prepared, appears to be clean with few visible blemishes — this smooth regularity an outcome of millennia of diagenesis that gradually transformed the warm Jurassic slurry into stone that could be finished to resemble the fine tooth of a sheet of undrawn velum. The even composition, geologists' observations suggest, is due to the hypoxic salinity of these chemical baths, environments that inhibited the potential for organic survival. Without the disturbance of tides, only unsuspecting animal life, debris from occasional flooding, or windblown drift might by chance have stirred up clouds of silt in the tranquil lagoons.

When flushed with water the pale grey stone darkens, and what becomes easier to detect are clues to what lies below. Revealed by wetting the surface: a distinct red stain of iron deposit, the peppering of a rash of dark spots, and streaking through the grey, a wave of warmer pigment. Veining the grey limestone are linear tracks of silica, one of which traces a disjuncture in the primary formation; a fault line along which the stone might suddenly break as it wears thinner with use. Caught in deep geological time, 'the flickers of an unwritten past', a captured moment in the stone's ontogenesis.<sup>26</sup> Compressed into *ibi dormant material*, and discretely witnessed by these interruptions of a virtual past. And the potential for events yet to unfold.

In truth however, it was not the complete skeletonized fossil of a flighted creature that was first named Archaeopteryx, but a single feather unearthed in 1860, the arrival of its pigmented shadow in the sedimented limestone adding complexity to discussions on the genealogy of avian creatures and contributing to sustained speculation on the plumage of dinosaurs. Perhaps in the words of Jane Bennett our falling feather in its chance immersion might be understood, through the fortuity of being in the right place at the right time,<sup>27</sup> as the actant that 'makes things happen, becomes the decisive force catalysing an event'.<sup>24</sup>

5. Distribute evenly a layer of 60s graining sand or carborundum powder. Sprinkle water over the stone and mix the two together, spreading the mixture evenly over the surface. Take a stone of a similar size, place on top of the first stone, printing surface to printing surface. Commence grinding, moving the top stone in the shape of a horizontal figure of eight. Grind with an even movement, renewing sand and water as required.<sup>25</sup>

26. Chare, p. 249.

27. Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, p. 32.



Figure 3. Sedimenting Limestone.

6. After grinding for twenty or thirty minutes, take a piece of cloth soaked in turpentine and rub it in black printing ink until the rag is well coated. Moisten stone with water and rub the cloth vigorously over the stone. If the old image still persists, it will pick up the ink. If you are satisfied that it has been removed, wash the stone clear first with turps substitute and then with water.<sup>28</sup>

In the presence of a lithography stone in the graining sink, atmospheric conditions are noticeable. Sensitive to environmental change, they have temperatures that can be taken.<sup>29</sup> In dry climates, humidity caught from the breath will instantly show, then quickly evaporate from

28. Jones, p. 32.

29. Chare, p. 247.

30. Grosz, *Becoming Undone*, p. 30.

### Technology

Having only recently arrived in my studio, in good light the stone now reveals a horizontal seam along its pock-dimpled edges, indicating that it was 'kidded' from two thinner stones cemented back-to-back to give sufficient thickness. Also showing up within the patination of sediment is a pale shadow of grease, the adumbrated specter of a previous image that might print if not this stone on a cusp between intersecting worlds. Simultaneously a shard of geological formation, completely removed, and manipulated, both a mineral deposit, and a fragment of material culture, it is mineral deposit, extracted, measured, and manipulated, both a mineral deposit, and a fragment of material culture, it is mineral deposit, relatively stable evolutionary matter, and a matrix for printing, its nature put to work for a *life of invention*.<sup>30</sup> In today's digital print environment, this stone might seem an anachronistic artefact, a ghost from the past. There is, however, a pleasing reverberation in the abiding presence of lithography stones. Quarried to meet a constant demand for use in the 19th century print industry, these laboriously finished pieces of stratified rock

the dehydrated surface. Correspondingly, if left stacked against a damp basement wall, moisture readily migrates into the hydrophilic stones, increasing their weight. In the hands of artists drawing made in the summer will be willingly absorbed, but in winter damp stones might struggle to notice these water borne traces. The stones' behavior is not just determined by primary formation, but also by subsequent place of use. Solnhofen stones shipped to far corners of the globe might react very differently to those remaining at home in German printmaking studios. Like all good travelers, lithography stones quickly acclimatize to new environments, although the methods and knowledge sought out in anticipation of their arrival, may take time to translate; novice lithographers in sub-tropical climates, following to the letter tried and tested handbooks written under the heat of a desert sun, might encounter reluctance from the stone to respond accordingly.



are now also the record of moments past in the unfolding events of technological succession: still frames from a sequence of advancing mechanization. Cut loose from the perpetual speed of these events, lithography studios are now stored against the walls of communicated in slower silent glimpses of a world that tenaciously hold the making time; sedimented texts that tenaciously hold the making of language to its material origins.

7. *Bevel the sharp edges of the stone with a file or an electrical belt sander. This prevents damage to the tinning roller; ridging of the printing paper; denting the tympan; the attraction of ink to the edges during printing.*<sup>31</sup>

It is with these things in mind that I reflect on, and write about, the preparation of this stone for drawing, anticipating the feel of its surface as it takes the warmth from my hand, its satisfying resistance to the lead of a pencil, the reassuring weight of its stability, and its patient insistence on slowness. At play here two matrices, one a slice of the earth's crust, the other the illuminated of matter brought into the *territories* of language as a instrument of communication on a continuum that spans the distance between sharing information, *more or less stable expression of chaos*, and the *calculable* and *measurable* spaces of digital pixels.<sup>32</sup> Shaping the chronological spaces of limestone, unable to keep pace with a desire for flawless repeatable information, were developed more efficient systems for sharing offset plates and the digital highways of virtual communication: technologies more inclined to remove laborious obstacles from the cursive flow of text.

31. Jones, p. 33.  
32. Gross, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, p. 17.  
33. *Ibid.*, p. 15.  
34. Gross, *Chaos, Territory, Art*, p. 29.

## Noise

Attendant with the receptivity of the freshly grained stone to record in exquisite detail the finest hairline serif from copperplate script is its willingness to capture with fidelity; debris from drawing materials, fingerprints, and lingering traces from past use. In the intimate contact between the porous surface and the soft flesh of a resting hand, there is always a potential for unintended traces of grease to be deposited – by-products from the physical process of drawing that might later print as superfluous information. This is not to suggest that the receptive nature of the stone cannot be used, and lithography is a *system constituted to control the variability of the materials*.<sup>34</sup> Ambiguous shadows and overspill that the margins can be removed; enigmatic blemishes that obscure legibility can be erased; serendipitous imprints from windblown drift settling on the surface can be diminished. And to sharpen the brittle clarity of lines of text, tonal contrast can be increased.

So, too, is it sometimes possible to mute infiltrating disturbance to the syntax of the drawing; from rashes and tracks in the lithified deposit that gradually emerge during printing. Tolerable noise or unwelcome disruption, this visible interference from variabilities in the sediment confound [...] from within.<sup>35</sup> Reminding the artist that prepared lithography stone is not a sheet of undrawn paper, but a collaborator with *agency*; an *actant* in an *assemblage*.<sup>36</sup> As the scribing hand pushes, drags, and sweeps its way around the rectangular plane, abraded grease is taken in, that the stone will later play back as printed information. But also lingering beneath this deceptive still surface is the latent capacity for other impulsive forces to resonate. For within the Jurassic template is a sensitivity that will notice these vagrant interruptions to the homogeneity of its fabric. In suspended animation, this particulate matter from the geological *lime trap* rises up from the dense *interior* when the stone is re-grained, bringing with it a nascent potential to speak.<sup>37</sup> Embedded in this seemingly static depth

35. Bennett, p. 23.  
36. Bennett, p. 31.  
37. Anne Sauvagnargues, 'Crystals and Membranes: Individuation and Temporality', in Gilbert Smonon, *Being and Technology*, ed. by A. De Boever, A. Murray, J. Roelle, & A. Woodward, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 57–70 (p. 69).

is the *active power* of mineral life, transient material, with a readiness to harness its intentions to the sensorial movements of corporeality.<sup>38</sup>

8. *The coarse grain left by grinding is normally too rough; so remove it with snake stone (which is a trimmed block of volcanic rock), rubbing it edge-ways on the moistened stone to produce a smooth surface. Continue thus for about fifteen minutes, again making sure that the whole surface is worked evenly. Sprinkle with more water occasionally. The result should be a completely smooth surface. Beware of stray abrasive particles. They can scratch the surface deeply at this stage.*<sup>39</sup>

## Points of Contact

Pressed together, this contact point between skin and stone is an entwining of agencies, a partnership that creates from its coupled entities an assemblage. Cosmological residue and print technology, light sensitive film and projector, liquid tusche and lithography stone, inscribing device and artist's hands, words and narrator; assemblages of diverse materialities that operate in dynamic cohesion. But whilst disparate, the elements in these assemblages share a unity of *substance* made common to all matter by Spinoza's *conatus*: a unifying will, endowing material bodies with a persistent energy that Jane Bennett calls 'thing-power'.<sup>40</sup> In the small world of lithography these porous, slippery, veined, creased, callused, flaking, hesitant, stuttering, and *affective* bodies mingle in antagonistic and cohesive relations.<sup>41</sup> Intimate partnerships in which small differences in silt formation can become audible; differences that might by chance manifest as indexical traces of a scribing hand. Left in evidence of this coupling between entities, indivisible 'clouds of fantasy and pellets of information': printed on paper with a layer of ink that makes no distinction between the two.<sup>42</sup>

38. Bennett, p. 11.  
39. Jones, p. 34.  
40. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 21.  
41. *Ibid.*  
42. Sontag, p. 69.  
43. Jones, p. 34.  
44. Gross, *Architecture from the Outside*, p. 122.

## Acts of Inscription

Amongst my small accumulation there are a few large lithography stones that were dug up from a back garden some years ago. Pitted and chipped from the trauma of burial and acidic soil, they hadn't aged well. It also became clear when the mud and dust had been washed off that, unlike the fine grey texture of the stone now in the graining sink, these were heavily laden with chalk and other sedimented irregularities. Quarried from the upper layers of rock formation, not suitable for fine tonal work, glimpsed in residues of ink and not from Solnhofen. However, in spite of their inferior quality, legible on the surfaces are the anonymous remains of hand-drawn pages for an ironmonger's catalogue, meticulously drawn fixtures and fittings for the Edwardian home, and screws, intricately broken text size images in standard imperial measure, rendered crisp outlines now witnessed in static simultaneity. Documented now broken tracks across a weathered landscape. Their crisp outlines now witnessed in static simultaneity. Events that span suburban entombment, the calibrations of antique engineering, and the flooding of silting residue, successive moments now witnessed in static simultaneity, as fragmented *inscriptions* and shadows cast by the exposed and eroded limestone. Intersecting worlds and intersecting chronologies that now converge within the matted felt of a palimpsest.<sup>44</sup>































setting fire to the earth (the 'service'). Perhaps Le Neve thought this quotation especially apposite because it comes just after Phaëthon's epitaph:

HIC · SITVS · EST · PHAETHON · CVRRVS ·  
AVRIGA · PATERNI

QVEM · SI · NON · TENVIT · MAGNIS ·  
TAMEN · EXCIDIT · AVSIS

HERE PHAËTHON LIES: IN PHOEBUS'  
CAR HE FARED,

AND THOUGH HE GREATLY FAILED,  
MORE GREATLY DARED.<sup>32</sup>

In a project that highlights the textual instability that arises when epitaphs move between media, it seems entirely fitting that Le Neve seeks to associate his ambitious obituary with Phaëthon's doomed efforts. That he does so in an allusion that garbles the Latin original resonates – appropriately, if not deliberately – with his understanding that the act of textual transmission always also invites textual transformation.

No record of Le Neve's death survives, although he seems to have lived several decades after 1719, when the fifth and final volume of *Monumenta Anglicana* was published.<sup>33</sup> No monument marks his final resting place, but the epigraph on the title page of the first volume of *Monumenta Anglicana* could stand for Le Neve's epitaph as well. This, too, is a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, from the very last verse of that work: '... nec ignis, / Nec potest ferrum, nec edax aboletere verustas,' [And now my work is done,] which neither the wrath of Jove, nor fire, nor sword, nor the gnawing tooth of time shall ever be able to undo.<sup>34</sup> Le Neve's text is an act of metamorphosis that turns stone and manuscript into printed text, but that also self-consciously registers the process of transformation. And, as in Ovid, the altered body/text, while often apparently frailer than the original, achieves longevity through its capacity to change.

<sup>32</sup> Ovid, pp. 82–83.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Doggett, 'Le Neve, John (b. 1679, d. in or before 1741), antiquary,' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <oxforddnb.com> [accessed 20 June 2020].

<sup>34</sup> Ovid, pp. 426–427.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, 26 (30 March 1711).

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Free-holder*, 35 (20 April 1716).

<sup>29</sup> Paul Baines and Pat Rogers, *Edmund Curll: Bookseller* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 72.

follow: [...] When I read the several Dates of the Tombs, of some that dy'd Yesterday, and some six hundred Years ago, I consider that great Day when we shall all of us be Contemporaries, and make our Appearance together.<sup>27</sup>

Mr. Spectator's reflections depend on the material characteristics of stone. Stone's durability obliterates temporal distinctions between parents and children, youth and age, past, present and future. It figures of youth and age, past, present and future, at least, of permanence. By contrast, and in another periodical essay, Addison condemns 'Grub-street Biographers, who watch for the Death of a great Man, like so many Undertakers, on purpose to make a Penny of him.'<sup>28</sup> Here, Addison attacks the team of speed-writers working for the notorious bookseller Edmund Curll, who had published Le Neve's *Life and Characters* of the recently in-producing 'instant biographers' of the recently dead, often based on limited or spurious information.<sup>29</sup> *Monumenta Anglicana* wasn't published by Curll and it isn't a collection of biographies in the same vein as *Life and Characters*, but, with its serialised obituary of the recently dead, it could nonetheless be seen as part of the print-based, irreverent publication culture to which Addison so strenuously objected.

Le Neve, however, constructs the relationship between stone monuments and printed memorials differently from Addison. In the preface to volume two of *Monumenta Anglicana*, Le Neve notes that

*When a Church extremely decay'd, or out of Repair, by the mere Injury of Time, shall, by the Zeal of the Parishioners, or by any other Assistance, be pulled down and rebuilt; there has been no Care, or Thought of re-erecting any Monuments which must of Necessity then come down: But the Marble is thrown in a Corner, as the Bones into a Charnel-House ... [T]o prove the Matter of Fact, I have, now lying by me, six Sheets of Inscriptions, taken in the Year 1680, in the Church of St. Clements Danes, in which Year, we are told, this Church was taken down, and rebuilt at the Charge of*

*the Parishioners, and some others; but, let any body find the Tombs, or any Footsteps of them, if they can; nay, farther, I very much question, whether there be so much as another Copy of them now in being? (ii, [A] 1<sup>v</sup>–2<sup>r</sup>)*  
*as another Copy of them now in being?*

Contrary to Addison's assertion that, because of its durability, stone figures forth eternity, Le Neve emphasises its vulnerability. Likening monuments that have been cast aside to skeletons in a channel house, he collapses the apparent distinction between monuments that endure, and corpses that decay. Le Neve's vivid movement into the first person ('I have, now lying by me ...') also highlights the fragility of manuscript as a medium. A single copy of six sheets (perhaps there is a sense of potential fragmentation implicit in their separateness?) offers little security against loss. Like other antiquarians before him, then, Le Neve highlights the protective function of printing stone *inscriptions*. John Weaver, sceptical of the growing power of puritans in his own time, presents his text, *Ancient Funerall Monuments*, as an antidote to earlier iconoclasts who left monuments 'broken downe, and utterly almost all ruinated'.<sup>30</sup> In Le Neve's time, the building of fifty 'Queen Anne' churches presented a different kind of threat to ancient monuments. Nonetheless, there is a similar belief in both texts that print, for all its apparent ephemerality, has preservative qualities.

What we see in *Monumenta Anglicana*, however, is the conviction that print is not only preservative, but also transformative. Le Neve makes a number of arresting allusions to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as he explores this idea. Noting that his obituary can never record all of the deaths that take place in any given year, he asserts that 'yet with all its Faults, I believe I may be so bold as to say Aliquisq; Malo foret [sic.] Usus in illo' (i, b 1<sup>r</sup>). The Latin here is a mangled quotation from Book II of Ovid's work, 'aliquisque malo fuit usus in illo'. In Ovid, even in that disaster was there some service.<sup>31</sup> In Ovid, this line follows the death of Phaëthon, son of the sun god, Phoebus, who crashed his father's chariot and so put out the sun for a day (the 'disaster' to which Le Neve's quotation refers), but gave another form of light by

<sup>30</sup> Weaver, #3.

<sup>31</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Frank James Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library, xliii (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916), pp. 82–83.



# Writing the Birds: Barrawarn

Catherine Clover

**R** *ead*ing silently is to be avoided

oh ah-ah oh ah er or oh ar-ah-ah ah

or ah ah ah

ah orrrr

ah ah ce ah ahh

ah EE ah-ah ee

ah ah-ah eee or

eeee ah-ah ahh

ah-ah oh

ee ah-ee ahhh

ah ce ah ah or-or

ah ce ah ah ahh

(Thursday early mild dry)

or ah ee

or ah ee

or ah ee

(Later overcast a grey-yellow light)

or ah ee

or ah ee

or ah ee

(Saturday morning bright)

ah ee-ya

ah ee-ya

ah ee-ya

ah ee-ya

ah ee-ya

eeeeeeeeeeeeee

eeeeeeeeeeeeee

eeeeeeeeeeeeee

eeeeeeeeeeeeee

ah ee-ya

or ah ee

(Tuesday morning windy)









6. John Bradley, 'Learning Language: Learning Country', talk at *Whose Language Are You On?*, Melbourne Free University, 2 May 2019.

5. Harley Dunolly-Lee and Tonia Stebbins, 'Restoring Language to Community and Country: What's Happening in Victoria', talk at *Whose Language Are You On?*, Melbourne Free University, 9 May 2019.

The prison closed in 1997 and during development into an apartment complex was ignominiously tagged by locals as 'Penritdige Piazza'. Many of the extraordinarily thick bluestone walls of the prison have been retained for heritage value, complete with razor wire.

ah ee ya

ah ee ya

ah ree ahh

ah ee ya

(Sunday morning)

ah EE ah ee ree ah ah ee re yah ee ya ee ree ya rorr rorr

ah ee ye rah ra ee ra ye ah re ye ah aa ah ror or or eh

ah ye ah

ah ye ah

oe ah re ye ee ah ahh ra ee ro roh ah ya re orr ah ye ah

(Sunday afternoon)

Indigenous Australian languages are relational. Kin is core to Indigenous Australian culture and language, where who is speaking and who is listening dictates what is said and how it is said. There is never a tight package of form and meaning in language, rather, as Dja Dja wurrung linguist Harley Dunolly-Lee notes, 'meanings inclusively than in the West and includes all species: what is a multi-species kin. Humans are part of the continuum, not the central pivot of life, as discourses around human exceptionalism claim. Linguist John Bradley, who spent

many years with the Yanyuwa people of present-day Queensland, observes that family is far more than blood and other people.<sup>6</sup> Donna Haraway describes a congruous concept of kin for non-Indigenous people in which common 'flesh,' laterally, semiotically, and genealogically, kin are unfamiliar (outside what we thought was family), uncanny, haunting, active.<sup>7</sup>

ah ee ya

ah ee ya

(Thursday afternoon)

During 2019, the International Year of Indigenous Languages, there are many public talks and lectures in Melbourne about the process of Indigenous reclamation. In one of these talks, Dunolly-Lee explains that there is much debate and lectures in about how language reclamation can be carried out,<sup>8</sup> Some say that what is left of a language should be preserved and carefully archived in a pure form. Others want to revitalise the languages into living, disagreement forms. Methods for rebuilding include borrowing from neighbouring languages, improvisation and guesswork. Language mixes also offer some useful hints and suggestions. The only words Dunolly-Lee knew of his language as a child were snatches of *miss on talk*, his recollection, of insults and English, consisting, from laughter and snickering from both Dunolly-Lee and Indigenous members of the audience course through from auditorium). Language relates directly to land, to country, and in the process of reclamation a word can be called out to see how it fits, how it feels, within the landscape.

7. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 103.

8. Harley Dunolly-Lee, Jay Kennedy, and Julie Saylor-Briggs, *Knahip Teo Symposium at Yirramboi Festival with the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL) and State Library of Victoria*, 6 May 2019.

aaa oh ahh ohh orr orr

aaa ahh orr

rrro aaaa EEEE ahh aaa aah ahh orrr

arr rra ahhh eeee trahhh ahh EEE ohh

rra ahh rra eeh ohh rra ohh

prro-oh-prro-prroahh eee oh

ah ee ah ro oh ee ah-oh ee-oh

ah-eh aa-ee-ah aah-oh-ee tra-oh

oh-oh ooh rro orr ooh

(Sunday early)

As an urban industrial landscape for much of the twentieth century, the suburb included the post-war modernist Kodak factory (1957–2000) on the street where I now live, which provided employment for large numbers of the local population.

The Kodak factory complex is architecturally significant as probably the most intact example in Victoria of a large post-war industrial complex. It is a fine and particularly intact example of an architect-designed mid twentieth century factory complex in a landscaped setting, a type that proliferated in Melbourne's outer suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s but has since become increasingly rare. It is architecturally significant as a fine, intact and varied example of the work of Harry A. and Frank L. Norris

& Associates, a noted and prolific Melbourne firm of commercial architects, whose post-war work demonstrates a highly personal strain of International Modernism, distinguished by elegant detailing, ornamentation and the use of high-quality materials and finishes.<sup>2</sup> The area also includes the site of Penritdige Prison, built in 1851 from bluestone by the prisoners themselves. This is where bushranger Ned Kelly was executed in 1880. It is also where two of Melbourne's most celebrated contemporary artists, Indigenous actor Jack Charles and Stolen Generations, spent time.

Thanks to Australia's shameful Assimilation Policy I was snatched like a little lamb from the breast of my young mother, Blanche Charles, at the tender age of four months. Placed into City Mission Home for babies in Melbourne's inner-north suburb of Brunswick, I became a ward of the state. I was kept there until the age of two, then moved on to the next institution – Box Hill Boys' Home. I was kept a lone blak child among two hundred white faces, not another registered Aboriginal child to be seen.<sup>3</sup>

The year 1988 was a pivotal moment for a lot of us blackfellas. We had some sense of what had happened to ourselves, as a people, before that year. But what did I know up to that point? My lifestyle, my drinking, my parents, who, like me, had been taken from jail for no good reason. We might have lived through those traumas alone, but a collective sense of injustice began to bring us together that year.<sup>4</sup>

2. Former Kodak (Australia) Pty Ltd Factory Complex, *Heritage Council Victoria* <skhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/71066> [accessed 15 June 2021].

3. Jack Charles, *Born-Again Blakfellah* (North Sydney: Penguin, 2019), pp. 7–8.

4. Archie Roach, *Tell Me Why* (Cammeray: Simon and Schuster Australia, 2019), p. 200.



oh oh ee oh aa  
or ee eh  
ee EE ee ah ee or er  
eee eh er or  
or eey

ha ha ee  
(Tuesday early greeting)

Despite many decades of industry and urbanisation, ancient archaeological evidence of the Wurundjeri people's long connection to this place is tangibly present along the course of the Merri Merri. Stone artefact scatterers are visible and tools made from silcrete and quartz used to grind seeds, cut meat and skins, and cane wood have been found up and down the banks along the water.

ah-ee-yaah  
ehhh  
oh or  
eeahh  
eeahh  
ah-ee

<sup>10</sup> Tina June Windi, *The Yield* (Melbourne: Hamish Hamilton Australia, 2019), p. 103.

ah-ee

EEEEEE

ahh-cheeahh-ehahh-eh

ah ee oh ah or  
ah ee oh ahh or or  
ah ee oh ah ah or or  
ah ee ah ah oh ah or ch or  
oh or ah ee oh oh ah  
ahh

ah ee-ya  
(Wednesday)

Songlines – *yarrang gadih:dhuruy* means song having line and *birrang-dhury-gadih* means journey having line. These lines are our early map making. They measure down through story songs and dances. The lines are there, but sometimes the *gadih* is lost.<sup>10</sup> Although there is a mystical quality associated with Aboriginal Songlines, there is also an intensely practical aspect to the routes taken. Songlines invariably follow ridge lines, valley lines and easy contours. For Aboriginal people it was like following a system of flashing neon lights, regardless of the coded song instructions.

ahh or-or  
or ee ah-ah ahh ee or  
or ah ee-ah ee-ah or  
ah EE ah-ahh ah ee-ah ee ah-ahh  
ah or  
ah-ah or  
ee-ah-ahh or  
(Wednesday early bluing)

The Wurundjeri community's understanding of the mingling of the natural world with the cultural world is a term *naturraalkures*, where nature and culture are blending rather than a dualism. This mingling of the world at how I might consider the cultural world is this suburb. The traditional Wurundjeri people I live are now a paved suburb of houses and gardens and pavements and roads, occupied by Wurundjeri and Indigenous Australians from other tribes, but far greater in numbers these days are new migrants (like myself), second or third or fourth generation migrants (like asylum seekers, descendants of convicts/early settlers,

eh-ee-ya  
ee-ya  
eh-ee or  
ah ee or  
(Saturday late afternoon)

A tributary of the ancient Birrang that swirls its light brown waters through the centre of Melbourne, the Merri is a small but significant watercourse that meanders through the northern part of what is now city sprawl. It was a source of food and water during the thousands of years that constitute the pre-colonial era. In heavy rains the creek quickly grows in size and floods easily, even when the rains are relatively brief. Like many waterways that constitute the thousands of large numbers along the Merri Merri, flooding is sudden and the current fast and dangerous. Flooding is sudden local birds, both native and introduced species. Traditionally, each of the four Woi wurrung-speaking clans identified with specific areas (an estate). These estates were contiguous and, collectively, took in all of the drainage basin of the Yarra River and its tributaries south by the Yarra River; upstream was bordered in the north by the Dividing Range from Mount Baw Baw to Mount Blackwood. The Werribee River was the westernmost extension, and in the east Woi wurrung territory stretched into the Dandenong Ranges past Warburton. Because of their obvious connection with land along the river, the Woi wurrung clans are often referred to in the historical literature as the Yarra Yarra tribe.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Woi wurrung, *Worran Aboriginal Corporation for Languages* <waching.org.au/langages/worranung.htm> [accessed 15 June 2020].



















# G I O S S A R Y

## Stolen Generations (c. 1869-1969)

The term used for the policy of Australian Governments where Indigenous Australian children were taken from their families, their culture and their language and placed in homes and orphanages as a form of racist assimilation.

Barrarnan:  
Barrarnang:  
Merrri Merrri:

Australian Magpie  
River Yarra  
Very rocky, and the name for the  
Merrri Creek



















Figure 5. Printed ornamental 'Y' in the *Llyfr Gwedd! Gyffredin* (sig. A27).  
Archives and Special Collections.

If, as Donald F. McKenzie argued, 'the fine detail of typography and layout, the material signs which constitute a text, do signify', what is being signified here? If the non-textual features that the printing house added to the page spoke a 'visual vocabulary', underscoring the complex matrix of relations between functions and linguistic content, are the same functions recapitulated when book users designed their own ornaments to replace those that were lost or damaged?<sup>25</sup>

The hand-drawn ornaments offer a striking deviation from the design of the printed ornaments they stand in for. Geometric but also abstract, they seem, at first, to be virtually unreadable. It is possible, however, that the textured effect of the dots and oes is meant to emulate the *manière crívelle* (or 'dotted manner') method of relief-engraving, which was in use since the fifteenth century and often used to fill in the background of woodblock ornamental letters.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, the little 'E' and 'Y' which border the manuscript, appear to be imitating the running-in multiple directions, within the 'E' and 'Y' engraved in parallel hatching used in printing. By martyring dotted manner and hatching strokes, our agent marks out these salvaged pages in terms of difference rather than similitude. Recovery has offered an opportunity to transform the text in Figures 3 and 4 with parallel lines, dots, and oes.

This was obviously a work in progress. On the verso side of the manuscript leaf, a space remains vacant where the capital 'E' remains only partially decorated. And while this manuscript leaf pays homage to the visual dimensions of the lost printed pages, the agent introduces flowers, and a heraldic shield, small dots, and a little o-shaped embelishment. Where on the verso side of the printed leaf, a row of *fleur-de-lis* structured a chevron-like zig-zag pattern of text, our agent has used a chevron with parallel lines, dots, and oes.

It seems likely that this agent had a copy of the printed leaf s/he sought to (re)produce, since there has been an attempt to replicate the structures that organised its original design and layout: for instance, to insert placements of ornaments in places that correspond to the manuscript ornaments in print. So, where in print we find decorated initials, we find its approximation in manuscript; where in print a row of ornaments was used to structure a visual pause between the Absolution and the Lord's Prayer, we find its temporal-spatial demarcations, turning headers ('Boreuawl Weddi?') and even catchwords, have been copied out, and while at least three occasions, across both sides of the surrogate leaf, the manuscript 'Y' of 'Jesu' simulates the bold black letter 'Y' used in the original: that name and letter carried an attempt to return to black-letter, a font that carried its own retrospective associations, recalling the monastic scribal hands of medieval manuscript production.<sup>24</sup>

24. Pauline Reid, *Reading by Design: The Visual Interface of the English Renaissance Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 25.  
25. Donald F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), pp. 94–96.  
26. Claire McGonn, 'The Typographical Features of Anna Trapnel's Prophecies', *The Seventeenth Century* (2020), 1–20 (p. 14, p. 15) <doi.org/10.1080/0268172X.2020.1721327>; Hazel Williams, 'Printers' Ornaments and Flowers', in *Book Parts*, ed. by Marionne Rubinoff, *Doppelgänger Dilemma!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 109–122 (p. 112); Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 113.



Figure 6. A left-handed woman's glove with inner manuscript lining (c. 1640s). Wynn Hall 1044. Reproduced with the permission of Bangor University Archives and Special Collections.

spangles punctuate the webbing designs. Flower petals and leaves, and shimmering metallic silver metal wires twist in and around motifs resembling intricate collections of such forms of embroidery: blue threads in Bangor's collections (c. 1640s) (Figure 6) highlights the including gloves.<sup>28</sup> Conventually, a luxury glove in used to embroider the surface of early modern textiles, on visual affinities with the metallic discs, or 'spangles', a hand-drawn dots and o-shaped flourishes start to take for instance, is bordered by hatching that looks like 'Y' and 'E' have a fabric-like quality to them. The 'Y', the edge of the large letter, and both the manuscript

The background to the printed ornamental 'Y' reveals other design cues. The man at the centre of the letter (probably St John the Apostle and Evangelist, whose attributes in visual arts were often an open book and quill) is framed not only by flowers and leaves, but also by parted curtains, with scalloped-shaped cloth draping pattern reappears in the manuscript 'E' as a frame around

via a complex mingling of tones, hues, and textures, with lights and darks expressing relief, even movement, in ways that show up the printed ornaments they stand for as being somewhat generic.

28. I've been inspired here by McGonn's illuminating prophecies, deployed in Anna Trapnel's Fifth Monarchist prophecies.

27. See 'Dotted Print', in *The Grove Encyclopedia of Materials and Techniques in Art*, ed. by Gerald W. W. Ward (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 155–156.  
28. Claire McGonn, 'The Typographical Features of Anna Trapnel's Prophecies', *The Seventeenth Century* (2020), 1–20 (p. 14, p. 15) <doi.org/10.1080/0268172X.2020.1721327>; Hazel Williams, 'Printers' Ornaments and Flowers', in *Book Parts*, ed. by Marionne Rubinoff, *Doppelgänger Dilemma!* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 109–122 (p. 112); Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014), p. 113.











century bookseller's note, this 'Bible was [...] found built in a wall in a chest room at a Farm House at Saintbury' by one 'Rev [John] T[hododosis] Jones' (c. 1786–1851), a 'Vicar of Saintbury' and former Master of the Grammar School of King Edward VI, Stratford-upon-Avon. The book then came into the hands of Richard Hughes (1837–1930), an Anglesey-based farm labourer who, late in life, came into money via a surprise inheritance, which he used to collect rare books, gifting 3000 of them, including this Cranmer Bible, to Bangor University in 1930.<sup>45</sup>

This short provenance narrative might suggest that moments of inception: to find and possess all sorts of beginnings.<sup>46</sup> I must confess a preoccupation with the nostalgic getting back to the identities behind the marks in books, but with this is a sense of my own belatedness. Taking Bangor's Cranmer Bible out of its new box is like entering into a conversation that has already petered out. Paper scraps linger within its pages as signs of incompleteness, of recovery processes that have been cut short. Patched pages stand in for what is not there as much as what is: there's really no going back. What is there is a humbling sense that I'm not the first: many people have been into this book before me, and what they did to it back then means that I can handle it now. Its value lies less in a sense of handling an authentic original than in handling an object that foregrounds the archivally- and geographically-specific labours that precede and support my reading. It is a hugely involving object for that very reason: I can only read its materiality by way of (amongst others) the labourer Hughes, whose generous donation to Bangor marked the beginnings of the archive in which this dishevelled object, and all the others I've been discussing, are now housed.

But then there's this: a manuscript note, affixed to the left board and overlaid with a stamp belonging to Hughes, which physically describes this Cranmer Bible as 'imperfect', since it is missing a number of pages.

These traces exist in the form of **inscriptions** and signatures, ink spills, rogue hairs, the cracked shells of nuts, pins, as well as hundreds of unattached paper scraps, a few of which can also be seen in Figure 8. Some of these scraps carry commonplace passages and from sermons, numbers and calculations, names and dates, and some are blank. Most look as if they were being used as bookmarks; others contain shards of biblical text. These scraps appear to be remnants from a larger recovery project, in which hand-written supplements were used like plasters to dress wounded pages. This involved a cautious alignment of hand and press, and a sense on that agent's behalf of the text as a kind of genetic jigsaw, one that could easily fall apart, but also be put back together again using scissors, glue, and paper.

Many paper scraps floating freely within Bangor's Cranmer Bible are off-cuts of an attempt to mend a printed page. The effect is that the book feels alive with meaning and potential, but also that it is dangerously close to collapse and disappearance. Over time, extensive use has reduced it to material stuff, which it continues to shed every time the book (if that's not too monolithic a term) is opened. For this very reason, archivists recently placed Bangor's Cranmer Bible inside a cardboard box for its own safety, lined with cushions, actually lacks) has been downloaded from Early English Books Online and affixed to that box, a sign of what is, and what is not, in fact, inside.

It's a curious end for a book that has had a very active social life. As research for another article, I have traced a few of this book's former owners. So far, this narrative has me moving from one 'merdle [i.e. Myrtle?] Paston' – baptised '[the [13th] day of december in the 31st] year of the reygyn of kinge Henry the eyght' – through to a husband and wife team, Benjamin and Susanna Rogers, of Rowington, in Warwickshire, who are active in its margins between 1710 and 1743, and who were jointly responsible for the patchwork repairs discussed above. As far as I can tell, the book then moved south-into Gloucestershire, where, according to a nineteenth-

[B]eginning at Gen XIX', it says, before remarking that material damage due to sustained reading has otherwise rendered it 'worn and damaged'. It's a lexicon that marks this object out in terms of lack and want, but it could easily be (re)characterized in opposite terms. Turn over its battered left board and you will find a book that is somehow in excess of itself, marked by overspill and remnants. It's almost too much rather than not enough, a book that's bursting at the seams of its own material limits.

The word 'imperfect' just doesn't do justice to this book's exciting, decaying disarray, and neither should it be comfortably attached to all the other material modifications examined in this article. To quote Joshua Calhoun, each of those examples hint towards a 'duplicitous media preservation strategy', which mingles a desire to repair books back into a state of completion – to reinsure, for example, imprints and ornamental capitals – with a sense of books as transformative spaces into which stuff can be added, as well as revealed.<sup>47</sup> (A multiple ownerships, identities, shared parts, and new beginnings.) Half-undone by use and half-made-over, pivoting between copying and creating, possessing and processing, my examples encourage us to think about books and people in imaginative process together, and to recognise that earlier reading communities were comfortable with a sense of the book as an accumulative form, whose endurance through time was predicated upon its openness to material change. Indeed, the loss and damage accrued by book use prompted book users not only to recover those losses, but also to reflect on what printed books are, and what they could be. Acknowledging the interpretive potential modelled in repaired and modified pages is, therefore, a good place to begin as we take an 'imperfect' old book down from its shelf, or out of its box.

47. Joshua Calhoun, *The Nature of the Page: Poetry, Papermaking, and the Ecology of Texts in Renaissance England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), p. 150.

45. Hughes's rag-to-riches story was unpacked in the *Welsh Outlook: A Monthly Journal of National Social Progress*, 18:4 (April, 1931), 88–89. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), p. 5.







Simon Morris is co-editor of *Inscription*, and Professor of Art at Leeds Beckett University. In 2002, he founded the publishing imprint *information as material* (iam) which has published over fifty books by artists and poets across the globe. [informationasmaterial.org](http://informationasmaterial.org)

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Craig J. Saper, a Professor at UMBC, has published *Artificial Mythologies*; *Networked Art*; *The Amazing Adventures of Bob Brown*; *Intimate Bureaucracies*. He co-curated *TypeBound* (on typewriter and sculptural poetry), and was the co-founder of [folkvine.org](http://folkvine.org). Roving Eye Press books (*all free as downloads*) and links to two other books. [rovingeyepress.umbc.edu/](http://rovingeyepress.umbc.edu/) He has co-edited many scholarly collections and critical editions, including in 2020 *Readies for Bob Brown's Machine*.

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The Roland Barthes Reading Group has been parsing Roland Barthes's *The Preparation of the Novel* [Trans. Kate Briggs] for four years. His text repeatedly lays out the conditions for beginning without ever quite starting his novel project. The group ran an Unmasterclass seminar with guest reader Anne Boyer as part of the Poetics in Commons symposium at the University of Sheffield. Work from this session is currently being edited into a forthcoming publication published by Ma Bibliothèque. The Roland Barthes group include: Emma Bolland, Julia Calver, Helen Clarke, Louise Finney, Suzannah Gent, Sharon Kivland, Debbie Michaels, Hestia Peppé, and Rachel Smith.

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Alice Wickenden is finishing a collaborative PhD with the British Library and Queen Mary, University of London, titled 'Hans Sloane's Library and its Material Connections'. She works on bringing theories of collecting and institutional practice into conversation with the material book in order to understand what it means to talk about a library as a distinct sort of collection. Alice has forthcoming work in *Publishing History*.

Zara Worth is the Project manager for the *Inscription* Journal. Zara is a visual artist and doctoral researcher at Leeds Beckett University where she also works as a Research Assistant. Her work proposes connections between online cultures, religious icons, and the work of art through themes of value, presence and belief systems. [zaraworth.com](http://zaraworth.com)

## Contributor Biographies

Sean Ashton was an associate editor of *MAP Magazine* (2008–2012) and writer for *Art Review* (2012–2017). Ashton writes fiction, criticism and poetry. His novel *Living in a Land* (Ma Bibliothèque 2017) is a fictional memoir written in sentences constructed in the negative, while his forthcoming book *Sampler* (Valley Press, 2020) is a selection of excerpts from an imaginary encyclopaedia compiled entirely by poets.

Erica Baum is well known for her varied photographic series capturing text and image in found printed material, from paperback books to library indexes and most recently sewing patterns. She received her MFA from Yale University in 1994 and her BA in Anthropology from Barnard in 1984. Her work is held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; MAMCO, Geneva; Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris; FRAC Ile de France, Paris; and Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven. [bureau-inc.com/mainsite/Artists/Erica/EricaBaum.html](http://bureau-inc.com/mainsite/Artists/Erica/EricaBaum.html)

Jérémie Bennequin has been developing an interdisciplinary practice as an artist that focuses on themes of time, memory and erasure. Drawing is at the heart of his visual arts practice and literature has consistently been found to be the raw material for his work and the catalyst for his ideas. He is well known for having erased the work of Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, following a rigorous methodology of one page a day for a project that lasted ten years. [jeremiebennequin.com](http://jeremiebennequin.com)

Rebecca Bullard is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Reading. She is the author of *The Politics of Disclosure: Secret History Narratives, 1674–1725* (2009) and co-editor, with John McTague, of *The Plays and Poems of Nicholas Rowe, volume 1* (2017). She has special interests in book history, eighteenth-century politics and life-writing – including epitaphs.

Catherine Clover's multidisciplinary practice addresses communication through voice, language and the interplay between hearing/listening, seeing/reading. Using field recording, digital imaging and the spoken/written word she explores an expanded approach to language within and across species through a framework of everyday experience. [ciclover.com](http://ciclover.com)

Michael Durrant is a lecturer in Early Modern Literature at Bangor University. His first monograph, *The Dreaded Name of Henry Hills: The Lives, Transformations, and Afterlives of a Seventeenth Century Printer*, will be published in 2021.

Craig Dworkin is the author, most recently, of *The Pine Woods Notebook* (Kenning Editions, 2019) and two scholarly monographs: *Dictionary Poetics: Toward a Radical Lexicography* (Fordham, 2020) and *Radium of the Word: A Poetics of Materiality* (Chicago, 2020). He teaches literary history and theory at the University of Utah and curates the Eclipse archive: [eclipsearchive.org](http://eclipsearchive.org)

Alexandra Franklin is co-ordinator of the Bodleian Libraries Centre for the Study of the Book. Printing *Moby-Dick* is a personal project which emerged from her professional work, supporting research into the historical methods and materials used in making manuscripts and books.

John T. Hamilton is the William R. Kenan Professor of German and Comparative Literature at Harvard University. His publications include *Soliciting Darkness: Pindar, Obscurity, and the Classical Tradition* (2003); *Music, Madness, and the Unworking of Language* (2008); *Security: Politics, Humanity, and the Philology of Care* (2013); and *Philology of the Flesh* (2018).

Kathryn James is Curator of Early Modern Books and Manuscripts at the Beinecke Library, Yale University, and co-organizer of the Yale Program in the History of the Book. She is the author of *English Paleography & Manuscript Culture, 1500–1800* (2020).





## Introducing Craig Saper's Global Reading supplement

You'll have noticed that *Inscription* comes with supplements (a fold-out print; a vinyl LP) – those troublesome extras that both belong to the main text but that are also separate entities. Where to keep them? Are they inside or outside the edges), or centripetal (spiralling towards the centre)? This 'Global Reading Supplement' is the most perplexing supplement of the lot, since it both exists and does not. You can read it by finding its AR code at [inscriptionjournal.com](http://inscriptionjournal.com) and loading it through Instagram. But perhaps 'read' is not the right word. The text is composed by this issue's digital-artist-in-residence, Craig Saper. Saper imagines a reading experience beyond the regime of the two-dimensional page, creating a rotating, spherical platform to visualise text. The virtual world presents new possibilities, new spaces and new shapes for information, and this piece offers a blueprint and a provocation for a new kind of platform, called Foam. In this 'sphereological' model, information is three-dimensional, manipulable, zoomable, rotatable. 'Using the Foam space', according to Saper, 'readers and writers gather information, data, and media within multi-dimensional bubble-worlds.' In this spherical platform, we can move between different scales and types of data, perceiving a timeline, for instance, then zooming in to 'one year, one date, one name, one moment'. Much recent discussion within the humanities, and literary studies, has focused on the scale of reading; in these discussions, close reading and distant reading are often imagined as kinds of poles. Saper's piece presents an alternative, a mode of experiencing text on multiple scales at once.

In collaboration with creative technologist Ian Truelove, Saper's imagined spherical reading experience has been developed in the only place it can currently exist: Augmented Reality. Saper's text has been typeset in a spiral form using InDesign, then wrapped around a sphere in the Spark AR authoring platform. Using Spark AR's coding tools, the text is made to slowly rotate and spiral upwards, disappearing (much like this journal's colophon) into a 'hole' at the top. The resulting sphere of text – hovering over Erica Baum's cover image to this issue – is an infinite page with no beginning and no end. Saper's own voice narrates the text but, using the gyroscope data from the user's phone and audio distortion filters, the sound of Saper's voice changes according to the reader's relative position. We can walk around the spinning sphere in three dimensions, and inspect it from all angles, but something about this scrutiny seems distinctly odd and reciprocal. This strange eyeball of words 'keeps its eye peeled on the reader as it peels away the text you are reading'. What has happened to the page?

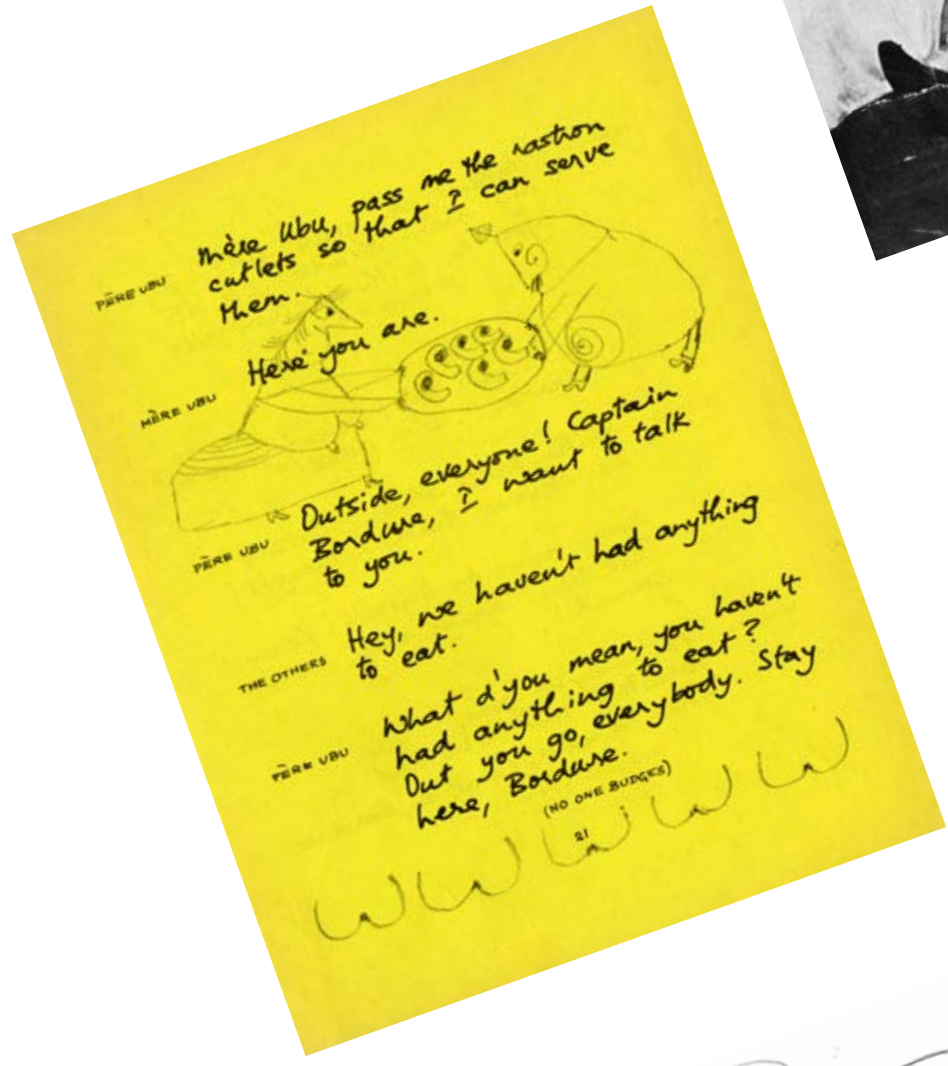








Franciszka Themerson designed the life-size puppets for the Ubu Roi production at the Marionetteatern in Stockholm in 1964 directed by Beata Bergström. This was her first involvement with Michael Meschke and Alfred Jarry's production of Kung Ubu. The production of Ubu Roi with Franciszka's drawings, published by Michael Meschke, 1951, and translated by Barbara Gaherboechus Press, 1951, and translated by Barbara Wright. The Stockholm production was Franciszka's third involvement in the introduction of Jarry's play to an English audience. The second one was a rehearsal at the ICA, London in 1952. The production of Ubu Roi travelled the world for 25 years. In 1969/70 Franciszka worked on an Ubu comic strip which consisted of 90 frames. The Ubu comic was published in Holland, France, Italy, Poland and Japan, but even though her original text is English, it was never published in the UK.



## Ubu Roi, 1964

The logo of *Inscription* is the spiral: a mark that does not end, turning in on itself and out to meet the world; a circle that never quite returns to its starting point. We take our spiral directly from the portly stomach of Père Ubu, in a 1964 production of Alfred Jarry's play *Ubu Roi*, directed by Michael Meschke at the Marionetteatern in Stockholm. The set, designed by the Polish, later British, painter, illustrator, filmmaker and stage designer, Franciszka Themerson (1907-1988), was extraordinary, its iconography, construction and powerful use of line producing an aesthetic impact similar to Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau* in Hannover or Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*. We are very grateful to Michael Meschke, Daniel Bergström (on behalf of the family of Beata Bergström) and Jasja Reichardt, who looks after the Themerson estate, for their permission to reproduce photographs of Michael Meschke's staging of the play, taken by photographer Beata Bergström.

For more information on the extraordinary creative legacy of Michael Meschke's production of *Ubu Roi* from 1964, please refer to Meschke's own website, the Themerson archive, or the Marionettmuseet at the Scenkonstmuseet.



Mère Ubu and Franciszka Themerson, 1970.





35. A. E. Musson, *The Typographical Association: Origins and History 1810 to 1949* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 19  
<babel.lhathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uct.5b675136&view=1up&seq=33> [accessed 26 June 2020].
36. Musson, p. 19.
37. Musson, p. 82.
38. W. Falk, H. Behrend, M. Duparré, H. Hahn, & F. Zschaler, *Karl Marx: Capital. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, London 1887* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Akademie Forschung, 1990), p. 424.  
<doi.org/10.1515/9783050063577>

image to represent printing as a trade. Some firms installed the huge machines displayed at the Great Exhibition, churning out newspapers and books; on the other hand, 'nearly every small town [in the United Kingdom] had its printing office, turning out a local paper in addition to jobbing work'.<sup>35</sup> These small-scale outfits, like those depicted in movie westerns, enabled the imperial reach of printing.

Many readers have pointed out that *Moby-Dick*, though a tale of adventure on the high seas, is set in the industrial landscape of whale oil extraction. The original purpose of the *Pequod's* journey is to kill many whales, not to kill Moby-Dick in particular: that is only Ahab's ulterior motive, which casts aside the investors' profits in pursuit of revenge. In the same way, Melville's novel as a work of art emerged from a partly mechanized printing trade, in which humans were working alongside machines. In the year that *Moby-Dick* was published most printing firms employed six people or fewer.<sup>36</sup> Hundreds of hand-compositors were hired to keep pace with the early illustrations of printing workshops did not disappear from the picture. In 1856 in L. Johnson's Philadelphia firm, children finished the type made by machines. In Britain, the Children's Employment Commission of 1866 condemned the long hours, exploitation of child labour, and unhealthy working conditions in many offices.<sup>37</sup> Karl Marx deplored the degradation of child workers whose only job was to feed the machines with paper.<sup>38</sup>

At the same time as printing was becoming mechanized, another set of people became interested in using cast-iron hand-presses.<sup>39</sup> The idea of producing a printed text from one's hand and the sweat of one's brow, is the romantic impulse which inspired the craft revival of hand-press printing in the later nineteenth century. Perhaps it is not surprising, when we think of the multiple births of *Moby-Dick*, that the revivalists looked for inspiration to a period before the industrial printing of their own time. David McKitterick notes that, '[b]y using iron hand-

presses rather than machine presses [William Morris] demonstrated the importance of the skilled workman having as complete control as possible over his task.'<sup>40</sup>

Others have illustrated every page of *Moby-Dick*, or produced further works elucidating Melville's sources and legacy, or organised readathons.<sup>41</sup> The absorption of these readers in the work is summed up as a feeling that '*Moby-Dick* is a book about everything'.<sup>42</sup> Without their talents, but with an interest in constantly refresh book production, I took to printing in an effort to join our encounters with the letters and then gathering them repeatedly setting out the mechanics of constantly refresh back into the cases. Far from warning against this project, the multiple, confused first printing of *Moby-Dick* opens the map to new possibilities and helps to show where this new edition can, and will, stumble in meshing human craft with machine work.

Letterpress printers today are more supportive of newcomers than Ben Franklin's eighteenth-century workmates. Rivalries tend to be sublimated into comparisons of expertise and artistry. It is from this group that I learn, slowly, the standards of the craft. This community gives minute attention to typography and to the infinite gradations in quality of ink on paper. That interest has inspired tentative forays into illustration as the wrapper of each chapter: a mock theatre poster his voyage as a side-show to history's great events; dark squares depicting the 'blocks of blackness' on the night-time streets of New Bedford in Chapter 2; and, with the help of the found printing block, that portentous painting on the wall of the Spouter-Inn in Chapter 3, the 'unaccountable masses of shades and shadows' possibly depicting a foundering ship and exasperated whale.

Only 132 chapters to go.

I am grateful to Veronica Watts, Jonathan Jong, and Richard Lawrence for their advice and assistance.

39. James Moran, *Printing Presses: History and Development from the 15th Century to Modern Times* (London: Faber, 1973), p. 99.

40. McKitterick, 'Changes in the Look of the Book,' in *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, v1, pp. 83–84.

41. Matt Kish, *Moby-Dick in pictures: one drawing for every page* (Portland, OR: Tin House Books, 2011). Kish used the Signer Classics edition to define the pages he illustrated. Philip Hoare, *Leviathan, or, The Whale* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008); George Cotkin, *Die Deeper* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

42. Kish, *Moby-Dick in pictures*, pp. vi–vii.



32. Calder, pp. 51–94.  
 33. James Baldwin, *Go Tell It On the Mountain* (New York: Vintage International, 2013), pp. 203–204.  
 34. Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (Lerner Publishing Group, 2018), p. 31. <bookcentral.proquest.com/lib/oxford/detail.action?docID=5444970> [accessed 20 June 2020].

this thought is an idea that somehow the act of setting every word and mark of punctuation, however confused in transmission, will reveal the bones of Melville's language and the family resemblance to the skeletons of his ancestors. We know that Melville was profoundly influenced by his reading of Shakespeare.<sup>32</sup> Leave the speculators to consider the symbolism of the whale; this effort at printing is a chance to wallow in the words. Is it the sonority of Melville's language, however borrowed, which gives the book its prophetic tone?

*That once found out, and all the rest were plain. But stop; does it not bear a faint resemblance to a gigantic fish? even the great leviathan himself?* (*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 3, p. 12)

Hamlet: Methinks it is like a weasel.  
 Polonius: It is back'd like a weasel.  
 Hamlet: Or like a whale.  
 Polonius: Very like a whale.

(William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, and quoted in the preliminary section of *Moby-Dick*, which was printed as a postscript in the English edition, 'Extracts. Supplied by a sub-sub-librarian,' p. xiii)

As the project goes on, it is possible to feel more adventurous. Following paths away from the novel's other reading. It helps to seek out different sources of illumination and to listen to voices telling stories that are not Melville's.

[Ishmael steps over the threshold of the African-American church in New Bedford] A hundred black faces turned round in their rows to peer [...] and the preacher's text was about the blackness of darkness, and the weeping and wailing and teeth-gnashing there. (*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 2, p. 9)

[...]

And now in his moaning, and so far from any help, he heard it in himself – it rose from his bleeding, his cracked-open heart.

*Where shall I go?*

There was no answer. There was no help or healing in the grave, no answer in the darkness, no speech from all the company. They looked backward. And John looked back, seeing no deliverance.

*I, John, saw the future, way up in the middle of the air. Were the lash, the dungeon, and the night for him? And the sea for him? And the grave for him?* (James Baldwin, *Go Tell It On The Mountain*, 1952)<sup>33</sup>

## 5. The Chapel

In printing terms, the 'chapel' was the printing-house, and by extension the organization of journeymen in one firm. Benjamin Franklin explains in his *Autobiography* how, as a journeyman printer in London in the mid-eighteenth century, he made himself unpopular by refusing to 'treat' his fellow workers to drink and in exchange 'had so many little pieces of private mischief done me, by mixing my sorts, transposing my pages, [...] if I were ever so little out of the room, and all ascribed to the chappel ghost'.<sup>34</sup>

Surviving pictures of workshops in the first century of printing in Europe generally feature the different workers each performing their interdependent tasks: two setting type, another pair operating the press, a reader correcting the proofs, and a boy carrying a stack of paper. Franklin's memoir reveals that relations were not always so harmonious. During the nineteenth century the proliferation of print and increasing mechanization changed the picture even further. There was no single

Then the 'comps' moved from standing at the composing frame to sitting at a keyboard which punched holes in paper tape to programme the text. Like the compositors at L. Johnson's or Robert Craighead's in the 1850s my type is cast by machine but set by hand. And like the compositors in Clay's firm, working for the publisher Bentley in London, the type that I am setting will be used directly for printing.

Bibliographers looking at books made early in the hand-press period – that is, well before the publication date of *Moby-Dick* – generally make a point of counting the pages in each gathering and noting the number in each. It's a version of kicking the tyres on a car; we expect a certain number, and if that is not found some inquiry will be made into the reason. The profile of the quires, called a collation, is given in the full bibliographical description of a book. It records all the quires, to which by tradition the printers gave markings of single or multiple letters (for instance A, or bb, or CCC), and the number of leaves in each. The collation for a short book from the fifteenth century might look like this: a–d8 e6 f4. Arriving, textually, at 'The Spouter-Inn' (New Bedford, Massachusetts, and Chapter 3 of Melville's novel) I realised that I could be giving signature marks to the gatherings. The ostensible purpose of this would be to indicate to the binder which sheets were to be included in the quire, and in which order. The two first editions of *Moby-Dick* have these markings, and each begins with signature 'B': the unsigned signature [A] having taken up the preliminaries of that volume. The American first edition, issued in one volume, is signed 1, 1\*, 2, and so on, and we arrive at signature 27\* by the end.

What a vanity it is to mark the signatures in my edition, which has no integrity as a volume but will rely on the numbering of chapters, pages, and signatures to hold the text in order. It will make a very irregular collation for a librarian to read. So far, it would look like this:

?? (The preliminaries, not yet printed, so the number of leaves in this quire is still unknown, and the signature mark may be 1, a, a, or what you please) [A–B\*] (Pages 1 to 16, Chapter 1 and 2. Each of the first two chapters is made of two sheets folded once, to make four leaves with one page on each side, that is eight pages in total. No signature markings, so the letters are given in square brackets.) C\* (At last, a signed quire. After the first two restless starts to the journey, we have a more leisurely twenty-four pages in the New Bedford boarding house, and on page 40 finally fall asleep with Ishmael and his shipmate Queequeg.)

## 4. Reading for printing, or printing for reading

Merveille est k'om la mer ne het,  
 Qui si amer mal en mer set  
 [It is a wonder that man does not hate the sea,  
 when he knows that such bitter evil is at sea]

(*Tristan and Yseult*, Carlisle fragment, discovered 1995)<sup>35</sup>

That same image, we ourselves see in all rivers and oceans. It is the image of the ungraspable phantom of life; and this is the key to it all.

(*Moby-Dick*, Chapter 1, p. 3)

Maybe an inevitable effect of re-reading the book too often is a tendency to see signs and portents in all things. You really do know what's coming next.

A retrospective justification for the printing project might be that printing a book is a way of reading it afresh, and more carefully. But is the compositor really reading the copy? Many of my paragraphs are set with greater attention to the spacing than to the words. After all, the words are the author's (up to a point) while the spacing is where competent typesetting will show. Contrasted with

35. Sebastian I. Sobczak, *The Sea and Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2007), p. 66.







14. Contract between Herman Melville and Harper & Brothers for "The Whale," in *The Writing of Herman Melville*, v1 (1988), pp. 708-709. [lib.library.columbia.edu/catalog/ldpd:1136682](http://lib.library.columbia.edu/catalog/ldpd:1136682) [accessed 20 June 2020].  
 15. Herschel Parker, "Historical Note, Section VII," in *The Writing of Herman Melville*, v1 (1988), pp. 708-709. For a comparison, see *Moby-Dick side-by-side: the American and British first editions*, 1 (online), [electroniclibrary.org/moby-dick-the-whale-proof.html](http://electroniclibrary.org/moby-dick-the-whale-proof.html) [accessed 20 June 2020].  
 16. Tanselle, "Historical Note, Section VI," in *The Writings of Herman Melville*, v1 (1988), pp. 679-680.

but these simply provided the copy for more compositors in London at the firm of Richard Bentley. In London, five hundred copies were printed from the set type and published on 18 October 1851. A month later Harpers in New York contracted with Melville, and according to their contract with Melville, the printing of nearly 3000 copies was from the stereotype plates made by Craighead.<sup>14</sup> (The same work, and according to their contract with Melville, in succeeding decades.) The process of setting, proofing, and stereotyping in New York should have meant that the text was absolutely fixed, ready to be set in London from clear printed copy. Nonetheless during the crossing of the ocean the compositors, or all diverge in some important ways. Notable differences are that prefatory material in the American edition – the 'Etymology' and 'Extracts' – is placed at the end of the English edition, and that Bentley's London edition also lacked the 'Epilogue' explaining Ishmael's survival, leading to some mystification on the part of British reviewers.<sup>15</sup> Thus Bentley's edition mislaid both the beginning and the end of the novel as we know it.<sup>16</sup>

These differences are magnified in importance because no manuscript of the work is known to survive, nor proofs marked by Melville.<sup>17</sup> The editors of the Northwestern Newberry critical edition of Melville's works explain the differences as part intention and part error. They surmise that some of the text in the American but not in the English edition was excised by a literary editor for the London publisher Richard Bentley, to eliminate passages which might prove offensive to the British novel-reading public. The fate of the 'Epilogue' is not easy to untangle in the absence of the manuscript. Bentley's printers might have simply missed it, however unlikely that seems, or Melville may have added this section later for the American edition in these respects. 'Whether the American edition in these respects represents a later or an earlier stage than the English, therefore, the American title page, table of contents,

arrangement of preliminaries, and inclusion of the epilogue would seem to reflect Melville's final intention.'<sup>18</sup> I had taken as my printing copy a paperback Everyman edition of 1907, which was based on Bentley's London edition and omitted the Epilogue.<sup>19</sup> The 1992 edition contains the text from Dent's 1933 reprint, with the Epilogue happily restored and with the prefatory material at the front. It was only on beginning the composition that I took note of the further missing passages, seeming expurgations which run to several paragraphs each. The reprint does not ignore them but relegates them to endnotes under the advice: 'The original American edition contains the additional material printed below'.<sup>20</sup> These are set in smaller type than the main text with more words to the line. Leaning back and forth in the book was tiresome enough, but counting the number of extra lines in order to do my 'casting off' in the edition contains the calculation – of course there were errors – was costing me hours of time in composition. Every error in calculation – of course there were errors – was costing me hours of time in composition. The Northwestern Newberry editors advise, '[a]n editor must choose the American edition as the copy-text, since it was set directly from Melville's manuscript.'<sup>21</sup> I needed to start again, to work from copy with all of the words printed at the same size. Then I could begin to take an interest in the six other categories of variants identified by the critical editors.

18. Tanselle, 'Note on the Text,' in *The Writings of Herman Melville*, v1 (1988), p. 783.  
 19. G. Thomas Tanselle, *A checklist of editions of Moby-Dick, 1851-1976: issued on the occasion of an exhibition at the Newberry Library commemorating the 125th anniversary of its original publication* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1976), pp. 11-12.  
 20. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1992), p. 495.  
 21. Tanselle, 'Note on the Text,' 783.  
 22. Melville (1992), p. 7.  
 23. Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or, The White Whale* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1907, repr. 1928), p. 1.  
 24. Peter Shillingsburg, 'The Three Moby-Dicks', *American Literary History* 2, no. 1 (1990), 119-130 (p. 122).

There is much more editorial intervention still to come but some less so. When I started to set Chapter 1 and began to look at the text letter by letter, a phrase on the first page that had become familiar to me from the paperback – 'whenever it is damp, drizzly November in my soul'<sup>22</sup> – was revealed to contain a typographical error which has persisted in the Dent editions very likely since 1907.<sup>23</sup> Both the American and the English first editions read, 'a damp, drizzly November' (p. 1) Yet I could not bring myself to add that 'a'. As Peter Shillingsburg asked in 1990, can there be an 'established' text of this work?<sup>24</sup>

Mathematical calculations of the width of each letter and the number of spaces could tell you how many words, and how large the spaces should be between those words. Those are the calculations performed for every line of a hand-set text, not usually mathematically but by a haptic process of judging the tightness of the piece held together in the composing stick as the last is the key to preventing problems later. Only lines of exactly equal lengths will make a perfect large rectangle need to be locked up together in a frame with square sectioned wooden rods or 'furniture' so that the whole page can be lifted and put onto the press. Any variation results in loose lines in the forme, characters dropping off the ends of lines, and an unravelling disaster.

The opportunities for error in composing type are numerous: eye-skip in following the copy that leaves out a word or a whole line; selecting a letter from the wrong compartment in the type case; selecting a letter that was replaced in the type case; selecting (and wrongly replacing it yourself in the first place); placing a letter upside down in the line so that 'reads' letters in the wrong order. Look at one of the most studied printed books of all, the first Folio edition of Shakespeare's plays. Leaving aside the variations in spellings of words occasioned by having two or more compositors who couldn't agree, or the obvious errors for which the hapless 'Compositor B' is blamed, begin in the assembly of the copy itself, the text to William Shakespeare had written for the stage. The clue is in the printing of the *Tragedy of Troilus and Cressida*. The play appears in the book, in the section of 'Tragedies', but the title is not in the list of contents. What went wrong? A broken pagination sequence tells of false starts and a shuffling of sequence. Unexplained blank spaces, nonsequential page numbers, and the

11. W.W. Greg, 'The Printing of Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida" in the First Folio', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 45:4 (Fourth Quarter, 1951): 273-282; Ben Higgins, 'Printing the First Folio,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's First Folio*, ed. by Emma Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 20-47.  
 12. G. Thomas Tanselle, 'Historical Note, Section VI,' and 'Note on the Text,' in Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick, or The Whale*, ed. by F. Hoffman, H. Parker & G. T. Tanselle, *The Writings of Herman Melville: The Northwestern University Edition*, Vol. 6 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988). *Oxford Scholarly Editions Online* (2017) [dx.doi.org/10.1017/ac9780281020199/book-12](http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/ac9780281020199/book-12).

appearance of decorations and additional text as 'filler' are mute witnesses to the effort (with sighs and oaths?) to put things right in the printing house in 1623, as the permission to print *Troilus and Cressida* was negotiated and the text was finally set up.<sup>11</sup> It is thrilling to repeat the best mistakes by the most famous printers. Not being a textual scholar, I blithely disregarded the idea of possible variants. With a much read paperback as my copy I would simply begin at the beginning of my favourite book. The easiest thing in printing is to do a line-for-line reprint. You know which words need to go on which line. The exact number of lines required can be counted in the copy. Onward, I thought. Then I learned that my well-worn Everyman's Library paperback of *Moby-Dick* concealed a 'Troilus and Cressida' right in the first chapter. Beneath the surface were textual problems that go back to the printing and publishing history of this novel.

The professional teams of compositors who set *Moby-Dick* in 1851 accomplished the job in a matter of weeks. In fact, it was set by hand twice. The 'first edition' published in London was set from printed proofs of an earlier typesetting in New York.<sup>12</sup> In keeping with a practice devised for the purpose of ensuring copyright in both Britain and the United States, Melville's novel was to be published almost simultaneously in the two places. It was first set in type at the firm of Robert Craighead, printer and stereotyper, in New York at Melville's own cost.<sup>13</sup> The author also paid for the 'plating': the casting of stereotype plates from moulds of the set type. These metal plates, thinner and lighter than the type and were easier to store for the purposes of future printing. The advent of stereotyping around the beginning of the nineteenth century meant that texts could be preserved for printing while the moveable type was being re-used for the next job.

Craighead's compositors in New York were at work setting the type in June and July of 1851. Printed proofs were sent from New York to London in September 1851,

13. R. Craighhead, *Printer and Stereotyper*, 83 Vercy Street, New York (New York: Year-Adolph and Robert Bachman, *Quadrangle of North America*, 4th edn, 3 vols (New York: Year-Adolph and Robert Bachman, 1852-1854), 1 (1852).









To begin something cleverly can be expressed idiomatically in German as *heim reichen Hefje* or *angreifen* - to seize something at the right end. Here, the noun *Hefje* refers to the 'grip' or 'hilt' of a sword or dagger which one must seize (*angreifen*) in order to execute one's assault (*Angriff*). The English *dever* vividly retains this figure. Likely derived from the Middle English *divers*, 'claws, talons, clutches', to act cleverly in order to grab on to the hilt or the *Hefje*, the writer writes cleverly, in a way that makes him or her 'responsible' in the sense of being 'accountable' (*haftbar*). Yet, as every writer knows, every beginning is difficult - *omne initium difficile est, aller Anfang ist schwer*. The mere thought of capturing it and re-envisioning a new process, can be debilitating, even for those who are generally esteemed for their eloquence and confidence and sureness of mind, like Cicero, for example, who once confessed:

*Semper equidem magno cum metu dicere; quotiensque dico, totiens mihi videor in iudicium venire.* (Cicero, *Pro Cluentio*, 51)

Indeed, I always begin to speak with great trepidation; and as many times as I speak, so often it seems to me that I am myself on trial.



evidence that, in 1910, Kafka read a study in Egyptology, where one learns that the hieroglyph for the scarab spells the triliteral phoneme *skr* or *hpr*, which gives us the verb for 'becoming' or 'transforming'. The verb into being, he who has been transformed) – the god of metamorphosis.<sup>12</sup>

It can be observed how the scarab, for no apparent reason, commonly rolls a large ball of dung over a dung heap. In Egyptian mythology this act was seen as a representation of the god Khepri who rolled the sun across the sky, and then pushed it over the horizon in the West, where it traveled through the underworld, before re-emerging the next morning in the East. On this basis of rebirth or resurrection, depicted hieroglyphically as a scarab grasping the sun's disk, the sign of the god day, a new life, or a new beginning.



Figure 2. Throne, Tomb of King Tutankhamun Exhibit. Photo: Christian Rodas.

12. On the significance of the Egyptian scarab in regard to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, see Karl H. Rubelcher, 'Eros Skambibis in der modernem deutschen Literatur', *Zettblatt für ägyptische Sprache und Literaturstudien* 96 (1969/1970), 47–48.

13. In the historical dictionary prepared by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the *Haf* is likewise defined as 'the mayfly (*Ephemeroptera*)', named from 'the fact that when the pupa transforms into the winged insect, the molting remains or adheres to a bank where the transformation takes place.' *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 10, p. 132, available online: <<http://www.uni-trier.de/~db/online/krwb/uni-trier.de/db/>> [accessed 14 May 2020].

Taking place 'one morning', at daybreak, Gregor's transformation, his *Verwandlung*, could be regarded as a sublime, sacred resurrection, as a metamorphosis representing the protagonist's death as a traveling salesman and his rebirth as a man liberated from his former life. When read autobiographically, the text suggests that the transformation marks the death of Kafka the insurance expert and his rebirth as a writer – a writer of stories that have in fact become immortal.

At first, the start of *The Trial* would appear to be less auspicious; being taken into 'custody' (*Häft*) by his protagonist to a miserable fate, as someone who can hardly be deemed as glorious, as a resurrection is irredeemably guilty. The insect-transformation that incites *The Metamorphosis* thus contrasts with the apprehension that triggers *The Trial*.

Curiously, however, the noun *Häft* not only denotes 'custody', or 'detention', but also appears as an old zoological term for the 'mayfly', known as the *Ephemeroptera* – the ephemeral 'fly' (*Pflüge*), which lives for only 'one day' (*ein Tag*). In his comprehensive study of *Natural History*, first published in 1815, the German biologist, Lorenz Oken, explained that the mayfly is called a *Häft* because, upon molting, its striped wings marks the stage when the leaves of plants that grow along the riverbank.<sup>13</sup> As Oken further points out, this final molting mature – the last stage of plants that grow along the stream – the pupal insect species, ready to fly off and procreate, entomologists call the *imago*. The *imago* is the stage of the mature insect, when the pupa becomes sexually active. Thus, Josef K.'s *Verwandlung* ('arrest' or 'picture' who has been transformed into an insect, or perhaps into a burgeoning writer who longs to be creative – to fly away from all commitments and obligations, a mortal who surrenders to the day. *Cape diem!*)

'to a gigantic insect' – *zu einem ungeheuren Ungeziefer*. Before discussing the main terms, it is useful to note that English translators invariably domesticate what remains an odd feature in Kafka's German, by rendering the phrase as transformed *into* a giant insect, with *in* *ein ungeheures Ungeziefer*. But Kafka does not write *in*, which he uses, quite surprisingly, the preposition *zu*, which governs the dative case. *zu einem ungeheuren Ungeziefer*. In order to respect this difference in English, one would have to translate the phrase somewhat awkwardly, rather than 'into (*in*) a giant insect'. The distinction *in* plus the accusative case, which would have to respect this difference in English, is continuous *in*, the implication is that the preposition *in*, rather than 'into (*in*) a giant insect', that the transformation is part of an inner development across as more disjunctive – that something has changed into something entirely new, seized and transported to an altogether new and strange state.

This strange state is identified as an *ungeheures Ungeziefer*, which the Muirs translate as a 'gigantic insect'. However, what is at once noteworthy in the prefix *un-*. Certainly, the adjective *ungeheuer* can describe anything that is 'enormous, tremendous, or monstrous', indeed, the nominal form, *ein Ungeheuer*, is typically translated as 'a monster'. Yet to be more precise, in German, the prefix *un-* negates what is 'familiar and friendly', with connotations of feeling at ease or at home; hence, the cognate *Heirat* ('marriage'), which negates 'homey' (‘uncanny’), understood as the meaning of *unheimlich* (‘uncanny’), understood as the negation of what is 'familiar and friendly', with connotations of feeling at ease or at home; negates all familiarity, it exceeds domestic safety and cosiness. *Ungeheuer* is not merely 'immense' or 'gigantic', but also highly unpleasant, profoundly disturbing.

Within the context of the story, coming from the old charwoman, the term *Miszkäfer* is clearly being used as an insult. Still, one should recall that the dung beetle, like the *Ungeziefer*, conjures earlier, ritualistic settings in Ancient Egypt, where the insect, known in Latin as the *scarabaeus* or 'scarab', was worshipped as sacred. There is

11. Kafka, *Ungeheuer 1912–1914*, ed. by Malcolm Pasley (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), p. 145 (27 May 1914).

The noun *Ungeziefer* can refer to any kind of bug, insect, or vermin. The verbal root comes from the Old High German term *zebun*, which specifically denotes 'an animal fit for sacrifice', an unclean creature *Ein Ungeziefer*; therefore, originally, an unclean creature is *unfit* for sacrifice, Kafka could have chosen to use the German *Insekt* or *Kakerlake* (cockroach), but neither appears once in the story. *Ungeziefer* is arguably far more repulsive, much more unpleasant, much more disgusting and repulsive, much more unpleasant, much more disgusting than the presence of this domestic setting of the Samsa community, the *Ungeziefer* must be expelled from the community in order to ensure the safety of that sacrifice, the *Ungeziefer* can thus be expelled from Samsa. Transformed into such a creature, Gregor while still occupying the family home.

Yet, although the text refrains from using the words 'dung beetle' or 'cockroach', towards the end of the story might help us to identify the type of insect Gregor a *Miszkäfer* (the word for 'beetle' (*Käfer*) already bears some resemblance to the name *Kafka*, just as the word for 'cockroach' (*Kakerlake*) exhibits the same double K. Is the repulsiveness of the 'dung beetle' or even the implied 'cockroach' already bears some very characteristic of myself?<sup>11</sup>







The first sentence of *The Trial* stands as one of the most well-known and hauntingly powerful expressions in German literature: *Jemand mußte Josef K. verurteilt haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet*.<sup>7</sup> Mike Mitchell's English translation for the Oxford World's Classics series reads: 'Someone must have been telling tales about Josef K., for one morning, without having done anything wrong, he was arrested.'<sup>8</sup>

Quite pertinently, the trial or process begins with an arrest (*Verhaftung*). Josef K.'s prior life has come to a halt so that a new life – the life of the accused – can proceed. Again, the arrest amounts to revising the conditions of the protagonist's position. K. is seized or grasped, and thus the novel can begin. Yet, when one returns to Kafka's manuscript, one discovers that the novel not only begins with a thematic revision but also with a literal revision:

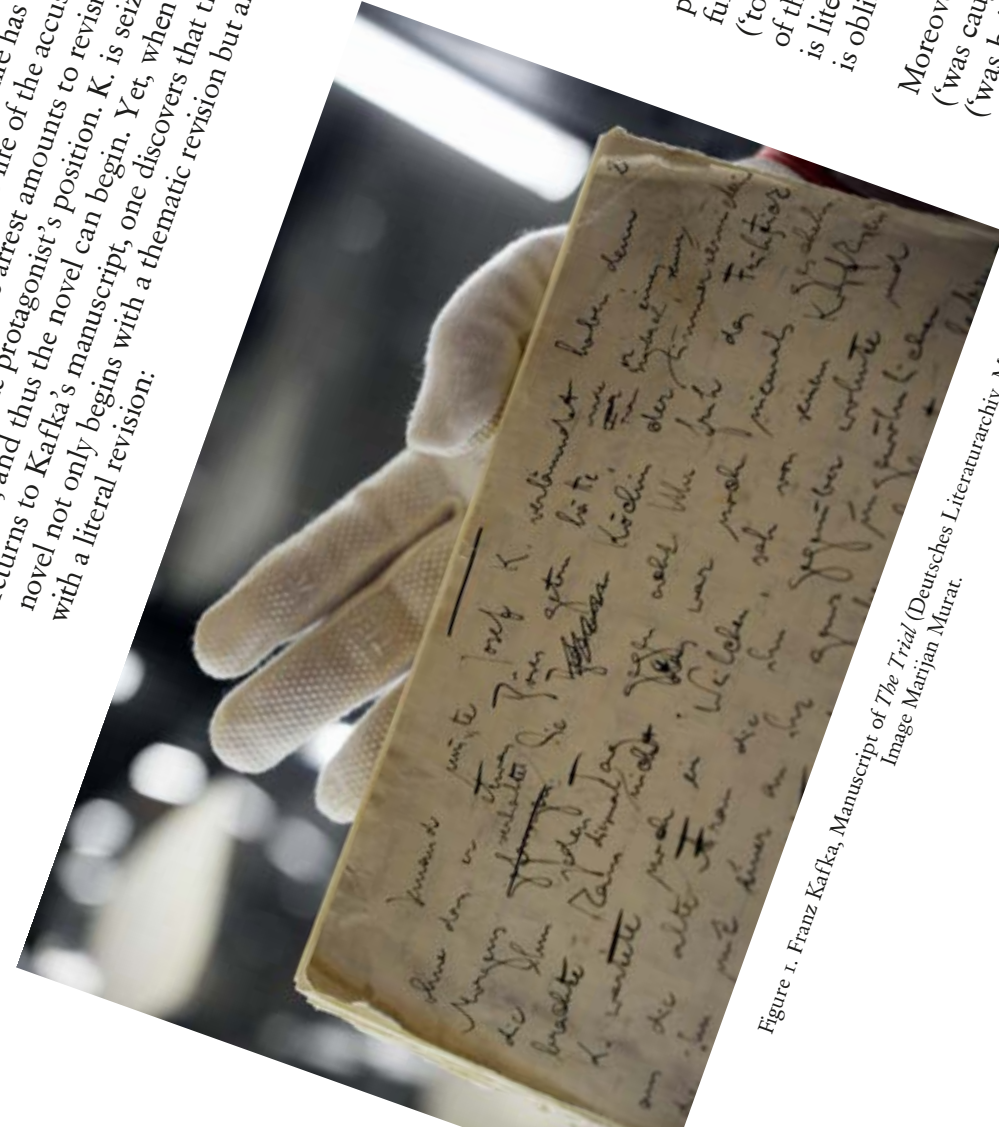


Figure 1. Franz Kafka, Manuscript of *The Trial* (Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach).  
Image: Marijan Murat.

The text can be transcribed thus:

Jemand mußte Josef K. verurteilt haben denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens **gefaßt**.

Originally, it had been written that Josef K. 'was caught' (*war gefangen*); but then, Kafka modified the verbal phrase to say instead that he 'was arrested' (important to note that one grammatical form of the passive voice has been replaced by another. *K. wurde gefangen* ('K. was caught'), to *verhaftet*, 'arrested' ('to be') as the auxiliary in typical German). It is *Zustandspassiv* (statal passive), typically described as he was in a condition: 'K. was caught' by another. *K. war* is in a captured state. In contrast, the resultative version, *K. wurde verhaftet* ('K. was being arrested'), is formulated as a *Vorgangspassiv* ('processual passive'), employing the verb *werden*, which is to say, 'become', as the auxiliary in order to denote the resultative being affected: *K. wurde verhaftet*, which is to say, 'the process of being arrested'. *K. wurde verhaftet* (processual passive) further denotes the action itself. One recalls that the participle *gefangen*, from the verb *fangen* ('to catch'), evokes the capture expressed in the process of the beginning: (*Anfang*). Yet once begun, the text is literally revised to describe an action. The initial state is obliterated so that the process or trial may begin.

Moreover, by substituting the statal passive *war gefangen* ('was caught') with the processual passive *wurde verhaftet* (approximates the sentence, equally well-known, which opens Kafka's *Verwandlung* ('The Metamorphosis')): *Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte, fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheuren*

7. Franz Kafka, *Der Prozeß*, Original edition 1925], ed. by Malcolm Pasley (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), p. 9.  
8. Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. by Mike Mitchell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5.

1. Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher 1914–1921*, ed. by Malcolm Pasley (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1999), p. 24 (23 July 1914).  
2. For information on the material format, see Franz Kafka, *Der Prozeß: Apparatband*, in the *Kritisches Ausgabe*, 15 vols., ed. by Jürgen Born, Gerhard Neumann, Malcolm Pasley and Jost Schillemeit (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002), VI, pp. 73–86. Subsequent references to this edition are marked KKA, with volume and page number.

the German *anfängen*, 'to begin', that is, 'to catch, grab hold of' (*fangen*). In Latin, a 'beginning' is a *coepitum*, that which has been 'taken up'; an 'undertaking', just as in German an *Anfang* signifies that a previous state has been 'caught' or 'captured' (*gefangen*), snatched up and re-purposed. Etymologists are less clear on the English *begin*, which reaches back to the eighth century as the Old High German *biginnan*. Yet, there is sufficient linguistic evidence to suggest that the verb relates to an Indo-European root, \**ghen-*, which appears in the Greek *χωνόθεν* (*chōnōthen*), 'to take in, to hold' and the Latin *prehendere*, 'to grasp, catch, seize.' In all these cases, again, to begin implies to seize hold, stopping what has heretofore preceded and manipulating it in such a way that it henceforth proceeds otherwise.

In the opinion of most biographers, who derive their conclusions from the author's letters and diaries, *Der Prozeß* – can be traced back to 12 July 1914, when Kafka visited his fiancée Felice Bauer in Berlin. Over dinner at the Askanischer Hof Hotel, in the presence of Felice's sister Ena and their friends, Grete Bloch and Ernst Weiss, Kafka suddenly and quite unexpectedly announced that he was breaking off the engagement (with guilt for causing the engagement and quite unexpectedly to the dinner guests in Prague and utterly hidden with guilt for causing the engagement and utterly drafted a new story centered on a protagonist whom he named Josef K., a man arrested without knowing by halting the process that was heading toward marriage and redirecting it towards other, literary ends.

As usual, Kafka began composing the work in one of the store-bought notebooks (*Hefte*) that he used as a daily journal. The *Tagebuchheft* ('diary-notebook') employed in this case was in quarto format (24.6 × 19.7 cm) containing thirty-four unlined pages, without any watermark, bound

3. For a comprehensive account, see Peter-Paul Schneider, 'Das Manuskript von Franz Kafkas Roman "Der Prozeß"', in Franz Kafka – *Der Prozeß – Manuskript des Romans*, ed. by Ulrich Ott (Marbach: Deutsches Literaturarchiv, 1989), pp. 9–10.

4. See Benjamin Balint, *Kafka's Last Trial: The Case of a Literary Legacy* (London: Picador, 2018), pp. 124–125.

5. Cf. Balint, *Kafka's Last Trial*, pp. 142–147.

6. Terry Truico, 'A Kafka Manuscript is sold for \$1.98 Million', *New York Times*, 18 November 1988, C 30.

in brown wax cloth.<sup>2</sup> The draft of what would become the opening chapter of *The Trial* began on the recto page following a diary entry dated 30 July 1914 and would eventually comprise sixteen sheets, written on both sides with black ink. Subsequent chapters were likewise drafted in similar bound notebooks. Then, at some point in early 1915, Kafka tore each page out of the *Hefte* and organized the loose papers into single bundles held within a folded folio sheet, marked by unnumbered chapter titles. The manuscript sheets, still bear slight traces of the red trim from the notebook's gutter, are now held in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach.<sup>3</sup>

Kafka never brought the novel to completion. Over a decade later, before succumbing to laryngeal tuberculosis, he entrusted all his papers – the diaries, manuscripts, letters, and sketches – to his close friend, Max Brod, with specific instructions to burn the pages, 'unread'.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Brod revised the manuscript for publication, which appeared in 1925, just over a year after the author passed away. On 14 March 1939, the night before German troops marched into Prague, Brod packed Kafka's manuscripts into a rucksack and, together with his wife Elsa, took the last night train that would cross the Czech-Polish border before it was shut down by the Nazis. They arrived in the Romanian port of Constanta on the Black Sea and there boarded the liner *Bessarabia*, which stopped over in Istanbul, Athens, Crete, and Alexandria, before docking in Tel Aviv.<sup>5</sup> Although most of the manuscripts were transferred to a Swiss bank vault by the publisher Saliman Schocken during the Suez Crisis in 1956, Brod held on to *The Trial* until his death in 1968, when it was bequeathed to Brod's longtime secretary, Ilse Esther Hoffé. In 1988, Hoffé ultimately consigned the handwritten sheets to auction at Sotheby's, where Heribert Tenschert purchased them on behalf of the Literaturarchiv for a record-breaking \$1.98 million<sup>6</sup> – an appropriately hefty sum for these unique pages that Kafka once tore loose from his personal *Hefte*.

\*



# Haft: Kafka in Process

John T. Hamilton

Most processes begin with a *revision* of sorts, with a re-examination and correction of what has been previously accomplished or received. To *proceed* means to 'move' (*cedere*) 'forth' its sights on what comes ahead; it alters the view of what happened before (*pro-*), to come forward and (*pro-*). Like every *project* or *underscores*, a *process* sets future-directed, determined by a goal that manipulates and steers the past in conformance with a destination, a *terminus ad quem*. A process enables someone or something to depart from a former state in order to arrive somewhere else, to enter into a new situation, which requires taking a fresh look at things. The process *re-visions*, one that relinquishes the *precedent*, this the new to take place could be called the *precedent* and wholesale inventions or ingenious reformulations, as well as the slightest of changes, modifications, emendations, which are all achieved by readjusting one's perspective or realigning one's scope. To begin – that is, to revise and proceed.

Driven by a decisive revisioning, a process often entails the interruption of what preceded. It grabs hold of the past, seizing it and bringing it to a halt so that it can be submitted to scrutiny and proceed in a new light. Hence, in its initial usage, beginning in the late twelfth century, the English term *process* specifically defined legal proceedings or legal action – a judicial *trial* – which continues to be the primary sense of the French *procès* and the German *Prozess*. An indictment disrupts them to assessment and judgment. Court proceedings begin by stopping what up to that point has been going on, arresting whoever is accused of being responsible, and re-viewing the case in accordance with fresh criteria, that is, with criteria imposed by law. The person who stands before the law stands before a set of principles

that differ from those that guided one's actions beforehand. A trial intervenes by redefining the status of agents and actions, now in terms of guilt or innocence, recitude or culpability. The life of the person indicted comes under arrest, compelled to occupy a new position that is henceforth governed by different aims and expectations. The indicted person is still the same person but now viewed otherwise, recast *vis-à-vis* other principles, other beginnings, reconsidered, reformulated or transformed, and thereby re-envisioned or *revised*.

A similar gesture can be ascribed to artistic processes, by which a prior, ground suffers an interference. The *inscription* of any mark – by hand or typographic, a word, a number, or merely a scribble – proceeds by revising the blankness of the page, just as sounds revise the silence, just as colors and lines revise the vacuity of the plane, just as sculptural form revises the formlessness of the material. Of course, creative processes also seize upon prior processes – for example, an earlier draft, received motifs and themes, traditional plots and forms, conventional definitions and idioms, figures and syntax – again, with the view of moving forward, or unconsciously, foreseeable or inscrutable, conscious or unconscious, foreseen or unforeseen. Opening the door onto a new project entails closing the door on a previous state. Every overture presumes the door on that which proceeds. Prior conditions, prior formats, and prior formulations persist, qualifying the process itself. Once begun, the procedure includes what came beforehand and transforms it, now in line with what looms ahead. The material precedent thus operates as the included exclusion, belonging to the work as that which has been overwhelmed by the work as that so that something else may issue forth and appear. Beginning a work – revising and proceeding – is thought to consist in the seizure of something prior, experiential or material. The Latin verb for beginning, *incipere*, vividly denotes this act of grasping (*in* + *capere*, 'to take hold of, to take in hand'), which correlates precisely to





act of decision, always the same, to move in the same way, to leap at the last moment, to leave, to run away. At a car's length, under the headlights, I see the grey-brown of their coats, the strange angularity of their legs and elbows, the light absorbed into their eyes, impossible to read although I comb their faces for expression, for intention, a glimpse of recognition. They stand watching and then move, each decision the same decision, the younger deer waiting as the others spring away, then pausing to decide, to respond, to do one thing or the other, as my car approaches, as slowly, as slowly and its consequences are made visible, lineated, one thing becoming another as the dark resolves itself into a road in the suburbs, into an evening far from the beginnings, years, generations after things began.

\*

I order bags of scraps from Pergamena, Jesse's tannery. I keep them for students, to use in penmanship practice. The scraps are the pieces that, for whatever reason, some have slivers of opacity at the edge, some are yellow, some show the grain or are smooth. The pieces are calf, goat, a mixture of hides, a mixture of uses. The bag holds pieces of the shoulder, the flank, of a goat, a calf, a mixed herd. You can rub your fingers over the pieces, the interior and exterior, inside and out, the hair side and flesh side of the animal.

33. The bills submitted by scriveners document the process and cost of compiling legal documents. One document, listing the charges from December-April, 1666/7, shows a scrivener charging three pounds sterling for 'drawing and ingrossing a large pair of indentures' of assignment from Mr. Harrison to Mr. Morris & Clayton, both in [unclear] sent [.] 3 large Skins'. From 'A Bill of writings made for Col. Thomas Howard, England, 1666-1667', Beinecke Library, OSB MSS 40, Folder 13.

32. *The Saturday Magazine*, 184.

*This operation is performed upon a kind of form, or bench, covered with a sack stuffed with flock; and this process leaves the parchment fit for writing on.*<sup>33</sup>

\*

'Is not parchment made of sheepskins?' Hamlet asks Horatio. 'Ay, my lord', Horatio replies, 'and of calf-skins too'. Watching the gravedigger, they fill the grave with an imagined textual corpus, the parchment skins of legal documents. These statutes and recognizances, fines and recoveries would have been compiled and recorded by a scrivener, or legal clerk. He would have engrossed, or copied, it in pairs, one to be retained by each legal party to a transaction. The documentary body that Hamlet and Horatio imagine was always twinned. It was always extant in the world as only one of two copies recorded by an instrument of the English law.<sup>33</sup>

Head of household; male; white; 46 years old; married. These are the categories by which my father's father was recorded by the state. The 1940 U.S. Census record was compiled by a census enumerator, one of 140,000 to gather data from households over a single month, for the census date of record of April 1. A training video for the census enumerators gives some idea of how this interview was envisioned. In the video, the enumerator perches on a sofa in a parlor or living room. He is white, middle-class, educated; he speaks in full, carefully articulated sentences as he leans over a coffee table to complete the census form by hand. The census participant is a white, middle-aged woman, a mother, her hair pinned in a bun, a bow at her neck, a wealth of empirical information at her disposal. Is your house owned or rented, she is asked; what is its value; what are the names, sex, race, age, and employment status of each occupant of the household? In the training video, the woman is conversational, at ease, unabashed by the intimacy of the situation. 'Thank you very much, Mrs. McGee', the enumerator says, 'that's all the information I'll need'.<sup>34</sup>

34. *The 1940 Census of Population* (Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, [1940]), online film recordings, National Archives, <archives.gov/research/census/1940/videos.html#video2> [accessed 21 June 2020].

35. *Know Your U.S.A.* (Census Bureau, U.S. Department of Commerce, [1940]), online film recordings, National Archives, <archives.gov/research/census/1940/videos.html#video2> [accessed 21 June 2020].

The federal census was required; the census enumerators were sworn to confidence. Once completed, the forms were sent by registered mail to the Census Bureau in Washington, D.C., where the data was stripped from the census forms, 'transformed into a series of holes punched in coded cards'.<sup>35</sup> The census forms themselves were closed to the public until April 2, 2012. On the entry of this form for my father's father, the enumerator has circled an X, to mark the name of the person supplying the household's information. 'F, W, 34, M'; female, white, 34 years old, married; my father's father's wife, my father's mother; my grandmother.

\*

*The parings and clippings of the skin in the preparation of parchment are used in making glue and size.*<sup>36</sup>

\*

Sometimes I go with my younger child, my daughter, out into the woods to look for antlers. The deer shed them each spring: sometimes, in the leaves and sticks, between the rocks and lichen, there they'll be, like any other thing, at one moment unknown and unseen, and next, right there before you. We pick them up and bring them home. I wash them in the sink with dish soap, to strip something from them, to ease their entry into our home. I give them to the dogs, who sink down where they are to chew them, dragging them back to their beds or a private corner to gnaw on them, hoarding. Over the weeks and months the antlers become things like other household things, there and not there, known and not known.

Sometimes here I see a family of deer, perhaps a family, one gathering almost interchangeable with another. They graze at dusk on the roadside or drink from the ornamental pond of the nearby golf club. They are silent, still even when in motion, turning to examine the highlights of my car, pausing in distinct and complicating ways, each pause a frame of action before flight, the long hesitation leading to a single



31. This information was located using the free resources made available by Ancestry.com, <ancestry.com> [accessed 21 June 2020]. Ancestry.com draws on federally compiled records that are held and freely provided by the U.S. National and Archives Record Administration, <archives.gov/> [accessed 21 June 2020].

Parchment is rendered neutral, yet it still retains the imprint of the skin. Some traces of the animal remain: the flecks and grains, pores, the shadows of its pigmentation. The skin is still visible in the writing surface.

My father's family tree varies online, between the various genealogical sites. Sometimes his father had a first marriage. Sometimes his father wasn't married to the woman who is my grandmother. Sometimes he had two children, neither of whom is my father. Sometimes his middle name is different. Sometimes my father doesn't exist. I check myself, to use as a control, to see whether I exist online, and with what degree of accuracy. I do, and correctly. My birthdate, my parentage, all are meticulously recorded.

The documents for my father's father include:

Document #1: the United States census record for 1940.

Here he is listed as living in Ward 3, **Altus, Altus-City, Jackson-County**, Oklahoma. He is: head of household; male; white; 'race (original)', also white; 46 years old; born in Texas around 1894; last place of residence: **Ponca-City, Kay**, Oklahoma. He has a wife: **Bessie-M. female**, 34. He has a son: **Billie Clifton**, male, 18. The census is taken in the year of my father's birth; it is the last glimpse of an administratively documented world without my father in it. The site allows you to view a scan of the original census sheet: the James family constitute items 15–17. Head, Wife, Son.

Document #2: the school census records for the district of Choctaw county, Oklahoma.

Name of pupil: **Smith-James, M.** Born **Feb-13-1895**, age 16. Signed, **W. C. James**, Parent or Guardian. **W.C. James**. That father had a father.

25. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.2.

26. T.L. Stinson, 'Knowledge of the Flesh: Using DNA Analysis to Unlock Bibliographical Secrets of Medieval Parchment', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 103 (2009), 435–453; Sarah Zhang, 'The Lab Discovering DNA in Old Books', *The Atlantic* (19 February 2019), <theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/02/dna-books-artifacts/582814/> [accessed 18 June 2020].

being. That creature will be our parchment subject.

First she is killed, her throat cut to preserve the integrity of the skin. Her blood is drained. She is flayed: her skin is removed from her body by a sharp-bladed knife. At this point, she becomes two things: the body and the skin. The head, hooves, and tail are removed; they leave our field of vision. The skin is removed from the body; the body leaves our field of vision. No more elbows, no more knees, no more shoulder bones or hip bones; no bony vertebra beneath the hair of the neck, warmed in the sun, bristling under the hand scratching behind an ear.

\*

Claudius says, 'But you must know, your father lost a father. That father lost, lost his.'<sup>25</sup>

\*

That father lost a father. In 2009, Timothy Stinson, a researcher at North Carolina State University, published a paper on the use of parchment in animal DNA sequencing. He was interested in identifying the species cultivated for parchment in the medieval and early modern period.<sup>26</sup>

In 2014, Matthew Teasdale and Daniel Bradley applied the practice of 'next-generation' or 'massive parallel' sequencing of DNA to parchment.<sup>27</sup> Next-generation sequencing, according to Wikipedia, begins with a 'DNA sequencing library, [...] generated by clonal amplification by PCR in vitro'.<sup>28</sup> The DNA components are first replicated and then examined in parallel. They are 'read', through fluorescent light or the release of hydrogen protons, in a comparison of the similarities and differences that are part of the essence of each strand.

Using these analytical techniques, researchers at the University of York began a large-scale project to collect and analyze DNA from parchment held in rare book and archival collections in Britain, the U.S., and around the world. Their goal was to identify the species in use, and to track the use and spread or different species over time

27. M. D. Teasdale, N. L. van Doorn, S. Fiddyment, C. C. Webb, T. O'Connor, M. Hoffeter, M. J. Collins and D. C. Bradley, 'Paging through history: parchment as a reservoir of ancient DNA for next generation sequencing', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 370 (19 January 2015), <doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2013.0239> ; Teasdale and Bradley initially examined bones, before moving to parchment; C. Gamble, E. Jones, M. Teasdale, et al. 'Genome flux and stasis in a five millennium transect of European prehistory', *Nature Communications*, 5, S27 (2014), <doi.org/10.1038/ncomms27>.

Document #3: the 1917 draft registration record.

The draft card is completed in a Palmer cursive. Name in full: Smith James. Age, in yrs: 22. Date of birth: Feb 13, 1895. 'Are you (1) a natural-born citizen, (2) a naturalized citizen, (3) an alien, (4) or have you declared your intention (specify which)?' He was 'Natural Born', in Gober, Texas. His present trade: 'Livery man', self-employed, in Bennington, OK. He has a wife, Caucasian. He has no previous military experience. His height and build are medium. His eyes: grey; his hair, light brown; he is not bald. He has not lost an arm, leg, hand, foot, or both eyes', nor is he otherwise disabled. He signs his name, in an unconfident hand, to 'affirm that I have verified above answers and that they are true'. The document is witnessed in Bryan, Oklahoma, on **June 5, 1917**, my father's birthday, some 23 years later. 'A True Copy'.

Document #4: **Smith-James** is registering for the draft again, this time on **April 26, 1942**, at the county court house in Altus, Oklahoma.

He is still white. Now he is 5 foot 8 inches and 145 pounds. He has brown hair, blue eyes, and a light brown complexion. He has a telephone, and a telephone number: 354. He is still self employed, now at the 'Warehouse Gro. & Market'. He has added a middle initial to his signature: **Smith-M. James**.

Document #5: the United States Social Security Death Index.

Age: 78. Last place of residence: Altus, Jackson, Oklahoma. Event date: **Feb 1973**.

Document #6: 'Find a Grave Index': **Smith-M. James**,

Event Type: Burial. Event Date: 1973. Death Date: **February 14, 1973**. Cemetery: **Altus Cemetery**.<sup>31</sup>

and location. They wanted to know where and when a particular genetically recognisable breed of animal had come into use, and to gather what information might be available from the skin, whether the skin came from a male or female animal.<sup>29</sup>

The research allows study of the changes in livestock breeding over the course of decades and centuries; it is essentially a genetic fossil record of animal DNA from the past. The information might also allow the study of how the markets and economy for animals functioned in earlier centuries; for instance, how far skins travelled from their animals, and how the animal markets related to those of textual production. This and other points of social and economic history are supported by DNA sampling research from parchment.

Mitochondrial DNA is passed down through the mother. DNA analysis of parchment tracks the genetic lineage from mother to daughter, over the life of a genetic variant, until the daughter differs sufficiently from the mother or grand- or great-grandmother to be genetically distinct, possessed of a sequence of difference that reflects fluorescent light in a distinct manner, or releases hydrogen protons in an distinct manner, defining the differences of one variant from the other, one mother from her mother or grandmother, and those mothers from the daughters who follow. Parchment is the DNA marker of each animal, situating each skin like the photograph in a family album, there in school clothes, plaits braided, looking back at the person behind the camera. Alongside text is the animal, and the record of its life, its genetic history, captured in its skin. Skin wants to return to the body. That father had a father. That mother had a mother.

\*

*The skin is fixed to the summer; and the parchment-maker then works with the sharp tool from the top to the bottom of the skin, and takes away about one half of its thickness. The skin being thus equally pared on both sides, it is well rubbed with pumice-stone.*<sup>30</sup>

28. 'DNA sequencing', <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DNA\_sequencing> [accessed 18 June 2020].

29. Zhang, 'The Lab'; Teasdale, et al. 'Paging through History'.

30. *The Saturday Magazine*, 184.



23. Matthew Hoffman, 'Picture of the Skin' (2019), <webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/picture-of-the-skin#1> [accessed 18 June 2020].

24. Hans Sachs, 'Der Permcenner', *Eigentliche Beschreibung aller Stände auff Erden* (Frankfurt am Main, 1568), f.97<sup>r</sup>.

The whorls of black or brown or grey can be seen in the skin beneath; the shadow of these still brown or purple after the hair has gone. Once the skins have been stripped of hair, and hang limp and shapeless on a sawhorse, we bring them upstairs to dry upon a rack.

Parchment and leather start at the same point, with the animal. Both begin to come into being at the moment that the skin is stripped from the body, then cleaned and prepared for processing. Parchment and leather diverge at the point where the skin has been cleaned and prepped. While skins for leather are treated with tannins, skins for parchment are stretched to dry.

Parchment is made from skin dried under pressure. As the skin dries, its moisture evaporates; the skin shrinks. Over time, as the skin dries, it stretches on the rack. As it dries, still gelatinous, the skin stretches, its molecular structures realigning. Once dried, the parchment must be finished: scraped thin, rubbed, and polished. This process realigns the molecular structure of the parchment. The gelatinous skin becomes opaque. Once an animal, the skin is transformed into a writing surface. It might hold the marks of the knife that stripped it from its body. It might hold the shadows of the neck, the vertebrae, the points at which the elbows and knees, the exoskeleton, the bones and legs of its body have rubbed against the skin from the inside, have pressed and stretched it, have made their mark. The outside and inside, the world and the self: these all leave their traces on the skin.

\*

*The parchment-maker now takes the skin thus to be prepared by the skinner.*<sup>22</sup>

\*

Here are the terms by which we understand the animal:

Hair, whiskers, eyes, ears, tail, hooves, field, grazing, sun, moon, day, night, weather, inside, outside, tame, wild, baby, mother, milk

Here are the terms by which we understand the skin:

The epidermis, or upper layer, our outer layer to the world

The dermis, or first interior layer, containing hair follicles, sweat glands, and connective tissue

The hypodermis, or second interior layer, containing fat, connective tissue, and blood vessels.<sup>23</sup>

To think about the substratum is to be forced to recognize the material structure of parchment as having once had subjectivity, as having once lived, like us, within the world. The sheep, or cow, or goat was a herbivore; it had a herd or flock; it inhabited a pasture or field or mountainside; it moved among other lambs or calves or kids. Like them, it suckled and grazed; it moved with the curious bony nimbleness of the herbivore. Parchment once capered; it bit and kicked and bleated; it had a skin.

How does parchment change as a documentary record when we remember this subjectivity? What does it mean to think that each parchment membrane was once a living animal, its skin intact upon its body, that skin enveloping a head and nose and mouth, two brown eyes, two ears, velvety and hairy, twitching? The skin covered its neck and shoulders and legs to its hooves, to the ground, on the ground, below a tail, swishing at intervals.

In his record of the professions in mid-sixteenth-century Germany, Hans Sachs shows us the parchment-maker alongside society's other occupations: the apothecary, the type designer, the prince, the cooper.<sup>24</sup> It is a view of parchment as already object: stretched on the rack, the skin scraped by its creator. It is already a material, already not an animal, recognisable as the unfinished substratum of an as yet unwritten text.

In another imagining, the process of making parchment begins elsewhere. It begins in an earlier moment, as someone like me, a subjective being fixed in time and place, selects and lays hands upon another subjective

16. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II.2.591; 593-595; 595-634. 'If it live in your memory', begin at this line.'

17. *The Saturday Magazine*, 184.

Hamlet organizes a performance of a play to try to trick Claudius into revealing his murder and treason. 'The play's the thing', we hear. Hamlet has asked the troupe of traveling players to add a 'speech of some dozen or sixteen lines'. The players agree; Hamlet 'sets down' his text to insert into the performance, which the players hold in living memory.<sup>16</sup>

I have brought my students to Montgomery, New York, for something similar. Jesse will rehearse the performance of something that we no longer hold as living practice: the production of parchment, a material which my students and I have seen only as the writing surface for text in the library's collections. We are enacting a past, in the stage of Jesse's tannery, that the author of *The Saturday Magazine* piece on parchment presumed his working-class readers to have at the edges of their experience, to have seen the 'carts loaded with sheep-skins proceeding from large markets' with which the narrative structure of parchment-making as practice is framed.<sup>17</sup> For my students, for me, for Jesse, that process is excavated from lost practice.<sup>18</sup> The 'cunning of the scene', like Hamlet's play, breathes life into the past, it strikes 'to the soul'.<sup>19</sup>

My students are politely interested as I discuss the components of ink in some detail. We have a snack, sitting under the trees, chatting with Jesse on the loading dock, then make our way inside the tannery.

\*

*The wool or hair side of the skin is served in a similar manner; and the last operation of the skinner is to rub fine chalk over both sides of the skin with a piece of lambskin that has the wool on: this makes the skin smoother, and gives it a white down or knap.*<sup>20</sup>

\*

My computer screen is filled with my family tree. After my father leaves the hospital, I fall into trying to find the traces of his family. I have joined the free membership

of every genealogy site, and found myself on the shadier side of the genealogical market, where criminal records are checked: sites with comments, howsoever genuine, like: 'this site is friggng awesome, it helped me prove my girlfriend was cheating on me', or 'this site helped me learn that my new girlfriend is a registered sex offender'. My email inbox is filled with promises of full reports on criminal records and prison sentences, state and federal.

I've done most of this actually in my parents' living room, alongside my father, as we sit together watching 'Miss Marple' episodes and dredging the last of the See's chocolate box, in the last days of the Christmas season. I wake up at night trying to untrangle the feeling of it, a mixture of worry and guilt, and still I continue. I ask my husband and children, in generic terms, whether it is okay to publish something about somebody else without their knowing. No, is the immediate and universal answer. They want to know the circumstances. They want to know who it would be about. I wonder whether it counts if you publish something somewhere where someone will almost certainly never read it. I wonder whether I should rewrite this essay even before I've finished it. I wonder if I could include a 'redacted' section. I wonder why I still can't bring myself to ask my father about his past, written on both our skins.

*It is left to dry, and is removed from the frame by cutting it all round.*<sup>21</sup>

\*

Parchment begins when the skin has been removed from the body. It is first cleaned; the hair must be removed. At Jesse's tannery, these processes are accomplished on a shop floor, with commercial vats soaking the skins and spinning them, the whole process damp and visceral. I wear thick rubber boots, boots I bought before my first trip out to see Jesse. I try not to touch anything. I haven't looked at beforehand. Jesse has a batch of skins prepared and we scrape away at these to remove the hair.

18. From the later seventeenth century, European parchment-making practices were documented in trade dictionaries and encyclopedias, as by Jacques Savary des Brélons in his *Dictionnaire universel de commerce* (Paris: J. Estienne, 1723-1730). See Alexis Hagador, 'Parchment making practices in eighteenth-century France: historical practices and the written record', *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, 35 (2012), 165-188 (p. 166). How these idealized descriptions correspond to actual practice, and to practices in different periods and regions, is an open question. As Ronald Reed states, 'Parchment only too well exemplifies how a wealth of technical knowledge, acquired carefully over many centuries, may easily become neglected and lost.' Ronald Reed, *Ancient Skins, Parchment and Leathers* (London: Seminar Press, 1972), p. 119 (cited from Hagador, p. 165).

19. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, II.2. 577.

20. *The Saturday Magazine*, 184.

21. Ibid.

































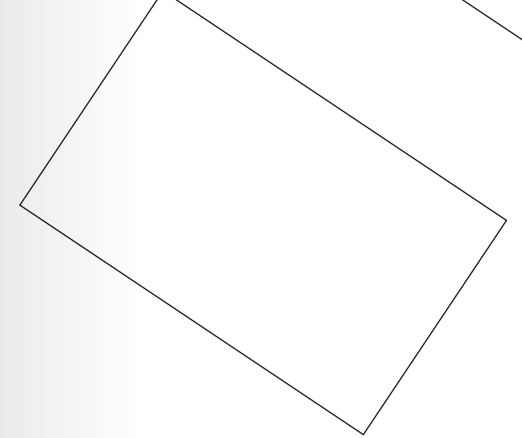


A new me or another me.  
 Other:  
 From him:  
 Parent / Father:  
 Barthes introduces the session by likening its delivery to the smell of dust and oil  
 a sewing machine  
 He goes on to consider the question  
 Why do I write?  
 I write because I have read  
 He observes that not all readers become writers,  
 a mutation, an illumination,  
 to rewrite his most beloved texts, 'I hope to write  
 distinct, the first of which is a kind of following of a book  
 one of imitation. I wo types of imitation are identified as  
 between reading and writing for him, is reciprocal, and  
 which he equates with an act of love.  
 The author must possess the desire to write and inhabit  
 it. The author does not create the world: s/he enunciates  
 helped or stopped or postponed – the true author must  
 give in to the desire of it. Anxious=Distorus. Madness  
 drives me to get out my pen in public. I am a man-pen.  
 almost like a natural function; Animal function=base  
 function. Can one ever be a true writer without this  
 consuming desire? Can the rest of us only imitate,  
 or simulate?

text(ile)

flickering screen projections offer  
 the same scent

6. For a re-reading of Walter Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood* (Sheffield: Gordon Projects, 2016),  
*Edits from a Berlin Childhood* (Sheffield: Gordon Projects, 2016), see Helen Clarke.



HOSTILITY

Perhaps a better word for  
 the relation between the  
 book read and the book  
 to be written is:

in that having read the  
 book I love I now hate  
 as it might have been  
 written by me

in that it is allegedly  
 produces systems  
 in that reflections

proliferate  
 in that I am thoroughly  
 sick of the brotherhood  
 of important men

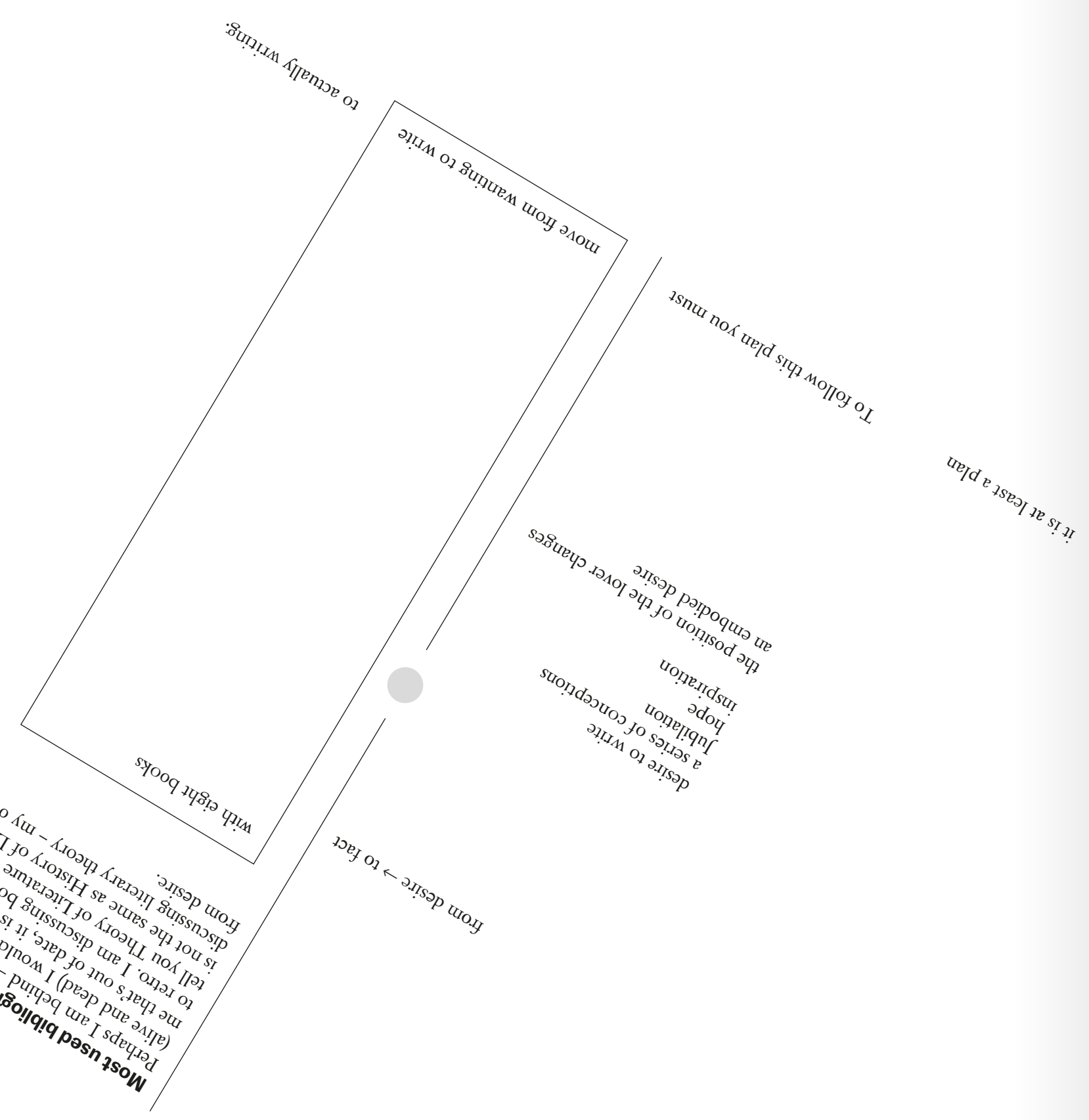
There is ...  
 which I think he means obsession – non-pathologised,  
 I mean an injection of something by something else  
 Not to be another but to be other: The (beloved) author  
 has put something in me. This new thing (not his dead-  
 end originality) is the strange in me.

speak tentatively  
 into the pixelated fog

wait  
 for a reply

CAN YOU HEAR ME?  
 [...] connecting  
 to audio





**A Collective Bibliography of the Most Frequently Quoted Authors, Compiled by the Contributors.**

Bibliography of those most frequently quoted authors presented in the form of a list of books - a *bibliophite*, one might say. A catalogue or record of the present, constantly changes when history, constantly which, like history, constantly changes around a subject - again, to the collection of objects that lay - in more or less orderly or chaotic fashion - one on top of the other. Or is it alongside?

BENJAMIN  
 -, (1934) *Berlin Childhood*, Harvard University Press, 2006.  
 trans. by Howard Eiland, Harvard University Press, 2006.

DELLUC  
 -, (1923) *Le Silence*, in *Écrits cinématographiques III: Dramas de Cinema, scenarios et projets de films*, Cinematheque Francais Cabiers du Cinema, 1994.  
 trans. by Howard Eiland, Harvard University Press, 2006.

DERRIDA  
 -, (1993) *Spectres of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, & the New International*, The MIT Press, 2017.  
 trans. by Peggy Kamuf, Routledge, 1994.

DIDI-HUBERMAN  
 -, (2011) *Barok*, trans. by Samuel E. Martin, Octagon Press, 1989.

MOBERLEY & JOURDAIN  
 -, *Ghosts of the Trauma*, self-published, 2016.

SHAH  
 -, *The Exploits of the Incomparable Milla Nasrudin*, Beacon Press, 1992.

TOWNSEND  
 -, *Artst's Process*, Routledge, 2019.

WITTIG  
 -, *Creative States of Mind: psychoanalysis and the Artist's Process*, Routledge, 2019.

WOOD  
 -, *Without Mastery: Reading and Other Forces*, Edinburgh University Press, 2014.







# The Work as Will

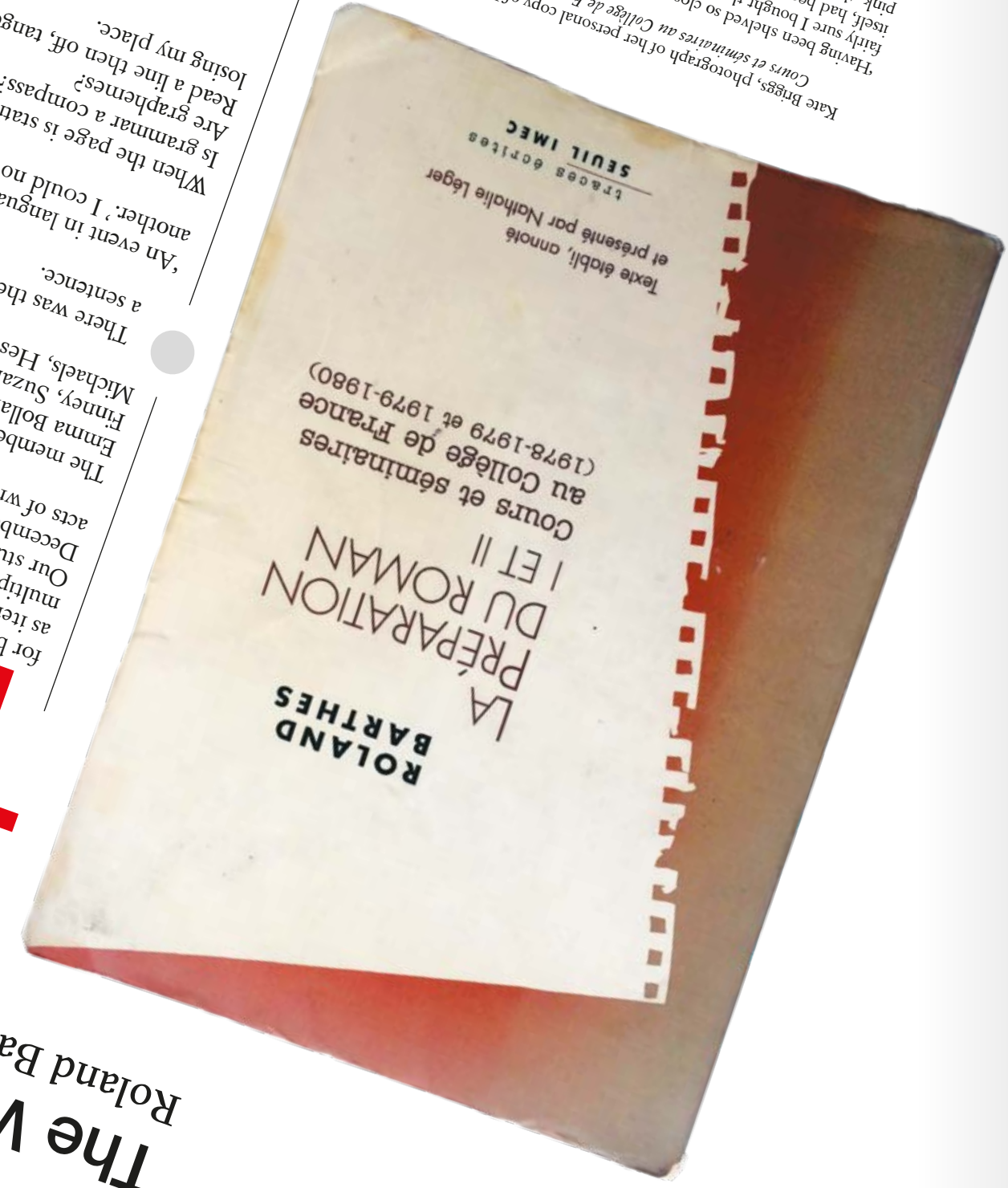
## Roland Barthes Reading Group

The Work as Will  
(will to begin)

**T**he Roland Barthes Reading Group has been parsing four years. His is a text in which the novel is never quite begun; or rather in which the *conditions* for beginning *repeatedly start* to be laid out. Beginnings – as iteration, as speculation, as speculation. Beginnings – Our stuttering synopsis of the chapter. Session of December 1, 1979 collates our notations, our minimal acts of writing in which we promise, soon, to start.

The members of the group participating here are: Emma Bolland, Julia Calver, Helen Clarke, Louise Finney, Suzannah Gent, Sharon Kivland, Debbie Michaels, Hesta Peppé, and Rachel Smith.

'An event in language is to take one step, and then another.' I could no longer walk.  
When the page is static (not static). Hum.  
Are graphemes?  
Read a line then off, tangential, elsewhere, making a note, losing my place.



Kate Briggs, translator of the English edition of Roland Barthes's *The Preparation of the Novel I et II*, *Cours et séminaires au Collège de France, 1978-1979 et 1979-1980*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1995].  
I am fairly sure I bought the book the year Seoul first published it – the spine, if not the cover of the book, had been bleached by the sun, turning its original deep dark red into something closer to mud-pink, the colour of unbaked clay.  
Having been shelved so close to the window for so long – for some fourteen years now, since I am sure I bought the book the year Seoul first published it – the spine, if not the cover of the book, had been bleached by the sun, turning its original deep dark red into something closer to mud-pink, the colour of unbaked clay.  
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# Welcome to *Inscription*

Gill Partington

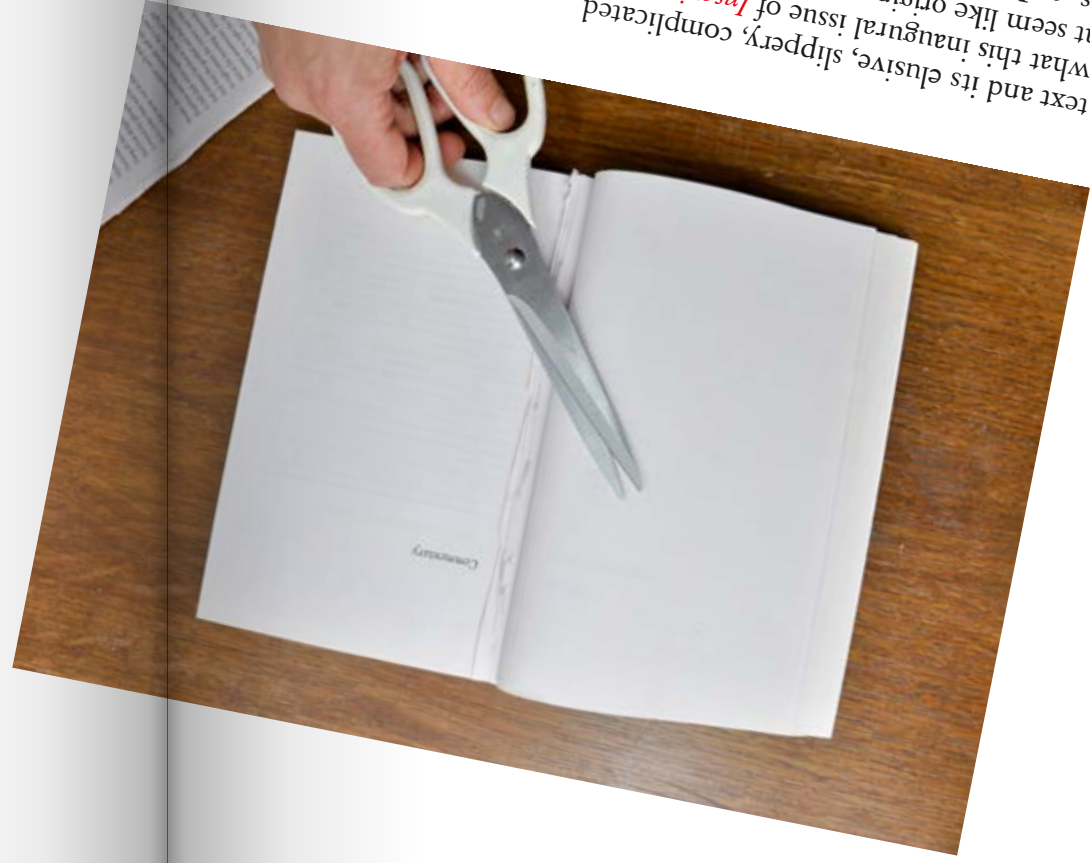
Where to begin? How to begin?

These are tricky questions. Perhaps it's too late to ask, since we're already out of the starting blocks. We're on the fourth line, heading rapidly for the fifth page of the introduction – isn't really the the beginning bound, printed object actually starts is difficult to pinpoint. Does reading start on page one? Or before that, at the front cover – eyeing up the illustration and the blur; deciding if we like the look and feel of it; giving the pages an exploratory ruffle, weighing up whether to take the plunge? Perhaps it begins before the reviews, recommendations and digital textual artefacts, or else what Gérard Genette calls the *epitext*: that guide us towards a particular book and shape our understanding of it. Before you pick up or download this journal, you've already started reading it.

But wait. We might be getting ahead of ourselves. glance before moving on to the actual contents. In which case, perhaps we haven't started yet, after all.

– just a bit of throat clearing before the journal begins in its preliminary matter – mere preliminary matter – just a bit of throat clearing before the journal begins in its preliminary matter – mere preliminary matter

The material text and its elusive, slippery, complicated beginnings is what this inaugural issue of *Inscription* and reworkings, as John T. Hamilton shows, through his careful tracing of both the etymologies in Kafka's writing and the overwriting dynamic at work in a very different context – early modern Welsh bibles – whose missing title pages have been reinvented in some surprising DIY forms by their owners. These are beginnings that are in fact retrospective constructions. Alice Wajkelden, a century collector Hans Sloane has been overwriting by shift between book covers and reorderings. That Rebecca Bullard finds, too, in the work of Sloane's early form of media theory, oscillating between different writing surfaces – stone, print and manuscript – but Alexandra Franklin finds embarking on the painstaking (1851) summons meditations on both beginnings and her own life span, but also reaches back into the past to question the beginnings of Melville's novel. However far back we go, we're never quite at the start, since the printed book is always, by its nature, a kind of secondary copy. Serena Smith's description of preparing a



lithography stone opens up another, deeper order of time, and a search for beginnings that lie much further back, beyond the anthropocene. This is a limestone surface that has already been written on by geological forces, Kathryn James traces themes of *inscription* and origin in a different context and a different medium – skin, paternity and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But, as with Smith's consideration of stone, the question is the same: how to decode the rich meanings and history already legible in this supposedly blank surface.

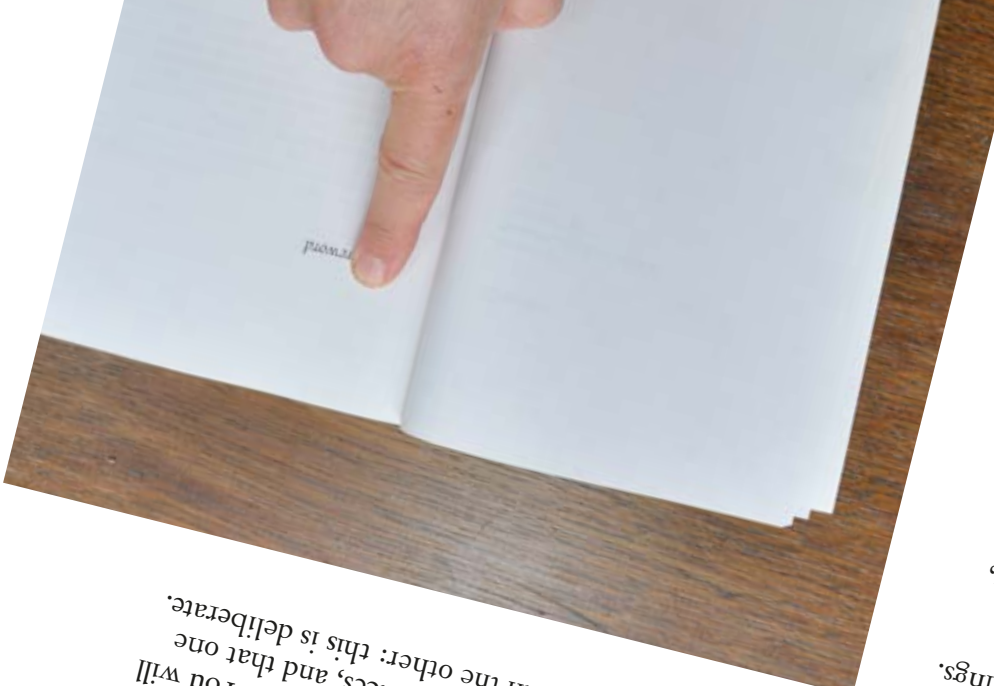
Catherine Clover grapples with issues of transcription as well as *inscription*. The layered soundscapes of her suburban Melbourne environment includes not only indigenous language of the Wurundjeri people, but the passed down orally, persists not in writing but through its connection to the terrain. What kind of writing can do the mute pages? The Barthes Reading Group, too, are pushing at the limits of the page. They reinvent its layout to transcribe multiple streams of thought and a chorus of voices, responding collectively to Roland Barthes's *The Preparation of the Novel*, a book-length rehearsal for a book that always lies in the future, never getting off the ground.

Leaving the page entirely, we find Sean Ashton's voice on vinyl record rehearsing similar, stuttering beginnings. As he reads from his novel, *Living in a Land* (2017), a series of first lines builds not into a narrative but into an incongruous and hilarious anti-audiobiography, one told entirely in the negative. 'I've never had syphilis; and I have never confronted a dangerous animal. Glyndebourne; he reveals, 'I've never been to

uncertain which holds the authentic or original version. process of hand-printing Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) summons meditations on both beginnings and endings. It's a project that extends forward, beyond her own life span, but also reaches back into the past to question the beginnings of Melville's novel. However far back we go, we're never quite at the start, since the printed book is always, by its nature, a kind of secondary copy. Serena Smith's description of preparing a

is considerably better than the other: this is deliberate. see that there are two editorial prefaces, and that one point: starting again, but differently. Flip over. You will after all, but a circle that never quite returns to its original boat in Edgar Allan Poe's tale. And what is a spiral, normally be at the start, circles around the central hole. The colophon and publishing information, which would drawn in by an invisible centripetal force, like the helplessness back to front, so we have two beginnings and no end. And the middle? Well that's a beginning of a sort, too. The whole thing works just as well upside down and see inside, so to speak. *Inscription* is also reversible. Illustration plays on these multiple entry points of the book, confusing the eye by presenting the beautiful cover and around this journal. Erica Baum's beautiful cover there are plenty of other ways to find your way into If this was a false start, it's not too late to begin again.

and progress. tiny watchsprings to think about scale, time, entropy and progress. Robert Smithson's massive 'Spiral Jetty' (1970) with meditation on the meanings of this form, juxtaposing the pages of the journal we find Craig Dworkin's intricate and out in augmented reality. And then, spiralling back to Ian Truelove, allowing us to read, revolve, zoom in here it's given virtual form by creative technologists spherical medium in his text, 'Foamy Reading', and in-residence Craig Saper imagines a radically new, story 'A Descend into the Maelstrom' (1841), removing the shape of its eponymous whirlpool. Digital artist Jérôme Bennequin takes an eraser to Edgar Allan Poe's edition's other artists-in-residence. On a pull-out poster, The record's spiralling grooves are echoed by this





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This is the same hole.







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