# HINGED, BOUND, COVERED:
# THE SIGNIFYING POTENTIAL OF THE MATERIAL CODEX

by

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**A Dissertation**

*Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University*

*In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**


Department of English

West Lafayette, Indiana

August 2021

**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL**

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*Have you fallen into the world of a book? Do you hear books speaking to you?*
*If you have been the victim of pretty covers, old bindings, heavy moving boxes, interesting fonts, or other nonsensical bookish infatuations, you may be entitled to compensation.*
*Not really, but I will dedicate this study to you.*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my Grandma Shirley, who, legend has it, read every single book in her childhood library. I remember running my fingers through the elaborate, tasseled bookmarks hanging from whatever book was sitting on your kitchen counter. I miss it dearly. To my mom, for believing in this stupid venture and stupid project before I even knew it existed. I got my love of books and other old things from you, so you're to blame for this dissertation about the important thingness of books. Thank you for making me think reading was cool, for enabling purchases from the Scholastic book fair, and for dropping me off at the library. I remember sitting on the first floor in the Racine Public Library for hours searching the stacks for every story I could find about King Arthur and Greek myths. I also remember being banned from the library multiple times because of late fees; I've never broken that habit, but you should add those fees to my tab.

To Magnus, my demonic little spoon meathead, who has been there since the beginning, who has co-piloted dozens of road trips, who has licked away my tears. I know it's because you care and not that you're really trying to eat me. To Marvel, who moved in right when I needed her and spackled back together a broken heart. I strive to live with your attitude and confidence.

When I was stuck and feeling incompetent, Nush Powell forced me (basically kicking and screaming, iirc) to work in her office once a week. Thank you for grounding me until I got words on the page, for offering candy instead of kleenex, for rewarding me with a bottle of champagne, and for making me feel smart again when I thought I'd lost it. To my chair, Robyn Bartlett, who came through on her promise to get me over the finish line. You read some really, really, bad versions of this. I apologize and thank you.

My smart, snarky, supportive friend-olleagues. Arielle McKee, the best title-thinker-upper in the seven kingdoms (See? Don't let me title things). You were always good for midnight responses to my nonsensical ramblings, a pep talk, and a pun challenge. If I got the library stacks joke in here, you owe me five American dollars. Dana: my work soul mate. You've been my translator and hype [wo]man since, like, the day we met. I'm sure our first conversation was about monsters, moistness, and other gross things, and I'm glad nothing's changed. I owe so much of my early academic success to our OG writing group, and I hope Ingrid Pierce and Justin Barker are kicking butt and taking names. And I owe so much to the Great Panini Writing Group of 2020-21. I could not have asked for a more supportive group to drag me across the finish line.

Dana Oswald, my undergrad advisor at UW-Parkside. You treated me like a real adult scholar from the very first day of 266 – long before I was an adult, real, or a scholar. You may not know this, but you also saved me from my double major in finance and economics. Thanks to my fifth-grade teacher, Mr. T, for submitting a poem I'd written to an anthology competition; that pretty green and gold binding had to hold my family over for years.

I am also supposed to include "relevant funder information," so thank you to the US Government for graciously providing me with loans to keep food on the table. I will never, ever be able to repay you.

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“I love books. I adore everything about them. I love the feel of the pages on my fingertips. They are light enough to carry, yet so heavy with worlds and ideas. I love the sound of the pages flicking against my fingers. Print against fingerprints. Books make people quiet, yet they are so loud.”

Nnedi Okorafor, *The Book of Phoenix* (2015)

“The book: a stack of paper sheets printed on both sides, bound on one end, and encased between covers.”

Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (2018)

# ABSTRACT

The idea of "the book" overflows with extraneous significance: books are presented as windows, gateways, vessels, lighthouses, and gardens. Books speak to us and feed us, and they are a method of escape. From their earliest appearances in the western world, the book has signified much more than a static, hinged, bound, covered object inscribed with words. Even when a book is not performing an elaborate, imaginative function, the word "book" very often signifies the text it holds or even the text's author. You can open *The Bluest Eye* or carry Octavia Butler in your bag. *Fourteenth-century author Geoffrey Chaucer invokes a book by "Lollius" as authoritative source of his Troilus and Criseyde, though no person exists; twelfth-century chronicler Geoffrey of Monmouth claims to be translating from an unlikely "very ancient book."* When a book makes an appearance in narrative, it is rarely *just a book.* This dissertation asks what is it about the book, in the shape of the codex, that has helped the book become such a metaphorically rich signifier.

In scholarship, despite a renewed appreciation for the book as both material and cultural object, the frequency with which the book represents something other than itself has, ironically, exiled these bookish metaphors into the land of the common trope. *When the book does something miraculous, it is just a narrative device.* Indeed, books have become to significantly meaningful that attempts to define "the book" evade simplicity, rendering books as everything and nothing at the same time. In light of this overcomplication, my inquiry is based on a simple premise: Metaphors are based on some element of physical truth. Though the book has sprouted in a variety of metaphorical directions, many of those metaphors are grounded in the book's material realities. Acknowledging this, especially in an age of fast-evolving media and bookish fetishism, offers a valuable and novel perspective of how and why books are both semantically rich and culturally valued objects

This dissertation attempts to unravel the various threads of meaning that make up the complex "idea of the book." I focus on one of these threads: the book as a material object. By focusing on how the book as object—not the book as idea—functions within narrative, I argue that we can identify what about the book object enables some of these metaphors. I analyze moments in literature, television, and film for when metaphorical functions are assigned, not to an ephemeral, complex idea of the book, but rather to the material realities of the book as an object. In these moments, the codex's essential, material shape (what I am calling its bookishness) enable

metaphorical functioning; when bindings, pages, covers, and spines initiate metaphorical action in their very mundane physicality, we can identify how the material book has come to mean so much more than itself.

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# CHAPTER 1. HINGED, BOUND, COVERED: THE BOOK MAKES THE METAPHOR

"Books are gateways to faraway places." Announced to a room of people, this statement would not inspire confusion. Some listeners may find their interest piqued, wondering to which magical world or brand of nerdiness the speaker was going to pay tribute; others may roll their eyes at such a grand cliché and continue scrolling Instagram. Such a pronouncement may provoke curiosity, interest—even disinterest—but not confusion. Everyone in the room would share a basic understanding of what it means for a book to act as a gateway. Indeed, in contemporary western culture, we understand (and accept) that books are, in fact, gateways to other places. …that books feed your brain …that books hold multitudes. Books are windows, and gardens, and friends, and lighthouses. The book has taken on a wide range of magical and metaphorical signification. The book can, without any mental gymnastics, represent actions and thoughts both related and unrelated to book use: A book can represent reading, memory, generic tropes, nourishment, social awkwardness, intelligence, superficiality, community, escape; books can talk, invite, hide, open, reflect, and build. For centuries, the book has been an object of a culturally shared imagination, doing incredible things and serving incredible purposes.

The book, as an object, has come to be filled to overflowing with extraneous signifying residue; indeed, the book has taken on the ability to carry such a diversity of signification that it may be more accurate to say that the *idea* of the book can serve miraculous purposes. In its metaphorical life, the book strains against its material binding.[1] In *Paradiso*, the loose leaves (*quaderni*) of the world become bound "*in un volume*" at heaven's summit (33.86, 87).[2] Hamlet erases and reinscribes memories in the "book and volume" of his brain (1.5.110).[3] Admonishing publication regulations, Milton argues that the "Books are not absolutely dead things," as they

[1] See the Appendix to this dissertation for an example of this metaphorical range.

[2] Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. Allen Mendelbaum. Digital Dante (New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2014), https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/paradiso/paradiso-33. accessed June 20, 2021.

[3] William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles (Washington: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004), accessed June 20, 2021.

"preserve as in a violl" the essence of their creator (*Areopagitica*).[4] One of Nnedi Okorafor's main characters "loves books" because they are "light enough to carry, yet so heavy with worlds" (*The Book of Phoenix*).[5] Journalist Anna Quindlen lauds books as "the destination, and the journey."[6] And yet, despite its movement, life, and loudness, the book is an inanimate object. In its metaphorical life, the book performs personal, social, and cultural functions so far removed from the book's physical, material reality that it rarely gets to be just a book.

And yet …

Though the range of metaphorical signification seems to exceed the book's mundane physical reality, many of the book's symbolic forms, at their core, hold a kernel of truth. I suggest that the rich metaphorical life of the book derives from the physical book's very mundane material realities. In fact, in many instances when a book is represented as doing something very un-bookish, the unbookish action stems from the book acting like *just a book*. At heaven's summit, Dante is awestruck at the "separate, scattered: substances, accidents, and dispositions" of life "ingathered and bound by love into one single volume."[7] The metaphor aligns the realities of life with the realities of book circulation and binding. Transforming life's messy leaves into a neatly bound book is – almost too obviously – possible because books are, in their final form, bound objects; leaves can be "separate" and "scattered" but books, by definition, brings leaves and quires together to be bound. The *Commedia* itself was released and circulated in notebooks (*quadernetti*) over the course of ten to seventeen years, and Dante likely never saw (or expected) his work to be bound together.[8] Throughout most of the manuscript period, binding was not an assumed aspect of the

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[4] John Milton, "Areopagitica," ed. Thomas H. Luxon, *The John Milton Reading Room*, Dartmouth College http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton, accessed June 20, 2021.

[5] Nnedi Okorafur, *The Book of Phoenix* (New York: DAW Books, Inc., 2015), EPub. chap. 13.

[6] Anna Quindlen *How Reading Changed My Life* (New York: Random House, 2010), p. 70.

[7] "Nel suo profondo vidi che s'interna / legato con amore in un volume, / ciò che per l'universo si squaderna: / sustanze e accidenti e lor costume / quasi conflati insieme, per tal modo / che ciò ch'i' dico è un semplice lume." (In its profundity I saw—ingathered / and bound by love into one single volume— / what, in the universe, seems separate, scattered: / substances, accidents, and dispositions / as if conjoined—in such a way that what / I tell is only rudimentary") (Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso,* trans. Alan Mandelbaum, 33.85-90).

[8] John Ahern, "Binding the Book: Hermeneutics and Manuscript Production in Paradiso 33," *PMLA* 97.5 (1982): 800-09. Erik Kwakkel summarizes well the paradoxical status of pre-print binding: "Bindings are a key feature of the manuscript. Without a bookbinding, the quires remained individual entities. Curiously, this was sometimes the very rationale for not binding a book: some users preferred to keep their quires separate, for example, teachers who needed to bring only part of the book to class" (*Books Before Print :*

book; booksellers and even universities maintained stock of unbound texts so purchasers (and students) could build their own miscellanies (or simply keep unbound packets). For Dante to see such a scattered, fragmentary text brought together in a bound volume signifies a form of rare, cleanly sorted finality. The book manifests in heaven as a metaphor for the Eternal Light (*la luce etterna*), and that metaphor is explained through and rooted in the material realities of the book. Moreover, by paying attention to how the book's mundane features are metaphorically translated into something that seems unbookish offers a richer understanding both of how the idea of the book has developed and how the material book is understood by the people using those metaphors.

This dissertation is based on what appears to be a simple premise: Metaphors are based on some element of physical truth. Though the book has sprouted in a variety of metaphorical directions, many of those metaphors are grounded in the book's material realities. Acknowledging this, especially in an age of fast-evolving media and bookish fetishism, offers a valuable and novel perspective of how and why books are both semantically rich and culturally valued objects. In what immediately follows, I will first consider how we can define what the book is (and what it isn't). Acknowledging that the word "book" can signify a variety of concepts dovetails with my strategies for discussing representations of books as they appear in narrative. Second, I will discuss how locating and analyzing books-as-objects requires an approach that completely divorces representations of the material book from any extraneous symbolism, including ties to texts, authors, and metaphor. Thus, my methodology is a layering of surface reading (which commits to looking *at* rather than *through* a narrative in the search for meaning), and material culture studies (which offers language useful in considering how material elements come to bear cultural significance).

Using this methodology, I can then explain my approach to analyzing representations of the book that show the book's material features enabling metaphorical significance: *bookishness*, the material, physical features of the codex that (independently and/or collaboratively) make the book a specific object that we know when we see.[9] Physical elements of a codex, including

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*Exploring Medieval Manuscript Culture*, Medieval Media Cultures (Leeds: Arc Humanities Press, 2018): p. 75). See also Michael Suarez, SJ and Henry Woudhuysen, eds. The *Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford, Oxford University Press. 2010) pp. 153-54; Mirjam M. Foot, *The History of Bookbinding as a Mirror of Society* (London: The British Library, 1998).

[9] A colloquialism for subjective observations made popular by Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart in 1964 but, earlier, made about the book by Don the dog in *Nero, the Circus Lion: His Many Adventures*:

bindings, buckles, covers, pages, elements of *mise-en-page*, and indexing tools can contribute to an object's bookishness when they are depicted as a part of the book's material design or construction. Fourth, I will then position my argument in relation to three ongoing and lively approaches to considering the book's materiality: the book as social tool (Leah Price); the book as art object (Amaranth Borsuk, Joanna Drucker); and the book as commodified aesthetic in the face of the digital age (Jessica Pressman). As I will explain, my position may best be dubbed "book as book," a perspective that first fully attends to the book for its own sake *before* analyzing its metaphorical (or practical, representational, or commodified) offshoots. Finally, I will briefly outline the scope and goals of this project and summarize how these goals inform the content and structure of each chapter.

## 1.1 Defining the Book

### *Book as Object*

The book is at once a static, material object and an evolving, rich symbol, and distinguishing between these two modes of signification is at the core of this study. When discussing the book as an object, I really mean the codex, an object that itself is rather simply defined[10]: the codex is an object composed of a series of pages, sewn or glued together, perhaps wrapped in a cover.[11] According to *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, the primary identifying

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"Well, I can't read, either," said Don. "But I know a book when I see one. The little boy in the house where I live goes to school, and he has books. Sometimes I carry them home for him in my mouth. So I know a book when I see one" (Richard Barnum, *Nero, the Circus Lion: His Many Adventures* (New York: Barse & Hopkins, 1919) pp. 87-88.

[10] Themselves acknowledging the superfluous metaphorical range of the "idea of the book," a great number of text scholars would say limiting the "book" to any single material form is inappropriate. Thus, many scholars of the book and the text consider the "book" any object inscribed with text, a perspective summarized by Jessica Brantley: "A book might be best understood as the material support for inscribed language, a category that includes rolls and codices and even monumental inscription, both written by hand and printed by many different mechanisms, and also a wide variety of digital media" ("The Prehistory of the Book," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 632-39, p. 634). As I will outline below, this type of form-blindness prevents us from recognizing the specific affordances of the specific medium. I concede that "book" (and even "bookishness") may not be the perfect terms; however, a term referencing the "codex" doesn't capture the cultural fascination with the "book" as a material apparatus.

[11] See the appendix for a sense of the variety of material and figurative definitions assigned to the book. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the "book," in its material sense, as "A portable volume consisting

feature of the codex is its "hinged leaves, in contrast to the roll (or scroll)."[12] In this view, the codex sprung from (and remains a version of) the tablet, which consisted of multiple boards tied or clasped (i.e. hinged) together.[13] Even if we consider the hinged tablet a book, we are left with a pretty clear image of what the object looks like: something roughly box-shaped, secured on at least one edge, containing pages that can be turned, and that likely (but not always) is protected by a cover.

While I suggest that the codexical book's essential material features afford the book much of its metaphorical resonance, recognizing variance in these features is equally important in recognizing how the book gains cultural and imaginative significance. Despite the simplicity with which we can define the codexical book as an object, each of its essential features can be modified in any number of ways: the material substrate, size, and even shape of the pages; the methods of combining the pages; the material, size, and shape of the cover – if there is one at all. In addition to the essential features, the color and composition of any ink; the residual evidence of binding, lining, and inking; the decoration or trappings of the cover can each signify something about the specific object. Books can be constructed by hand, machine, or both; their pages can present text,

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of a series of written, printed, or illustrated pages bound together for ease of reading" ("book, n.". *OED Online*. June 2021. Oxford University Press. accessed July 1, 2021). Roger Chartier states that before and after Gutenberg, "the book continued to be an object composed of folded sheets, gathered between covers and bound together" (*Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995], p.14). Moreover, the material expectations of the book transcended the manuscript/print divide; the printed book was "very much dependent on the manuscript" as a model of bookishness: scripts, layout, and design all imitated the manuscript and many elements (illuminations, rubrics, and titles) continued to be created by hand (Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, p. 15).

[12] "codex," *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, ed. Michael Suarez, S.J. and Henry Woudhuysen (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2010) p. 618.

[13] If the hinging is the defining feature of the codex, then its worth nodding to the *orihon* used in China and Japan between the seventh and twelfth centuries and *amoxtli* used in Aztec and Mayan communities. Meaning "folded book" in Japanese, *orihons* were scrolls folded back and forth between columns, accordion-style. The valleys between folds were pierced and strung together, creating a type of hinged scroll. Likewise, *amoxtli* consisted of a sequence of pages glued together and folded accordion-style along the seams. Neither technology can be connected to Egyptian or European developments in textual forms, and cannot be considered as a link between the rolling scroll and hinged codex as we know it in Western culture; however, it is also necessary to acknowledge, albeit briefly, that similar advancements (if that's what they are) were taking place outside of the Roman west (Keith Houston, *The Book: A Cover-to-Cover Exploration of the Most Powerful Object of Our Time* [New York: W.W. Norton, 2016] p. 265-68); see also Colin H. Roberts and T.C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983]).

art, or nothing – and each of these details offers information about the individual object's social and physical circulation.[14] From moving volvelles and elaborate pop-up mechanisms, to shaping and binding that opens to look like a heart, to treatises bound in a book after being found in the stomach of a codfish, books are endlessly wild constructions.[15] Rather than simplifying the book, reducing our focus down to the book's most essential physical features allows us to consider those features in new ways (here, how they contribute to the book's metaphorical range). By paying attention to instances when the book is just being a book, the book's essential, bookish features – including covers, bindings, and pages – are able to take center stage.

### *Book as Metaphor and Metonym*

Of course, the book is not just an object. Since its earliest inception, the book has developed a metaphorical life that extends far beyond its role as a bound set of pages or even its relationship to the content inscribed on those pages. Considering both secular and religious representations of the book, Brian Cummings says, "The power of the book as a sacred object is bound up with its capacity to be rendered as a symbol."[16] Cummings' description alludes to the specific materiality

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[14] As a field, history of the book covers a vast amount of ground; those approaches that are most relevant to this project are outlined below. Across the field, scholars have approached the book as an object to understand what a book says about itself (descriptive bibliography, paleography, codicology; manuscript study à la Ralph Hanna, Kathryn Kerby Fulton); what books can tell us about texts (new bibliography, textual bibliography); what texts can tell us about books (book history à la Leah Price, D.F. McKenzie); and what book-use can tell us about people (book history à la Elaine Treharne, Michael Johnston).

[15] On early modern volvelles, see Suzanne Karr, "Constructions Both Sacred and Profane: Serpents, Angels, and Pointing Fingers in Renaissance Books With Moving Parts," *The Yale University Library Gazette* 78.3/4 (2004): 101–127; James Bettley, *Art of the Book: From Medieval Manuscript to Graphic Novel,* Victoria and Albert Museum Studies (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001); Bibliotheque Nationale de France (BnF) MS Latin 10536 is a heart-shaped Book of Hours (https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc72254g and https://ascholarlyskater.com/2015/10/24/heart-shaped-books-day-twenty-three-of-medieval-manuscripts/); on the *Vox Piscis: The Fish Book* (1627), see Alexandra Walsham, "Vox Piscis: or The Book-Fish: Providence and the Uses of the Reformation past in Caroline Cambridge," *The English Historical Review* 114.457 (1999): 574-606.

[16] Brian Cummings, "The Book as Symbol," in *The Oxford Companion to the Book,* p. 96. This project is concerned only with a book's meaning as a secular, popular object. For perspectives on what Ernst Robert Curtius has called the "magnificent religious metaphorics of the book," see *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages,* trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollinger Series 36 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), p. 311; Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*; Benjamin Harnett, "The Diffusion of the Codex," *Classical Antiquity* 36.1 (2017): 183–235.; Timothy Stanley, "Faithful Codex: A Theological Account of

of the book's "power" by depicting it as a "binding up" of ideas. Chartier identifies "a long-standing and crucial association between the idea of the text and a particular form of the book," that manifests as codes for understanding the book as a material form and as what I've been calling the metaphorical life of the book:

> Nothing better demonstrates the power of this association [between text and form] than the traditional Western metaphors that represent the book as a figure for destiny, the cosmos, or the human body. From Dante to Shakespeare, from Raymond Lull to Galileo, the book used metaphorically was not any book: it was composed of quires, constituted by leaves and pages, protected by binding. The metaphor of the Book of the World, the Book of Nature, which has been so powerful in the early modern era, is secured by immediate and deeply rooted representations that associate the written word with the codex.[17]

Chartier recognizes the book's pervasive and powerful performance in the culture imagination and, moreover, he specifies that "the book" that operates in these metaphors is, specifically, the codex. The consistency with which the book, as codex, is represented in both cosmological and epistemological metaphors as well as popular metaphors (including as gateways, containers, and mirrors) suggests that something about the specifically codexical shape of the book makes these metaphors possible.

This dissertation will show how the book's material features fuel many of its metaphors; however, it's essential to acknowledge that these metaphors are not fueled by the book's material features alone. Rather, to return to Chartier, these metaphors arise from a "crucial association between" the linguistic text and the material book. My methodology, as I explain below, involves challenging that association in order to distinguish book from text; to make this distinction, we need to recognize the association when we see it. Both in practice and by definition, the term "book" has become synonymous with the words it holds; the relationship is metonymic, as the word "book" can stand in for the text at any moment.[18] Saying "*The Tempest* is my favorite book" makes as

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Early Christian Books," *Heythrop Journal* 57.1 (2016): 9-28.; Matthew D.C. Larsen and Mark Letteney, "Christians and the Codex: Generic Materiality and Early Gospel Traditions," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 27.3 (2019): 383-415.

[17] Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, pp. 22-23.

[18] It's tempting to see the interchangeable use of "book" and "text" as synecdoche, rather than metonymy, especially when synecdoche is generalized as a part/whole relationship. In book studies, synecdoche is most often invoked when claiming that "book" should not be used to describe all books, because books are singular, unique objects. This seems to stem from an understanding that synecdochic refers to "horizontal and vertical contiguity…between members of a taxonomy" whereas metonymy refers to contiguity that

much semantic sense as saying "*The Tempest* is my favorite drama"; the word "book" means both object and text. Indeed, as the first sense of the term "book" in the *Oxford English Dictionary* is the material object (referenced above), the second sense refers to the linguistic text: "A written composition long enough to fill one or more such volumes."[19] These definitions point to a complicated truth about the book: when we encounter a book in narrative, it can be an object, or a text, or both, and what "book" signifies can change from one line to the next. However complicated, the metonymic relationship between the book and text is what affords the idea of the book the its rich metaphorical life.

Though the metaphorical range of the book is a product of the book's hybridity as both object and text, it is possible to consider how these two elements work independently to build those metaphors [see Figure 1].[20] As Chartier notes, the specific shape of the codex is a crucial part of

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"exists between the features inside a referential (including partonomical) domain, associated with a concept" (Brigitte Nerlich, "Synecdoche: A Trope, a Whole Trope, and Nothing but a Trope?," in *Tropical Truth(s) : The Epistemology of Metaphor and Other Tropes*, ed. Armin Burkhardt and Brigitte Nerlich, eds. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010) 291-319, p. 310). See also Ken-Ichi Seto, "Distinguishing metonymy from synecdoche," in *Metonymy in Language and Thought*, ed. K. Panther and G. Radden, Human Cognitive Processing 4 (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1995), 91-120. Likewise, the conflation of book and text has been referred to as metonymy by Brian Cummings and others: "A book is a physical object, yet it also signifies something abstract, the words and the meanings collected within it. Thus, a book is both less and more than its contents alone. A book is a metonym for the words that we read or for the thoughts that we have as we read them" ("The Book as Symbol," p. 93). See also Barbara Dancygier and Eve Sweetser, *Figurative Language,* Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), and Leah Price, *How to do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[19] "book, n." *OED Online*, June 2021, Oxford University Press, accessed July 1, 2021. This duality is mirrored in the *Oxford Companion to the Book*'s entry for the "book": "A word that has long been used interchangeably and variously to signify any of the many kinds of text that have been circulated in written or printed forms, and the material objects through which those words and images are transmitted" ("book," Michael Suarez, S.J. and Henry Woudhuysen, eds., *The Oxford Companion to the Book* [Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2010] p. 542).

[20] Although Jakobson proposed that metonym and metaphor represent opposing figurative dynamics, more recent scholarship in cognitive linguistics has complicated the proposed binary relationship between similarity (metaphor) and contiguity (metonym), arguing that metonymy can give way to metaphor (Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle. *The Fundamentals of Language*, 2nd ed. (Le Hague: Mouton, 1971; Walter de Gruyter, 2002), Zoltán Kövecses argues that, "many metaphors (of the correlational kind) derive from metonymies, that is, they have a metonymic basis" ("The Metaphor–Metonymy Relationship: Correlation Metaphors Are Based on Metonymy," *Metaphor and Symbol*, 28:2 (2013, 77-88, p. 76). See also G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Mario Brdar and Rita Brdar Szabó, "When Zidane is not simply Zidane, and Bill Gates is not just Bill Gates: Or, some

the metaphors that arise from this metonymy, and, I suggest, acknowledging the association allows us to see its disparate parts. In this scheme, the book as object can produce a distinct set of metaphors, the text can inspire a set of metaphors (e.g., between the text and the author), and the book/text metonym inspires others. Milton's claim that books "preserve as in a violl" an "extraction of that living intellect that bred them" works because books are both the textual product of someone's intellect and, in fact, containers; the metaphor turns intellect into a liquid squeezed from the author and placed within the safe, preservative confines of a glass bottle. The book is cast as a metaphorical vial, and that metaphor stems from the metonymic hybridity of book and text. I argue that, by paying close attention to how these metaphors appear in literature, we can parse out which elements of bookish metaphors stem from the book's material features, and that doing so allows us to appreciate in more precise terms the influence of the material object in defining the cultural value of the book.

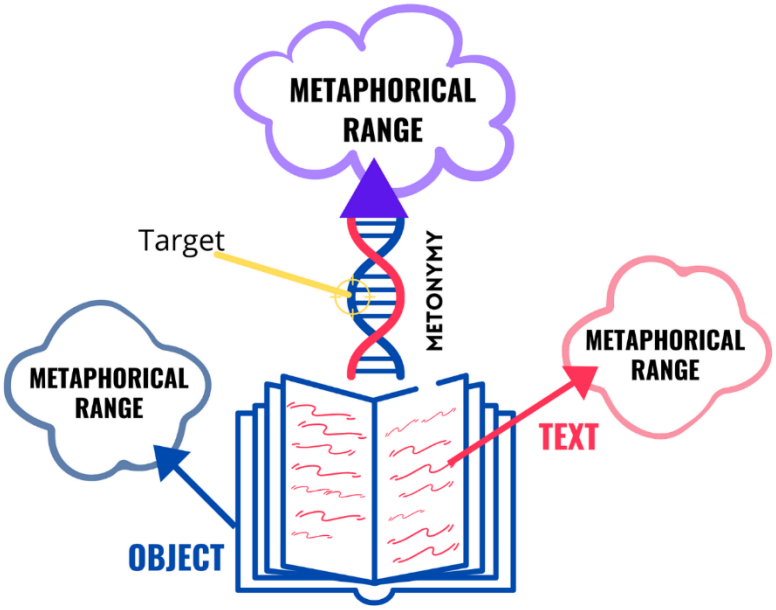


Figure 1. Locating the material in the book/text metonym

*Book ~~as~~ is not Text*

For my purposes, then, it is important to remember that the book is *not* always a text. I stress this issue of definition because the ubiquity of the book/text metonym makes the metonym and difficult to avoid (and sometimes problematic to break). While defining the book as the codex (with pages, some sort of binding, maybe some sort of cover) is rather straightforward, noticing when the book slips into representing something else takes intentional effort – this is especially true when the "book" represents the "text." Despite how natural it is to conflate the book and the

thoughts on online construction of metaphtonymic meanings of proper names," in *Aspects of Meaning Construction.* Ed. G. Radden, K.-M. Köpcke, T. Berg, and P. Siemund. (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2007) 125-42**;** **Z**oltán Kövecses, "A New Look at Metaphorical Creativity in Cognitive Linguistics," *Cognitive Linguistics*, 21.4 (2010): 663–97.

text in our minds and our words, identifying the material book as just a book – before it transforms into metaphor – requires an active rejection of the metonymic connection between the book and the text. Much of the scholarship that claims a focus on the material book tends to slip freely between a language of the book and a language of textuality, and doing so skips over chances to appreciate the book as a material object.[21]An example (which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 5) regards the frame narrative of the *Parliament of Fowls*; Chaucer's narrator reads a "bok" that he describes as "Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun" (*PF* 19, 31). Though scholarly convention is to refer to this "bok" in terms of the text it invokes (Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*), the narrator is *not* discussing the text — he is talking about the object resting on his lap.[22] Identifying the narrator's book as the *Somnium* is useful when considering issues like Chaucer's sources or the genre he is invoking, but doing so ignores the narrator's engagement with the book as a material object. In moments like this, it is possible and productive to maintain focus on books (as objects) that appear in these scenes, instead of jumping straight to what they may signify beyond themselves. The metonymic relationship between book and text produces the book's metaphorical range, but as conflating the two concepts is almost reflexive, divorcing the two concepts requires intention.

Acknowledging the book's rich metaphorical range allows us to deliberately sideline our assumptions about what a book represents and instead focus on what the book is. This is the venture of this dissertation: seeing books for their literal, material features and considering the affordances of those features. Thus, in the following chapters, I will analyze instances within narratives where books perform narrative functions. We see these books maintaining social memory, enabling physical travel, and cultivating creative thinking. However, before the books perform any of these

[21] An example of this in scholarship is Piero Boitani's chapter on "Olde Books" in Chaucer's dream visions, in which Boitani claims that, "Chaucer consecrates books as the key and integrating element of the dream experience" (p. 60). Despite this thesis and his claims regarding Chaucer's invocation of books as material objects, Boitani conflates the text and the book in his analysis: "*Literature* is Chaucer's inspiration. A *book* is at the beginning and end of each of his poems until he starts composing the *Canterbury Tales*" (p. 61, emphasis mine). It's not that this is inaccurate – the "book" can (and does) signify "literature," but by conflating "literature" with "book," he misses the opportunity to investigate the role played by the material book as it makes its appearance at both the beginning and end of these poems. (Piero Boitani. "Olde books brought to life in dreams: the *Book of the Duchess*, the *House of Fame*, the *Parliament of Fowls*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann, 2nd ed. [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 58-77).

[22] Moreover, even if we think, in academic hindsight, that the *Parliament of Fowls* is referring to *the Somnium Scipionis*, written by Cicero (and/or Macrobius), the narrative never uses those specific words.

grand functions, they are just books: they are pulled from shelves, are touched and handled, are opened and closed, are torn and burned. Divorcing the book from the idea of the book – sidelining the knee-jerk temptation to see these objects as a means to metaphorical ends (or to not see them at all) – allows us to focus on how they function, simply, as objects. I argue that these moments, when a book is just being a book, reveal what it is about the book – a series of pages, sewn or glued together, perhaps wrapped in a cover – that allows such a mundane object to bear such a wide range of metaphorical meaning and hold such cultural value.

### 1.2 Methods: Taking Books Literally

To locate and appreciate moments when books act like books requires an approach that distinguishes the book as an object from the book as an idea – in other words, that can identify and separate the metonymic threads that combine to produce metaphor. Thus, my methodology is a layering of what Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus have called "surface reading" with the tenets of material culture studies. As an approach to literary analysis, surface reading aims to take the narrative at its word; rather than assuming texts hold meaning that can only be revealed when we apply the correct interpretive lens, surface reading focuses on what is there.[23] As a mindset, as well as a method, this is particularly useful when distinguishing the material book from any extraneous symbolism, including ties to texts, authors, and metaphors. In practice, this manifests in each chapter as descriptive reading that considers books both through my eyes and the eyes of the characters: exploiting a "cultivated, patient, sensory attentiveness" in order to "bear witness to the vital materialities that flow through and around us."[24] By "just reading," we can consider what the

[23] Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading: An Introduction," in *Representations* 108.1 (2009): 1-21. "Surface reading" is positioned in opposition to the "symptomatic reading" of high theory in the late twentieth century, which assumes that a text's meaning is "hidden, repressed, deep, and in need of detection and disclosure by an interpreter" (p. 1). Best and Marcus define "surface" as "what is evident, perceptible, apprehensible in texts; what is neither hidden nor hiding … A surface is what insists on being looked at rather than what we must train ourselves to see through" (p. 9). Anne Orford invokes Foucault in claiming this form of description seeks "not to reveal what is hidden, but rather to make us see what is seen" ("In Praise of Description," in *Leiden Journal of International Law* 25.3 (2012): 609-25, p. 609).

[24] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010) pp. xiv, x.

book looks and feels like in a character's hands, rather than prioritizing the book's metaphorical significance from the perspective of an outside interpreter or authorial intention.[25]

Further, by considering these books as surfaces looked upon by the characters, we can adopt the material and codicological methods used by book historians to study books that exist in the real world. In the study of medieval manuscripts, recognizing that a book's physical apparatus and linguistic text work together as a "manuscript matrix" acknowledges book-use as a cognitive exercise engaging physical, visual, and textual elements of reading.[26] I suggest we can apply the same thinking when considering how a character interacts with their books. While we may rarely get deep codicological detail of the books that characters read, we can acknowledge that the narrators are engaging with a book matrix – an object that is both material and textual. In turn, considering what these material elements signify (both within their narratives and in the development of the book as a cultural idea) benefits from the language of material culture studies.[27] Concerned with "teasing out the affordances of materials and materialities," material culture studies form an interdisciplinary approach to observing how materiality informs and creates culturally shared ideologies.[28] When observing objects, like books, MCS asks how their "properties (such as the strength, weight, durability, resistance) and the materials they are made of (such as paper, cloth, plastic)" work together and independently to define what that object means in its

[25] Sharon Marcus introduces the concept of "just reading," a subset of surface reading, in *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 75.

[26] Stephen G. Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," in *Speculum* 65:1 (Jan. 1990): 1-10, p. 8. Studies that represent or discuss this approach to the medieval book include Aditi Nafde, "Hoccleve's Hands: The Mise-en-Page of the Autograph and Non-Autograph Manuscripts," in *Journal of the Early Book Society* 16 (2013): 55-83; Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Alexandra Gillespie and Arthur Bahr, "Medieval English Manuscripts: Form, Aesthetics, and the Literary Text," *Chaucer Review* 47.4 (2013), 346-60; Arthur Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[27] As Christopher Tilley outlines in *Handbook of Material Culture*, material culture studies "centers on the idea of that materiality is an integral dimension of culture, and that there are dimensions of social existence that cannot be fully understood without it" ("Introduction," *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2006) 1-7, p. 1).

[28] Timothy Carroll, Antonia Walford, and Shireen Walton, "Introduction," *Lineages and Advancements in Material Culture Studies: Perspectives from UCL Anthropology*, ed. Timothy Carroll, Antonia Walford, Shireen Walton (London: Routledge, 2020), 1-16, p. 7. Another concept that material culture studies acknowledges is that "material" defies easy definition; see Chapter 2 for a brief consideration of how to define "material" and consideration of materiality as it relates to textuality.

cultural context.[29] This approach helps us ask, not what a book represents, but how its individual properties worth together and independently to enable certain metaphorical symbolism. [30]

### 1.3 Bookishness

I argue that many of the diverse figurative strands of the book's metaphorical life are based in the affordances of its essential physical properties: its hinged pages, binding, and covers. These essential elements define the book as a material object that we know when we see it, and, collaboratively and independently comprise what I call the book's *bookishness*. Bookishness is meant to represent the physical features of the book that make it "a book." While the book's metaphorical life extends far beyond the bounds of the book, bookishness is an attempt to recover the book's essential physical shape and, further, an appreciation for the various forms this shape can take. A term for this physical essence is necessary, I suggest, exactly because "book" has come to signify far beyond itself, both metaphorically and physically. Metaphorically, as I've already proposed, books can refer to texts, authors, gateways, mirrors, gardens, and friends. Likewise, "book" has transcended its bookish physical form: ebooks, iBooks, MacBooks (and the MacBookBook) all invoke the idea of the book. Moreover, these each in different ways invoke the idea of the book by invoking the physical design of the book – its bookishness: Samsung's new Galaxy Fold cellphone, which impersonates the book's hinge, claims to be a "category-defying

[29] Fiona Feng-Hsin Liu, "Understanding Children's Literature and Material Culture through Pop-Up Books," *Tamkang Review* 9.2 (2019), 49-70, p. 54.

[30] In a critique of new materialism and object-oriented ontology, Benjamin Boysen claims that something like the surface, materialist reading I'm proposing approaches "semiophobia," or "an unease and malaise with the idea of human reality as being semiotic" ("The Embarrassment of Being Human," in *Orbis Litterarum* 73. 3 (2018): 225-42, p. 225). I don't intend to imply that the metaphorical power of books is a negative symptom of the book-human relationship or that it should be avoided; my argument seeks to understand how such semantic power became possible by, first, respecting the material reality of the book that affords the object its semantic range. In this way, my approach is also not in line with object-oriented ontology, though it is tempting to draw parallels. I am not proposing that books are (or should be interpreted as) being wholly autonomous objects that truly hold meaning in and of themselves, or that "cannot be reduced either downwards to their pieces or upwards to their effects" (Graham Harman, "Art Without Relations," *ArtReview* 66 (November 2014): 144-47, p. 144). It is, I ultimately argue, exactly in their ability to be deconstructed into pieces –leaves, bindings, stitching, covers—that we can appreciate the book's semantic range. While I propose we interpret the books appearing in narratives as books—taken at face value as objects before imprinting them with metaphoric meaning—I do not propose that those objects exist beyond human making and use (or that such interpretations aren't useful in other ways).

innovation" because it has "changed the shape of the phone."[31] In these examples, and in narrative representations of the book, the book's power is charged by its shape – its bookishness. I argue that the book's bookishness, whether the functionality of turning pages or closing a cover, enables the book's metaphorical range.

### 1.4 Looking for the Material Book

My consideration of how the book's materiality affords it metaphorical depth operates within an active network of inquiry about the book as an object and an idea. Three approaches in particular complement the scope of my argument, and it is worth discussing these by way of explaining both the larger implications of this work and clarifying how my research is distinct.

Wondering what it is that books actually do, Leah Price asks what it would "mean to study books without privileging reading."[32] In doing so she interrogates the book/text metonym, paying attention to what else the book signifies when in the hands (or the shelves, drawers, and kitchens) of the people who own them. Like this dissertation, Price's approach centers the material book as an object by questioning assumptions about its use and functionality as they are represented in narrative. In the context of Victorian Britain, Price finds that the book is rarely used for reading. The book is more often a prop used for socially superficial purposes (to avoid conversation, decorate a parlor, or fashionably match a dress) or practical solutions (deconstructed to wrap a fish or line a drawer).[33] For example, in *Mill on the Floss*, Price notes that when Maggie Tulliver

[31] "Galaxy Fold," *Samsung*, Accessed July 1, 2021, https://www.samsung.com/us/mobile/galaxy-fold/. Though Samsung doesn't specifically invoke the shape as bookish, reviewers can't seem help making the comparison: "It gets plenty bright, and you can use it fully flat or with the Fold sort of half-open like a paperback book" (Dieter Bohn, "Hands-On with the Samsung Galaxy Fold: More Than Just a Concept," *The Verge*, April 15, 2019, https://www.theverge.com/2019/4/15/18311109/samsung-galaxy-fold-photos-video-foldable-screen-phone-hands-on-impressions, Accessed July 1, 2021. Also, Patrick Lucas Austin, "Samsung's New Galaxy Fold Smartphone Opens and Closes Like a Book," *Time*, February 20, 2019, https://time.com/5533715/samsung-fold/, Accessed July 1, 2021).

[32] Price, *How to do Things with* Books, p. 20. Elsewhere she iterates this concern by pointing out that focus on the linguistic text comes "at the expense of the book as a material thing" ("From the History of a Book to a 'History of the Book," in *Representations* 108 (2009): 120-38, p. 120).

[33] Conversely, where books are reduced to props, "texts" are represented as morally superior: Whether the axis is temporal, sexual, generic, ethical, social, or disciplinary, Price finds that use of the "text" (versus "book") consistently signifies whichever end of the binary "happens to be considered superior" while use

daydreams "over her book," this is not a metaphorical representation of how reading a text inspires creative daydreaming; rather, it is an important moment of "non-reading."[34] Interpreting this narrative moment in terms of non-reading redirects attention from interaction with a text to interaction with a physical object – by shifting focus to the book, we see that the book allows Maggie to achiever her actual goal: avoiding the people around her to daydream in peace. By attending to the book's representation as a material object, Price is able to locate the book's culturally assigned value as a tool within the Victorian social system, a model I've found valuable in thinking about how bookishness enables cultural significance.[35]

Through thoughtful surface reading, Price uses depictions of books in narrative to investigate the book as an idea; conversely, Amaranth Borsuk asks how the book as an idea has affected manifestations of the book as an object. To her, the book/text metonym is a productive jumping off point rather than an obstacle: Hinging on the idea that "book" refers to both object and content "regardless of our acculturation to the codex," Borsuk celebrates the variance in book design that, she argues, results from variance in the book as an idea.[36] Rather than looking into narrative, Borsuk focuses on the artist book, a form of "self-referential" object that plays with the limits of bookishness. In doing so, she acknowledges that books have an essential material form (which, at one point, she offhandedly refers to as a "bookness"), and argues that this essential bookishness of the book is the seed from which ideological and material variance sprout. Borsuk's work represents a branch of book studies centered on the material, and by investigating how the idea of the book is represented in real books, "The Book" complements my investigation of books that appear in narrative.

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of "book" consistently signifies the inferior, superficial end of the binary (Price, *How to do Things with Books,* p. 71).

[34] Price, *How to do Things with Books,* p. 78.

[35] I must also acknowledge Oreitta da Rold's recent work, which asks the same questions of paper that I ask about the book. In *Paper in Medieval England,* da Rold reads medieval narratives for how they present metaphors about paper and argues that, "Medieval authors use the affordances of this material – its chromaticity, pliability, porosity, and tensility – to form complex metaphors and scenes" Orietta Da Rold. *Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020) p. 209). Likewise, she recognizes that medieval authors appreciated paper as an imaginative object, in ways "more diverse than some simple accounts of the value of paper in manuscripts studies have suggested" (209).

[36] Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018), EPub, Chap 1. "The Book as Object."

Both Price and Borsuk take a stance on the fate of the book in the face of the digital turn: Borsuk claims that "the codex threatens to disintegrate into the digital," but that its material flexibility will see it manifesting in new forms. Price reminds us both that "one technology rarely supersedes another"[37] and that, "Far from displacing sewn or glued blocks of printed paper, the digital era seems to have invested those objects with new glamour."[38] The glamour granted to the codexical book in the face of (wake of? aftershock of?) the digital turn is what has inspired Jessica Pressman's inquiry into the current "creative movement invested in exploring and demonstrating love for the book as symbol, art form, and artifact."[39] Rather than a concern with the book object itself, Pressman is interested in the recent surge in items impersonating the book: in the form of cellphone cases that look like book covers, sculptures made of carved books, and mini-books fashioned into earrings, Pressman observes that "Books aren't going anywhere, but they are being repurposed and reimagined."[40] She (and others) also note how the "visual and linguistic semiotics of the codex" have been adopted by digital reading devices.[41] While, currently, it seems that no one can engage with the history of the book without addressing the book's prophesied death in favor of digital media, Pressman's perspective is unique in its concentration on, not only the book as a material object, but on how other items invoke the book by adopting its physical features.[42] Moreover, Pressman calls the impersonation of books "bookishness," a term she uses to suggest

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[37] Leah Price, "Dead Again," *New York Times Book Review*, August 12, 2012, https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/leahprice/files/price_dead_again_nytimes.pdf

[38] Leah Price, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Books: The History and Future of Reading* (United States: Basic Books, 2019). EPub.

[39] Jessica Pressman, *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), EPub, "Introduction."

[40] Pressman, *Bookishness*, "Introduction."

[41] Pressman, *Bookishness*, "How and Now Bookishness."

[42] In addition to Price's works ("Dead Again," 2012; and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Books, 2019*), see Martha Pennington and Robert Waxler, *Why Reading Books Still Matters: The Power of Literature in Digital Times* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Robert Darnton, *The Case for Books: Past, Present and Future*, (New York: Public Affairs, 2009); Andrew Piper, *Book was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). According to Priscilla Coit Murphy, theories about the death of the book take three forms: "media are rivals of each other," "a new medium so affects an existing one that the two converge to meet all prior purposes and perhaps a few new ones," and "new media—following a period of shifting and settling—are thought to take on complementary functions with respect to other media" ("Books Are Dead, Long Live Books," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thornburn and Henry Jenkins, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003): 81-93, pp. 90–91).

the "physical nearness to books" by those objects that invoke its physical features.[43] The study of these objects, she suggests, informs our sense of how the book operates as a culturally significant object in the twenty-first century.

Together, Price, Borsuk, and Pressman represent a sustained scholarly interest in identifying both the idea of the book and how that idea is formed. They also model, in very different ways, how the specific material features of the codex can inform these discussions. Though I have encountered many approaches to the book, as an idea and an object, there is a gap in discussing how or why the book, in the secular cultural imagination, has taken on a metaphorical life that far exceeds its essential material form. Studies that do concern themselves with the affordances of material properties tend to focus on the historical production or circulation of these materials rather than considering how they functioned as a part of the book's apparatus.[44] In this dissertation, I contribute to this network of inquiry by asking what representations of the material book that appear in narrative reveal about their own material status. In doing so, I will show that the book's own bookishness – its defining material features – forms a basis upon which many strands of metaphorical thinking are founded. The qualities of the physical, material book have informed the ways books have become so much more than objects in the cultural imagination. In moments when a book is just a book, we can sometimes see how that book makes meaning for and by itself, without layers of metaphorical or culturally accrued baggage obscuring the view.

### 1.5 In this Dissertation…

The book's essential features have persisted since its popular adoption in the Roman west in the second century CE (and if we include its hinged forerunner, the tablet, the book's lineage extends back to 1300BCE). As my brief examples at the beginning of this chapter suggest, the metaphorical range of the book seems to have existed alongside the material book since early in its inception.[45] Consequently, defining the scope of almost any study of 'the book' will fall short

[43] I'm not mad about this at all.

[44] Fascinating examples of such studies include Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Scraped, Stroked, and Bound: Materially Engaged Readings of Medieval Manuscripts*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 23 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013); Harald Anderson, *Between the Text and the Page: Studies on the Transmission of Medieval Ideas in Honour of Frank T. Coulson*, Papers in Medieval Studies 33 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020).

[45] Citing Sophocles and Euripides, Roberts and Skeat suggest that, in classical Greece, the tablet signified tradition and dignity "that the roll lacked" (*The Birth of the Codex*, p. 11).

in some way. Thus, rather than attempting to compile a comprehensive case about the metaphorical life of all books, I consider these chapters models of how instructive a surface reading for bookishness can be. While arguing that the metaphorical life of the book can be linked to its material bookishness, each chapter concentrates on an in-depth reading of just a few texts. It is my hope that focusing each chapter on a small selection of texts will demonstrate that even a surface reading can lead to depth of evidence; when a book is represented in these narratives, there is no shortage of content to consider. Further, in an effort to show the ubiquity and variety of bookishness as it manifests in narrative, this dissertation transcends periodization and narrative form. Chapters 2 and 5 discuss medieval narratives while Chapters 3 and 4 consider works composed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By beginning and ending with close readings of medieval texts, I suggest that, if the work's historical context is taken into consideration, the significance of bookishness is a valuable source of information that throughout the western literary timeline. Finally, chapter 4 considers how bookishness has been represented in television and film (alongside textual narrative).

In chapter 2, I discuss the representation of textual materiality in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. This chapter focuses less on the book (i.e., codex) as a specific material form, instead modeling how the material properties of a textual object can supplement or create meaning for those who read, see, or interact with the object. I argue that *Le Morte d'Arthur* is a particularly provocative demonstration of both the diversity of forms that textual materiality can take as well as the ways material properties can confirm (or challenge) a text's reception. This chapter discusses three genres of text: prophecies, personal letters, and chronicles. In doing so, I show how the physical materials (e.g., parchment, stone, blood, ink) and extratextual properties (such as where, when, and how the text is delivered) work to define a text's genre for both authors and readers. The care with which a text's materiality is crafted demonstrate that the materiality of texts matters. Moreover, this chapter begins to introduce the significance of the codex as a particular material form in the way it restricts codexical binding to specific genres: Only those texts that are sufficiently historical are allowed to be bound in the bookish form. In addition, Malory's work offers an interesting mirror to the contemporary conversations regarding the "death of the book": Constructed in manuscript form in the mid-fifteenth century, *Le Morte Darthur* became one of the first printed books in England. How Caxton's edition does (and doesn't) model itself on the

Winchester is its own performance of how bookishness can be manipulated to different rhetorical ends.

Turning to contemporary fiction, chapter 3 considers the book as metaphorical memory-keeper in late twentieth-century dystopian narratives. Contemplating the book's metaphorical role as a vessel in which memory is preserved for future generations, this chapter takes seriously the ways the book is represented as both protective and instructive of historical knowledge. Based on the premise that dystopian narratives, almost by definition, have to control what a populace knows or remembers about its collective past, this chapter looks at how controlling books is depicted as a mechanism of historical erasure. This chapter reads Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* to demonstrate how these narratives situate the book's bookishness as affording the book its historicizing functions. In *Fahrenheit 451*, books are aggressively destroyed and replaced by audio/visual media; analyzing the material design of these different medias reveals what makes the book so special: because books can be closed, paused, reopened, and reread they enable contemplative thinking. A look at *The Giver*'s passive control of books complements a discussion of *Fahrenheit 451*'s aggressive censorship; even though books are relatively absent from the narrative, how the protagonists understand and share knowledge mimics bookishness. The tactile transfer of memories between Jonas and the Giver is particularly bookish in its impersonation of touching and feeling the pages of a book. Moreover, the methods used to maintain social amnesia (namely, creating a Receiver of Memory as a human archive and informational go-between) reveals how dangerous direct contact with a material book can be. In both texts, the book's bookishness (rather than textual content) is represented as a technology of memory critical to maintaining social connection to historical narrative.

Chapter 4 demonstrates how bookishness fuels the book's various spatial metaphors; namely, the idea that books are portals, windows, and gateways. By discussing the invocation of bookishness in children's literature, I argue that the imaginative idea that books can be entered or looked into is enabled by a belief that the book has an internal three-dimensional space. Two themes common in narratives for children engage directly with this spaciousness: metafictional picture books and portal narratives. In doing so, these narratives reveal how the book's own bookishness enables this metaphorical range. Metafictional picture books, including Mo Willems' *We are in a Book!* and Jon Stone's *The Monster at the End of This Book* each depict the space inhabited by fictional characters as three-dimensional in how the pages are drawn and in how the

characters engage with both their space and the child's book. More importantly, calling attention to the book's internal space defines the real material book as a boundary between the book's internal and external spaces, turning it into a portal or window to the spaces occupied by Gerald, Piggie, and Grover. While metafictional narratives allow diegetic characters to look out at the reader, portal narratives depict characters using books to move between different narrative landscapes. In these stories, books are represented as boundaries between worlds, and engaging with these bookish boundaries allows characters to be physically transported to other spaces. Portal books (and the narratives that use them) represent books as containing entire worlds, and they do so by referencing the book's real bookish features — covers, pages, bindings — as properties that define and create three-dimensional space. As evidence, this chapter focuses on Anna James' *Bookwanderers* series and Chris Colfer's *The Land of Stories*; further, to discuss the portal book as a spatially motivated visual device, this chapter turns to Disney's storybook openings and the daytime television series, *Wishbone*.

Finally, chapter 5 returns to the late medieval period to consider the material book in Geoffrey Chaucer's dream visions. Rather than focusing on a specific metaphorical strand, this chapter reveals how books in Chaucer's dream visions, specifically, the *Book of the Duchess* and *Parliament of Fowls*, invoke bookish materiality to paint a number of metaphorical images: In the Book of the Duchess, the narrator's book is depicted as an enigmatic space in which the narrator searches, finds, and discovers narrative content; the book then turns into a portal that transports his body to a three-dimensional landscape. Each of these is represented as a product of the book's bookishness, allowing the narrator to touch, open, search, and fall into the book's pages. Moreover, when he writes a revised version of the narrative he has read, the new text takes a material turn, suggesting that his physical engagement with the book—afforded by its bookishness—influences his understanding of the text he reads and writes. Likewise, the *Parliament of Fowls* represents books as a technology of memory, capable of carrying, delivering, and shaping social memory. These functions are attributed to the book's bookishness, which allows it to act as a preservational container that not only holds textual content, but allows it to remain protected for future generations. In both of these dream visions, reading from a book is represented as a physical, sensorial experience, a fact that afford the book a number of metaphorical functions.

To supplement this conversation, I've compiled a collection of quotations, found in the appendix, that define or discuss the book in academic or metaphorical terms. My hope in collecting

and presenting these together is to demonstrate the range of relationships that people have with the book – as an object, idea, symbol, and metaphor. From authors of fiction and nonfiction, from within and out of academic conversations, these definitions demonstrate the ubiquity of the book as it exists in and throughout the cultural imagination.

# CHAPTER 2. CRAFTING MATTER: MATERIAL FORM IN *LE MORTE DARTHUR*

In the Arthurian tradition, a spurned Sir Bagdemagus storms away from the court and into the wild because the younger Sir Torre is promoted to the Round Table before him. In the French *Suite de Merlin*, Bagdemagus flees from court, finds a cross at the side of the road, kneels to say his prayers, and swears on the cross that he will not return to court.[1] Finding a cross inspires him to express out loud his anger and make his vows against the court. In Sir Thomas Malory's version of the scene, the English *Le Morte Darthur* (1470), which draws upon the *Suite*, Bagdemagus stops to pray at a cross in the road, and his squire "founde wretryn uppon the crosse that Bagdemagus sholde never retourne unto the courte agayne tyll he had wonne a knight of the Table Rounde, body for body."[2] In the French, the cross instigates an instance of oral oath-making; however, in the English, the knight finds his convictions already inscribed onto the material landscape. Here and elsewhere, Malory revises his sources in ways that privilege written texts over oral performances; moreover, when depicting these written texts, *Le Morte* also shows what these texts look like and, often, how they are created. In doing so, the narrative represents authorial craft as a process that considers textual as well as material properties. Indeed, the narrative enthusiastically describes the physical properties of all sorts of textual objects: Bagdemagus' cross is inscribed with "lettirs of gold," Elaine's letter is surrounded by costly fabric and calculatingly placed in her hand, and Balyn's bejeweled sword pierces a slab of red marble. Further, materiality is manipulated to design how the texts look, of course, but also how they are created and delivered:

[1] "Et quant il ont un poi chevauchie, il truevent a un chemin forchie une crois qui estoit faite de nouviel. Si tost que Bandemagus voit la cros, il descent et s'agenoille devant. Et quant il a une grant piece este a genous ey il ot dites ses priieres et ses orisons tells comme il les savoit, il jura seur la crois, oiant le varlet, que ja mais en la court le roi(s) Artu(s) ne retournera devant qu'il ait conquis en bataille cors a cors auchun des compaignons de la table reonde." *La Suite du Roman de Merlin*, ed Gilles Roussineau, 2nd ed. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2006), 309-10. (*The Story of Merlin*, trans Rupert T Pickens, in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*., ed. Norris J Lacy, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1993-1996). I: 211.)

[2] Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed P.J.C. Field. 2 vols (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2013), 1: 105. Sir Thomas Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, ed P.J.C. Field. 2 vols Arthurian Studies 80 (Cambridge, D.S. Brewer, 2013), 1: 105. All citations from *Le Morte* are from this edition and will be parenthetically referenced henceforward.

Arthur's famous sword appears suddenly on Christmas Eve, Elaine's letter arrives in a dramatically unsupervised floating barge, and Balyn's sword mysteriously appears floating on the river. Appreciating the material details that go into creating and delivering these texts reveals the narrative's awareness of how a text's formal, material properties can affect reception and use. In other words, the care paid to materiality in *Le Morte Darthur* suggests that authorial creation is as much about material crafting as it is about choosing the best words.

This chapter argues two things: first, that *Le Morte* portrays a type of authorship that actively engages with material features and, second, that attending to Le Morte's representation of textual materiality informs our conversation about the materiality of the "book." In *Le Morte*, a text's material properties affects how the text is received and understood by its audience; understanding precisely *how* these material properties influence readerly reception helps us understand how the book's bookishness influences the larger "idea of the book." Indeed, because *Le Morte Darthur* is so thoroughly concerned with the affordances of material properties, it models both how materiality affects reception of individual texts and shapes generic expectations. *Le Morte* vividly illustrates the great variety of material properties available when designing a text, and as such, is a useful model for recognizing a text's material properties in the wild. Are the letters gold or black? Is it inscribed in blood or ink? Is the text wrapped in fabric or set upon a stone? Is it hand-delivered or mysteriously unsupervised? Asking these questions of the texts in *Le Morte* is an excellent exercise in considering how material properties influence readerly reception of individual texts. Moreover, this chapter shows that materiality shapes and constructs three genres within the narrative: prophecies, epistles, and chronicles. These three genres are both shaped by and shaped from the material properties used to present them—prophetic texts must look elaborate and miraculous; epistles work when they are hand-crafted and organic. Just as materiality informs what we expect from a prophetic text, so too bookishness informs the metaphorical range of the book. Looking at the material properties of texts in Malory's narrative exemplifies how we can recognize (and appreciate) the materiality of the book within other narratives.

With respect to textuality in Malory, a number of studies have focused on Malory's use of specific genres (e.g., prophecy, complaint) or specific textualized materials (e.g., tombs, letters). These studies, however, only consider the physical properties of texts when it helps discuss Malory's handling of specific genres or materials; my contribution is to question how Malory uses

the material, physical representation of texts as a strategy across all of the genres he invokes.[3] All of these scholars recognize that the "material" (broadly defined throughout the scholarship) is important to the Malorian project, but none have asked if or how Malory manipulates the physical aspects of texts as a part of a general authorial strategy, and none have proposed what these strategies may say about medieval authorship. These scholars have noticed that Malory shows authors writing, dictating, and composing texts; I add that we also see them making, creating, and crafting the texts that exists throughout the Malorian landscape. I will show how Malory depicts authors using materiality in strategic ways to inform textual content and influence reader reception. Moreover, I will show that these moments of textual materiality are (more often than not) absent from Malory's source texts. In a way distinct from its known sources, *Le Morte Darthur* portrays text-making as both textual and material, revealing a version of authorship that relies on tactical physical craftsmanship.

One value in discussing the relationship between materiality and textuality is that it interrogates the terminology we use to discuss both "books" and "texts." This may be particularly true of Le Morte, in which the variety of texts that appear in the narrative obviates any obvious categorization by either material form or textual genre. When discussing textual materiality, we must recognize that each physical object has its own unique traits (even by modern mass printing standards and especially in medieval book making) and that this singularity affects each individual reading experience of the text. Particularly in the spirit of new philology's attention to manuscript context as a credible informant, each material witness of a medieval text is due its own critical discussion.[4] However, accounting for (and literally counting) the texts within *Le Morte* is more

[3]For Malory's use of the epistolary form and complaint, see Georgiana Donavin, "Elaine's Epistolarity: The Fair Maid of Astolat's Letter in Malory's *Morte Darthur*," *Arthuriana* 13 (2003): 68-82; Georgiana Donavin, "Locating a Public Forum for the Personal Letter in *Le Morte Darthur*," *Disputatio* 1 (1996): 20-36, and Françoise Le Saux, "Pryvayly and secretely: Personal Letters in Malory's 'Book of Sir Tristram de Lyones'," *Etudes de Lettres* 3 (1993): 21-33. On prophecies, Kathy Cawsey, "Merlin's Magical Writing: Writing and the Written Word in *Le Morte Darthur* and the English Prose *Merlin*, *Arthuriana* 11 (2001): 89-101.

For writing on tombs in Malory, see Jennifer Boulanger, "Righting History," *Arthuriana* 19 (2009): 27-41.

[4] I use *form*, *materiality*, and *physicality* interchangeably to discuss the material aspects of medieval texts; further, I consider any non-linguistic element to fall in the category of "material." For example, this essay will consider how modes of delivery, material construction or materials, and specific visual features as material tactics of text-making schemes. This is a sort of literary-centric take on Stephen G. Nichols's claim that new philology must also consider the manuscript matrix because treating "text and language alone have

difficult than it would seem; there are no fewer than thirty-eight texts within *Le Morte* (and the "lettirs" that move through the Book of Sir Trystram are almost uncountable). Likewise, while some texts are stationary (tombs, the Christmas Eve anvil), many texts travel through the landscape intact (down rivers, with bodies, by messenger), some are referenced multiple times (Balyn's sword is created in book one and found in book six), and others exist but are not read aloud (letters to Ban and Bors are kissed and traded though their exact content is not given). Moreover, inscriptions show up on everything from parchment to stone, so adopting a universal distinction between objects and their textual content (for example, "books" and "texts") does not work as a defining scheme. Even Jerome McGann's flexible "double helix" of linguistic and bibliographic "codes" is too bound to what we understand of the codex to truly apply.[5] Therefore, I will simply refer to the many written or dictated objects as "texts."[6]

To demonstrate the variety and pervasiveness of material manipulations in *Le Morte*'s depiction of authorship, this chapter classifies three different text-making strategies occurring through the narrative: those ensuring the authority of prophetic texts, those emphasizing the handmade composition of personal letters, and those verifying the historical veracity of chronicles. Authors of prophecies, letters, and chronicles all consider material strategies in their text-making, demonstrating that the material inclination of Malory's authors spans genre, audience, and purpose. The categories also showcase a wide variety of material methods, allowing us to appreciate how authors choose or reject different strategies to match their rhetorical aims: they are written on stone, iron, and parchment; are inscribed with magic, recorded from dictation, or inked by one's own hand; sit on shelves and travel down rivers; and are intended for large audiences or for specific individuals. In order to be authoritative, prophetic texts must appear to be divinely created, so their authors remove any trace of earthly authorship. To move their audiences to empathy or action, letters must be personal, so they amplify the craftsmanship of the author. The narrator, Merlin,

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seriously neglected the important supplements that were part and parcel of medieval text production." Stephen G. Nichols, "Philology in a Manuscript Culture: Introduction to 'The New Philogy'," in *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1-10, p. 7) This follows Christopher Cannon's argument that, recognizing less-obvious textual features "[shifts] from the periphery of our attention to the centre of our analysis, [and] tends to crack open those parts of a textual surface that has, heretofore, seemed impenetrable." Christopher Cannon, "Form," in *Middle English*, ed Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007) 177-190, p. 190.)

[5] Jerome J McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Philadelphia: Princeton University Press, 1991) p. 77.

[6] To clarify further, this essay refers to Malory's textual project (*Le Morte Darthur*) as the "narrative" and the inscribed materials within as the "texts."

Elayne, and Gawain use physical details to bolster the authority of their messages through the erasure or emphasis of an authorial presence.

Finally, the depiction of chronicles, registers, and historic records bridges the fictitious world of *Le Morte* to its place in the real world. I will show the ways "book" becomes code for a truthful account, and that the narrative creates and destroys "books" as a way of clarifying their content as fantastic or historic. Presenting the texts in this way contributes to what Thomas H. Crofts deems Malory's "orientation toward truth-telling," and applies to both his source materials and to texts written within the narrative.[7] While some scenes become "books" in his source materials, he removes this designation in his account when the nature of their creation seems unreliable. For example, Blaise writes a "book" in the *Suite*, but it is denied this designation in *Le Morte*. Likewise, this pattern of bookishness claims authority for Malory's narrative by invoking a "book" that doesn't seem to exist. The narrator doesn't hesitate to describe the fantastic texts that move throughout the narrative, or to invoke the authority of a historical text that doesn't exist. But he balks at calling a text a "book" when it is based on the supernatural, magical, or unreal, instead leaning towards a practical understanding of texts, their utility, and their influence on historical accounts.[8] Because some story-telling texts are specifically *not*-books, his appeal to a *book* becomes a declaration of credibility linked to a literal object. Books not only hold a literal, material referent in *Le Morte*'s performance of late-medieval authorship, they also signify a specific type of truth-telling authority, which he employs to his own strategic affect.

As this dissertation argues, the material reality of books is interwoven with texts, stories, and even histories. *Le Morte* contributes to this conversation by showing a version of late-medieval authorship in which material design is an inherent part of textual output. Referencing a book is not just a rhetorical flourish or generic trope; all texts are given a material shape that suits their purpose, and "books" are no exception. In fact, this chapter complements K. S. Whetter's argument that the Winchester manuscript provides valuable evidence for considering the *Le Morte*'s textual contexts, asserting that, "Malory, that is, seems to have been influenced as much by the bibliographic and

[7] Thomas H. Crofts, "Degrees of Veracity in the *Morte Darthur:* Elements of Malory's Chronicle Style," *Journal of the International Arthurian Society* 1 (2013) 120-139, p. 132.

[8] For more on books as appropriate and effective vessels of historical narrative and social memory, see Chapter 3.

codicological as the lexical and thematic text of the *Chronicle."*[9] and I would add that narrative depictions of textual creation also reveal authorial process. Bridging the bibliographic work of book historians with the textual evidence of literary analysts (as well as the cultural work of reading historians), this chapter discusses the way characters design, write, and receive texts. Within *Le Morte*, a text is never without a physical referent, from the moment of its creation to the time it is experienced by a reader. From gold inscriptions to painted road signs, text does not happen in a vacuum – even in a world where anything can happen, a text is the result of a creator, and the creator decides what it looks like.

### 2.1 Prophecies: Divine Deliveries

Throughout *Le Morte*, Merlin is perhaps the most dramatic example of an author manipulating materiality as a strategy for text-making. Merlin's meddling in Arthurian politics is well-noted, and, in *Le Morte* he enacts most of his manipulation through strategic textual production.[10] His primary method of doing so is to make his texts appear as if they are sent from some supreme divine order, and he does so by creating grand and elaborate material displays. Indeed, Kathy Cawsey has demonstrated that *Le Morte*'s prophetic texts are invariably authoritative and motivating because their audiences believe they are sent by God.[11] Such texts, including Arthur's sword and anvil, Balyn's sword, and other various "letters of gold," appear divine and magical to their in-text audiences, and those audiences respond with appropriate reverence and action.[12] Though Malory sometimes shows (and other times implies) that Merlin

[9] K. S. Whetter, *The Manuscript and Meaning of Malory's* Morte Darthur*: Rubrication, Commemoration, Memorialization,* Arthurian Studies 84 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), p. 36.

[10] Merlin's political maneuvering is well-noted, particularly in Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[11] Cawsey, "Merlin's Magical Writing," 90. Cawsey's thorough study on prophetic language in *Le Morte* focusses on Merlin's role as author, finding Merlin's "direct link to God" to be the source of his magical abilities (95). I agree that Malory employs Merlin as an agent capable of producing the texts necessary for narrative progression, but I am interested here in how the narrative still attends to formal qualities to achieve these divine appearances.

[12] For more on prophecies in *Le Morte*, see Rachel Kapelle, "Merlin's Prophecies, Malory's Lacunae," *Arthuriana* 19 (2009): 58-81; Jane Bliss, "Prophecy in the *Morte Darthur*" *Arthuriana* 13 (2003): 1-16; and Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power*. The role and effect of prophecies (both written and oral) in *Le Morte* has received much consideration, but generally agreed upon is that Malory's characters receive prophetic tidings as invariably true.

has created these texts – not God – prophetic texts only serve their narrative functions when they appear to be completely untouched by human hands. The texts are effective because Merlin is able to erase any sign of a human author; scholarship has overlooked how the narrative (via Merlin) achieves the impression of divinity by manipulating the material qualities of these works.

The first of these prophetic texts—and the first text we see in *Le Morte*—is the sword and anvil. Though it appears to be the result of divine creation, the anvil's miraculous delivery and appearance are the result of Merlin's authorial creation. The anvil appears without explanation and prophesies the terms which will determine the rightful king: "and theryn stack a fayre swerd naked by the poynt, and letters there were wryten in gold aboute the swerd that saiden thus: "Whoso pulleth oute this swerd of this stone and anvyld is rightywys kynge borne of all Englond." The nobles try to pull the sword as soon as they read the message: "whan they sawe the scripture som assayed, as wold have been kyng."[13] The sword and anvil appear with no warning, no explanation, and, as Cawsey points out, no questions asked.[14] This air of authority is the result of the anvil's material details more than its content, and these material details are the result of Merlin's authorial creation. The text is composed of a sword, piercing an anvil, set upon a large stone, which arrives without an accompanying agent or author; the whole thing is fully formed, and it is already engraved—with letters of gold, no less (written on either steel or iron, though placement of the words is unclear), each of these details leading the lords to believe the anvil has divine origins and to their immediate attempts to remove the sword. The supernatural features of the text garner the nobles' respect and reverence for the anvil's content—that whoever pulls the sword is the rightful king. Though we can only guess, it's reasonable to assume that the same content written on different materials would not evoke the same response: finding a message on parchment, or watching a craftsman engrave and paint a stone inscription would simply not have the same reception; however, these words engraved in gold on a miraculously appearing anvil and sword instigate immediate reaction. The anvil's physical features and clandestine delivery work in

[13] Malory, 1: 7.

[14] Discussing the anvil's reception, Cawsey notes that "no one thinks [the anvil] might be some sort of trick or hoax," and that "Even the barons and other kings, who later reject the statement, accept its truth-value at first and attempt to pull the sword themselves." ("Merlin's Magical Writing," 90). The motivating force of the written prophecy is important for questions of character agency and narrative structure, but I would like to focus on the ways Malory presents this more as a text and less as an actual divinely produced object. See Kapelle, "Merlin's Prophecies"; Catherine Batt, *Malory's* Morte Darthur: *Remaking Arthurian Tradition*, The New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

tandem with its linguistic content to ensure it is interpreted as a divinely produced text, and all of these details are the result of Merlin's authorial creation. By delivering the message with these features, Merlin demonstrates an understanding of how material details work with linguistic content to achieve a text's desired goals. Moreover, Merlin's role as author results from a number of changes that Malory introduces from his source text.

*Le Morte*'s depiction of Merlin-as-author is hugely different from the Merlin in Malory's source material, the French *Suite de Merlin*, in which the anvil is presented as an actual divine object—not something crafted to appear divine. So, too, in the *Suite*, Merlin is as much an observer as the nobles; there is no implication that he has produced the anvil-as-text, and, because the anvil is actually a supernatural, divine object, there is no reason to think of it in terms of authorial creation.[15] Merlin tells Uther that Jesus Christ will empower his son to rule, and he advises the nobles to pray to God and follow His commandments until Christmas Eve. The community responds with reverent obedience, living according to God's will and praying for a sign to be delivered (I. 212). When the sword appears, the Archbishop sprinkles holy water over the object and reads the text to the crowd: "the one who pulled this sword out would be king of the land by the choice of Jesus Christ." Here, in the French, the attendees are more than willing to pray for an answer to their problem, and when the sword appears, there is little reason to believe that it is not by the grace of God; Merlin advises them in advance that God will respond to prayer and good behavior, but he is as much a spectator as any of them. Here, the anvil is quite explicitly God's reward for good behavior—it is not a product of Merlin's political maneuvering or authorship. Finally, the Archbishop interacts with the text and acts as an intermediary; using a holy authority to introduce the text, I would suggest, enforces its divine nature. In this version of events, the anvil is a divine object for audiences both in and outside of the narrative; there is no room to understand the French anvil as the product of authorship, because it is clearly created by God.

In the English, we see an author at work, not a divinely produced object. In *Le Morte*, the *Suite*'s religious content is reduced, Merlin organizes the scene, and it is implied that Merlin

[15] In the *Suite*, Merlin assists in revealing that "through the power of Jesus Christ," Uther's son will reign after him. He advises the people to "make prayers to God and swear to keep the commandments of Holy Church and all that God manifests therein" and they go on to "live very humbly and very uprightly," agreeing to "pray as best we know how" until the new heir is revealed. *The Story of Merlin*, trans Rupert T Pickens, in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation.*, ed. Norris J Lacy, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1993-1996). I: 211.

creates the anvil and its prophetic message. While the French Merlin merely assists in God's revelation of Uther's heir,[16] Malory's Merlin makes the announcement himself.[17] Malory erases the *Suite*'s extended discussion of God's directives (to pray, live humbly, and follow the Commandments); instead, Merlin takes control and gives orders for the Christmas Eve service. What is more, while the French anvil states that whoever pulls the sword will do so "by the choice of Jesus Christ," the English bears no such divine qualifications. In Malory, the anvil is the final step in Merlin's political maneuvering of Uther's succession, and insofar as its audience reacts with the necessary action, the anvil exemplifies Merlin's ability to use both materiality and content to produce a text that can operate on its own.[18] If readers of *Le Morte* understand Merlin as the "author" of the anvil, we can appreciate how thoroughly he has strategized the text's physical features to achieve his desired rhetorical effect. In addition to the explicitly material attributes discussed above, Merlin has the anvil delivered during a church service, under the supervision of the Archbishop, at Christmas, in London. In both versions, the audiences react to the anvils with reverence because they deem them divine; however, Malory's anvil is easier defines as a text than as a divine product. The anvil is a text that successfully influences its readership because of its author's strategic manipulations of both material and textual content.[19] By rewriting the anvil scene into one of earthly authorship instead of divine intervention, Malory depicts an authorial process that includes both material features and textual content.

Malory's portrayal of authorship as a process including manipulation of both linguistic content and physical features is even more clearly demonstrated by Merlin's creation of Galahad's

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[16] *The Story of Merlin* in *Lancelot-Grail*, I: 211.

[17] "Syre, shall your sone Arthur be kyng, after your dayes of this realme with all the appertenaunce?" (7) For the more political role of Merlin in Malory (versus other traditions), see Stephen Knight, *Merlin: Knowledge and Power Through the Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009.)

[18] Removing the scene's religious content is not a matter of simple reduction, as Malory also drastically reduces the reverent and submissive behavior that characterizes the court of the *Suite*. In Malory, the people gather (they have been threatened with excommunication), and after matyns, the anvil is seen in the courtyard; the crowd becomes distracted; the Archibishop has to actually "command" them back into the church to finish Mass. (7) In addition to granting Merlin a central role in planning the event, Malory makes the crowd less-than interested in the holy power of the Christmas Eve service; they have to be threatened in order to attend in the first place, and must be ordered to stay in the service. Situating Merlin closer to the event implies his role in the anvil's production and giving him an unruly audience means he must come up with a text that will command their attention, reverence, and action.

[19] Merlin's abilities may be beyond human (we see others inscribe tombs and stones, but none in gold or as miraculously as Merlin), but his text is made of earthly materials, for human audiences.

sword. At the end of the "Tale of Balyn and Balan," Merlin refashions Balyn's sword for use by Galahad in the later Grail Quest. Near the end of his process, Merlin orally relates the sword's prophecy to an unnamed knight nearby, and also "all thys he lette wryte in the pomell of the swerde." (1: 74)[20] Here Merlin explains to the reading audience that the sword has a destiny, presumably directed by whatever sort of magic he has performed; he also chooses to inscribe, or "lette wryte," this destiny onto the pommel, turning it into a text. Narratively, this inscription seems unnecessary: Merlin has already explained the sword's fate to a random knight (and therefore to us, as the reading audience), and because he has performed whatever magic he needs, only the best knight will be able to handle the sword—regardless of any inscription. The inscription, in other words, is extra, and with its presence the sword becomes a text to be read by Arthur's court (and by us). As a text, we can recognize how inscription and materials work together to produce a final product. Moreover, creating the sword is a process that ultimately relies on Merlin's ability to "lette make by hys suttelyté" (1: 74).[21] Describing Merlin's process as the product of "suttelyté" classifies it as the skillful execution of a craft, and pairing it with "making"—a verb flexibly applied to either material goods (like swords) or written texts (like books)—aligns this sword-making as parallel to strategic, textual production. [22] These words blur the lines between what it takes to create a sword and to create a book, a blurring that aligns with the other ways the narrative shows authorship as a skilled, multimodal craft.

Merlin's creation of Galahad's sword is especially interesting as an authorial project because it is a revisionary project. Merlin turns the old sword not only into a text, but into a text that redesigns existing, disparate pieces to work for a new purpose and a new audience. Merlin creates the primary material form of the text by first switching out Balyn's pommel for one "of

[20] In "The Noble Tale of the Sankgreal" we find out that the inscription is "wrought with lettirs of golde" and reads "Never shall man take me hense but only he by whos side I ought to honge, and he shall be the best knight of the worlde" (1: 668).

[21] "sotillī (adv.)," *Middle English Dictionary Online*. "sotillī (adv.) : 1b) (a) Skillfully, dexterously; delicately, carefully; marvelously; also, exquisitely; ~ maked (wrought), skillfully wrought, elaborately wrought; (b) effectively."

[22] "maken, (v)." *Middle English Dictionary Online*. (a) To write or compose (a book, poem, song, prayer, letter, etc.); compile (a concordance). "make, (v)." *Oxford English Dictionary*. I. Senses in which the object of the verb is a product or result. To bring into existence by construction or elaboration. II. To cause to be or become (something specified).

precious stonys."[23] Whether the new pommel is what bears the magic necessary to fulfill the prophecy is unclear, but it does serve to transform the sword from simply "noble" to "fayre ryche." This change in physical design encodes the new text with wealth-value appropriate for both its new divine delivery and its new courtly audience. In this way, Merlin's methods of creating Galahad's sword from pieces of Balyn's—and sending the whole thing to court as an inscribed text—shows authorial creation (including revision) taking material features into consideration. Merlin, as author, only sends his text to fulfill its destiny after making sure the material features align with the text's rhetorical purpose. Again, *Le Morte* shows us an author working at both textual content and material features, as if the two aspects of authorship go hand-in-hand.

Comparing Merlin's creation of Arthur's sword-in-anvil to his creation of Galahad's floating sword-in-stone puts into focus the different material strategies available to the author of these texts. The effect is two texts that we may say are in the same form (prophetic sword-in-stone) but are given drastically different material features to suit different audience receptions. In the anvil scene, Merlin uses rather humble materials; the "fayre swerd naked" sticks into the foot-tall, steel anvil, which sits upon a "grete stone." The base materials are ultimately modest – the stone is *"lyke* unto a merbel stone" but not – a choice that matches its role as a seemingly-divine object, its appearance at church, and the politically serious matter of setting up the line of succession. The hedging reference to not choosing marble shows an understanding of the different materials available and an arguably strategic shying away from the more lavish option. The stone ("grete" but not marble) echoes the materiality of an administrative decree (or even the papal "bullys undir leade" sent in "The Deth of Arthur"[24]) which connotes practical authority more than wealth-value. Bare stone and a fair sword are appropriate for the political, historical matter of succession, and matching these materials with a gold inscription and magical delivery, ensures his text will be taken seriously, respected as authoritative-because-divine by its audience.

Conversely, the lavish materiality of Galahad's now-floating sword matches both its seemingly divine production, the courtly audience, and the grandiose nature of the quest it helps inspire. When Galahad's sword arrives "[floating] abovyn the watir," the court identifies the text

[23] "Merlyn toke his swerd and toke of the pomel and set on another pomel." (1: 74) He also explains the swords prophecy: "There shall never man handyll thys swerde but the beste knight of the worlde…And Launcelot with thys swerde shall sle the man in the worlde that he lovith beste." (1: 74)
[24] *Le Morte Darthur*, 1: 896.

as a "fayre ryche swerde" with a pommel of "precious stonys wrought with lettirs of golde subtylé" in a stone of "rede marbyll." (1: 668) Though a sword is a practical item for a knight, its extravagance operates as a status symbol for its royal audience and peerless owner. Just as elaborate illuminations and decorations imply the value of a manuscript page and the wealth of its owner, this sword's elaborate construction both predicts and represents the singularity of its destined owner.[25] The difference between the wealth-values encoded in the two swords results from Merlin's authorial choices, not accidents, and mimics values formally encoded in late-medieval books. The bookish metaphor can even be extended to the swords' final production and distribution into the world. To finish his process, Merlin pierces the sword into "a marbil stone stondynge upryght, as grete as a mylstone, and the stone hoved allwayes above the water." (1: 74) Mimicking the binding of a book, the floating marble allows the sword to move unhindered through the world and becomes the first feature evaluated by its audience. While it would be easy enough to create both swords the same, lavish or stark, the narrative changes them (signifying "rightful heir" to the throne and the "best knight in the world") are different enough to match their purposes. From inscriptions to stones to marble; from content to design to delivery, Merlin performs a version of authorship that not only implies, but assumes, the inherent manipulation of material features.

### 2.2 Letters: Personalizing Epistles

This attention to the physical design of a text extends beyond Merlin's authorship of miraculous texts and into the realm of very unmagical letter-writing. Whereas Merlin goes to great lengths to erase any sign of human authorship, the composition of letters requires authors to do the opposite: in scenes of letter-writing, the authors manipulate material features to emphasize the

[25] As Ardis Butterfield summarizes, "every material fact of the [manuscript's] existence not only reflects the assumptions and cultural habits of medieval readers but also forms assumptions and habits that govern the way in which the text is received." Ardis Butterfield, "Mise-en-page in the Troilus Manuscripts: Chaucer and French Manuscript Culture," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58 (1996): 149-80, p. 50. See also Michael R. Ott, "Text-Bearing Warriors: Inscriptions on Weapons," in *Writing Beyond Pen and Parchment: Inscribed Objects in Medieval European Literature*, ed. Ricarda Wagner, Christine Neufeld, and Ludger Lieb, Materiale Textkulturen 30 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 275-89, p. 382-84.

personal, handwritten production of the texts.[26] This is nearly opposite of Merlin's magical craftsmanship, showing how material manipulation, in the scheme of *Le Morte*, applies to even the most unfantastic genres of writing. Two authors in particular —Gawain and Elaine— demonstrate a version of authorship that accounts for strategizing both rhetorical technique and physical design when producing letters. In fact, Malory's mastery of contemporary rhetorical strategies for letter-writing has been well-noted; Georgiana Donavin, in particular, points out how artfully Malory modifies customary textual strategies to "raise awareness" of individual voices.[27] However, the ways *Le Morte* describes material aspects of letter-writing has not been noticed. Similar to Donavin's observations that Malory's letter-writers center their own voices through rhetorical mastery, I argue that Gawain and Elaine also employ physical strategies designed to remind the reader of the letter's author. The narrative represents letter writing (like prophetic writing) as a process involving manipulation of both words and materials. Moreover, the personal, human-centered objectives of letter-writing are opposite of the divine, unauthored objectives of prophetic writing, showing that *Le Morte*'s materially-grounded authorship transcends rhetorical situation.

Comparing Elaine's portrayal of authorship to Merlin's offers an awareness of a broad set of rhetorical and material strategies, but one constant is that both words and materials play a part in textual design. Unlike Merlin, Elaine desires an entirely opposite reaction from her audience; like Merlin, Elaine crafts both rhetoric and materiality to evoke the desired reception and reaction. Instead of texts made to appear like they are divine, untouched by human hands, Elaine seeks to emphasize the human at the center of the text. Elaine orders her brother to "wryght a lettir lyke as she ded endite," and when it is finished (again, "worde by worde lyke as she devised hit") she has it placed, while her "body ys hote," in her "ryght honde, and [her] honde bounde faste to the letter."

[26] Letters sent and received throughout *Le Morte* are arguably more dynamic than the prophetic texts. For example, letters are misremembered and incorrectly relayed (as in the king of Red Cliff's death note imitated to devious ends (Mark and Mordred's forgeries compared to the properly sealed papal bulls), or shared in ways that help the community (as are Percivale's sister, Elaine, and Gawain's death letters).

[27] Georgiana Donavin has demonstrated Malory's mastery of the epistle as a textual form, showing that "he drastically revised [Elaine's letter] from its original version in the *Mort Artu* and completely invented [Gawain's]." "Locating a Public Forum," p. 23. Here and elsewhere, Donavin argues that Malory must modify customary epistolary form in order to "raise awareness of the Maid's voice," while retaining expected tropes for Gawain; this demonstrates a focus on the letter as personal correspondence that can be manipulated to garner such personal effect ("Elaine's Epistolarity," 69).

(1: 828) Not only are we assured, as much as is possible through narration, that the letter is composed precisely as she dictates it, she also securely binds the letter in her hand and does so while she is still alive so as to witness its correct execution. Because dictation was a common form of medieval composition, she would be understood as the letter's author to those reading the narrative; placing the letter in her hand further enforces her authorship to the characters at court, connecting the text to its author in a tangible and personal way—symbolism doubled by its binding to her hand.[28] As a clasp protects the internal workings of a codex, so binding the letter to her hand ensures that the letter remains within its intended contexts. Like Merlin, she extends her authorial attention to the material casing of the letter. She has her body placed in a "fayre bed with all the rychyst clothis, … put within a barget, [with] but one man…and that my barget be coverde with blacke samyte over and over." (1: 828) Composing the boat, adorning herself, and placing the letter are individual material features that coalesce into an overarching material strategy, one that ensures the letter will not become alienated from its author once it is out of her hands (because it never is) and beyond her control. Moreover, this authorial scene suggests that Malory is not simply following formal tropes of letter-writing, but is thinking about material ways of textual presentation and design.

Likewise, Gawain finds himself in a similar rhetorical situation, but he uses vastly different material features to create a personal link among himself, his text, and his reader. After his final confession, Gawain requests "paupir, penne, and inke, that I may wryte unto Sir Launcelot a letter wrytten with myne owne honde" (1: 918).[29] When he receives the materials, Gawain is "sette up waykely…and than he toke hys penne and wrote" (1: 918). The narrative makes it clear that Gawain writes his own letter despite being weak and quite close to death. The stress here is less

[28] In observing dictation as a metaphorical equivalent to writing, Michael Clanchy notes, "Writing was distinguished from composition because putting a pen to parchment was an art in itself. Even when an author declares that he is writing something, he may in fact be using the term metaphorically." Michael T Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record 1066-1307*, 3rd ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012) p. 95. In setting up her death barge, Elaine establishes herself as both director and author, ensuring that her letter is produced, delivered, and received exactly as she desires. For more on Elaine's role in directing her death, see Sue Ellen Holbrook, "Emotional Expression in Malory's Elaine of Ascolat," *Parergon* 24 (2007): 155-78, and Rebecca L Reynolds, "Elaine of Ascolat's Death and the *Ars Moriendi*," *Arthuriana* 16 (2006): 35-39.

[29] The use of paper, specifically, is an important material detail as paper was a rather new technology in England. See Orietta Da Rold. *Paper in Medieval England: From Pulp to Fictions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

on delivery (as with divine texts and even Elaine's barge) and more on the handwritten form of the letter's creation; by emphasizing Gawain's authorship, he concurrently emphasizes the personal crafting of the text, revealing how the process of material construction can collaborate with the content of the text. In addition to making his authorship clear to us, Gawain makes his authorship clear to Lancelot, writing that "thys lettir was wrytten but too owyrs and an halff afore my dethe, wrytten with myne owne honde and subscrybed with parte of my harte blood." (1: 919) Like Elaine and Merlin, Gawain strategizes material features of his text by signing the letter in his own blood. Similar to Elaine binding her letter to her hand, signing in blood creates a connection between the letter's content and its author in an effort to emphasize the personal nature of the letter. Moreover, the scene is a product of Malory's invention. Instead of simply interpolating the letter's content into the narrative, *Le Morte* narrates Gawain's authorial process into existence, and it includes his manipulation of the letter's physical features. Through Gawain and Elaine's authorial processes, we learn that a letter does not inherently bear authority; instead, authority—divine, personal, or otherwise—is the product of an author's conscious manipulation of physical, material properties.

### 2.3 Chronicles: Non-Books, "Grete" Books, and French Books

I have shown that authors within *Le Morte* give careful consideration to both linguistic and physical features of texts, as we can see in Merlin's, Elaine's, and Gawain's crafting of anvils, swords, and letters. This section discusses how materiality is employed when creating historical texts, chronicles, or records, and it argues that the narrative uses materiality to define genre. Specifically, I argue that "book" is a label reserved for texts with a certain amount of historical authority, and that assigning or denying bookishness negotiates the truth-adjacent content of different stories.[30] Moreover, identifying when texts are given or denied bookishness reveals a material strategy for imbuing his own narrative with historical authority. In this light, references

[30] Whetter has included a substantial survey of the genre debate in his *Understanding Genre and Medieval Romance* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008). On Malory's use or invocation of English sources and traditions, see Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976) 3-36; Ruth Morse "Back to the Future: Malory's Genres," *Arthuriana* 7 (1997): 100-23; Edward Donald Kennedy, "Sir Thomas Malory's (French) Romance and (English) Chronicle," in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P.J.C. Field*, ed Bonnie Wheeler, Arthurian Studies 57 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004): 223-34.

to a "French book" are more than generic, rhetorical tropes; these calls for authority fit into a larger representation of record-keeping texts that takes materiality into account.

Three such record-keeping texts are produced within *Le Morte*: Bedivere composes a text about Arthur's death; court clerks record Bors' and Lancelot's narratives after the Grail Quest; and Merlin dictates a presumed history of England to Bloyse.[31] Of these, only the Grail chronicle is labelled a "book." The lack of "books" is interesting considering that the narrative appeals to the "French *book*" as a source more than seventy times and, often, no such French source text exists.[32] Because the narrative appeals to a "book," rather than a French work, chronicle, romance, or any of the other terms so often invoked to describe texts, this section asks what the shape of the book signifies within *Le Morte*'s textual lexicon. Ultimately, I show that texts shrouded in magic and uncertainty (like Merlin and Bedivere's) are non-books; but records produced with witnesses and in official surroundings (like the Grail story) are books. By aligning his project with "books," Malory differentiates his narrative and his authorial process from those deemed fanciful and unauthoritative. In other words, by situating *Le Morte* within proximity of "books," Malory imbues his narrative with historical credibility. In this way, appealing to a book represents an authorial mindset aware of how physicality bears meaning and which attempts to code itself with authority by remaining "bookish."

*Le Morte* consistently aligns the material form and rhetorical content of texts as working together, and "book" becomes a label for material, physical, actual feature, rather than simply a rhetorical trope. While arguing that *Le Morte* can be understood as a medieval history, Ruth Morse has characterized the narrator as "cautious" in how he references other texts, books, and sources; moreover, the consistency with which he distinguishes between tales and books demonstrates a

[31] Given Malory's attention not only to the form of texts, but to texts and authors at large, it is surprising how few historical texts feature in his narrative. In the *Queste* and *Suite*, various clerks routinely show up to record events, and in the *Suite*, Merlin dictates a book recording all of the events happening in the surrounding kingdoms to his master and clerk, Blaise. In contrast, Malory reduces or erases depictions of historical record-keeping to a handful of moments. Yet even in their reduced forms, these moments of textual production attend to form in a way consistent with the rest of the narrative.

[32] "On seventy occasions, sometimes with a French source, sometimes with an English one, and sometimes with no source at all, [Malory] cites the "French books" as authorities for his story." P.J.C. Field, *Malory: Texts and Sources*, Arthurian Studies 40 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1998), 27.

stable "vocabulary to indicate the status of particular narratives."[33] While Morse differentiates between "books" and other terms, she treats Malory's entire narrative "vocabulary" holistically; however, I would add that this lexicon can be split into rhetorical and material terms. For example, in the section that Morse analyzes (which occurs at the end of the section editorially titled "Aftir thes questis") Malory draws a distinction between narrative sections and whole, material books: "Here endyth this tale, as the Freynshe booke seyth, fro the maryage of Kynge Uther unto Kyng Arthure that regned aftir hym and ded many batayles." (1: 143) By defining the narrative content (Uther's marriage through Arthur's civil war) as content *within* the French book, *Le Morte* draws a distinction between tale and book — between content and material casing. By extension, "books" designate whole material objects that contain rhetorical content. In this scheme, "book" is a material feature, and interrogating the books created and referenced during *Le Morte* reveals what it means when a text is bookish.

In *Le Morte* the role of Bloyse—and the text he records—is reduced to a single instance; when considered in terms of strategic textual production, suppressing Bloyse's authorship can be interpreted as a discomfort with a magical "book." *Le Morte* deviates from its sources so that the textual content and material shape of Bloyse's text align. In the *Suite*, Bloyse (Blaise, here) plays a much larger role (including as confessor to Merlin's mother), and Merlin engages with him a number of times to consult about Blaise's writing. In his penultimate meeting, Merlin tells Blaise that he has "thought a great deal about how to bring [Blaise's] book to an end," and in the final meeting he "told Blaise the adventures that were happening in the kingdom of Logres and many things that were to come, so that Blaise had his book well-ordered and somewhat brought to an end before Merlin left Great Britain."[34] In the *Suite*, there is no doubt as to the prophetic nature of

[33] Ruth Morse, "Back to the Future," 102. On books, Morse observes that: "Malory is aware of books which record the past, however cautious he is about categorizing them. When he calls his own a book, he sometimes means the object. There are books of adventures, great books, English books, and even other books (besides the one Malory is writing) of King Arthur… 'Tale,' here as elsewhere, and depending upon its preceding article or pronoun, runs the gamut from 'unit of narrative' to 'story,' as in 'your version of what happened,' to 'source'" (102).

[34] *La Suite du Roman de Merlin*: "Ore m'aquiterai jou de chou que je vous ai pramis en Norhomberlande, car j'ai asses pense coment vous peussies mener vo livre a fin" (86). "Et si tost que Merlins estoit avoec lui, il li disout les aventures qui avenoient ou roiaue de Logres, et grant partie des choses qui sont a avenir, si que ci lot son livre bien ordene et auques mene a fin" (277). Translations are from *The Story of Merlin*, trans. Pickens.

the text, and it is implied that the final book is the original, written source for the narrative. Conversely, in *Le Morte*, Merlin only returns to Bloyse to dictate news of the civil war after Arthur is securely set on the throne:

> And there he tolde how Arthure and the too kynges had spedde at the grete batayle, and how hyt was endyd, and tolde the namys of every kynge and knyght of worship that was there. And so Bloyse wrote the batayle worde by worde as Merlion tolde hym, how hit began and by whom, and in lyke wyse how hit was ended and who had the worst. And all the batayles that *were* done in Arthurs dayes, Merlion dud hys mayster Bloyse wryte them. Also he dud wryte all the batayles that every worthy knight ded of Arthurs courte. (30, emphasis mine)

First, Merlin goes to Northumberland "and there" he tells the story, a slight but specific note indicating that he is in the room with Bloyse, directly reciting the stories to him in person. Merlin makes sure to mention "every kynge and knight" who was there, and Bloyse goes to apparent pains to render the story correctly, writing "worde by worde." Merlin then goes on to dictate "all" of the conflicts and deeds happening during Arthur's days. These details show the pains taken to record Merlin's content accurately. However, the ambiguous "were" makes it unclear whether the narrator is referring to Merlin's immediate past (thereby only dictating events before this session with Bloyse) or referring to the narrator's past (therefore also dictating all of the events forthcoming in *Le Morte*). This phrasing obscures this text's content and production; while Bloyse certainly records details of the war, it is unclear if he also receives news of Arthur's future. The existence of such a written text would seem to lend a great amount of credibility to Malory's version of the Arthurian legend if he were to invoke it—as he does dozens of times with his "French book." What, then, is the effect of reducing Bloyse's role to a single, unclear moment, particularly in light of the attention given to textual production, to other moments of Merlin's authorship, and to invoking the French book as a source?

Whereas Merlin's chronicle is deemed un-bookish because of his connection to magic, its French counterpart is clearly bound into a book. Merlin's, does not align with the larger signifying scheme of *Le Morte*; a "book" cannot be prophetic in content. The French version of the text records everything (past, present, and future) that takes place in the Arthurian legend, making it both explicitly prophetic *and* historical. It is also a codex recorded by hand, as the result of a "great deal" of thinking, using (presumably) ink, parchment, and bindings. While this fits the textual production presented in the French, it does not fit with *Le Morte*'s representation of either prophetic or historical texts. It is not effectively prophetic because the bookishness of a codex is

too human; it is not effectively historic because the content is connected to Merlin's magical influence. Merlin is too connected to magical writing to produce a historical register that *Le Morte* can present as credible, so it cannot and is not called a "book." *Le Morte* presents a textual schema within which certain linguistic goals are matched with appropriate material features, and Merlin's pseudo-historical storytelling might be inscribed on something, but not within the bounds of a book.

Even though discussion of Bloyse and Merlin's text is reduced from the sources, *Le Morte* still offers a number of details about the text's materiality and production, continuing the representation of texts as both linguistic and material objects. To fit the text within the authorial patterns we see elsewhere, the narrative suppresses its magical content and removes its designation as a book. The final process can be compared to aspects of Elaine's: "Bloyse wrote the batayle worde by worde as Merlion tolde hym" (30) The narrative hedges on the existence of prophetic content (as noted above), and also maintains Bloyse as a go-between. Merlin's text is dictated and recorded, a detail both of the text's material reality and that distances the magical authorship Merlin represents given his other textual projects. Further, as with Elaine's text, the careful process of dictation attests to the text's handwritten production; this strategy makes the text a thoughtful and personal rendering of Merlin's tale, but it does not explicitly signify either historical or a prophetic content.[35] The greatest indicator of content is that the text is no longer a book, a decision that renders the text more an element of fantasy than a possible historic source text. Merlin's dictated work can exist, but does not fall in line with, as Crofts puts it, Malory's "orientation toward truth-telling": within *Le Morte*'s textual lexicon, "book" implies veracity, a label that doesn't fit Merlin's text in the narrative's larger pattern of textual production.[36] When we appreciate *Le Morte*'s portrayal of texts' material realities and productions, we see how his edits allow reference to the text's production and content without coding it as credible, verifiable, or whole. Though the

[35] The letter written by Percivale and sent with his sister's dead body offers another interesting combination of formal features collaborating with content. The text is similar to Elaine's in that it is sent with the dead body, on a barge, and placed in her hand, but instead of pleading with its audience, as Elaine's, it acts as a sort of historical register by recording "all that she had holpe them as in strange aventures… and of what lynayge she was com." (1: 768; 1: 770) In brief, the letter circulates stories and allows for the symbolic return of un-returning knights. The material form of the letter allows it to move away from the Grail Knights and to Lancelot, while the placement in her hand, again, grants an ethos to the content by connecting it to a specific, presumably credible, person.

[36] Crofts, "Degrees of Veracity in the *Morte Darthur*," 132.

text is thoroughly diminished in detail and narrative function, denying it bookishness makes it more sensible in terms of form and content.

Like Merlin's dictation, Bedivere's text is denied book-ness because of the un-verifiable nature of its textual content—Arthur's death, a point reinforced by Malory's hedged references to Arthur's fabled return. After Arthur's death, Bedivere "made *hit* to be wrytten." (1: 928—emphasis mine) [37] If the "hit" is the story of Arthur's death, the content seems historical in nature; however, Bedivere does not actually witness Arthur's burial. There is enough doubt around Arthur's death, burial, (and potential revival) to deny Bedivere's credibility as an author, and thus, within *Le Morte*'s textual lexicon, to deny its bookishness. The question of credibility is also represented in how the narrator distinguishes his voice from others:

> [Y]et som men say in many partys of Inglonde that Kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of Oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynne the Holy Crosse. Yet I will nat say that hit shall be so; but rather I wolde sey, here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. (1: 928)

Instead of citing what others have written (i.e., the "French book"), the narrator indicates what other people say, a rhetorical move that codes this information as hearsay. The story is denied textual form (generally) and bookishness (specifically) in a way similar to denying the bookishness of Blaise's recordings.[38] It also aligns with the narrative's larger pattern of using materiality to code something as true or not. This aligns with what Croft characterizes as Malory [thinking] "like a historian," an interpretation again referring to Malory's hesitance to imply the veracity of a questionable text.[39] Croft reads Malory's rhetorical hedging as signifying the "precision of Malory's chronicle-style performance," and I would add that this scene also speaks to how the narrative represents authorships and texts through descriptors of textual materiality. While *Le Morte* addresses the questionable veracity of Arthur's death and return through hedging rhetoric, he also demonstrates what Morse defines as a desire to "ally himself with nonfiction works."[40] By denying Bedivere's work is a "book," he claims that the text in question, and Bedivere's authorial

[37] Malory invents Bedivere's authorial role: a parallel moment does not exist in the French *Mort Artu*.

[38] Similarly, Malory is unwilling to testify to the existence of Arthur's prophetic tomb, and equaling unwilling to give the inscription a form. The Winchester manuscript reads: "And many men say that there ys wrytten upon the tumbe thys vers: Hic iacet Arthurus, rex quondam Rexque futurus" (1: 928).

[39] Crofts, "Degrees of Veracity in the *Morte Darthur*," 122.

[40] Morse, "Back to the Future," 107.

role, are not credible enough to fall into the same category as historical chronicles. Within *Le Morte*, books carry truth-value, and Bedivere's story does not hold water.

Denying texts their bookishness is indicative of their potential inaccuracy, and, likewise recording the Grail records into "grete books" serves to emphasize the secular, chivalric aspects of the Grail Quest by appealing to a known late-medieval form of chivalric text. When Bors returns from the quest, Arthur orders his tale to be recorded: "the Kynge made grete clerkes to com before hym, for cause they shulde cronycle of the hyghe adventures of the good knyghtes,"(1: 788) Arthur calls in clerks to record the events, an effort not made following any previous quest, and which inspires Arthur to call in Lancelot to re-orate his story, so that "whan Sir Bors had tolde hym of the hyghe aventures…than Sir Launcelot tolde the adventures of the Sangreall that he had sene. And all thys was made in grete bookes, and put up in almeryes at Salysbury."(1: 788)[41] Karen Cherewatuk has shown that "grete books" are, in fact, a specific form of fifteenth-century writing. Denoting "chivalric miscellanies," fifteenth-century "grete books" demonstrate a "complex and syncretic vision of knighthood," similar to that represented by *Le Morte*.[42] Invoking a contemporary form with a basis in secular, chivalric concerns, not only encodes *Le Morte*'s version of the Grail Quest with the parameters of the genre. Acknowledging relevant contemporary forms also reveals, I would argue, an intuitive understanding of how texts work.[43]

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[41] Malory's restricted depiction of record-keeping (and books, specifically) is emphasized when comparing *Le Morte* to the *Queste*. The *Queste* emphasizes that all of the adventures were being recorded by court clerks, not just those of the Grail Quest: "the king summoned the clerks who were putting into writing the adventures of the knights at court. When Bors had recounted the adventures of the Holy Grail, as he had seen them, they were recorded and kept in the archive at Salisbury." *The Quest for the Holy Grail*, trans. E. Jane Burns, *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*., ed. Norris J Lacy, 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1993-1996) 4:87. The French clerks have been recording all of the knights' stories from the beginning, granting little significance to the fact that this specific history is recorded at this specific moment. That the narrative restricts the content of these chronicles only to the Grail Quest is indicative of the care with which texts are depicted, and that they are labelled as books reveals understandings about these tales in particular.

[42] Karen Cherewatuk, "Sir Thomas Malory's 'Grete Booke,'" in *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's* Morte Darthur, ed, D. Thomas Hanks, Jr. and Jessica G Brogdon, Arthurian Studies 42 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000) 42-67, p. 43.

[43] Noting Malory's secularization of the Grail Quest's central motives, Terence McCarthy finds that "[Malory] consistently shows himself more interested in Christianity's relations to worldly men and women than in fugitive and cloistered virtue. Terence McCarthy, "Malory and His Sources," in *Companion to Malory*, eds Elizabeth Archibald and Anthony Edwards, Arthurian Studies 37 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1996) 75-96, p. 92. Also, Kennedy's source study shows that multiple of Malory's English sources offer a

Labelling these as books aligns with the pattern that denies the bookishness of other texts, because they are produced, compiled, and stored in relatively trustworthy circumstances. The "grete books" are communicated by first-hand witnesses (not, as with Merlin, through a process of magical knowing), are recorded by court clerks (not, as with Bloyse, a mysterious, potentially magical character), and the texts are purportedly stored in a known library. While the potentially magic production of Merlin's dictation to Bloyse and Bedivere's shady credibility are enough to deny those texts labelling as "books," Bors' text carries enough credibility to receive this label. Moreover, understanding that bookishness signifies an amount of credibility speaks to the narrative's frequent invocation of the "French book" as a source. It is only by understanding how the narrative employs material terms that we can more fully understand how the narrative understands itself as a credible or fanciful story.

Gawain signs his name in blood, Elaine wraps her letter in silks, Merlin inscribes stones with gold, and Malory's narrator cites a French book. In *Le Morte,* authorial craft is both textual and material. These authors demonstrate, I argue, a version of authorship that inherently considers both linguistic and material aspects of a text's final product as equal and inseparable components of textual craftsmanship. Moreover, when we tune into how these authors think about the material features of the texts they produce, materiality takes a wide variety of forms. Elements of production, component materials, shapes, designs, methods of delivery, and decorations all become a part of the final texts produced and shared with the world. This informs our understanding of Malory, as it shows how he encodes his own narrative with the same textual lexicon used to describe his fictional authors' processes. *Le Morte* aligns itself with "books" because books are the shape of appropriate, historical texts. Moreover, acknowledging the role materiality plays within *Le Morte*'s version of authorship, offers a lesson for how we consider late-medieval textual production. As is the larger argument of this dissertation, texts rarely (if ever) operate distinct from their material realities. Malory's narrative provides evidence for this, as a pattern of textual materiality runs itself throughout scenes of authorship and textual creation. Authorship is a craft, performed in stone and parchment, silk and blood.

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basis for Malory's secularization of the Grail Quest. Edward D. Kennedy, "Malory and his English Sources," in *Aspects of Malory,* ed Toshiyuki Takamiya and Derek Brewer, Arthurian Studies 1 (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981) 27-55, p. 46.

# CHAPTER 3. THE BOOK AS DYSTOPIAN TECHNOLOGY OF MEMORY

> Than mote we to bokes that we fynde,
> Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde,
> …
> And yf that olde bokes were aweye,
> Yloren were of remembraunce and keye.
> Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve
> These bokes, there we hav noon other preve.
> (*LGW* F17-19, 25-28)

In these lines from the prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer's narrator pronounces books as keystones to memory, and he represents this memory as communal or shared. He tells us that, if books were "aweye," "we" and "us" would be left without any kind of proof about "olde thinges." The project of turning to books is shared by all of "us" as is the endeavor to "honouren and beleve" these books. At stake is the loss of *remembraunce*, meaning "common knowledge of the past" or "public memory."[1] Books are keys to a collective understanding of our past, and according to the narrator, that past is maintained by a shared honor and respect for the books in which our collective past is kept. The hypothetical situation posited by the narrator carries with it an ominous and unsettling warning about losing the books that hold our history: "yf" we lose books, we will "yloren" our collective past and suffer a social amnesia. Left mostly unexplained, the "yf" presents a shadowy threat, and "yloren" connotes a loss either by carelessness or chance.[2] He doesn't tell us how books may go missing, but he implies that it could happen either at any time or through our own negligence. Surrounded by lines about gossip and a love of books, these lines are uncharacteristically serious for Chaucer's dream vision narrators, suggesting the severity of what we lose when we lose both books and our collective memory. The lesson is to appreciate books for the tools that they are: custodians of stories "of holynesse, of regnes, of victorie, / Of love, of hate, of other sondry thynges, / Of which I may not maken rehersynges" (*LGW* F22-24). Books, the narrator argues, are what connects us to the past, and losing that past may have grave, unmentionable consequences. The threat of social amnesia

[1] "remembraunce, n." *Middle English Dictionary*. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/

[2] "lēsen v.(4)": (d) to lose (sth.) by chance or carelessness." *Middle English Dictionary*. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/med/

proposed by Chaucer's narrator is a central feature of many (if not most) twentieth-century dystopian and utopian narratives, as is the role of books in maintaining social memory.

Dystopian narratives offer a fruitful entry into a discussion of books and their representations in literature because dystopias tend to depict uncanny versions of reality that are simultaneously familiar and unrecognizable. Classifications of the dystopian genre, which originated as a subset of the utopian genre, have been numerous and varied for the last several decades, but Lyman Tower Sargent's early definition has endured as a basic framework: Dystopian narratives are those presenting a "nonexistent society" that the author intended "a contemporaneous reader to view as considerably worse than the society in which the author lived."[3] More specifically, noting the dystopian genre's "capacity for totalizing interrogation," Tom Moylan argues that the dystopian text "opens in the midst of a social 'elsewhere' that appears to be far worse than any in the 'real' world."[4] This interrogation allows a "pessimistic presentation

[3] Lyman Tower Sargent, "Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," *Utopian Studies* 5.1 (1994): 1-37, p. 9. The "dystopia" is both an easy and complicated designation that often defies "neat classification schemes" (Sargent, "Three Faces" 7). Dystopian studies are a subset of Utopian studies, and the two oppositional (but very similar) genres tend to inform each other. Baccolini and Moylan designate dystopian narratives simply as the "dark side of Utopia" because they are "accounts of places worse than the ones we live in." Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan, "Introduction: Dystopia and Histories," in *Dark Horizon: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Rafaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (London: Routledge, 2003), 1-12, p. 1. A definitive feature of dystopias is a developing counter-narrative in which the main character "moves from apparent contentment into an experience of alienation and resistance" (Baccolini and Moylan, "Dystopia and Histories," 5). Differences in the shape of the counter-narrative, and specifically the absence or presence of hope, have led to various dyst/utopian sub-classifications. While distinctions between dystopia and anti-utopia (or between mythic and epic dystopias) are fascinating, such specifics are beyond the purposes of this chapter. The most relevant distinction for this chapter may be the "critical" dys/utopia. Those stories that take a more complex approach to the genre, (and usually evidencing distinct feminist, ecological, or racial critique) have been designated "critical dystopias" or "critical utopias" because they depict an active "awareness of the limitations of the utopian" vision (Baccolini and Moylan, "Dystopia and Histories," 2). That said, I also enjoy Darko Suvin's succinct definition of dystopian narratives as those in which things "are organized in a significantly less perfect way than in the author's community. Darko Suvin, *Positions and Presuppositions in Science Fiction* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1988): p. 35.

[4] Tom Moylan, *Scraps of The Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000; Rpt. New York: Routledge, 2018), pp. xiii, xii. For critical summaries of the genres, see Moylan, *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*, pp. 147-58; Keith Booker, *Dystopia* (Ipswich: Salem Press, 2013). For foundational takes on Dystopia (and Utopian) narratives, several articles from the 1982 special issue of *Science Fiction Studies* (9) provided frameworks for future definitions: John Huntington, "Utopian and Anti-Utopian Logic: H.G. Wells and His Successors," 122-46; H. G. Wells, "Utopias," 117-21; Tom

of the very worst of social alternatives," but acts as "a prophetic vehicle, the canary in a cage … warning us of terrible sociopolitical tendencies that could, if continued, turn our contemporary world into the iron cage."[5] Unlike science fiction, fantasy, or post-apocalyptic narratives, dystopian narratives operate in "the midst of a social 'elsewhere'" but not necessarily an environmental, temporal, or physical elsewhere.[6] In other words, world-building in dystopian narratives is often based on shifts in social and/or political assumptions of the "real" world while still operating in a time and place that looks familiar. Dystopian narratives are interesting places in which to examine representations of everyday objects and lifestyles because, while depicting major systemic, sociopolitical changes, much of the mundane details of everyday life stay the same. As for representations of the book, I find that, even when books undergo a transformation to match the world's changes in social and political systems, much of the book—including its essential, material bookishness—remains the same.

Representations of books are particularly interesting in this genre because of the dystopian narrative's fundamentally fraught relationship with time and memory. In order to maintain hegemonic control, dystopian systems must control both what people know about the historical past and how they feel about the future.[7] Of Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Monica Toma argues that "the ruling elite is not only afraid of the uncontrollable, unknown future, but also of the past, which

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Moylan, "The Locus of Hope: Utopia versus Ideology," 159-66; Frederic Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?," 147-58.

[5] Baccolini and Moylan, "Dystopia and Histories," 6.

[6] A dystopian familiarity of place opposes the role of an unfamiliar setting in the utopia, coined by More to mean "no place." Unlike the dystopia, a traditional utopia involves travel to a place "located elsewhere, both spatially and temporally" (Baccolini, "Memory and Historical Reconciliation," 115). The main character's relationship to the space of the narrative is often a defining distinction between a utopia and dystopia: The utopian narrative, in general, follows a visitor into a new space as they observe and revere the world they are visiting; whatever the reader thinks of the perfectly utopian world, the narrator is obliviously impressed and maintains this perspective because they get to leave. Conversely, the dystopian, in general, begins with a member of the narrative world in media res. Already living in the dystopian area, "No dream or trip is taken to get to this place of everyday life" (Baccolini and Moylan, "Dystopia and Histories," 5).

[7] The Party slogan in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* summarizes it a little too well: "Who controls the past …controls the future; who controls the present controls the past" (George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (New York: New American Library, 1961): p. 32). This sentiment is also overtly stated in Aldous Huxley's Brave New World: "History is bunk" (Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2006): p. 22).

may represent a term of comparison" for members of the community.[8] Likewise, "history, its knowledge, and memory are therefore dangerous elements that can give the dystopian citizen a potential instrument of resistance."[9] This results in, as stated by Jacqueline Foertsch, the dystopian reliance on an "exaggerated present as a source of their [narrative] power and meaning."[10] In dystopian worlds, the past is dangerous because it models alternative sociopolitical standards of living; without these models, controlled peoples are ignorant that they can, should, or may benefit from rebelling against the current system. In addition to affecting one's assessment of the present, memory of the past also enables a sense of futurity: "memory may look back in order to move forward and transforms disabling fictions to enabling fictions, altering our relation to the present and future."[11] By enabling people to evaluate their present and hope for their future, a community's historical past is dangerous to any controlling regime that relies on social compliance. In a neat summary of the dangers of past and future in dystopian narratives, Carter F. Hanson argues that "memory, historical awareness and hope can be harnessed to bring about resistance and significant change."[12] Because memory of the past and hope for the future are weapons against a ruling regime's authority, communities in dystopian worlds find themselves locked in an eternal present—cut off from any memory of the past and with little or vague perception of the future. This chapter is concerned with the mechanics of historical erasure used in dystopian narratives and

[8] Monica Alina Toma, "Dystopian Community in Lois Lowry's Novel, *The Giver*," *Caietele Echinox* 32 (2017): 227-35, p. 227. Likewise, to Patrick Murphy, "hugging close to the shore of present time" enables dystopian authors to "enforce a cognitive function and didactic purpose" in their fiction. Patrick Murphy, "Reducing the Dystopian Distance: Pseudo-Documentary Framing in Near–Future Fiction," *Science Fiction Studies*. 17.1 (1990): 25–40, p. 27. Baccolini observes that the "dystopia depends on and denies history," in order to critique the author's present and past ("Memory and Reconciliation," 115). That dystopias include mechanisms to control social memory is not a new observation; the forms and methods this takes in relation to the book is my intervention.

[9] Baccolini, "Memory and Historical Reconciliation," 115.

[10] Jacqueline Foertsch, "The Bomb Next Door: Four Postwar Alterapocalyptics," in *Ray Bradbury*, ed. Harold Bloom, 2nd ed., Bloom's Modern Critical Views (Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2000; Rpt. New York: Infobase Learning, 2010), 173-95, p. 178. Foertsch identifies Fahrenheit 451 as a dystopian subtype she calls the "alterapocalyptic"; denied the explicit connection to time connoted by the postapocalyptic narratives, the alterapocalyptic is fixed in the present, looking sideways rather than in the past for its lessons.

[11] Gayle Greene, "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory," *Signs* 16.2 (1991): 290-321, p. 298.

[12] Carter F. Hanson, "The Utopian Function of Memory in Lois Lowry's *The Giver*." *Extrapolation* 50.1 (2009): 45-60, p. 46. See also, Carter F. Hanson, *Memory and Utopian Agency in Utopian/Dystopian Literature: Memory of the Future* (New York: Routledge, 2020).

argues that, as suggested by Chaucer's narrator, books are depicted as a technology critical in controlling what a society remembers about its past.

This chapter will explore Chaucer's assertion that books are keys to *remembraunce* by showing how books, as vessels of textual content, enable or cripple the dynamics of personal and social memory in twentieth-century dystopian narratives. I argue that the book (distinct from the texts it holds) is represented as a technology of memory critical to maintaining social connection to historical narrative. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and Lois Lowry's *The Giver* each depict a community locked in an eternal present because it has been detached from its historical past.[13] Despite the differences in these novels, summarized below, both feature the removal of physical books as a primary method of rewriting or erasing a community's knowledge of their past. *Fahrenheit 451* depicts censorship as spectacle, burning books in order to maintain intellectual equality; *The Giver*, on the other hand, secretly sequesters books out of sight. Both, though, retain certain approved books for certain social purposes: despite burning books for a living, the firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* carry physical rule books containing a false, revisionist history. In *The Giver*, each home has a censored dictionary and a "reference volume" outlining the rules and workings of the community. Moreover, and more essential, each narrative depicts the media that act as alternates or surrogates for the book. In each novel, the differences between acceptable and unacceptable books, as well as books and the media adopted to replace books (radio and television programs in *Fahrenheit 451*; the Receiver of Memory in *The Giver*) offer insight as to what parts of the book help serve the dystopian project and which may challenge dystopian control. Reading these novels for how books are seen, held, and interacted with shows how the book's bookishness enables it to act as a preservational technology of memory capable of maintaining historical narrative and social memory. Even when these narratives discuss *textual* control and circulation, they do so by way of the physical book; when they depict consumption of alternate forms of media, they do so in comparison to the physical book. In dystopian narratives, the book's bookishness makes it a preservational container in which stories can be saved for future readers; surface readings of these narratives reveal that and how the book is only able to act as a technology of memory because of its codexical features—bindings, covers, pages, and space. Texts must travel

[13] Ray Bradbury. *Fahrenheit 451*. (United Kingdom: Ballentine Books, 1988). Lois Lowry, *The Giver* (New York: HMH Books for Young Readers, 1993).

through time in order to preserve social memory, but books are the vehicles that make this travel possible.

Considering how the book acts as an interface via which users grasp and retain the information within is one way to conceptualize how books (and their surrogates) are represented in these narratives. As I will show, the televisor, radio, and Receiver of Memory act as substitute forms of media meant to either entertain and distract the public (*Fahrenheit 451*) or preserve historical narrative at a safe distance (*The Giver*). But what the alternates remove from the equation (sufficient interaction with historical narrative), they don't sufficiently replace, leading to communal and individual memory loss. The argument I develop is one of interface and interaction. As Amaranth Borsuk states:

> [The book's] design allows us to rest it on a surface or hold it aloft, to extend it about a foot or two from our faces and see text or image, or to run our fingers across its braille surface. We may insert a digit or a bookmark between pages to hold onto a passage or interest while flipping elsewhere to consult another. We can annotate the margins to talk back to the author, to subsequent readers, or to future selves.[14]

This description is not necessarily of consuming textual meaning and idea, but rather points to the intimate and bodily experience afforded by the material book. The book allows and encourages a personal experience; whether you scribble notes, dog ear corners, or simply turn pages, the book, for most, is an inherently tactile experience. Moreover, the book is inherently physical, but the way we understand our consumption of the book is learned. "Its materiality need have no bearing on its content," continues Borsuk, "yet whenever we hold a codex, we are subconsciously drawing on a history of physical and embodied interaction that has taught us to recognize and manipulate it."[15] As N. Katherine Hayles points out, when we change the physical form through which we consume texts, it "is not merely to change the act of reading," but rather "to profoundly transform the metaphoric relation of the word to world."[16] Ultimately, this is what I suggest is happening in *Fahrenheit 451*'s and *The Giver*'s visions of bookless futures – each asks not only what happens when a culture forgets its history, but what happens when we change the form through which we maintain that history.

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[14] Amaranth Borsuk, *The Book* (MIT Press, 2018): EPub, Chap. 4, "The Book as Interface."
[15] Borsuk, *The Book*, "The Book as Interface."
[16] N. Katherine Hayles, *Writing Machines* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 22.

These novels both censor, remove, and destroy books as methods of maintaining their community's detachment from the past while also implementing alternative forms of media as entertainment, education, or historical maintenance. In *Fahrenheit 451*, they ingest audio/visual media at all hours and keep a severely revised "brief history" in their pockets; in *The Giver*, the community genetically creates a person who holds all the memories of the "whole world" in his mind and body. By changing not only the content but the physical interface with which text is shared, these tactics create false and filtered connections to the past, and the effect is the maintenance of the dystopian status quo alongside a loss of individual and social identity. In considering the forms this takes as well as its effects on the community, I've found a useful analogue in what French historian Pierre Nora has described as the "archival" nature of modern memory. By distancing a society from its genuine historical memory, the dystopia mimics Nora's archival "reconstitution" of memory into something stored beyond human experience: "Memory has been wholly absorbed by its meticulous reconstitution. Its new vocation is to record; delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering, it sheds its signs upon depositing them there, as a snake sheds its skin."[17] This transition, which uses archival "*lieux de memoire*, sites of memory," to replace "*milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory," is the movement of memory from something experienced internally to something maintained externally.[18] This is particularly useful in considering dystopian depictions of memory and history, because the effects are the same: "the less memory is experienced from the inside, the more it exists *only* through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs."[19] In other words, when memory is "meticulously reconstituted" by outside forces —whether in the name of well-meaning archival preservation or dystopian revision— people lose their ability to retain or create original memories. According to Hanson, such transfers in the "responsibility of remembering" to insufficient, non-bookish containers causes "memory to lose its centrality as an individual or social engine."[20] As I will show, this holds true for both *Fahrenheit 451*, in which the characters cannot remember the most basic personal memories, and *The Giver*, in which the characters have lost all sense of personal, individual identity. When these

[17] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7-24, p. 13.
[18] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7.
[19] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13, emphasis mine.
[20] Carter F. Hanson, "Postmodernity, and Digital Memory versus Human Remembering in M. T. Anderson's *Feed*," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 40.3 (2015): 257-76, p. 267.

communities turn to surrogate forms of the book as vessels of historical, narrative memory (which prove to be false and insufficient), they suffer from the social amnesia expected of the dystopian project *and* they lose the ability to form meaningful connections to each other. By losing the book, they also lose themselves.

This chapter argues that books operate as a technology of memory in dystopian narratives. Moreover, the book's ability to perform its role in relation to memory is represented as an effect of its bookishness. Similar to themes in Chaucer's dream visions, the book is able to act as a preservational vessel in which texts are kept safe for future readers; even when a dystopian narrative features a revised, untrue history, the book is the appropriate receptacle for such information. Likewise, and more specifically, the book's bookishness affords it other features that, I will suggest, make it the ideal type of vessel for passing textual knowledge from one generation to another. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the book's cover, binding, and portability allow the reader time to stop, think, and mentally engage with what they are reading. In *The Giver*, the book's tactility and portability enable an interface that is educational and inspiring. In both of these narratives, the book is presented in competition with other forms of narrative-holding media, and in both narratives the book's bookishness is what sets the book apart as a method of maintaining either progressive social memory or dystopian social amnesia.

Social memory, as I will use it in this chapter, is a group's shared understanding of their place in relation to their historical past. Social memory provides a community with a type of shared identity, and in a dystopian world, it offers a shared vision for how the community's sociopolitical system could be different.[21] Often, as in the novels I'll discuss here, rejecting social memory has

[21] Building on Ernst Bloch's observations that memory acts as a repository of experience, Baccolini claims that memory is "necessary to an understanding of oneself and of the past, but also of the present and the future, and acquires those a social dimension" ("Memory and Reconciliation," 118); See also Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope.* trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice, and Paul Knight, 3 vols. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986.) Vincent Geoghan offered the first explicit look at the relationship between utopianism and memory in "Remembering the Future," in *Utopian Studies* 1.2 (1990): 52-68. See also, Rafaella Baccolini "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction," *PMLA* 119.3 (2004): 518-21; and Pieter Vermeulen, "Disappearing the Future," *Poetics Today* 37:3 (2016): 473-94. For the ethical imperative of social memory in changing present and future action, see Adrienne Rich, "Resisting Amnesia: History and Personal Life," in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), 136-55. Recently, memory and cultural studies have turned attention to how memorial and archival practices can (or should) be used in shaping the future rather than nostalgically (or post-traumatically) over-attending to the past. See Gayle Greene, "Feminist Fiction and the Uses of Memory," *Signs* 16.2 (1991): 290-321,

been sold to the populace as a type of utopian fantasy, in which they can "jettison the painful psychological fetters of history and forget about the past."[22] While a variety of methods exist for such a "jettison" (e.g., genetic manipulation and climate control in *The Giver*), here I will focus on how the book is portrayed as one such technology of memory. When referring to the textual content held in these books, I use the term historical narrative. The books we see (and we can safely assume, the books we don't see) in dystopian narratives contain more than strictly historical content—the firemen in *Fahrenheit 451* do recite a jingle about burning a range of literary content: "Monday burn Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner" (8). However, for the scope of this chapter, the effect of textual content on the dystopian sense of memory is the same no matter its genre or textual form; when considering the creation (or erasure) of social memory, a poem written in the past is just as effective as the nonfiction text. Both supply the reader with a voice from the past that they had, in these stories, been denied. The state of being without social memory, whether self-imposed or mandated by a totalitarian regime, can accurately be called a state of ahistoricity: Without knowledge of the past or hope for the future, these communities exist in the ahistorical, eternal present. The primary effect of living ahistorically is social amnesia, the communal lack of memory that, as I will show, affects how individuals understand their own identities, personal memories, and relationship with the world around them. As Walter Benjamin claims, "every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."[23] In short, the dystopian project relies on designing an ahistorical way of life by disconnecting society from its social memory; the result, intentional or not, is a form of social amnesia whose effects extend beyond a person's knowledge about the past.

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and these two collections: Yifat Gutman, Adam D. Brown, and Amy Sodaro, eds., *Memory and the Future: Transnational Politics, Ethics, and Society* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Richard Crownshaw, Jane Kilby, and Antony Rowland, eds., *The Future of Memory* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2010). Also Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).

[22] Carter F. Hanson, "Utopian Function of Memory" 48. Utopias are usually dystopias in disguise, so it's not surprising that both create authority using the same tool: forcing (or allowing) their citizens to "forget about the past." See note 3 above for more on the relationship between utopian and dystopian literature. Moreover, and one reason this is typically a White, western utopian dream, is it requires (or allows) a community to forget the pain it has inflicted.

[23] Walter Benjamin, "*Theses on the Philosophy of History*," in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana, 1992): 245-55, p. 247.

Both *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and *The Giver* (1993) portray dystopian hegemonies reliant upon the loss of social memory and maintenance of social amnesia. *Fahrenheit 451*, which takes place in an unnamed American city, follows the attempted intellectual awakening of Guy Montag, a firefighter responsible for setting ablaze any home in which books have been found. He is married to Mildred, who never removes her in-ear radios and spends the majority of her time in their "televisor parlor," a room made of three, floor-to-ceiling television-type screens (and to which she begs Montag to add fourth wall). We learn that Montag has been squirrelling-away books and hiding them in an air vent. Inspired by his strangely inquisitive young neighbor, his wife's casual suicide attempt, and a fire-call during which a woman chooses to burn with her books, Montag commits to figuring out what makes books so special and what they have lost in burning them. He connects with a retired English professor, Faber, and they make plans to begin reprinting books. However, Beatty, the fire chief, discovers Montag's books, burns his house, and forces him to flee the city before they can begin.

Though the central premise of *Fahrenheit 451* is book-burning, the censorship of books is simply a side-effect in the community's efforts to maintain intellectual equality and sustain a pleasure-seeking lifestyle. The fire chief, Beatty, explains that, "Life is immediate, the job counts, pleasure lies all about after work. Why learn anything save pressing buttons, pulling switches, fitting nuts and bolts? … That's all we live for, isn't it? For pleasure, for titillation?" (55-56). The community (as they have no other name) has committed to living in the current moment (i.e., the eternal present), seeking pleasure beyond all else, thus eliminating the need for intellectual pursuits. In fact, "the word 'intellectual,' of course, became the swear word it deserved to be," in order to reduce the pain of intellectual thought and difference (58). Pointing to the community's addiction to the in-ear radios and televisor screens, Robin Anne Reid has characterized *Fahrenheit 451*'s dystopian world as an exploration of "the extent to which technology can be used for social control, specifically through the use of the mass media for all education and entertainment."[24] In this view, audio/visual media replaces the book as a matter of form. It has also been noted the extent to which the community in *Fahrenheit 451* (as they have no other name) is a profit-driven culture of consumption "in the context of the marriage of capitalism and scientific advancement," of which

[24] Robin Anne Reid, *Ray Bradbury: A Critical Companion* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000) p. 59.

book-burning "is an effect, not a cause."[25] Whether capitalism, consumption, and technological advancement (or all of these) is the community's core motivation, each concept reflect the type of relentless, unsettled, and adrenaline-seeking behavior exemplified in how members of the community spend their free time: Besides watching televisors, they "break windowpanes in the Window Smasher place or wreck cars in the Car Wrecker place with the big steel ball. Or go out in the cars and race on the streets, trying to see how close you can get to lampposts, playing 'chicken' and 'knock hubcaps'" (30). Ultimately, the community in *Fahrenheit 451* performs its existence in the eternal present by seeking the immediate, adrenaline-soaked pleasure of the immediate moment.

The dystopian project in *The Giver* is similar to that of *Fahrenheit 451* in its efforts to reduce pain, though it is different in its methods. *The Giver* follows life in the "Community," a place cutoff from the rest of the world, where nothing is left to chance; everything from clothing and food to spouses, children, and careers is directed by a strict set of rules and specialized committees. As Hanson summarizes, "Lowry's world is an engineered Utopia gone wrong due to its extinction of aesthetics and personal choice."[26] In an effort to improve practicality and reduce pain, the Community has adopted "Sameness," the idea that everyone and everything should be equal and predictable. Genetic and technological manipulation control the weather, natural resources, and DNA; a Book of Rules, social surveillance, and a commitment to "precision of language" control the minds and actions of the Community's residents. Children are born to women assigned as birth mothers (whom they never meet); if they do not meet certain standards of health and development, they are euthanized or "released." Likewise, when someone reaches a specific (undesignated) age, they are released, as are individuals who break a significant rule more than once. Residents believe that released individuals go to a place called "Elsewhere" because they have no understanding of death, even as a basic concept. Their reliance on a "precision of language" restricts their lexicon to the most concretely explainable concepts and it prevents them from being dishonest, skeptical, or afraid; likewise, their elective ahistoricity and the resulting social amnesia leaves them unable to feel complex emotions. Though the residents are denied any form of personal freedom, they are ignorant of any other way of living and feel entirely content.

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[25] Evan Brier, *A Novel Marketplace: Mass Culture, the Book Trade, and Postwar American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 69.
[26] Hanson, "Utopian Function of Memory," 45.

The novel follows Jonas as he becomes a Twelve and receives the career assignment he is expected to hold for the rest of his life: the Receiver of Memory. He learns that the Receiver was created (presumably through genetic modification, though this isn't clarified) to hold the entire world's memories; his purpose is to act as an advisor when the Community needs to make an important policy decision that may introduce pain or change. The Receiver is able to go into his memories, extract the essential information, and tell the Community what to decide. In this way, the Community uses the Receiver to keep their social memory at a distance; he is able to filter the memories down to the advice they need without actually showing them the content. However, the Receiver doesn't simply find the memories—he becomes immersed in a full-body, sensorial experience. The way he holds, experiences, and transfers these memories is more akin to the interface afforded by a book than to, say, a researcher who locates and distills information. Moreover, because he experiences the memories, his perspective of the world is toxic to the idea of Sameness, leaving him in emotional and spatial seclusion from the Community. When Jonas begins his training as the new Receiver, the old Receiver transfers the memories from his body into Jonas' through touch. As Jonas acquires more memories, he develops a version of social memory—he understands his and his community's place in the historical timeline, and he gains the ability to think beyond precision of language and sameness. Jonas starts to see color and feel sunshine; he realizes that the emotions expressed with precise language are shallow imitations to real love and pain. Ultimately, Jonas decides that the cost of sameness is too high, he leaves the community, an act that sends the memories from his body and back "to the place where memories once existed before Receivers were created" – into the social consciousness of the residents (131).

### 3.1 'Hold on a moment': Slow Reading in *Fahrenheit 451*

In the world of *Fahrenheit 451*, books are outlawed because they allow (and perhaps encourage) contemplative, intellectual thought; I argue that the narrative's representations of the book suggest that the contemplation allowed by the book is afforded by the book's bookishness. Books are dangerous because, unlike other media used in the community, a book lets its reader control the pace and timing of the reading experience. Though textual content surely contributes to the "magic" he connects to undesirable intellectual thinking, Faber also attributes the book's intellectual qualities to its physical shape: Books allow and encourage contemplative thought because "You can shut them, say, 'Hold on a moment.' You play God to it. … Books can be beaten

down with reason" (84). Books can be "beaten down with reason," but this interaction between a reader's reason and the medium is possible because the book can be shut, paused, and considered. This acknowledgment that the book can both allow independent, rational thought and that the material shape empowers this process exemplifies what Jerome McGann calls the material book's "double helix of perceptual codes": "the linguistic codes, on one hand, and the bibliographical codes on the other."[27] In *Fahrenheit 451*, the power of books is afforded by its codexical shape; because the reader can "shut them," the reader has time to think and ask questions. Books are outlawed because the texts they hold allow for free, critical thinking, but the physical shape of the book as an object that can be closed, paused, and revisited is what enables readers to perform intellectual engagement with the text. In short, the book's bookishness, even before its textual content, allows for the aberrant intellectual behavior forbidden in the dystopian social structure.

That the community designs their acceptable media, radio and televisor programming, in ways that directly contrast the design of the book also suggests how much the book's physical shape plays a role in its deviancy. While books allow for contemplative thinking because they allow the reader to control the pace and progression of the reading experience, Faber explains that the televisor works in reverse: "you can't argue with the four-wall televisor," because "It is immediate, it has dimension. It tells you what to think and blasts it in. It must be right. It seems so right. It rushes you on so quickly to its own conclusions your mind hasn't time to protest, 'What nonsense!'" (84).[28] Whereas books can be shut, enabling the reader to slow down, ask questions, and "play God," the televisor "blasts" and "rushes" its message, which denies viewers "time to

[27] Jerome J McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 77. See also M. B. Parkes, "The influence of the concepts of ordinatio and compilatio on the development of the book," in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 115–41.

[28] This reprimand of the televisor seems in conflict with Faber's claim that there isn't anything particularly special about the book as a medium: "The same things could be in the 'parlor families' today. The same infinite detail and awareness could be projected through the radios and televisors, but are not … Books were only one type of receptacle where we stored a lot of things we were afraid we might forget. There is nothing magical in them, at all. The magic is only in what books say, how they stitched the patches of the universe together into one garment for us" (82-83). Faber acknowledges that the book isn't the only medium capable of holding historical narrative that "we might forget," and that the televisor programs could do the same thing. However, though he attributes their informative power to their textual content, "in what books say," his argument that books "stitched" the pieces of historical narrative into one place speaks to the book's shape as a vessel. The book may be "only one type of receptacle," but it is understood as a receptable and part of its performance here is its anthologizing power to bring texts together.

protest." In contrast to the book, which affords an opportunity for contemplative and perhaps leisurely engagement with its textual content, the televisor precludes engagement of any sort, instead it "tells you what to think," and send viewers to "its own conclusions."[29] By controlling the pace and progression of the viewing experience, the televisor functions in direct contrast to the book; that the element of leisurely interactivity afforded by its bookishness is not only erased, but is replaced with an opposing force, suggests just how deviant the act of leisurely reading is to the narrative's dystopian design.[30]

In *Fahrenheit 451,* the book is dangerous because the pace of the reading experience is in the hands of the reader, a delegation of control that allows contemplative engagement with the text; moreover, the dynamics of pace and contemplative engagement point to the book's ability to act as a technology of memory. The primary mechanism of control within *Fahrenheit 451*'s dystopian world is the eradication of leisure, including any activities and objects that allow one to slow down from their pleasure- and adrenaline-seeking lifestyle. Clarisse, the intellectually aware young women who initially inspires Montag to reconsider his way of life, says that, at school, "They run us so ragged by the end of the day we can't do anything but go to bed or head for a Fun Park" (30). The educational system is, unsurprisingly, devoid of any real educational or intellectual depth, instead generating an exhausted and antisocial populace. The systematic eradication of opportunities to stop and think extends to even the most mundane aspects of their lives. As Clarisse points out to Montag, they "got rid of the front porches" because "they didn't want people sitting like that, doing nothing, rocking, talking…they had time to think. So they ran off with the porches" (63). Also, Beatty explains, the "zipper displace[d] the button," because removing "even just that much time to think while dressing at dawn" reduces the opportunity for idle thoughts (56). The

[29] To Leah Price, the modern book is intimately connected with quiet moments, if not total leisure: "When we mourn the book, we're really mourning the death of those in-between moments (waiting in line, riding a bus) that nineteenth-century changes in lighting and transportation made hospitable to light reading, and that twenty-first-century communications infrastructures made available to paid labor." *What We Talk About,* 6.

[30] Faber's complaint about the televisor's tempo echoes Sven Birkerts' lament about the modern book on tape: "Pace is a serious problem … Until I listened to a book on tape, I didn't realize how much I depend on the freedom to slow down, speed up, or stop altogether while reading" (146). In realizing that "Reading, because we control it, is adaptable to our needs and rhythms," Birkerts relates the book's social functions—"our needs and rhythms"—as afforded by its design as a physical text that we control. Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 2006.)

community has decided that leisure is dangerous because it leads to contemplative, intellectual thinking. In an effort to control how people spend their time, life is reduced to objects and activities that keep them focused on the immediate moment rather than contemplating the past or the future. Books, because they're designed to allow and encourage this type of interactive, contemplative thinking, don't fit in this adrenaline-addicted lifestyle; they do not and cannot control how readers use their time. This is related to the maintenance of memory and historical narrative, because, in enabling free thinking, books also encourage the type of engagement with the historical narrative that would dissolve dystopian social amnesia. In other words, books operate as technologies of memory because they allow the reader to control the experience.

### *'Electronic Ocean of Sound': Fake Books and False Memories*

In *Fahrenheit 451,* books are represented as a technology of memory in that they allow the type of interaction that enables historical narrative to serve the educational function of social memory. As Faber explains to Montag, "books are to remind us what asses and fools we are," by teaching readers to avoid the mistakes of the past (86). This educational function is only possible when society is both aware of and identifies with that past. By depicting reading from books as an interactive experience, *Fahrenheit 451* also depicts reading from books as a performance of memory-building that credits books as enabling both awareness of and identification with historical narrative. To adopt Nora's terms, I suggest the interactivity made possible by shutting and questioning books turns reading into a "*milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory" in which memory is experienced and constructed as an internal process. Rather than being pressed on someone from the outside, like a scaffolding, reading historical narratives in books turns the textual content into a part of the reader's lived experience that allows the reading audience to connect with and identify with the historical narrative. The example Faber offers is that "[books a]re Caesar's praetorian guard, whispering as the parade roars down the avenue, 'Remember, Caesar, thou art mortal'" (86). Here, he portrays the reading experience as placing the reader amidst a roaring parade and turning books into actors who speak directly to the reader. By allowing an immersive, internally experienced form of engagement with textual content, books act as a technology of memory by turning historical narrative into informative, social memory.

The opposite dynamic (that is, externally or falsely constructed memory) is demonstrated by the media and narratives that align with the community's anti-leisure lifestyle, namely radio

and televisor programming and a brief revisionist history in the firemen's rule books. In *Fahrenheit 451*, the use of substitute methods of narrative delivery creates social amnesia rather than social memory, maintaining the dystopian dynamics that keep the community locked in an eternal present. Furthermore, that these substitutes fail to build a form of social memory that maintains social welfare suggests the superiority of books in maintaining social memory. In what is ultimately a poor substitute for the engagement of reading a book, the televisor programming performs a form of pseudo-interaction that offers the appearance of engagement but offers only an externally scaffolded experience. Mildred explains that the latest program lets her play a role in the show, so "When it comes time for the missing lines, they all look at me out of the three walls and I say the lines … he looks at me sitting here center stage, see? And I say, I say— 'I think that's fine!'" (20). The parlor's three screens create the sense of being immersed in the scene, and the impression that the characters look out at her in "center stage" makes Mildred feel like she's interacting with the show. Similar to Faber's example of books as Praetorian guards, the program is designed to make the viewer feel like they are in the middle of the scene with the actors speaking directly to them. However, the scripted program offers, at best, a superficial form of interaction that isn't at all influenced by her presence; the actors speak at her, but they do not speak to or with her. Compared to Faber's description of reading, if anyone is "playing God" in this scene, it is the televisor, as Mildred simply does what she is directed to do. And, while Mildred claims to feel a level of satisfaction from the sense of engagement it provides ("Isn't that fun, Guy?" (20)), her attempted suicide the night before suggests that her feelings of joy are insincere. In its pseudo-interactivity, the televisor may deliver the type of engaging narrative that could be found in books; however, unlike the book, its failure to create an interactive, memory-building experience points to the televisor's inability to maintain social memory.

Both the radio and televisor programming reject the contemplative, interactive experience offered by the book, instead turning media consumption into a largely physical, overwhelming experience. This removes any opportunity for leisure or contemplation and contributes to the community's mental fatigue and feelings of being "run ragged." As Montag enters his bedroom after his first conversation with Clarisse, he observes his wife in bed: "And in her ears the little Seashells, the thimble radios tamped tight, and an electronic ocean of sound, of music and talk and music and talk coming in, coming in on the shore of her unsleeping mind. The room was indeed empty" (11). Montag feels alone in his wife's presence because she is wearing her in-ear radio

"Seashells." Pumping out an "ocean of sound," the radios drown his wife in her own aural coma, leaving him alone "indeed." Made of "music and talk and music and talk" that is "coming in, coming in," the programming is incessant, repetitive, and monotonous. The effect is similar to Clarisse's observation that school is designed to "run [them] ragged": Mildred is asleep (in fact, she has overdosed on sleeping pills, so she is very asleep). However, Montag also points to her "unsleeping mind." The onslaught of audio content denies Mildred any real rest by keeping a part of her brain occupied with handling the drowning waves of sound. The audio programming, by design, overwhelms listeners with a constant stream of uninteresting, meaningless sound, keeping them distracted and exhausted but not offering any chance to interject.

When Montag watching the televisor, he is met with the same meaningless, overwhelming content that produces both physical and mental exhaustion. After watching one of the programs being played across their three-wall theatre system, in which he "drowned in music and pure cacophony," Montag describes the experience as physically overpowering: "A great thunderstorm of sound gushed from the walls. Music bombarded him at such an immense volume that his bones were almost shaken from their tendons; he felt his jaw vibrate, his eyes wobble in his head. He was a victim of concussion … He came out of the room sweating and on the point of collapse" (44-45). He experiences the sound like a storm "bombarding" his body hard enough to slam his brain and bones. While his impression that his bones have been shaken from their joints may be narrative exaggeration, that he is left sweating and on the "point of collapse" points to the literal physical effects of his experience. Watching the televisor programming is a grueling experience; whether the concussive effects are real or not, his consumption of the media is physically exhausting. Moreover, "When it was all over he felt like a man who had been thrown from a cliff, whirled in a centrifuge and spat out over a waterfall that fell and fell into emptiness and emptiness and never—quite—touched—bottom…" (45). That he continues to feel the effects of being "thrown, whirled and spat" after he leaves the room points to the program's lingering effects. That he feels like he "never—quite" reached any conclusion suggests the experience has left him feeling mentally unsatisfied; he didn't actually "whirl" anywhere, and there was no emptiness into which to fall. He is dazed and stupefied—"ragged"—without leaving the couch. By prioritizing the exhausting, adrenaline-seeking aspects of their anti-leisure lifestyle, the televisor rejects the contemplative, interactive engagement modeled by the book. When paired with the removal of books, these forms of assaulting, physically experienced media contribute to the community's loss

of social memory by making them too tired to engage in the form of contemplative interaction with the book that may reconnect them with social memory.

Likewise, as a community, the people in *Fahrenheit 451* are disconnected from their past, as demonstrated by Montag's conversations with Clarisse and the revisionist history contained in the firemen's rulebook. A main theme in Clarisse's dialogue is "Did you know that once…?": once billboards were only twenty feet long; once houses had front porches; once children didn't kill each other (9). Montag doesn't remember anything Clarisse proposes about the past, but when she suggests that firemen used to put fires out (rather than starting them), he is confident in his grasp of history: "No. Houses have always been fireproof, take my word for it" (8). However, after Clarisse's disappearance, Montag presents the idea to his fellow firemen, who respond by pulling actual books from their pockets:

> "That's rich!" Stonemen and Black drew forth their rule books, which also contained brief histories of the Firemen of America, and laid them out where Montag, though long familiar with them, might read:
>
> Established, 1790, to burn English-influenced books in the Colonies. First Fireman: Benjamin Franklin.
>
> RULE 1. Answer the alarm swiftly.
> 2. Start the fire swiftly.
> 3. Burn everything.
> 4. Report back to firehouse immediately.
> 5. Stand alert for other alarms. (34-35)

The firemen laugh at what they believe is an absurd bit of revisionist history, and in an ironic turn, they employ books to make their point. The confidence in Stonemen and Black's exclamatory, "That's rich" echoes the confidence of Montag's, "take my word for it," and Montag is "long familiar" with the rule book's contents. Montag brings up the question of history because Clarisse has inspired doubt, but this is the history the men share. What the men believe, they believe together. As Spencer notes of the firemen's book, which is "the only available text, and the voice of political authority," the book exalts their position as "a glorious and time-honored profession, an idea that gives the firemen a sense of continuity and security."[31] The result is a form of socially

[31] Susan Spenser, "The Post-Apocalyptic Library: Oral and Literate Culture," *Extrapolation* 32.4 (1991): 331-42, p. 334.

shared memory that maintains the firemen's compliance in the dystopian sociopolitical structure without providing enough genuine, contextualized history to stabilize social memory.

Though the rule books provide a historical narrative and is, in fact, a book, the brevity and dishonesty of the narrative make it more of an externally reconstituted social memory than an internally experienced "*milieux de memoire.*" Their "brief histories" of the firemen only comprise one line of falsified historical narrative: "Established, 1790, to burn English-influenced books in the Colonies. First Fireman: Benjamin Franklin." The firemen's history is both watered down and incorrect, but it is also, paradoxically, kept inside of a book.[32] The existence of a revised history speaks to the necessity of controlling the historical narrative, and its placement in a book speaks to the book as the proper interface through which to disseminate propaganda. The brief, revisionist history detaches the community from its true past while replacing that past with a narrative that serves their dystopian sociopolitical ideals. The existence of such propaganda, and the firemen's simultaneous demonstration of their knowledge, suggests the power of socially shared memory in providing a sense of security and camaraderie—it also suggests that the book is an effective way to create a shared narrative. However, despite the false-history's community-building, Montag is entirely ignorant of Clarisse's other historical, "Did you know that once…?" questions, suggesting that a false history does not help the community *develop* a sense of productive social memory as much as simply ingest what they have been given. Instead, as I will detail below, they have social amnesia rather than social memory.[33] I suggest that because the revisionist history imitates external sites of memory rather than real environments of memory, this book operates as a technology of amnesia rather than memory. Moreover, even in the midst of systemic anti-bookishness, the book is still depicted as the keeper of solid, reliable information and that solidity is afforded by the book's bookishness.

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[32] The irony in this revision is rich, considering Benjamin Franklin did establish the first fire department in the colonies but is also considered a founding father of printing in the American colonies. See Ralph Frasca, *Benjamin Franklin's Printing Network: Disseminating Virtue in Early America* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006.) and J. A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin,* 3 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005-2008), Volume 2*: Printer and publisher, 1730–1747* (2005), pp. 92–94.

[33] Indeed, as one cause of the community's social and individual amnesia, the firemen's revisionist history models Baccolini observations of false histories: "Because it is authoritarian, hegemonic discourse shapes the narrative about the past and collective memory to the point that individual memory has been erased; individual recollection therefore becomes the first, necessary step for a collective action" ("Persistence of Hope," 520-21).

That the only books remaining in *Fahrenheit 451* are those that reassert the hegemonic version of historical narrative and social memory suggests the importance of books in maintaining communal history. Moreover, the way that *Fahrenheit 451* depicts this scene highlights the materiality of such history books. It's interesting that the brief histories are still kept in books, considering one of Mildred's friends tells us that "all special training these days was done by film" (97). A society that has developed robotic hounds, four-wall televisions, in-ear radios, and fireproof homes —and that burns books for fun— could surely develop a different media to share both rules and history, yet they use books to transmit their rules and the acceptable history. Susan Spencer conjectures that this moment, "perhaps allows Bradbury to make a comment on the fact that textual knowledge is power, even –or perhaps especially– false knowledge. Power becomes unbreachable if textual information is monolithic."[34] I think she's correct, though I think the "power" is also (or more) attributable to the book rather than simply "textual knowledge." The centrality of the material book (rather than the text) in this moment is key. In this description, the "rule books" (not the "brief histories) are the grammatical direct object of the action: the firemen "drew forth" and "laid out" *them*, and Montag is "long familiar" with *them*.[35] The line is focused on the objects rather than the texts they hold, as, first and foremost, Montag is familiar with the books he sees on the table. The distinction is slight, but the book—not the text—is the center of attention in the firemen's display of knowledge, suggesting that the book is what carries the authority to settle their debate about the firemen's history. By keeping their history in bookish textual form, the society concurrently slanders and idolizes the book as a technology appropriate for carrying historical narrative.

The authority of the book as a carrier of textual content is also performed by *Fahrenheit 451* as a book itself. For one strange moment in the text, the narrative doesn't just relate the information inside the rule books; it recreates their actual pages, allowing us, the external readers, to look at the pages seen by the firemen. We are able to see the page as Montag sees it: the text is arranged using a specific hierarchical system employing spacing, indentations, a numbered list,

[34] Spencer, "Post-Apocalyptic Library," 334.

[35] "That's rich!" Stonemen and Black drew forth their rule books, which also contained brief histories of the Firemen of America, and laid them out where Montag, though long familiar with them, might read" (34).

and capitalization.[36] These are design elements made possible by the technology of the bookish page, the *mise-en-page*, or page layout — not the narrative itself. In this moment, *Fahrenheit 451*'s book mimics its narrative. While the narrative suggests the book is an authoritative container for history by placing a book on the table for Montag and the firemen to look at, the book mirrors this argument by showing *us* an actual page. If the narrative argues that books are a superior technology for sharing historical texts, the book reinforces this stance by performing bookishly.

### *Ahistorical Holding Patterns*

The community in *Fahrenheit 451* has lost track of its true place in history, and after decades of book burning, they have lost the "olde bokes" that would be key to remembering. They have lost their past, have been fed a false history, and they have destroyed the tools to help them recover the truth. While the goal, imposed by the community itself, is to level the intellectual playing field, replacing the book with other forms of media and with falsely scaffolded historical narratives has side effects for both their future interactions with books and with their ability to remember. As a dystopian narrative, *Fahrenheit 451* portrays a community "trapped" in time and denied "temporal trajectory." The community "can move neither into the past nor into the future to escape its fate."[37] While this ahistoricity is a common element in dystopian narratives because it helps maintain the dystopian project, in *Fahrenheit 451* this memory loss also affects the community's personal memory. In losing their social memory, they have also lost the ability to make and maintain new, personal memory. Moreover, when Montag attempts to engage with books, he is unable in either form or function. He realizes that, just as he has lost the ability to build internal memories, he has lost the ability to understand what he is reading and he has lost the

[36] This holds true for all editions of Fahrenheit 451 that I could locate, including the digital. Bradbury actually refused to let any of his novels be produced as digital or e-editions until 2011. In a 2009 *New York Times* interview, Bradbury said e-readers "smell like burned fuel" and recalled an earlier request by *Yahoo*: "Yahoo called me eight weeks ago," he said, voice rising. "They wanted to put a book of mine on Yahoo! You know what I told them? 'To hell with you. To hell with you and to hell with the Internet,'" (interview with Ethan Pine, "A Literary Legend Fights for a Ventura County Library," *New York Times*. June 20, 2009. https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/20/us/20ventura.html

[37] Foertsch, "The Bomb Next Door," 177-78. For Foertsch, the "alterapocalyptic" novel uses the threat of impending nuclear disaster as a framework (which is different from the postapocalyptic, which uses recovery from a nuclear disaster to make its point).

ability to engage with the physical book as a medium. When books are removed, the community is disconnected from its historical narrative and suffers social amnesia; when books are replaced with anti-bookish media, the community also becomes disconnected from its ability to conduct the contemplative engagement that makes social memory possible.

That the community in *Fahrenheit 451* is ahistorically disconnected from a sense of futurity is evidenced in their ambivalence about the impending war. Their ambivalence also demonstrates the dangers that hope for the future poses to dystopian control. The specter of war haunts the entire narrative, and no one seems to register the threat. Standing in a gas station while trying to flee the city, Montag hears the radio announce that war has been declared, and he observes the lack of response: '"War has been declared.' The gas was being pumped outside. The men in the beetles were talking and the attendants were talking about the engines, the gas, the money owed. Montag stood trying to make himself feel the shock of the quiet statement from the radio, but nothing would happen" (125). When war finally materializes, Montag observes that no one else is listening and even he is unable to really understand what a declaration of war means. He doesn't admit to the gravity of the situation until he sees the bombs and imagines Mildred in her hotel room, too distracted by the televisor screens to notice the bombs heading towards the city (159). The consistent threat of war offers the only semblance of futurity for the community in *Fahrenheit 451*, but their adrenaline-fueled media consumption has trained them not to care. Besides Montag, who passively observes the radio announcements and jets overhead, Faber is the only character (until the Railmen) who speaks about the war with a sense of futurity.[38] Moreover, Faber tries to delay his and Montag's subversive plot until the war disrupts routine media consumption: "We might start a few books, and wait on the war to break the pattern and give us the push we need. A few

[38] Montag does discuss the war with Mildred's friends, but they don't acknowledge the war as an element of the future as much as a current inconvenience Asked about her husband's involvement in the war efforts, Mrs. Phelps brushes it off: "'Oh, they come and go, come and go,' said Mrs. Phelps. 'In again out again Finnegan, the Army called Pete yesterday. He'll be back next week. The Army said so. Quick war. Forty-eight hours they said, and everyone home'" (94). A few lines later, she insists she "'didn't say a single word about any war, I'll have you know'" (98). Notably, Mrs. Phelps also sobs after hearing Montag's recitation of "Dover Beach," though she can't identify why, suggesting that at least some members of the community are suppressing their anxieties about the future more than forgetting them altogether. The consistent mention of suicide (including Mildred's overdose and Gloria's husband) is evidence that the loss of leisure, historical identity, and futurity has affected their mental health in a number of ways, though I am only concerned with the effect on their memory here.

bombs and the 'families' in the walls of all the houses, like harlequin rats, will shut up! In the silence, our stage whisper might carry" (89). Not only does Faber's theory point again to the hold the media "in the walls'" has over the community's attention, but he also points to the present state of media consumption as a "pattern" in which they are stuck. Faber hopes that the war, as an icon of futurity, will introduce enough change to make a difference, exemplifying the disruptive role of the future in controlling social memory and maintaining a dystopian sort of status quo. Deprived of the "temporal trajectory" afforded by a sense of an impending future, the community is trapped in the holding pattern of the eternal present.

While burning books in the pursuit of pleasure, the community in *Fahrenheit 451* has sacrificed its connection to social memory; by relying on media that functions in opposition to the book, they have also sacrificed their ability to read. By design, their radio and televisor programming are consumed in ways antithetical to the book, causing Montag to lose his ability to both comprehend the words he is reading and to engage with the book's physical apparatus. Montag's inability to read textual content or handle a physical book is demonstrated when he attempts to read on the train while the radio programming is playing in the background. After spending hours trying to read, Montag becomes overwhelmed by his failure to comprehend and seeks out Faber for help, comparing his brain to a sieve that cannot hold sand (78). Realizing that he will still have to burn the book when he gets home, he decides to start memorizing the words he sees on the page, thinking "no phrase must escape me, each line must be memorized. I will myself to do it" (78). Deciding to memorize the words in the book, "He tore the book open and flicked the pages and felt of them as if he were blind, he picked at the shape of the individual letters, not blinking" (79). His commitment to memorizing causes him to tear the book open, manically flicking the pages with his hands and eyes, but, "blind" he doesn't really see them. Montag's brain makes out individual shapes, but they do not coalesce into meaningful words and sentences. The eagerness of tearing and flicking at the book suggest his commitment to the task of memorizing, an acknowledgement that this is important work; but his tearing and flicking also depict a fruitless grasping at the object in his lap. He wants to read the words on the pages, but he can't—he is out of practice with this medium. As Darnton predicts, living in a "universe of electronic texts necessarily signifies a distancing from the mental representations and intellectual operations that are specifically tied to the form that the book has taken in the West for seventeen

or eighteen centuries."[39] Even though he is only trying to memorize the words, not their meaning, his initial failure is his inability to cognitively perceive the material apparatus; he knows his brain isn't suited to the task of understanding, but he is also not suited for the cognitive and physical work of reading from the pages of a book.

That this is a symptom of their anti-bookish lifestyle is suggested by how this scene places Montag's attempt to read in competition with the radio playing overhead. His attempt to read is portrayed as a conflict with the radio blaring over the train's speaker. As he begins to read, he is interrupted:

> He clenched the book in his fists.
> Trumpets blared.
> "Denham's Dentifrice."
> Shut up, thought Montag. Consider the lilies of the field.
> "Denham's Dentifrice." (78-79)

He never moves on from the single line of text, his brain flipping between the radio program, internal dialogue, and written text. Though Montag is attempting to tune out the radio — unlike the people around him who had been "tapping their feet to the rhythm" and "whose mouths had been faintly twitching the words Dentifrice Dentifrice Dentifrice" — he can't. After screaming out loud to, "Shut up, shut up, shut up!" (78). he perceives the radio as fighting against him: "The train radio vomited upon Montag, in retaliation, a great tonload of music made of tin, copper, silver, chromium, and brass. The people were pounded into submission; they did not run, there was no place to run; the great air train fell down its shaft in the earth" (79). Here, the book is placed in competition with the radio, and the battle plays out in physical terms. Montag describes the sound as a measured, physical presence as a "tonload" of metals trying to force him into submission; though the radio is an audio experience, he perceives it as a physical attack, a description antithetical to how Faber describes reading from a book. While books can be "beaten down with reason," leaving the reader in charge of the experience, here, the radio beats him. In turn, Montag tries to read by tearing the book open, "clench[ing it] in his fists," and flicking its pages. In other words, he tries to turn reading into a physical experience similar to consumption of the radio and televisor programs. The book is too quiet to compete with the radio programming's infiltration of Montag's brain and Montag doesn't know how else to engage with a text. The scene places the

[39] Darnton, *The Case for Books*, p. 23.

radio in competition with the book, highlighting how the radio is designed in contrast with the book, and how consumption of the acceptable media has shifted the consumer's cognitive abilities.

By erasing the community's concern for the future and knowledge of the past, the community in *Fahrenheit 451* erases their own temporal trajectory; while ahistoricity and its amnesiac effects are a common theme in dystopian narratives, *Fahrenheit 451* offers an interesting version of the effects on individual memory and memory creation. In the narrative, the characters are unaware of their shared, historical past as well as their personal, individual past. The eradication of books has caused social and individual amnesia, *and* it has affected their ability to create new memories, suggesting the essential role books play in maintaining and sustaining both social and personal memory. Minor examples of Montag's inability to recall his experiences is hinted at throughout his conversations with Clarisse: when told there is dew on the grass in the morning, he "couldn't remember if he had known this or not, and it made him quite irritable" (8). He isn't "irritable" at his knowledge (or lack thereof), he is annoyed because he can't "remember if he had known this or not." He can't remember *if* he remembers, putting his memory into question just as much as what he knows or observes about the world. His amnesia is made explicit when he considers his marriage to Mildred and can't recall how they met. When Montag asks Mildred how and when they met, she has to work to recall the information, eventually giving up, because, "It doesn't matter," leaving the room, and ingesting more sleeping pills than Montag can keep track of (43). Her frustration is echoed by Montag, who finds it "suddenly more important than any other thing in a lifetime that he know where he had met Mildred" (43). Each realizes they *should* know this information, and their responses suggest they understand how important personal memory is to the human experience. While Mildred self-medicates, Montag tries to turn the act of recalling into a physical experience, "massaging his eyes, his brow, and the back of his neck, slowly. He held both hands over his eyes and applied a steady pressure there as if to crush memory into place." The attempt to "crush" his memories into his brain recalls his descriptions of the radio and televisor as waves and thunderstorms of sound and light bombarding his body. To invoke Nora's theory of the external site of memory, Montag can't pull a memory from within, so he tries to create thoughts in the only way he can think how: by pressing the memory into his brain from the outside. By removing the interactive, memory-building interface of books, the community has revised human experience into something supplied by false memories and digital media. By abandoning real

experiences of memory for those supplied from the outside, they have lost the ability to remember themselves and their place in time.

### 3.2 *The Giver*: Delegating Social Memory to the Archive

By turning individual and social identity into something that is assigned from the outside rather than built through personal experience, Lois Lowry's *The Giver* features a similar depiction in the development of memory. The community in *The Giver* has committed to the idea of "sameness," resulting the eradication of anything that could act as a measure of difference – including the spatial world outside the community and temporal realms of past and future. In this way, they voluntarily maintain their own ahistoricity and social amnesia. To manage sameness within their own space and time —while reducing the side effects of social amnesia— they rely on "precision of language" as a method of reducing the slippery space between signifier and signified, thus reducing their lives to those elements that can be explained in objective, concrete terms. In this way, they operate within a mimetic signifying system, reducing lexicon and other signifiers to their simplest, direct representational range. In the Community, a tree is a tree, a table is a table, and each person is reduced to a set of objects that represent their role in the community rather than as individuals. Everything, Jonas explains, has a "clearly defined" function (93). The exploration of what and how objects signify offers an interesting perspective on how the community polices language, essentially throwing words in the trash as they would an obsolete object, in the name of maintaining their social amnesia.

Moreover, and more important, is how the narrative's fixation on language and objects is shaped by the idea and bookishness of the book. The narrative is a case study of Andrew Piper's claim that, "Reading books, and looking on the world through books, teaches us to relate to what we cannot fully know."[40] Without the form of empathetic education afforded by books, the community *must* maintain its signifying system in order to understand their limited range of experiences. As Jonas and the Giver demonstrate, access to the historical narrative teaches them both the content of memory and how to build their own memories and perspectives of the world. Though the community rejects their historical past, voluntarily living with social amnesia, they create a figure that mimics the form and functions of the book and social memory: the Receiver of

[40] Piper, *Book Was There* p. 43.

Memory. The Receiver acts likes Chaucer's "olde bokes," holding inside his body all of the memories "of the whole world" extending "back, and back, and back" (98).[41] More interesting than the creation of a single person responsible for holding an entire world's memories (which has been discussed in various ways, at length) is the way the Receiver's preservation and transfer of memories takes on the physical, tactile nature of reading from books. The Receiver's transfer of memories – performed by touch and received as a lived experience – recreates the type of bookish interface. Further, while the Receiver takes on the forms and functions of the books for the community, the narrative investigates the nature of historical, social knowledge, claiming that "Memories are forever" (180). In *The Giver*, memories both "need to be shared" and must exist somewhere (193). The creation of the Receiver as a source of knowledge impersonates the social function of the book, while the design of the Receiver as a transmitting receptable of knowledge impersonates the bookishness of the book. Ultimately, in creating a person who holds all of historical narrative inside the bounds of his body, *The Giver* argues that the book, in physical shape and social function, is the ideal vessel for maintaining social memory.

Their use of precise language and strategically designed objects is an attempt to reduce extraneous meaning afforded by words and signs, thus allowing the Community to exist with social amnesia without feeling their lack of social memory. A reduced lexicon and externally scaffolded signs of identity reduces the slippage between signifier and signified. A primary method of identification in *The Giver*, and one that supplements their lack of books and historical narrative, is the series of objects they use to signify growth as individuals and as members of the social group. The objects are laden with meaning, and they expose the way the Community centers their identities in objects around them rather than in internal, personal traits or experiences. The children receive these objects at the annual Ceremony, during which the children's positions in the Community are formally announced. In addition to hair ribbons, under garments, and assignment-badges, notable objects include the Ceremony of Fours' jacket, which has buttons down the back, "so that they would have to help each other dress and would learn interdependence" (52). At seven, the children's back-button jacket is replaced by a front-button jacket, "the first sign of independence, the first very visible symbol of growing up" (and at eight, the front-buttons are

[41] And as Julia Panko points out, the "three-dimensionality of the book also allows it to function as an archival space." "The Tactility of Books." *Unbound*, April 16, 2012. https://futurebook.mit.edu/2012/04/the-tactility-of-books/. Accessed July 4, 2021.

smaller, marking their increased physical development and maturity) (52). Each child receives their own object, yet while they are received with an individual form of pride, they do more to signify their individual identity as it falls within the larger social schema. They represent the child's age as well as the child's expected aptitude as a social member, including the time since they began studying "precision of language" and participating in dream telling (at age three). These objects signify personal and social identity by communicating what individuals can rightfully expect from each other. The sense of community offered by this system replaces opportunities to build the individual identity denied them while living with social amnesia.

Moreover, the jackets' design both represents *and* performs the child's expected role in the social group: By forcing Fours to help each other with their buttons, the jacket represents their growing ability to rely on each other while also forcing them to rely on each other. This signifying power is repeated in the Sevens' front-button jackets, encouraging them to act independently while also being a "sign of independence." The social performance and signification offered by the objects, also represented by the bike received at the Ceremony of Nines, which is a "powerful emblem of moving gradually out into the Community, away from the protective family unit," demonstrates the type of mimetically defined identity used within the Community to create and maintain Sameness (52). By connecting prefab identities to prefab objects, they attempt to concretize the slippage between signifier and signified —when people and places are marked by these objects, what you see is what you get. Similar to how the revisionist history in *Fahrenheit 451* offers the illusion of security and camaraderie, relegating identity to external objects (rather than internal traits or personal choice) maintains the Community's idea of "Sameness," order, and predictability while allowing the illusion of community. Also, as a dystopian framework controlling social memory, *The Giver*'s mimetically defined identities limits how members of the Community are able to envision their standards of living and their relation to the world around them. Recognizing the Community's prioritization of objects, or their performance of identity via objects, reveals both how the Community also treats words like objects and, ultimately, how this identity system comes into conflict with the idea of the book.

Using objects to maintain a mimetic identity system relies on collectively agreed upon understanding of what those objects signify. In *The Giver*, understanding what objects represent and how to respond to them is mandated by Book of Rules and performed via the concept of "precision of language." However, the rules about "precision" and truth-telling show how they

also treat words like objects that have specific, definable features and boundaries, a fallacy that maintains (rather than challenges) their social amnesia. When Jonas asks his parental units, "Do you love me?" they are exasperated and say that he, "of all people" knows to consider precision of language (159). His mother explains that Jonas has "used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it's become almost obsolete," and reminds him that "our community can't function smoothly if people don't use precise language … Do you understand why it's inappropriate to use a word like 'love'?" (159-60). The community treats words like objects in that each has an acceptable, universally understood meaning and application; here, words have objectivity in that they signify a fixed, stable signified. When a word becomes (or already is) unstable, it is eradicated; and, as with other objects in the Community, when a word is misused, the offender is subject to punishment. "Love" has become as obsolete as the snow that Jonas encounters in his first interaction with the Receiver (which, he says, "became obsolete when they adopted climate control [106]); because it doesn't serve a social or natural function, it is rendered useless, "inappropriate," and a danger to the smooth "functioning" of the Community. The rules about precision of language, and especially about using obsolete signs, are reinforced in the same way as rules about other objects, a suggestion made more poignant as spoken by Jonas' mother, who works in the Department of Justice and is "responsible for adherence to the rules" (16). While adults are subjected to public shaming over the Community's speaker system, children and the elderly are punished for misspeaking with a "regulated system of smacks with the discipline wand: a thin, flexible weapon that stung painfully when it was wielded" (69). Even though the policing of some objects, like bikes, is often lenient, Jonas recollects that his friend Asher had been punished so severely for misusing words at the age of three that, "for a period of time, [he] stopped talking altogether" (70).[42] The severity of punishment shows how seriously the Community considers words as capable of carrying one-to-one signifying power; in the Community, each word has a meaning, and it is to be reserved for that specific application. Like buttons and bikes, words are

[42] The goal of creating clear, concrete links between signifier and signified is also portrayed in their commitment to truth telling. Uncomfortable with the dishonesty allowed by his new position as the Receiver of Memory, Jonas recalls that he "had been trained since earliest childhood, since his earliest learning of language, never to lie. It was an integral part of the learning of precise speech" (89). Precision, including clarity and honesty, is a core tenet in their use of language, and though honesty seems to imply awareness –because nothing it kept from them—the narrative shows how a dedication to honesty is shallow when language is limited.

treated as definitely signifying resources that can be applied or misused to the benefit or detriment of the Community. And, just like someone who breaks the rules more than once, when one of these word-objects does not perform in a way that iterates the social system, it is released.

The assignment of identity through outwardly created identities, reinforced by a ritual Ceremony, ceremonial objects, and precise signifiers, creates the illusion of social connectedness but, rather than allowing the group to grow together, it stunts their growth. In other words, the methods and interfaces through which they make meaning do not help them understand their experiences or their world. By basing their identities in objects and a shallow lexicon, people in the Community have abandoned individual subjectivity; they see each other in terms of objects rather than individually significant subjects. Rather than building identities and relationships from internal sources and shared narratives, their relations to each other and to the world are defined by objects and object-like words. This includes their own names, as performed in the Ceremony of Loss and Murmur-of-Replacement: When someone has died unexpectedly, like a boy who drowned in the river, the "entire community had performed the Ceremony of Loss together, murmuring the name Caleb throughout an entire day, less and less frequently, softer in volume, as the long and somber day went on, so that the little Four seemed to fade away gradually from everyone's consciousness" (56). In the Community, names are assigned from a list, so no two people share the same name; they also recycle names after an elderly person dies, by passing the name to a newchild. Caleb's identity is bound to his name, a concrete signifier referring to that specific member of the Community. The ceremony that approximates grieving and release is bound by the objectively signifying sign, "Caleb"; through a ceremonial repetition and fading of the sign, both sign and its referent are retired from the collective consciousness. The child's entire identity is linked to the sign, "Caleb," and erasing his presence from the Community is a simple matter of erasing the word from use. The ease with which they perform his erasure suggests how clearly his identity is tied to outward signifiers, like his name, and how shallow their relationships to one another are: "Caleb" the sign may have significance, but Caleb the child is a nonexistent entity (before or after his death).[43]

[43] One exception to this may be the Ceremony of Release for the elderly, performed when someone reaches a prescribed age and is scheduled for euthanasia. This ceremony includes a recitation of what that person did during their life – including their job and if they had any members of a family unit. When talking about one of these ceremonies with Jonas, an elderly woman, X, passes verdict on Roberts's life, saying it was boring. It may be that these ceremonies do celebrate an individual's personal achievements or personality,

The naming system reduces individuals to signifiers so they may be neatly disposed of and recycled in alignment with the Community's social system; the naming system also sustains social amnesia by denying the type of intergenerational, historical narrative afforded by individual subjectivity. After Caleb's death, the opposite ritual is performed when the name/sign is brought back into lexical circulation in its assignment to a newchild; in a "Murmur-of-Replacement Ceremony," the name is repeated "for the first time since the loss: softly and slowly at first, then faster and with greater volume … It was as if the first Caleb were returning" (56-57). Newchild Caleb 2.0 is assigned to Caleb 1.0's parents, suggesting that the sign "Caleb" now refers to "the child of these parents" no matter who actually fulfills that role in the Community. Names, as objective signifiers, refer less to individual subjects and more to roles withing the social structure. Only one person can inhabit each role at a time, and it has little to do with that person's traits or abilities. While each person's job assignment and spouses are chosen carefully through committee, their base identity – designated by their name—is externally and superficially assigned, like a badge one wears. The name as a socially signifier is iterated in the ceremonial repetition Jonas experiences when he is assigned as Receiver of Memory, and "With the chant," Jonas considers, "the Community was accepting him and his new role, giving him life" (81). Accompanied by a mixture of pride and fear, Jonas acknowledges that "He did not know what he was to become" (81). The chanting occurs because of Jonas' "new role" which will result in some sort of new "becom[ing]." His position in the social structure is changing drastically enough to necessitate a sign repetition ritual, demonstrating again that signs are tied more to someone's socially, externally defined identity rather than their individual, internally defined identity. Because "Jonas" the sign refers to a position in the Community rather than to Jonas the boy, it must be ritually redefined to avoid becoming obsolete. They are not celebrating the achievement of Jonas as an individually defined subject; the ritualized naming system works to adapt the signifying outfits that people wear so that people continue to make sense. The attempt to erase the slippage between signifier and signified by orienting themselves through concretely signifying objects and signs, again, erases the sociality of identity, limiting how they relate themselves to the people and world around them.

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but I tend to think that reciting someone's assigned role and assigned family members is simply a reaffirming of the person's compliance within the system that assigns (rather than allows) personal choice. It is also worth considering that, during Asher's ceremony of twelve, the speaker recites some of Asher's various shenanigans; while this may seem to point to his individual traits, the stories are told only to reassert Asher's success in abandoning these quirks and assimilating into the accepted social system.

More to the point, the existence of their mimetic signifying system demonstrates the narrative's argument for the book; in the absence of books and historical narrative, the Community must reduce its existence to the most basic elements of life—even if the resulting life is shallowly lived. The Community in *The Giver* relies on mimetic signification similarly to how the community in Fahrenheit 451 relies on audio/visual media; because both communities reject lived experience and social memory in favor of externally scaffolded identities, both suffer from the ahistorical stagnancy that results from being locked in the eternal present. The major difference for *The Giver*, however, is how they create systems to preserve and sustain their social amnesia while minimizing how they feel or experience its side effects. In addition to a precision of language and externally scaffolded objects, the Community created the "Receiver of Memory." The Receiver acts as a receptable of social memory so the Community can live with social amnesia while retaining the essential educational functions of social memory. They turn to him for wisdom about the past without experiencing it for themselves, thus acknowledging the useful aspects of social memory while rejecting its ability to inform social identity. Moreover, his use as a receptacle, who transfers his wisdom through a tactile interaction, acknowledges the role of the physical vessel in maintaining and sharing social memory. The Receiver of Memory is a book surrogate that works to maintain their dystopian social amnesia while keeping social memory close enough to be useful. Ultimately, though they acknowledge the necessity and authority of books as keepers of social remembrance, demonstrated in their reliance on other objects and other receptacles of memory, these replacements are shallow without the signifying power of experience and interaction afforded by the physical book.

### *'Necessary Reference Volumes'*

Despite the Community's intentional maintenance of ahistoricity and social amnesia, they use books for specific purposes. That the Community still uses books in any capacity demonstrates an understanding of (and respect for) when and how books serve social functions; this acknowledgment is also reflected in their creation and use of the Receiver as a replacement for books. Jonas' perplexity when seeing the books lining the Giver's[44] home demonstrates how the

[44] The Giver, who was the Receiver until Jonas was assigned as the next Receiver of Memory. The characters' names can become confusing because Lowry's novel is *The Giver*, the character who shares memories with Jonas is called the Giver, and the position he holds in the community is called the Receiver.

Community perceives books in the same terms as their utilitarian furnishings: "Jonas stared at them. He couldn't imagine what the thousands of pages contained. Could there be rules beyond the rules that governed the Community? Could there be more descriptions of offices and factories and committees?" (94). Jonas' reaction reveals how he understands the form and function of books. Only informed by the "necessary reference volumes" kept in each home, "a dictionary, and the thick community volume which contained descriptions of every office, factory, building, and committee. And the Book of Rules, of course," Jonas believes books serve a purely social, educational function by providing the type of objective descriptions enforced in verbal exchange (including their "sharing of feelings" and "dream-telling" rituals) (94). In fact, Jonas cannot "imagine" what else they could contain, suggesting that books serve a very specific, informative purpose in the Community. Books in the Community, as rule and reference volumes, are versions of the book that retain the solidity, presence, and preservational qualities of material books while excising the type of content that inspires creative or imaginative thinking. In keeping the essential bookishness of the book, the "thick community volumes" serve the single purpose of communicating essential, descriptive information needed to maintain communal productivity, but only within the approved mimetic signifying system. In this way, the reference and rule books still perform the social function of providing a common sort of narrative by which they understand each other and their place in the Community. Like the firemen's rulebooks in Fahrenheit 451, these volumes co-opt the book's form to narrative's new, restrictive social purpose. It is, however, in this co-opting that the book's authority as a physical form is evident: like Fahrenheit 451, the Community has technology to communicate in other ways, and does not. Even when the book must be censored to maintain the social amnesia necessary for dystopian ahistoricity, the book is still an effective tool for creating and defining social cohesion. Moreover, the presence of books in an educational, objective capacity outlines, again, what purpose they think books serve in the Community and, more interestingly, why they created the Receiver of Memory.

Even within the Community's rules about precision of language, Jonas' reaction to the books demonstrates how the books inspire metaphorical thinking that breaks from their use of objective signs and mimetic signifiers. Moreover, his imaginative response is tied to their essential bookish form. He is in awe of the books, which number in the "hundreds – perhaps thousands,"

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Though sometimes I am talking about the position created by the Community (the Receiver of Memory), the narrative refers to the character as the Giver, so I will call him the Giver as often as makes sense.

because he can't imagine there being enough utilitarian information to fill so many of these "precisely defined" vessels. He expresses his awe in their number and also in their "titles embossed in shiny letters" (94). When imagining what textual information so many books may communicate, he imagines the "thousands of pages" and visualizes the pages "containing" the mysterious content. Jonas is initially taken aback by their number, which doesn't align with his understanding of how much information exists in the world, and he expresses this awe by considering the decorative details on their spines and the storage-like function of their pages. Even for Jonas, who is as un-metaphorical as they come, the mundane features of the book's design inspire awe and influences his understanding of their metaphorical potential as containers of knowledge. Despite his very utilitarian understanding of what books are for, Jonas still imagines the book as a vessel in which something is contained and kept safe for use, and, even for a brief moment, he finds wonder in the shiny, embossed titles stamped into their spines. In this way, even in a climate of precise language the bookishness of the book inspires metaphorical thinking beyond the book's textual content.

The Giver's home is lined with books, despite the fact that he already carries all of the memories in the world. The effect, I would suggest, is to create a bookish space that helps to amplify Jonas' experience receiving historical narrative. His "hundreds—perhaps thousands" of books fill the bookcases, which "completely covered" the walls and "reached to the ceiling' (94). The room, lined floor-to-ceiling with books, becomes a space surrounded and wrapped in textual content, the "titles embossed in shiny letters" glowing out into the space. The books compliment the Receivers decorative furniture, oozing with superfluous signifying meaning, and have the additional effect of wrapping the room and its inhabitants within the bindings of a book. The books, though we never see Jonas or the Receiver open them, leave an impression on Jonas' thinking, a testament to the influential effect of the book on an otherwise objective, precise mind. In their first conversation, the Receiver invites Jonas to ask questions, but "In his mind, Jonas had questions. A thousand. A million questions. As many questions as there were books lining the walls. But he did not ask one, not yet" (97). Only minutes after he has entered the room, Jonas begins positioning the books into the middle of metaphors, calling on their overwhelming presence to represent the overwhelming confusion he feels about his situation. "Even trained for years as they all had been in precision of language," Jonas is influenced by the books' presence, as he turns from precision of language to incalculable numbers (113). The bookish space, created by the presence of books

themselves, serves to amplify the nature of their exchanges, which is itself bookish in its tactile immersion.

### *Archive as Dystopian Technology of ~~Memory~~ Amnesia*

The books throughout the Community and in the Giver's home offer insight into how books are understood to work; they also suggest how the Receiver of Memory was created as a technology of memory that mimics the social purposes of the book while maintaining social amnesia. In social purpose and material form, the Receiver mimics the book: The Receiver serves the socially productive, informative function that they understand books to serve; he acts as a preservational receptacle of information; and he transmits his content in a touch-based, tactile interaction imitating the experience of using a material book. First, it is important to acknowledge that the Community consciously created the Receiver, likely with the same form of genetic manipulation that removed differences in hair, eye, and skin color. The Giver tells Jonas that "memories once existed [somewhere else] before Receivers were created" (131). And, much like the "necessary reference volumes" kept in each house, the Receiver is created to be available when the Community is "faced with something that they have not experienced before" (130). As an example, the Giver cites a petition to increase the birthrate in order to increase resource production, saying that in such cases, "they call upon me to use the memories and advise them" (130). When faced with a situation about which they have no experience or knowledge, the Community acknowledges that it needs more than factual data projections, that their mimetically oriented relationship with the world is inadequate, and that social memory is a necessary tool. Indeed, when Jonas asks the receiver why the two of them "have to hold these memories," the Giver says the memories are the source of "wisdom": "Without wisdom I could not fulfill my function of advising the Committee of Elders when they call upon me" (140). By turning to the Receiver (indeed by "creating" a Receiver in the first place), the Community acknowledges the value of social memory and, implicitly, of the receptacles that carry historical narrative. The role of the Receiver of Memory, as a reference volume they turn to when they have questions about social development, displays the narrative's underlying argument for the role of material books in social growth –even if its content is too messy to align with their desired social amnesia.

To serve his social purpose, the Receiver becomes a preservational receptacle of memory inside of which the Community's historical narrative is contained, which allows the Community

to develop and maintain an ahistorical social amnesia. The amount of knowledge carried by the Receiver points to the extent to which they rely on him as a keeper of historical narrative and also, conversely, to the extent to which the Community has rejected social memory. The Giver explains to Jonas that he will be "transmitting … the memories of the whole world … Before you, before me, before the previous Receiver, and generations before him" (98). The Receiver, as a receptacle of memory, maintains memories that are both spatially defined – "of the whole world" – and temporally defined – "before me, before you…and generations before." Because of the awareness afforded him by the memories, he is aware of his position in the world and in time, but Jonas' social amnesia prevents him from grasping either concept:

> "The whole world?" he asked. "I don't understand. Do you mean not just us? Not just the Community? Do you mean Elsewhere, too?-" He tried, in his mind, to grasp the concept. "I'm sorry, sir. I don't understand exactly. Maybe I'm not smart enough. I don't know what you mean when you say 'the whole world' or 'generations before him.' I thought there was only us. I thought there was only now." (98)

At this point, Jonas is still operating on the principles of honesty and accuracy required by a "precision of language," yet he lacks the spatial and temporal understanding to make sense of the "whole world" and "before me." When Jonas doesn't understand what "the whole world" means, his first term of comparison is "not just us? Not just the Community?," showing how his understanding of the world, spatially and temporally, is bound up in his relationship with and within the ahistorical Community.[45] As Jonas says, "I thought there was only us," referring to how disconnected the Community is from anything outside itself. Moreover, though the Giver says he will transmit memories "of the whole world," which is spatial, he describes the experience in largely temporal terms: "Before you, before me, before the previous Receiver, and generations before him." Jonas, again, struggles and fails to understand what the Giver means by both "before" and "generations before him." Jonas' admission that he "thought there was only now," demonstrates the Community's ahistorical existence as well as their social amnesia. Moreover, this vision of social amnesia is made possible because the Receiver, as a receptacle of memory, serves the material functions of the book.

[45] His only word for the space outside the Community is "Elsewhere," a capitalized, proper name signifying, to him, the space beyond the Community's walls. Though Elsewhere actually signifies death, to Jonas, it is a spatial designation constructed in relation to the Community.

Appreciating the role of materiality in the Receiver's construction helps explain how the Community is able to maintain balance between its social amnesia and social memory. The Receiver imitates the bookishness of the book in how he understands the memories to exist inside him: "He put his hands to his own face, to his chest. "No. Here, in my being. Where the memories are" (132). Further, when explaining how he will share the memories with Jonas, he describes it as transmitting "all the memories I have within me" (97). Not only is he preservational in what he contains (memories of the whole world, back and back), the Receiver performs preservational bookishness in that he contains them specifically inside the protective binding of his body. The memories are also expressed in physically quantified terms, echoing Jonas' observation of the "hundreds—perhaps thousands" of books: The Giver says he is "so weighted with them" and after giving a memory to Jonas (thus transferring it from his own body), he feels like it is "A little weight off this old body" (104). The effect is mirrored in Jonas, who, after months of receiving memories, feels "weighted with new knowledge" (125). Being weighed down by emotions is a common metaphor for the burden of knowledge, but in *The Giver* the expression is used to express the Giver's (and Jonas') physical perception of the memories they carry. And, like a book whose pages are ripped out, the Receiver becomes lighter when the memories are removed and rebound into Jonas, who feels himself becoming heavier.

While the representation of memories as physically weighted items adds to appreciating the Receiver of Memory as a bookish technology of memory, it also adds to understanding how the Receivers act as external "*lieux de memoire*, sites of memory" that replace "*milieux de memoire*, real environments of memory."[46] In maintaining the memory of the "whole world," "back and back," the Receiver acts as a living, material archive that represents, in Nora's terms, the "meticulous reconstitution" of historical narrative. The Community is "delegating to the archive the responsibility of remembering," using him as a "breathtaking storehouse of a material stock of what it would be impossible for us to remember, an unlimited repertoire of what might need to be recalled .[47] Recognizing the Receiver as an external site for an "unlimited repertoire" of memory offers an explanation for their balance of social memory and social amnesia. He is a receptacle of memory, and as an external storehouse, he allows the Community's social memory to be externally maintained (if not actively scaffolded). Remembering that "the less memory is experienced from

[46] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7.
[47] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13.

the inside, the more it exists *only* through its exterior scaffolding and outward signs," we see how the Receiver is able to separate the Community from its historical narrative in order to maintain social amnesia.[48] The effect of relegating memory to a purely archival form, for Nora and in *The Giver*, is that memory loses its connection to social and personal identity: Caleb is erased when his name is no longer spoken, and Jonas thinks there is "only us" and "only now."

While the Receiver acts as an external archive that can both maintain social amnesia and preserve social memory, how he filters information to make this work shows how the book precludes this type of filtered consumption of historical narrative. While his primary purpose is to inform the Elders on issues in which his wisdom may be useful, he performs this duty by also censoring and filtering what he tells them. The Giver tells Jonas that, when called on for wisdom, he doesn't "describe the memory," because "They don't want to hear about pain. They just seek the advice. I simply advised them against increasing the population" (141). He only tells the Elders the information they need to make their decisions, translating what he knows of historical narrative into the precise, informative language that they understand and accept. He doesn't offer a revisionist history as much as a non-history, but the separation between fact and fiction allows social amnesia. In designing the Receiver and his function, the Community develops a system of anti-social social memory that uses the most useful parts of the book while rejecting the aspects non-compliant with sameness – namely, the identifying experience offered by connection to social memory. The Receiver is a technology of memory in how he retains and preserves social memory and makes it available for social development, but he is also a technology of amnesia in how he divorces wisdom from experience, "advice" from "pain."

In this way, the Receiver is a technology of memory optimized for the dystopian project. Superior to the book because he can filter the aspects of historical narrative that afford shared identity and historical connection, the Receiver, saves the Community from pain. When Jonas asks why everyone can't share the memories, the Giver explains, "then everyone would be burdened and pained. They don't want that. And that's the real reason The Receiver is so vital to them, and so honored. They selected me — and you — to lift that burden from themselves" (142). The Community "jettisons the painful psychological fetters of history" by transferring them to an external carrier capable of filtering the wisdom from the pain. In his dual capacity as technology

[48] Nora, "Between Memory and History," 13, emphasis mine.

of memory and of amnesia, the Receiver looks "back in order to move forward," translating the pain he feels into transformative and productive information for the greater good.

### *'Memories Need to be Shared': Tactile Bookishness*

The Receiver's purpose for the community is essential in understanding the way he maintains both amnesia and memory, and the tactile nature through which he transmits information is essential to his bookishness. Jonas' experiences inside of memories are immersive and inspire empathetic thought. Though this is, in part, attributed to the content of the memories, the exchange is explained and made possible by physically interacting with the Receiver. How the Receiver transfers memories via touch is similar to the interaction with a physical book and enables the immersive experience that follows. When he prepares to "transmit the memory of snow," the Giver, "placed his hands on Jonas's bare back" (100).[49] As Michael Camille has proposed, before the cognitive performance of reading texts begins, the book is first and foremost touched.[50] The physical form of the transmission is consistent when Jonas shares memories with the newchild, Gabriel, as Jonas "pressed his hands into Gabriel's back and tried to remember sunshine. … Aching from the effort, he forced the memory of warmth into the thin, shivering body in his arms" (221). The tactile form of transmission reinforces the Receiver's depiction as a physical casing in which memories are stored and from which memories are removed. I also suggest that this form

[49] The Receiver consistently refers to memory-sharing as transmitting or transferring: "my job is to transmit to you all the memories I have within me," and "The Giver would transfer every memory of courage and strength that he could to Jonas" (97, 197). The language of transmission and transfer seems appropriate because the memories move from the Receiver to Jonas; because the memories are discussed as physical items that have weight, it's easy to envision them moving through space, from one body to another. The language of transmission, though, has some un-bookish, electronic undertones, like a radio signal or an email that is transferred from one IP address to another (which, while still having electronic presence are more ephemeral than he pages of a book). This verbiage perhaps points to the Receiver as a container than a book, as textual content isn't erased once it's been read; however, despite the almost electronic connotations of transmission, the exchange is a physical.

[50]Michael Camille, "Sensations of the page: imaging technologies and medieval illuminated manuscripts," in *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, ed. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998) pp. 33-53. (However, I refuse to acknowledge that "between covers" invites "the titillation of intellectual and sexual reproduction," proposed by Susan Stewart. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993) p. 37.)

of transmission is bookish in how it allows a form of immersive, interactive experience that mimics reading from a physical book.[51]

When Jonas receives a memory, he becomes immersed in the experience; he sees and feels its contents, which expands his vocabulary and understanding of the world. In this way, *The Giver* suggests that wisdom can only come from experiencing something[52]; also, though, it suggests that the book offers this type of educational experience. With the Receiver's hands on his back, Jonas does not just learn about the memory; he experiences the memory. He is "filled with energy," and feels "the sharp intake of frigid air" and "cold air swirling around his entire body" (101-102). Jonas senses that "the touch of the man's hands seemed to have disappeared," but he also senses that he is somehow in two places at once:

> One part of his consciousness knew that he was still lying there, on the bed, in the Annex room. Yet another, separate part of his being was upright now, in a sitting position, and beneath him he could feel that he was not on the soft decorated bedcovering at all, but rather seated on a flat, hard surface. His hands now held (though at the same time they were still motionless at his sides) a rough, damp rope. / And he could see, though his eyes were closed. (102)

Both on the bed and on the sledding hill, Jonas describes the experience as being in two places at once. The transmission offers a tactile sense of the cold air and hard sled, while retaining his consciousness in the Receiver's room. The split consciousness is made possible, the narrative suggests, by the Receiver's physical touch on his back. In this way, the tactile transmission mimics reading from a book because of its unique combination of material object and textual content. He accesses the information by physically touching its vessel, and he engages with the text within his subconscious mind.

The intensity of Jonas' experience inside the memory makes some sense when considering the cognitive effects of reading. Drawing on Bloch's work on the effect of dreaming and daydreams, Hanson says Jonas' memory-experience is felt "akin to an intense daydream, but the cognitive result is closer to the anticipation engendered by the 'sharpened or condensed' images

[51] Robert P. Waxler and Martha C. Pennington argue that, "The reduction in or loss of the physical side of reading changes the reading act, making it (literally and figuratively) more mechanical and less embodied and sensual." *Why Reading Books Still Matters: The Power of Literature in Digital Times* (London: Routledge, 2017) p. 95.

[52] The centrality of sensory experience is also represented by Jonas' "Capacity to See Beyond" and the Receiver's "Capacity to Head Beyond," sensory-based gifts that mark Jonas and the Giver as capable of experiencing the memories stored by the Receiver (79).

of literature."[53] Jonas' experience in the memory mimics a daydream in its split-consciousness – he, on some level, imagines himself somewhere other than his body. But I think Hanson is accurate in attributing the memory's intensity to its relationship with literature; because the Receiver is designed in bookish ways, the process of sharing memories mimics the cognitive activity of reading bookish content.[54] Moreover, though Hanson only notes the cognitive effects of the transmission, the transmission begins with physical interaction with the bookish Receiver. Literary and historic narrative are depicted as the content which inspires productive, inspiring cognitive learning, but the book is presented as the material form that makes this possible.

This detail also suggests why the book can't be used to both maintain social memory and social amnesia: In *The Giver*, bookish information teaches readers how to understand things they haven't directly experienced. In a way, reading from a book trains a person how to have a fuller understanding of the world. The effects are both immediate and develop over time. In Jonas' memory of sledding, he observed the landscape and, "Even as he thought the word "mound," his new consciousness told him hill … and he understood instantly that now he was going downhill. No voice made an explanation. The experience explained itself to him" (103). Within the memory, his vocabulary builds organically, similar to learning words encountered in narrative based on their context. By "explaining itself," the narrative of the memory teaches Jonas about things he wasn't even looking to learn; that his "consciousness told him" new words as he moves through the memory suggests that the memory's immersive nature contributes to the learning. After months of training with the Giver, Jonas asks about the last child selected to become the Receiver; as the Giver starts telling a story, Jonas thinks that "Rosemary, and her laughter, had begun to seem real to him, and he pictured her looking up from the bed of memories, shocked" (178). Rosemary, someone he has never met, has "begun to seem real" enough that he can picture her sitting on the bed. Contrasting his inability to even imagine what is in the thousands of pages of books in the Giver's room when he first arrived at the annex, Jonas is able to construct an image of Rosemary

[53] Hanson, "Utopian Function of Memory," 56.

[54] As Hanson notes, this might be a narrative trick for handling how much Jonas needs to learn in a relatively short novel, "Jonas does not have time to utilize the literature available to him as the new Receiver, but his experience of receiving memories closely approximates the Utopian effects of daydreams and literature described by Bloch" ("Utopian Function of Memory," 56). In this way, the memory-transmission system in The Giver allows Jonas to experience literary content without the perhaps more leisurely act of reading books for the entire narrative.

based purely on the Giver's stories. Because of his experience with memory, Jonas has learned how to learn and how to imagine. His contact with historical narrative and his growing sense of social memory enable him to make his own, new memories. The Giver's bookish transfer of memory allows Jonas to experience real environments of memory, which give him the ability to develop his own, internally sourced memories and experiences of the world.

### 3.4 The Book as Interface

In 1994 Sven Birkerts rang one of the first tolls in the book's supposed death knell, claiming that, "Suddenly it feels like everything is poised for change as the slower world that many of us grew up with dwindles in the rearview mirror."[55] For Birkerts, this change of pace is in line with "the stable hierarchies of the printed page—one of the defining norms of that [slower] world."[56] Though it was first published forty years before Birkerts' *Gutenberg Elegies*, *Fahrenheit 451* plays out his anxieties about a community "in thrall to the technologies that manipulate it" running away with the simple pleasure of reading a book for leisure. Published just one year earlier, The Giver gives voice to his fear that "Wisdom: the knowing not of facts but of truths about human nature and the processes of life" will be lost in the face of evolving technologies; Jonas' experience with precision of language performs Birkerts theory that, without books, we will "no longer think in these larger and necessarily imprecise terms."[57] However, as many have articulated, the book has not died.[58]

I might suggest, though, that these two narratives do depict a 'what might have been' if our media had evolved differently. There's no questioning that our technologies for consuming media of all kinds has and continues to evolve at a snowballing pace. Despite this dissertation's theme, argument, and (I hope) expressed idolization of the book as a material form, it owes much of its completion to an e-reader.[59] The device allowed me to steal back many of Price's "in-between moments" by reading while waiting in lines or waiting for meetings to start; likewise, I could highlight with a swipe of my finger and export the notes in seconds. Probably the greatest benefit

[55] Sven Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies* p. 3.
[56] Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies*, p. 3.
[57] Birkerts, *The Gutenberg Elegies*, p. 74.
[58] Leah Price, "Dead Again," *The New York Times*, Aug 10, 2012. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/leahprice/files/price_dead_again_nytimes.pdf. See also "Chapter 1. Hinged, Bound, Covered," note 41
[59] Kobo Clara, to be exact. Highly recommend.

of the e-reader's interface is how I could switch between pleasure reading and scholarly reading without talking myself into getting off the couch; rewarding myself with textual breaks was easy, and bargaining with myself to get work done became less painful. The difference between Birkerts' predicted textless wasteland and my (arguably) productive digital reading is how evolving devices have clung to rather than rejected the book's bookish form.

In *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Giver*, we see not only what is lost when social narrative is censored, we see what is lost without the experience of holding and touching a material book. These threats to social and individual memory, and Birkerts anxieties about unbookish technology have not come to pass, because the book has proven to be a "powerful form of residual media actively shaping digital culture."[60] Rather than rejecting our codexical heritage, technological advancements have leaned towards the book as an apparatus. As Jessica Pressman points out, "In the realm of big, digital data and highly visual interfaces, the symbol and vocabulary of the book still reigns. Though e-readers could have developed in multiple ways, they adopted the visual and linguistic semiotics of the codex."[61] If the book is a powerful interface because its tactility offers an interactive, embodied experience with textual content, something similar is happening with the screen of an e-reader, which Borsuk claims is "fundamentally interactive, tactile, and multisensory: the reader must manipulate them to experience their full effect."[62] If, further, the book affords leisure because it allows you to pause the experience, think, and ponder, the e-reader's highlight, annotate, and even "dog-ear" features afford a similar cognitive experience. I still prefer the

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[60] Jessica Pressman, *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020): EPub, "Introduction."

[61] Pressman, *Bookishness*, "How and Now Bookishness." Indeed, "From annotation and bookmarking to black text on creamy 'pages,' interfaces like that of the Kindle borrow a number of the physical book's structures, remediating them in the digital environment while flattening the codex to the dimensions of a thin wax tablet" (Borsuk, *The Book*, "The Book as Interface"). The issue of digitizing the book has been especially important in medieval studies, which generally agree that digital replication of an object produces a new artefact rather than a copy. Nonetheless, many have discussed how the experience with a book can (or should, or shouldn't) be translated into an e-experience. See: Elaine Treharne, "Fleshing out the Text: The Transcendent Manuscript in the Digital Age," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 4.4 (2013): 465-78; Elaine Treharne and Claude Willan, *Text Technologies: A History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); Stephen G. Nichols, *From Parchment to Cyberspace: Medieval Literature in the Digital Age*, Interventions: New Light on Traditional Thinking 2 (New York: Peter Lang, 2016); and Maura Nolan, "Medieval Habit, Modern Sensation: Reading Manuscripts in the Digital Age," *The Chaucer Review* 47.4 (2013): 465-76.

[62] Borsuk, *The Book*, "The Book as Interface."

material book, particularly when it is practical, affordable, or sentimental. But, by depicting what might have been if our digital future (present?) had actively rejected its bookish inheritance, *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Giver* make an argument for appreciating our e-readerly present –while at the same time positioning that appreciation in relation to the book.

# CHAPTER 4. THE SPACIOUS BOOK: GENERATING SPACE IN PAGES & PORTALS

In *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (1955), a popular children's picture book, Harold decides to go for a walk "in the moonlight," but there "wasn't any moon" and "he needed something to walk on." He solves the problem by using his purple crayon to draw a moon and "a long straight path so he wouldn't get lost."[1] An example of metafiction, this story leans into the idea both that it is fiction and that fiction is created by someone.[2] Harold, himself an element of fiction, creates the narrative by drawing on the pages; whether intentional trees or accidental oceans, Harold generates the narrative as he moves through the world, a form of fictional creation that represents the narrative's constructedness in plain purple lines. Of interest in this chapter is that Harold's metafictional world is represented as three-dimensional: Harold's first two actions are to draw a moon, which sits in the background, and a path, which starts wide in the foreground and recedes into a vanishing point on the distant horizon. Although it exists on the two-dimensional pages of the book, Harold's world is drawn as if it is three-dimensional. Even in a piece of metafiction self-consciously aware of its fictional construction and textual existence, the inside of the book manifests as a place with depth and distance. Harold and the Purple Crayon exists on the pages of

[1] Crockett Johnson. *Harold and the Purple Crayon* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955). (unpaginated).
[2] Patricia Waugh offers an influential definition of "metafiction": "Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality." *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Methuen, 1984, Rpt. London: Routledge, 2002), p. 2. Metafiction generally exists as an umbrella term for any such self-conscious narratives, though more specifically, metafiction is reserved for commenting on a text's fictionality while metanarrative refers more specifically to self-conscious reflection on the act of narrating. See also, Ansgar Nünning, "Towards a Definition, a Typology and an Outline of the Functions of Metanarrative Commentary," in *The Dynamics of Narrative Form: Studies in Anglo- American Narratology*, ed. John Pier, Narratologia 4 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 11–57, and Monika Fludernik, "Metanarrative and Metafictional Commentary: From Metadiscursivity to Metanarration and Metafiction," in *Poetica* 35 (2003): 1–39. For texts that are not necessarily textual, including artwork or material creations, Werner Wolf has proposed "metareference" as a "heuristically motivated umbrella term for all meta-phenomena occurring in the arts and media." "Metareference across Media: The Concept, its Transmedial Potentials and Problems, Main Forms and Functions," in *Metareference across Media. Theory and Case Studies Dedicated to Walter Bernhart on the Occasion of his Retirement,* ed. Werner Wolf, Katharina Bantleon, and Jeff Thoss, Studies in Intermediality 4 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 1–85, p. 12.

a book, and yet that book is represented as spacious and spatial. This space allows Harold to wander from his path to a forest, to a mountain, to his bed.

This chapter suggests that the book's various spatial metaphors, namely, the idea that books are portals, windows, and gateways, are fueled by features of the material book's bookishness that allow it to be represented as spacious. In narrative, representations of the book often depict the book as having internal three-dimensional space: a box-like shape, doorlike cover, piles of pages, and deep gutters all contribute to the imaginative idea that one can fall into the internal space of the book.[3] When the book is an apparatus for engaging with narrative text, the page becomes a technology that allows us, "to look through, to transport ourselves into an imaginative space off the page."[4] To consider spacious representations of the book, this chapter analyzes instances of narrative metalepsis in children's literature. Defined most simply as the crossing of narrative levels by characters or narrators, metalepsis implies both that distinct narrative levels exist, and that boundaries or thresholds hold those levels in place.[5] Metalepsis can happen on the relatively unintrusive level of discourse, for example when a narrator offers a narrative digression or a character orally recites a story; these instances tend to be brief or, in general, unintrusive to the narrative structure. Conversely, this chapter is concerned with metalepsis that happens at the "story level," which is more pervasive and obscures the lines between distinct narrative levels.[6] One

[3] For an example of a text that overtly engages with the concept of the book's internal space is the artist book, Real fiction: An enquiry into the bookeresque. The visual narrative, is a series of photographs depicting half-completed and demolished rooms and buildings. Most images include shadowed edges, fade into layered page-edges, or create the illusion of sinking away from the flat page, all strategies that give the impression of the book as a three-dimensional space complicit in harboring the photographed rooms. Claiming "there are two sides to every opening," the book calls attention to the reader's material book as a part of (or passageway to) the represented spaces in the images. Helen Douglas and Telfer Stokes, *Real Fiction: An Enquiry into the Bookeresque*, (New York: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1987).

[4] Piper, *Book Was There*, p. 49.

[5] Narrative metalepsis was first characterized by Gérard Genette, whose work has inspired multiple taxonomies and approaches. See Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980.) The basic definition of metalepsis is generally agreed upon, though its effects and taxonomies – as well as defining narrative levels – has inspired a lot of debate. John Pier has compiled a concise outline of the conversation ("Metalepsis (revised version; uploaded 13 July 2016)", *the living handbook of narratology*, Peter Hühn, et al., eds. Hamburg: Hamburg University. https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/51.html).

[6] On the influence of metalepsis on narrative structure, William Nelles defines metalepsis at the discourse level as "unmarked" and metalepsis at the story level as "distinctly marked." See *Frameworks: Narrative Levels and Embedded Narrative,* American University Studies XIX, General Literature 33 (New York:

manifestation of story-level metalepsis is that which self-consciously calls attention to its own medium, for example, when characters in a television show break the fourth wall by looking at the camera, making apparent eye contact with the viewer. This type of metalepsis both confuses narrative boundaries and calls attention to the material realities of modes of transmission. I argue that, when metalepsis is performed by using a book, one effect is that the book is represented as a spacious material object: In what I'm calling bookish metalepsis, both characters and readers are asked to be aware of the physical space that exists inside and outside of the book. Whether considering the specific object in the reader's hand or the idea of the book in general, bookish metalepsis both builds and confirms culturally understood ideas about the book –including the idea that books are spacious.

The chapter discusses two categories of bookish metalepsis that manifest in children's literature: metafictional picture books, in which the narrative refers to its own material binding, and portal narratives, in which books act as gateways to the space inside books.[7] In children's metafictional narratives, like Mo Willems' *We Are in A Book!* (2010) and Jon Stone's *The Monster at the End of This Book* (1971), the reader's real, material book is used as a metaleptic pivot point between the diegetic characters and the extradiegetic reader.[8] By speaking to and interacting with

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Lang. 1997; Rpt. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020), pp. 153–54). For more on the "mutual contamination" possible in metalepsis, Marie-Laure Ryan, "Metaleptic Machines," in *Avatars of Story,* Electronic Mediations 17 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 2006): pp. 204-30, 246-48; Dorrit Cohn, "Metalepsis and Mise en Abyme," trans. Lewis S. Gleich, *Narrative* 20.1 (2012): 105-114; and Fanfan Chen, "From Hypotyposis to Metalepsis: Narrative Devices in Contemporary Fantastic Fiction," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 44.4 (2008): 394-411.

[7] For studies of children's metafiction, see especially Joe Sutliff Sanders, "The Critical Reader in Children's Metafiction," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 33.3 (2009): 349-61; and Claudia Nelson, "Writing the Reader: The Literary Child in and Beyond the Book," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 31.3 (2006): 222-36. Also, for views on the problematic realism of children's metafiction, Virginie Douglas, "Storytelling and the Adult/Child Relationship in Geraldine McCaughrean's *A Pack of Lies*, or the Dilemma of Children's Fiction," in N*ew Voices in Children's Literature Criticism*, ed. Sebastien Chapleau (Litchfield: Pied Piper, 2004): 79-87; and Dudley Jones, "Only Make-Believe? Lies, Fictions, and Metafictions in Geraldine McCaughrean's *A Pack of Lies* and Philip Pullman's *Clockwork*," in *The Lion and the Unicorn* 23.1 (1999): 86-96.

[8] Several schemas exist to define narrative levels for various purposes (most hinging on if the narrator exist within or without the basic structure). For this chapter, I will be simplifying Genette's basic framework to three relevant levels: the real, external reader exists in the extradiegetic; the characters and narrators exist in the diegetic; any internal narratives encountered by the diegetic characters exist in the hypodiegetic narrative level. For overviews of terminology used for narratives with more complex structures, see John

the reader, characters generate their story's fictional content and do so in three-dimensional terms; like Harold, they design the world they live in and dictate how they move within it. And, because their bookish metalepsis calls attention to the reader's engagement with the material book in their hands, the book is represented as the spatial object inside of which characters can play. Conversely, in portal narratives, including Anna James' series, *Pages & Co.: The Bookwanderers*, Chris Colfer's *Land of Stories* series, and the television show *Wishbone* (1995-1997) the protagonists move from the diegetic to hypodiegetic levels by traveling into the narratives they encounter in their fictional world. In these stories, vivid interactions with books are used to perform metaleptic movement across narrative levels; the characters find themselves in different worlds and changed spaces with books acting as the threshold between reality and fiction. Narratives featuring portal books depict those books as containing entire worlds, and they do so by referencing the book's real bookish features — covers, pages, bindings — as defining and creating space.

Metalepsis in children's literature forces metafictional awareness of or attention to the book's material reality in a way that enables, confirms, and maintains culturally shared patterns in how we understand the book. Children's literature, in particular, is a relevant avenue into considering the metaleptic depiction of three-dimensional space because a variety of conversations in literary studies, material culture studies, and cognitive and pedagogical sciences actively consider the way children think about and learn from the types of visual and material features found in works designed for children. Considering how children understand and respond to immersive or interactive texts, a significant body of work in the cognitive and pedagogical sciences discusses interactive, active, passive, and constructive forms of learning in children of different ages.[9] Many have concluded that interactive pedagogies enhance a student's learning of material.

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Pier, "Narrative Levels (revised version; uploaded 23 April 2014)," in *the living handbook of narratology*. Peter Huhn, et al., eds. (Hamburg: Hamburg University) https://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/32.html.

[9] While the terms active, constructive, interactive, and passive have been used flexibly to describe different forms of learning activities, Michelene T. H. Chi has recently provided a more clear taxonomy: Active activities engage attention by simple techniques like repetition or underlining materials; constructive activities include using learned materials to complete problem sets or written responses; interactive activities involve participating in dialogue with another person or computer system; and passive activities require no type of engagement (e.g., silent reading). See Michelene T. H. Chi, "Active-Constructive-Interactive: A Conceptual Framework for Differentiating Learning Activities. Topics," *Cognitive Science* 1 (2009) 73–105, p. 74-88. These definitions describe, perhaps obviously, the activities performed by the learner and not necessarily the cognitive processes that happen in response (Chi, "Active-Constructive-Interactive," 90).

One such study found that a blend of hands-on and textual content offered the highest, most complex levels of cognitive engagement, allowing students to "sprinkle their reasoning with playfulness, imbue affect in their meaning making, exhibit sensitivity to suffering and personal connections, and consider ethical treatment of animals.[10] In very young children (ages 2.5 - 4), interaction with touchscreens was shown to improve memory of two-dimensional textual or visual content compared to children who were shown the same material without touchscreen interaction,[11] and another set of studies found that children were more likely to ask their parents questions and then retain information when guided by an app rather than reading museum labels alone.[12] This interest in how children learn, or how best to set the stage for learning, is reflected in a number of themes common to children's literature. However, long before modern science took an interest in creating interactive learning environments, children were escaping through wardrobes, down rabbit holes, and into books to engage with literary landscapes.

In fact, similar conversations have found that, across other age groups, picture book narratives for children enable a depth of cognitive engagement similar to the interactivity afforded by hands-on experiments, apps, and immersive play-spaces. Geraldine Burke and Amy Cutter-Mackenzie found that teaching undergraduate education students with picture books led to "inquiry into their embodied experiences with the books" which "awakened an awareness of

[10] Maria Varelas, Lynne Pieper, Amy Arsenault, Christine C. Pappas, and Neveen Keblawe-Shamah, "How Science Texts and Hands-On Explorations Facilitate Meaning Making: Learning From Latina/o Third Graders," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 5110 (2014): 1246–74 p. 1246.

[11] Brittany Huber, Denny Meyer & Jordy Kaufman. "Young Children's Contingent Interactions with a Touchscreen Influence their Memory for Spatial and Narrative Content," *Media Psychology*, 23.4, 2020 (552-578.) p. 568

[12] Michael T. Scholl and Robb Lindgren, "Designing for Learning Conversations: How Parents Support Children's Science Learning Within an Immersive Simulation," *Science Education* 100.5 (2016): 877–902, p. 879. Huber et al. note that: "Not just any physical interaction with 2D media is sufficient to improve learning. Research exploring children's learning from picture books has found that manipulative features in picture books (i.e., popups) impede children's ability to extract information, not unlike the 'bells and whistles' prevalent in many children's apps" ("Young children's Contingent Interactions," 554.) See also J. S. Radesky and D. A. Christakis, "Keeping Children's Attention: The Problem with Bells and Whistles," *JAMA Pediatrics* 170.2 (2016): 112–13; and M. Tare, C. Chiong, P. Ganea, and J. S. DeLoache, "Less is More: How Manipulative Features Affect Children's Learning from Picture Books," *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 31.5 (2010): 395–400.

environment and place."[13] In part, this "embodied experience with the book" is made possible because, I suggest, such books call attention to their own materiality by representing themselves as having an internal environment. Compared to traditional teaching texts, children's picture books enabled "sensory, cognitive, and emotional ways of knowing" as well as "bodily engagement of the learner in the content."[14] Like Burke and Cutter-MacKenzie, Peter M. Meyerson researched the effectiveness of children's picture books as pedagogical tools in an undergraduate educational psychology course. Noting that students "disengage" the moment they hear the word "theory," Meyerson found success in using children's books to convey theoretical concepts (e.g., using Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to teach Maslow's hierarchy of needs).[15] While students found "theory" to be "pedantic, unrealistic," picture books were able to turn a concept into "an operation" and "not just as an abstract idea." Moreover, he found that the books "create an affective connection between the student and the theory" by inducing "powerful emotional reactions."[16] Finally, he attributes this to the books' ability to allow "multimodal processing of the theories and concepts."[17] Both of these studies characterize the benefits of children's picture books in terms related to interactivity, immersion, and space: Students had "embodied experiences," were aware of "environment and place," and constructed "affective connection[s]" with the content in the books. In other words, though designed for children, the visual and material construction of picture books evokes emotional, verbal/nonverbal cognitive processes related to embodied, spatialized experiences — even in young adults.[18]

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[13] Geraldine Burke and Amy Cutter-Mackenzie, "What's There, What if, What Then, and What Can We Do? An Immersive and Embodied Experience of Environment and Place Through Children's Literature," *Environmental Education Research*, 16.3-4 (2010): 311-30, p. 311..

[14] Burke and Cutter-McKenzie, "What's There," 313.

[15] Eric Carle, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1969); Peter M. Meyerson, "Using Children's Picture Books as Tools to Facilitate Undergraduates' Learning," *College Teaching*, 54.3 (2006): 259-262.

[16] Meyerson, "Using Children's Picture Books," 261.

[17] Meyerson, "Using Children's Picture Books," 261.

[18] For similar studies with similar findings regarding the immersive benefits of picture books for elementary and secondary students, see: S. Williams, "Reading Daddy's Roommate: Preservice Teachers Respond to a Controversial Text," *New Advocate* 15 (2002): 231–36; L. W. Billman, "Aren't These Books for Little Kids? Picture Books can Bring the Events and People of History to Life for Middle School Students," *Educational Leadership* 60.3 (2002): 48–51; A. N. Hibbing and J. L. Rankin-Erickson, "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words: Using Visual Images to Improve Comprehension for Middle School Struggling

In the humanities, the connection among children's literature, materiality, and culture is already a robust conversation in both children's literature studies and material culture studies. Focusing on the properties and materials of objects, material culture studies ask how objects "contribute to an understanding of culture and social relations."[19] Various threads of material culture studies have located this dynamic in children's literature and toys.[20] Robin Bernstein claims that the "union of literature and material culture" has defined children's literature since the early eighteenth-century; and, focusing on children's pop-up books, Fiona Feng-Hsin Liu asserts that the materiality of books can "help us theorize in more nuanced ways about how children can exercise agency."[21] If, as material culture studies maintains, "culture [is] something created and lived through objects," this chapter suggests that the culturally understood spaciousness of books is created and maintained through the books that represent themselves as spacious.[22] In other words, metalepsis in children's literature forces metafictional awareness of or attention to the book's material reality in a way that enables, confirms, and maintains culturally shared understandings about the book's metaphorical breadth.

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Readers," *Reading Teacher* 56 (2003): 758–70; D. Kriesberg, A *Sense of Place: Teaching Children about the Environment with Picture Books* (Englewood, CO: Teacher Ideas Press, 1999).

[19] Liu states that material culture study "centers upon the material facets of objects, considering how their properties (such as the strength, weight, durability, resistance) and the materials they are made of (such as paper, cloth, plastic)" ("Understanding Children's Literature and Material Culture through Pop-Up Books," in *Tamkang Review*. 9.2 (June 2019): p. 54 [49-70]). For an overview of definitions and approaches, see Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (London: SAGE, 2007), and for a series of representative topical approaches, D. Hicks and M. Beaudry, eds., *The Oxford handbook of material culture studies* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2010).

[20] Approaches to material culture in children's toys and books include Karin Calvert, *Children in the House: The Material Culture of Early Childhood, 1600-1900* (Evanston, IL: Northeastern University Press, 1992.) and Joanna Sofaer Derevenski, ed- *Children and Material Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000). For their use of space and sense of interactivity, children's pop-up and movable books have received specific attention. Liu has pointed out that "each pop-up mechanism is designed to draw the reader in; when a pop-up spread unfolds, it demands a reaction from the reader" ("Understanding Children's Literature" 52) and Iona and Peter Opie claim that moveable books are successful only when "their bookish format conceal[s] unbookish characteristics" ("Books that Come to Life," *Saturday Book* 34 (September 19, 1975): 60-79, p. 64.)

[21] Robin Bernstein, "Toys are Good for Us: Why We Should Embrace the Historical Integration of Children's Literature, Material Culture, and Play," *Children's Literature Association Quarterly* 38.4 (Winter 2013): 458-63, p. 459; Liu. "Understanding Children's Literature" 50.

[22] Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture*, p. 4.

Whether crossing from the diegetic to the extradiegetic or diegetic to the hypodiegetic, bookish metalepsis works by calling attention to the book. While bookishness reveals the book's internal spaciousness, it also asks the reader to consider either the book in their hand or the idea of the book in general. The language of material culture, particularly Bill Brown's distinction between "objects" and "things," is useful in describing the metafictional awareness generated by bookish metalepsis. To Brown, a "chunk of matter" is an "object" when it is used to serve some purpose but is invisible in its own right.[23] Objects are absentmindedly used and consumed as a matter of course; however, an object becomes a Thing when it demands attention. Usually, Brown notes, this transformation happens when an object stops working: "when the car stalls, when the windows get filthy, when their flow within the circuits of production and distribution, consumption and exhibition, has been arrested, however momentarily."[24] In moments of bookish metalepsis, I suggest that the book becomes a Thing; the characters, like Gerald and Piggie below, hail the reader from the book's internal space, an act that differentiates the space they occupy from the space of the reader, and which calls attention to the intermediary book. Rather than absentmindedly consuming the narrative, the reader is asked to notice the book as a Thing — here, as a conduit between diegetic and extradiegetic spaces. Moreover, to Brown, when an object becomes a Thing, the user is forced to consider the "physicality of the thing" both in its own right and in relation to the user. By calling attention to the reader as a user and the book as an apparatus, these narratives turn the book into a pivot point around which the narrative, characters, reader, and book turn. Because that pivot point is a book — with a cover, depth, bindings, pages — one result is the representation of narrative as existing inside the internal spaciousness of the book.

### 4.1 'Try to make a little more space for the impossible': The Inside of Books

The material book, then, is represented as making space for narrative.[25] One representation of the book that foregrounds its materiality is fourth-wall breaking metalepsis popular in many

[23] Bill Brown "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry*, 28.1 (2001): 1-22. Outside of quotes from Brown, in this chapter I will be capitalizing Thing when referencing this dynamic.
[24] Brown, "Thing Theory," 4.
[25] The sub headers in this chapter are all pulled from chapter titles in Anna James. *Pages and Co.: The Bookwanderers* (New York: Puffin Books, 2018), which I discuss as a portal narrative, below. This book was followed by *Pages and Co.: The Lost Fairy Tales* (New York: Philomel Books, 2020), *Pages and Co.:*

children's metafictional picture books, which ends up representing the book as having internal, three-dimensional space. In these narratives, characters reach from the diegetic level of narration to the extradiegetic level of the reader and, in doing so, the characters acknowledge the fictional, bookish spaces that they occupy as well as the external space occupied by the reader.[26] Based in theatre and cinema studies, "fourth wall" refers to the understood division between actors and audiences, and breaking that division occurs when an actor looks at or speaks to the audience through that division; in film, the metaphor is based in the material realities of the three-walled room created either by a stage or a set. Though the term has been adopted in literary studies to reference narrative characters addressing their reading audiences, to the best of my knowledge, conceptualizing the fourth wall in literary studies is primarily concerned with a narrative's metafictional performance — not an acknowledgment that the book allows the reader to look into a physically depicted three-dimensional space. I suggest that the "fourth wall" is an apt term for discussing this representation of the book because it refers to the metafictional capacity of narrative while also acknowledging the book having an internal space (or room, or stage) inside of which narrative plays out.[27] Walls (like doors) suggest spaces divided from each other, and as I will show, the book is the wall (or door, or portal, or window) that divides the space of the reader from the space of narrative.

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*The Map of Stories* (New York: Philomel Books, 2021), and *Pages and Co.: The Book Smugglers* (New York: Philomel Books, 2021).

[26] This form of direct address is, of course, not restricted to picture books nor to narratives for children. Picture books are an interesting subject to consider the transcended medium because they are inherently both metafictive and metareferential, to adopt Wolf's term (see note 2, above).

[27] This may be particularly relevant for the young child's picture book, which attempts to lock the reader into the same time as the narrative. Because (in many texts) each page is a single chronological unit, the narrative timeline progresses with each page. And, as page turning is dictated by the reader's interaction with the material book, the reader is asked to occupy the same time as their narrative characters. In Bakhtinian terms, the chronotope of the picture book is especially connected to the reader and their experience of the narrative's time and space. Both the idea of the book as a fourth wall and the chronotope of the picture book would benefit from more discussion. For a consideration of this type of dynamic in graphic novels, see Adnan Mahmutovic, "Chronotope in Moore and Gibbons's *Watchmen*," *tudies in the Novel* 50.2 (2018): 255-76. M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist,trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist trans. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981) Special thanks to Arielle McKee, PhD, for convincing me this point was worth more attention than a brief footnote (and then for helping me untangle all the words).

By breaking the book's fourth wall, looking at bookish features (like page numbers and gutters), and asking the reader to read in certain ways ("I can make the reader say a word!"), these stories depict the book as having internal space inside of which characters can play, but over which the reader has ultimate control. [28]Moreover, by acknowledging the book as a space in which they live and play, the characters in these metafictional narratives differentiate themselves and the space they occupy from the book as an apparatus.[29] Such metafictional reference to the book's bookishness turns the book into a Thing, a splitting the silent metonymy of the apparatus and the text and calling attention to their differing functions. The characters understand the book as a specific kind of object with certain features and uses, and they call attention to these features in their narration ("It is page 46 now!")[30]; however, speaking to the reader about these features ends up acknowledging that their narration can't actually control the book by itself. In other words, speaking from the diegetic level of narrative, fictional characters can ask the reader to stop turning pages or to read again, but as an extradiegetic object, the book is beyond their reach. These stories foreground the difference between material apparatus and textual fiction and use that difference as a metaleptic device for crossing narrative levels.

The central idea of *We are in a Book!*, an Elephant and Piggie book by Mo Willems, is the characters' identification that they are, indeed, in a book; this metaleptic identification drives the story's narrative action and book's visual design. The plot follows Elephant Gerald and Piggie as they wake up, realize they are "in a book," play with the idea of being in a book, and face the reality that, "All books end."[31] Besides their speech bubbles, a few lines indicating movement, and page numbers, only the two characters (a grey, spectacled elephant and a pointy-eared pink pig) are depicted in the book. Within pages 3-5, Gerald wakes from what appears to be a nap and alerts

[28] Mo Willems, *We Are in a Book!* Elephant and Piggy 13 (New York: Hyperion, 2010) p, 23.An album of images is available here: https://ibb.co/album/p2B05G.

[29] Margaret Mackey defines this dynamic as creating a "reading zone" within a "contact zone": "An author addresses an unknown other through the vehicle of a text. The reading space opens up in the contact zone when a reader responds to that text and to the address from the author" ("The (Im)materialities of the Reading Space: *The Story of Holly and Ivy*," *Children's Literature* 49 (2021) 218-240, p. 219. Her "contact zone" is comprised of the author, text, and reader; though she lists the "material conditions" that make this zone possible (including financial support for schooling, pens and pencils for learning, book signings, the publishing industry) she doesn't include the book as a part of this space.

[30] Willems, *We Are in a Book!*, 46.

[31] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 42.

Piggie because he thinks "someone is looking at us."[32] Without further direction or pointing from Gerald, Piggie cocks a suspicious eyebrow, and on page 7 he marches towards the book's fourth wall. The image is inquisitive and initiates the narrative's metaleptic intrusion between the diegetic and extradiegetic narrative levels: motion lines indicate Piggie's forward movement, his wide and low arms suggest his cautious inspection of his target, and his single raised eyebrow show scrutiny. Well before they officially break the fourth wall, Piggie approaches and inspects the fourth wall as the area from which someone may be watching. After a few pages considering who (or what) may be watching, Piggie declares, "A reader is *reading* us!"[33] An exasperated Gerald asks, "how is a reader reading us?" and Piggie replies with both how and why: "The reader is reading these word bubbles," and, "We are in a book!"[34]

Piggie's metafictional declaration that they are "in a book" directs the rest of the plot by bringing the book's Thingness to the forefront of the reading experience. It's important that the characters never discuss their own existence as fictional, textual elements of narrative, but instead play with the idea of what it means to be "in" a book. The conversation is material, not textual. They are not "in a story" or themselves "fictional" or "characters"; the plot remains concerned with Gerald and Piggie's position inside the space of a book. That the inside of books is in fact materially spacious is implied by the "in"-ness of their declaration; as a preposition of proximity, "in" suggests books have insides and outsides. Piggie's inspection of the fourth wall and declaration of their in-ness both positions the characters as inside the space of books and demarcates the reader as somewhere outside the space of books. The implied difference between the two spaces is expressed in material, spatial terms, and is made by asking (forcing?) the reader to acknowledge the object they are holding. Borrowing Bernstein's description of "thing theory," I believe Piggie forces the reader "into an awareness of the self in material relation to the thing," that is, to the book they are using.[35] By defining themselves and the reader in relation to the material book, the narrative uses the book as a metaleptic pivot point that opens the book up for inspection as a material Thing.

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[32] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 5.
[33] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 17, emphasis original.
[34] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 16, 17.
[35] Robin Bernstein, "Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race," *Social Text* 27.4 (2009): 67-94, p. 69-70.

The narrative's method of breaking the fourth is founded on the idea that books are spatial and spacious objects: *We Are in a Book!* declares that the book has inside and outside spaces and the character's actions show what sorts of things can happen inside the space of books. As Piggie moves around the page, he does so in three dimensions and points to the edges of the space he inhabits. On the copyright and title page spread, the only pages with any hint at landscape, two rounded lines overlap, creating two hills at different depths. On the far-left edge of the copyright page, Piggie stands on the back hill angled away from the reader and pokes a finger to the left edge of the page. In the foreground of the right-side title page, Gerald stands open-mouthed in front of the closest hill and holds his hands (?) up towards the fourth wall as if he is testing the solidity of a piece of glass. As the two characters inspect the different walls, all three spatial planes are generated: The hills, as well as the size difference between Gerald and Piggie, gives the space depth, their placement on top and in front of the hills reveals vertical difference, and their positions on the far-left and right-center of the spread is horizontal. The characters are not in and inspecting just any three-dimensional space, though; as this title page explains (drawn in this instance as Gerald's speech bubble), they are "in a book." That the characters of a children's picture book exist in a space isn't exactly interesting, but that Piggie and Gerald exist inside a bookish space — and how they play with and investigate that space — offers a representation of how the material book works as an object inside of which narrative is contained.

As the pair consider their place inside a book, they begin playing with how books are used and exploring the limits of how they can control the reading experience. The plotline begins with Gerald asking how they are being read, and Piggie's responses are a lesson in both how a reader uses a book and how books function; unsurprising for a picture book, these are explained in visual terms, more importantly, many of these details are tied to the book's bookish materiality. Piggie's response that, "The reader is reading these word bubbles" is practically an introduction to the graphic or comic novel.[36] On this page, Piggie hangs over the top of his word bubble while Gerald looks up attentively. Piggie's contact with the word bubble, which usually extends from the character with a little space between, highlights the similarity in their coloring – both Piggie and his bubbles are shades of pink, a common tactic for identifying who is speaking. Likewise, Gerald's bubbles match his elephant gray, and their shared dialogue (usually laughter) is drawn

[36] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 15.

without bubbles, looking (and acting) more like motion lines than text. Piggie's answer to "How is a reader reading us?" is that the reader looks at and interprets visual elements of the page. Again, considering what it means to be "in a book" asks the reader to focus on what the Thing they're holding looks like rather than absentmindedly consuming the text as an invisible apparatus for text.

Another method of Gerald and Piggie's play is how they can "make the reader say a word," which they perform by using the book to enlist the reader in a specific reading performance. Piggie proposes the idea by cupping his hand to his mouth and speaking conspiratorially to Gerald, who in response, makes shocked eye contact with the reader through the fourth wall.[37] Piggie addresses the reader in a professorial pose, one arm behind his back and the other pointing in the air, explaining that it will work "If the reader reads out loud"[38] Piggie's directive is a subtle though rather literal performance of Bernstein's concept of the "scriptive thing": Piggie takes advantage of the book as a Thing (and its word bubbles) "to prompt, inspire, and structure human actions" by first telling the reader to read the bubbles then saying they can play along by performing the reading out loud.[39] Here, being "in a book" means that they can influence both what and how the reader reads, and this influence is performed by asking the reader to look at the pages in specific ways.

The narrative's primary conflict is how Gerald and Piggie come to terms with the fact that "All books end," a concept that shows the limits of what the characters can control and is investigated in bookish terms (42).[40] When Gerald asks, "WHEN WILL THE BOOK END!?!" (the capitalization and oversized text emphasizing his distress at the finality of it all), Piggie says, "I will look" and, on the next page, he is illustrated lifting the bottom right corner to check the page number of the final page. The image, Piggie on his knees, lifting the corner, is realistic in its

[37] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 23.

[38] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 25.

[39] Bernstein, "Dances with Things" 68. Because, as David Pritchard says: "For whatever else they may have been, whatever their role in building vocabulary and teaching letters and numbers, [picture] books were above all occasions to talk—to range around among words for the sheer fun of it." David Pritchard, "'Daddy, Talk!': Thoughts on Reading Early Picture Books," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 7 (1983): 64-69, p. 65.

[40] Willems, *We are in a Book!* 42. I argue that Gerald and Piggie define the narrative's conclusion by its placement in the material book, but also, in a sense, they teach basic narrative structure by calling attention to when and how the falling action begins. Stephen Roxburgh argues that picture books (even those without any text) can demonstrate narrative action. "A Picture Equals How Many Words?: Narrative Theory and Picture Books for Children," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 7.1 (1983): 20-33.

depiction of someone checking how much of the book is remaining: the pile is drawn as a stack of lifted pages in his hands.[41] From here, Gerald looks to the bottom-left corner, distressed that "It is page 46 now!" before also looking to the right-bottom: "EEK! / Now it is page 47!"[42] He says the "book is going *too* fast" and, over the next four pages, he lists the textual content he still has to offer ("More words!"; "more jokes!").[43]According to their conversation, books end as a matter of fact and this is measured in pages, not content. No matter what Gerald has left "to give," the material fact of the book constrains their textual possibilities, and their narrative generation cannot add pages to the book's physical apparatus. Piggie's answer to "when" the book ends and their investigation of, essentially, how much time they have left, is answered in bookish (rather than textual) terms. Not only does he seek his answer in the page numbers rather than in the plot, but the inquiry is also drawn in ways that mimic the actual material functions of the book and its pages. Essentially, the narrative's falling action is mapped onto and bound by the materiality of the book.

Ultimately, Gerald and Piggie hatch a plan to continue the reading experience in a way that works within the confines of the material book rather than considering the textual content. After whispering about their plan, the pair look out at the reader, hand clasped pleadingly in front of their bodies; Piggie smiles sweetly, and Gerald asks "Hello. Will you please read us again?"[44] Similar to their previous encouragement about reading aloud, this metaleptic moment asks the extradiegetic reader to extend the reading experience, admitting and acknowledging that the reader is in control. After this plea, Gerald and Piggie settle into the position they awoke from on the first page[45]; turning back to the beginning of the book, Gerald is already napping, and Piggie offers a thumbs up, wink, and a small "Thank you."[46] By resetting to their original positions, they concede to the bounds of the material book: they know the apparatus ends after page 57, so the only way to extend their time with the reader is to turn backwards in the book.[47] This performance prioritizes

[41] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 45.
[42] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 46, 47.
[43] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 48, 50.
[44] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 56.
[45] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 57.
[46] Willems, *We are in a Book!*, 2.
[47] While their plea to the reader is a bookish metaleptic breaking of the fourth wall, the resulting cycle of reading and re-reading might be less a transgression between narrative levels and more of what Fanfan Chen has called a dialectic "Mobius strip of ambiguity." Compared to metalepsis, which involves crossing borders into different levels, this narrative structure keeps the narrator in the same diegetic level but blurs

the book's role in the reading process rather than the narrative's. Their actions are based on the difference between book and text, acknowledging this difference and the limits of their influence on the experience. They may ask the reader and reset their positions, but these narrative strategies only work when in alignment with the book. In reality, if Gerald and Piggie succeed in their mission to be read again ultimately depends on the reader (and, likely, how close it is to bedtime); however, the metafictional narrative works by calling attention to the material book as a part of the reading experience and, along the way, it represents books as spacious, three-dimensional objects inside of which characters move around.

### 4.2 'Fictional by definition': The Monster at the End of This Book

The fact that material books have a final, non-negotiable physical end dictates the conflict and resolution of *We're in a Book!* as well as another popular children's metafictional picture book, *The Monster at the End of this Book*.[48] Piggie and Gerald find a seemingly positive solution by creating narrative dialogue and action that asks the reader to re-read the book and setting themselves into their initial positions; this resolution shows how characters can generate narrative content that plays along with the limits of the material book, and here the result is practical and whimsical. Conversely, the protagonist of *The Monster at the End of this Book* doesn't identify as being either in the book or a fictional character — Grover thinks he is, more simply, a reader. As a result of his misidentification, Grover generates a second book that is drawn within the pages of *The Monster at the End of this Book*. By begging the reader to stop moving through the book, Grover performs bookish metalepsis, acknowledging the extradiegetic reader and their role in turning pages; by generating a hypodiegetic book that sits within the reader's book and building a variety of obstacles to prevent page-turning (using ropes, nails, and bricks), he admits metafictional knowledge of the book as a page-turning apparatus. Together, his dual metalepsis, towards the extradiegetic reader and creating a secondary, hypodiegetic book, represents the relationship between material book and narrative content as strained. Like *We Are in a Book!*,

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the lines between individual narrative levels into something more "uncanny and ambiguous." Fanfan Chen, "From Hypotyposis to Metalepsis," 394.

[48] Jon Stone, (Michael Smollin, illust.) *The Monster at the End of this Book: Starring Lovable, Furry Old Grover*. (United States: Random House Children's Books, 2004. Originally published 1971. no pages) All citations are from this edition. An album of images is available here: https://ibb.co/album/HFTHQt.

both metaleptic and metafictional strategies call attention to the differences between diegetic Grover and the extradiegetic reader as well as between Grover's narrative and the reader's material book. The difference is in how the characters react to their fictionality and use their fictionality to dictate (and draw?) narrative action on the page.

Despite a difference in their awareness as fictional or bookish characters, both of these books depict the book as window into a three-dimensional space inside of which fictional characters dictate and create narrative. In *We Are in a Book!*, Gerald and Piggie use the book's three-dimensional inner space to create narrative content and collaborate with the reader, a performance of narrative creation that acknowledges that the material book is beyond their control. However, Grover doesn't quite realize he is a piece of fiction or identify as existing inside a book.[49] His ignorance influences what narrative content he creates and how it is drawn inside the book's space – namely, a second, hypodiegetic book manifests on the pages. Not only does he fail to understand that he is the titular monster, but he also depicts himself as a reader and, at least initially, the material book as something he has control over. Like Gerald and Piggie, his actions become the narrative on the page; because Grover thinks he is a reader rather than a character, a sub-book (a hypodiegetic book) manifests within the pages of *The Monster at the End of this Book*. Viewing himself as a reader, Grover uses the material book's three-dimensional space to create another diegetic level over which he may gain some level of control. But he and his creations are all narrative — as the extradiegetic reader turns the pages, his contraptions litter the ground, and his hypodiegetic book becomes torn and damaged. Grover's hypodiegetic book, the growing piles of garbage, and the damage to his book all represent his misidentification as a collaborative, extradiegetic reader; moreover, they highlight just how little control Grover has over the material

[49] This is open to interpretation. He certainly identifies as a collaborative reader, demonstrated by his attempt to turn the very first ("very dull") page. Whether he (in his mind) holds this collaborative position from within or outside the book, his control over the narrative space produces a visually rendered second book that sits inside the narrative space. For the purposes of my argument, the real importance is that, wherever he thinks he is, the book that he interacts with is rendered in realistic material terms. This debate is complicated by the sequel, *Another Monster at the End of This Book*, in which he is joined by Elmo. Elmo encourages the reader to turn the page while Grover creates new obstacles (paper clips, top block, glue, a steel door) to stop the hypodiegetic book from progressing. When Grover agrees to confront the monster, his plan is depicted in a thought cloud: he and Elmo, standing outside of a book, will approach the monster from opposite ends. Jon Stone, (Michael Smollin, illust.) *Another Monster at the End of this Book*, A Little Golden Book (Racine, WI: Western Publishing in conjunction with Children's Television Workshop, 1999).

book and what can happen when a character is unaware of their narrative (or bookish?) existence. Grover takes advantage of the three-dimensional space of the book to hatch his schemes, but he only manages to manipulate the story — not the physical apparatus itself. *The Monster at the End of this Book* is a piece of metafiction, but because its protagonist is unaware, the distance between narrative text and material book is put in relief.

At the beginning of the narrative, Grover acts like a collaborative reader rather than a fictional character, a fact that contributes to at least some of *The Monster at the End of this Book*'s charm and to most of the narrative's conflict. The narrative is similar to *We Are in a Book!* and many other fourth-wall breaking children's narratives in its use of the reader's real, material book as a metaleptic pivot point: Grover speaks to the extradiegetic reader about the book being read, calling attention to the specific object in the reader's hands as well as how the reader is using that object. However, rather than keeping the reader at a remove, Grover confuses his role in the reading process by identifying as a fellow reader. On the cover, a friendly "Hello everybodee!" initiates his conversation with the reader; he then deems the title page "a very dull page" and asks, "What is on the next page?" On this very dull page, Grover is drawn as he begins to turn the page, pulling the bottom-right corner up and rolling it towards the left side of the book. He situates himself as a fellow reader, deciding what content is or isn't interesting and trying to manipulate the physical pages. Plus, his judgment that it is a "very dull page" is pretty accurate: the page lists the title, authors, and copyright information in very small, plain typeface. To a child reader, his verdict and his rush towards more exciting content may feel conspiratorial. By both conversing with the reader about the narrative content and engaging with a mimetically drawn page, Grover mimics the extradiegetic role of the reader and plays along as a fellow book user. However, this page-turning is only an imitation: Grover doesn't actually succeed in turning the page, and the drawing itself only works if the reader plays along by turning the page. Conversely, Gerald and Piggie (who know they're in a book and how the book works) pull up the corner to check the page numbers, but they don't attempt to turn the page (if they could, they may reset the book to the beginning themselves). Here, Grover breaks the fourth wall without realizing the wall even exists, and this ignorance showcases rather than hides the difference between narrative content and the reader's material book. Unlike Gerald and Piggie, Grover's attempts to control the rest of the narrative are doomed to fail.

Whether he is aware or not, Grover is a fictional character in a metafictional narrative; because of this, his actions generate the story's narrative content which, in this case, include an entirely separate, hypodiegetic book. While Gerald and Piggie create narrative action based on their conscious identification as being in a book (in the form of word bubbles and their positions on the page), Grover's content stems from the fact that he doesn't realize that he is in the book. Rather, he identifies as a reader, and the result is a book inside the book that he can pretend to have some element of control over: within the three-dimensional space of the book, a second, hypodiegetic book is drawn across each spread. Complete with stacks of pages on both left and right sides of each spread, shading indicating the gutter's depth, and shadows on the 'ground' below this drawn book, an entirely separate book is drawn on the pages of *The Monster at the End of this Book*. Likewise, on the last page of *The Monster at the End of this Book* and after Grover realizes that he is the Monster, the hypodiegetic book disappears. As he identifies as an element of fiction rather than a collaborative reader, Grover recedes from the foreground and into the material book's internal space. His perhaps subconscious manifestation of a hypodiegetic book reinforces the idea that metafictional characters dictate narrative content, with or without their awareness. *The Monster at the End of this Book* calls attention to the reader's book as a Thing that the reader holds and controls, and Grover's hypodiegetic book allows Grover to demonstrate his awareness of how books look, feel, and function. Even if Grover's creation is fictional rather than material, it is drawn and discussed in realistically material terms that present the book as a space inside which he can play and inside which narrative is held.

Despite Grover's ignorance, *The Monster at the End of this Book* still represents the real material book as a spacious object, turning the hypodiegetic book into a narrative element placed inside the book's internal space. Grover's identification as a reader leads to the creation of a hypodiegetic book with which he can interact, but he is still inside the reader's book; likewise, his actions, schemes, and creations — including the hypodiegetic book — are depicted as existing within the three-dimensional space of the reader's material book. Unlike the real book's cover, which is drawn and colored from edge-to-edge, the bottom of the hypodiegetic book is drawn a few inches above the bottom of the material book; throughout the story, Grover and his obstacles are in the foreground. With the aid of the shadows inside and around the hypodiegetic book, the result is depth, as Grover moves around and piles-up objects across the book's landscape. All of his mechanisms — the ropes, boards, and bricks he uses to stop the reader from turning the page

— also exist and remain in this three-dimensional space: As the hypodiegetic pages turn along with the reader's, the obstacle's refuse spills out from the stacked pages on the left side each spread. Though he is ignorant of his narrative function, Grover exists in and uses the book's internal three-dimensional space as his primary weapon against the book's forward progression.

Moreover, Grover's actions cause the hypodiegetic book to take on damage, imagery that represents in visual terms the material book's practical function as a codex and social functions as a Thing that keeps narrative safe. Because Grover knows that "turning pages will bring us to the end of the book," his main goal is to keep the pages stationary, and he does so in ways that would likely work in the real world on a real book. He tries "tying the pages together," "nailing this page to the next one so you will not be able to turn it," and building "a heavy, thick, solid, strong brick wall." Because Grover is using tactics that would work in real life (and doing so with a book that mimics real life), the child gets to imagine themselves as actually overcoming his ropes, nails, and bricks — Grover even acknowledges that the reader is "very strong" for continuing to turn the page. The realism of these methods supports the use of the book as the metaleptic pivot point around which Grover interacts with the reader, and it contributes to the larger representation of the book as a physical object inside of which narrative lives.

Moreover, Grover's narrative manipulations both don't stop the reader and they damage the hypodiegetic book in realistic ways, a detail that represents the book and text as distinct, discrete elements. As the narrative progresses, the hypodiegetic book takes on damage: Grover's ropes have ripped the pages, and his nails have left holes and tears that reach through multiple pages. On the spread after the brick wall, the top half of the left page is torn down where the wall fell through the paper. The bricks that have fallen through are scattered in the foreground of the new spread, and the broken wall sits beyond the hole and tumbling out of the left side of the page. These images are interesting because they mimic damage to the pages, but the real book does not actually sustain any damage. Like the metaleptic strategies that ask the reader to notice the book they are holding, the damage to the hypodiegetic book — but not the real book — reveals the slippage between narrative text and material book. Though the visual narrative represents books realistically, and though the narrative uses the idea of the book to maintain metalepsis, the narrative does not (and cannot) affect the real, material book. In Grover's case, this is probably a good thing: His hypodiegetic book is thoroughly wrecked, leaving its internal narrative space compromised and unusable. Instead, the real book maintains a safe space for Grover to create narrative. The

visual representation of damaged pages is a reminder that narratives rely on the bookishness of books to keep them safe, ensuring the reader can return to the beginning of the story and start again, over and over.

### 4.3 'Getting lost in a good book': Portal Books and Narrative Travel

While metafictional narratives that employ bookish metalepsis bring attention to the reader's engagement with their material book, portal narratives that employ bookish metalepsis depict the book as an object that enables physical movement from one place to another. Portal narratives are defined by the movement of bodies and rely on "transition and exploration" as primary narrative strategies[50]; characters who engage with portals are transported to other worlds, and the story develops according to how they respond to this change and explore their new surroundings. Perhaps the best-recognized examples of the portal narrative are C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* and Lewis Carrol's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In these, the portals are a wardrobe and a rabbit hole, but a portal can be almost anything: a cyclone (L. Frank Baum, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*), a tollbooth (Norton Juster, *The Phantom Tollbooth*), a door (Neil Gaiman, *Coraline*).[51] These examples make for great portals because their physical design makes sense for allowing movement between spaces: Besides the rabbit hole and cyclone (even here, Dorothy is actually inside a house, which is inside the cyclone), each has a door, which in itself connotes the existence of and division between two separate spaces. Even when it is just

[50] Farah Mendlesohn, *Diana Wynne Jones: The Fantastic Tradition and Children's Literature*, (London: Routledge, 2005) p. 80. Portal narratives are distinct from "immersive fantasies," which begin in the midst of a fantasy world, and from quest fantasies, which focus on the journey between spaces rather than what happens in the new space. In quest fantasies, the journey from home and through an unknown world represents or allows for a character's personal growth; conversely, portal fantasies don't dwell on the transition between the spaces of home to elsewhere, allowing character development to happen as the character navigates the new world. (Farah Mendelsohn, *Diana Wynne Jones*, 81).

[51] Though I am concerned here with narratives that use books as portals, portals can take almost any form and need not be entirely material, particularly in science fiction. For example, throughout his *Oz* series, Baum's portals to Oz include the cyclone, floating on a chicken coop after being swept overboard, an earthquake, a magic belt, and a mysterious road. In science fiction, especially, cryosleep (Clifford D. Simak, *Shakespeare's Planet* [New York: Berkley Publishing, 1976]) or alien technology (Jo Clayton, *Skeen's Leap* [New York: Daw, 1986]) depict travel that is more scientific than magical. Octavia Butler, *Kindred* (New York: Doubleday, 1979) doesn't explain what exactly transports Dana between the present and past, but it isn't a physical mechanism.

to your closet or cupboard, doors are the literally gateways between one place and another. Moreover, wardrobes, rabbit tunnels, tollbooths (and even cyclones) each come with ready-made internal space. Because they are three-dimensional, it's easy to picture yourself entering and existing inside each of these spaces; it's even easy to imagine entering to find yourself somewhere unexpected. These portals serve their narrative functions because they enable characters to move from one space to another, and their physical designs make that travel plausible (if still quite magical). Like tollbooths and wardrobes, portal books allow characters to travel to other worlds; I suggest that this imaginative plausibility is made possible by the book's material shape and through narrative metalepsis.

Despite their relative size, portal books mimic other three-dimensional portals in both their material bookishness and in the representation of narrative as a three-dimensional space: Like doors, books can be opened and closed, and like wardrobes and tollbooths, books are depicted as spacious objects. When a book moves a character from one world to another, it is also moving the character from one narrative to another via metalepsis. As I've discussed above, metalepsis reveals the boundaries between narrative levels and shows the levels as having their own distinct spaces. When Piggie breaks the fourth wall, the book becomes a space in which he moves around that is distinct from the world occupied by the reader. The same dynamic happens when a character uses a portal book to transport themselves into a different world; both the narrator's world and the book's internal space become three-dimensional spaces in which someone can enter and exit. When characters move into a portal book, the book fulfill the genre's need for transition to a different world that can be explored and navigated by the character's physical body; the book is also a mechanism of metalepsis that the character crosses to enter a different diegetic level. A popular contemporary example – that has received a fair amount of scholarly attention for its rich layering of metafictional and narrative levels – is Cornelia Funke's Inkworld trilogy, in which follow Meggie and her father Mo; by reading, Mo can pull elements of narrative out of books and into his diegetic world.[52] However, for every narrative character who comes out, someone from

[52] Cornelia Funke, *Inkheart*, trans. Anthea Bell(New York: Scholastic Incorporated, 2011). *Inkheart* was followed by *Inkspell* (New York: Scholastic Incorporated, 2005) and *Inkdeath* (New York: Scholastic Incorporated, 2008). For considerations of Funke's work, particularly in terms of metalepsis and metafictionality, see Poushali Bhadury, "Metafiction, Narrative Metalepsis, and New Media Forms in *The Neverending Story* and the Inkworld Trilogy," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 37.3, (Sep 2013): 301-26, and Chen "From Hypotyposis to Metalepsis," 2008. Funke's work is translated from German and is usually

the diegetic world must go into the book. While Funke's work is generally considered a narrative for young adults, Inkworld seemed to inspire a slew of portal book narratives more explicitly for children.

A recent example is Anna James' series, Pages & Co.: *Bookwanderers*, including diegetic protaganist Tilly Pages, who "travel into" and "wander" through hypodiegetic narrative worlds by engaging with real, material books.[53] Here, if you "read with intent," you can "read yourself into a book."[54] In one scene, Tilly picks up a specifically sentimental copy of *A Little Princess* from her nightstand and "opened it at the first page and with only a moment's hesitations read her **way in.**"[55] By way of the book, Tilly finds herself in the hypodiegetic world of *A Little Princess*, "with her feet in a freezing cold puddle at the mouth of an unlit, empty alleyway."[56] When a cab drives past, she runs "to the end of the alleyway" to look "around the corner."[57] Using a book as a portal, the bookwanderer's body is transported into a three-dimensional narrative space through which

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considered as young adult fiction. Another narrative that falls into this category – that happens also to have been composed in German and is classified as young adult – is Mechthild Gläserld Gloser's *The Book Jumper*, trans. Romy Fursland (New York: Feiwel & Friends, 2017).

[53] Anna James, *The Bookwanderers,* (New York: Puffin Books, 2020) p. 143. All citations are from this edition. There has been a recent surge in this type of very metafictive portal book narratives. Chris Colfer's very popular series, *The Land of Stories* follows twins as they fall, literally, into the page of a strangely glowing and humming book of fairytales. *The Land of Stories: The Wishing Spell* (New York: Little Brown. 2012. *The Wishing Spell* has been followed by *The Enchantress Returns* (2013), *A Grimm Warning* (2014), *Beyond the Kingdoms* (2015), *Author's Odyssey* (2016), and *Worlds Collide* (2017) all published by Little, Brown.. A guide to the narrative universe, *The Ultimate Book Hugger's Guide* (2018), plays with the idea of actually hugging a treasured (or endangered) book. (New York: Little, Brown, 2018.) Similar narratives include J. A. White's *Nightbooks*, (New York: Katherine Tegen Books, 2018); Marissa Burt, *Storybound,* (New York: Harper, 2012); and James Riley, *Story Thieves*, (New York: Aladdin, 2015).

[54] James, *The Bookwanderers,* 149, 146.

[55] James, *The Bookwanderers,* 177 (formatting original). James' book is sprinkled with various illustrations and the typeface is frequently modified to represent Tilly's movements between narrative levels. In this instance, the text grows in size and descends, suggesting her travel as movement down into the book she is holding:

… with only a moment's hesitation read

her

**way**

**in.**

[56] James, *The Bookwanderers*, 178.

[57] James, *The Bookwanderers*, 179.

she moves and in which she measures wetness, coldness, and darkness. As a portal narrative, *The Bookwanderers* represents its portals — books — as having three-dimensional, internal space similar to that represented by fourth-wall breaking children's picture books: like Gerald and Piggie, Tilly is "in" a book, and she can use the space to move around, observe, and play. Moreover, while the content of Tilly's metaleptic experience is generated by the narrative, the transgression across narrative lines is fully dictated by her interaction with the material book.

By depicting the narrative world as a three-dimensional space that exists inside of books, *The Bookwanderers* also represents that narrative as being shaped and bound by the material binding of the book. In *The Bookwanderers*, and similar to both *We Are in a Book!* and *The Monster at the End of This Book*, narrative worlds inside of portal books are shaped by the length, size, and condition of the material books that holds them. The "primary rule of bookwandering is that you must keep the copy of the book with you when you travel," and, in order to leave a narrative world, a wanderer must read the last line "from the same copy of the same book" (145, 147). The bookwandering experience requires and relies on the presence of the material book to act as a portal in and out of hypodiegetic narrative spaces. After moving into the hypodiegetic narrative, the wanderer must carry the book with them, keeping the book as a consistently present Thing for both the extradiegetic or diegetic readers, who must pay attention to where the book is and how it is functioning. Moreover, if a wanderer doesn't read the last line before the narrative ends, they become lost in the "Endpapers": "The story has ended, but you're still in the book, and it can be very tricky to get back from there—the usual rules don't apply."[58] In this depiction of bookish metalepsis, the diegetic reader moves explicitly into a book; when the narrative has run its course, the wanderer remains inside the space they entered, which is the book – not the narrative. Not only is the book essential as a portal between narrative levels/worlds, the book also frames the narrative world by defining its boundaries. Like Gerald and Piggie, Tilly and her fellow bookwanderers are limited to narrative content that exists within the book's predefined number of

[58] James, *The Bookwanderers*, 147. Bookwandering is also contingent upon the book's condition; in this scene, Tilly tries to exit the book to find that the "last few pages were ripped and unreadable. The bottom corner of the last page was torn" (183). Because the pages did exist, they are the book's only exit; even after the pages are damaged, the narrative runs its course and Tilly is stuck inside the book. The book's internal world is defined by the length of the book as originally designed and doesn't simply shrink to accommodate the lost pages.

pages. When a book is a portal between worlds, the book is represented as spacious enough to contain that world; likewise, the world is also bound by the book's material size.

Moving into and through books, whether as gateways or windows, is possible because books are understood as spacious. Through bookish metalepsis, portal narratives enable the idea that books have internal space, and an understanding of books as having internal space has enabled the book's various spatial metaphors — namely, the idea that books are portals and gateways through which readers travel. As a storytelling technique, this is a pervasive and nearly invisible dynamic that appears in film and television as well as in written narratives. In fact, 19 full-length films and 12 shorts from Disney represent the idea of moving *into* a book in what they call their "storybook openings."[59] At the very beginning of these films, which include *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, directed by David Hand et al. (and premiering in 1937 as America's first feature length animated film) and *Enchanted* directed by Kevin Lima (a 2007 live-action/animation hybrid), the camera proceeds through a number of angles that mimic opening and reading from a physical book.[60] A form of bookish metalepsis, the openings move from the diegetic to the hypodiegetic levels of narration; the effect is that the book becomes a portal through which the reader is carried into the narrative landscape.

After the opening credits, the shot centers on a closed book either flat on a surface or propped up; each cover is adorned with the book's title and varying degrees of decoration (though the title of *The Adventures of Ichabod and Mr. Toad* directed by Jack Kinney et al. [1949] is only embossed on the book's spine). The camera pans to center the book and the book opens (usually with no help, though Jiminy Cricket opens *Pinocchio* directed by Ben Sharpsteen and Hamilton Liske [1940]); in most, a narratorial voice-over begins reading the text as it appears on the pages as the camera moves around to focus on different blocks of text or illustrations. Most importantly, each "opening" ends when the camera zooms in on the page until the image on the page takes up the entire screen and begins moving: The viewer has been moved from looking at the outside of a

[59] "Storybook opening," *Disney Wiki*, Modified Sept 8, 2020. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Storybook_opening. This clip from shows nine of Disney's storybook openings: JCH 007. "Disney Opening Book Titles." April 20, 2021. *YouTube* video 6:11. https://youtu.be/wv_FwC5U9SE

[60] "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," *Disney Wiki*, Modified June 21, 2020. Accessed June 25, 2021. https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Snow_White_and_the_Seven_Dwarfs. "Enchanted," *Disney Wiki*, Modified June 18, 2021. Accessed June 5, 2021. https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Enchanted#Filming.

book to sitting in the world of the story. This sense of movement between worlds is also reflected in the books' appearance: 16 of the 19 books in these openings are real, live-action props used to transition to animated landscapes. While watching, and viewer moves from their real world into the animated world of the narrative.[61] Likewise, 12 full-length and 8 short films use a corresponding "storybook closing" to exit the space of the book.[62] These openings represent the books as portals: with minimal interference from any other signifiers, the camera centers, opens, and enters the book to give the impression that the viewer has ended up in another place and time.

### 4.4 'No one has proper adventures in real life': Bookish Space in *Wishbone*

Storybook openings work, and their pervasiveness suggests the ubiquity with which the inside of books is understood as a spacious container for storyworlds. Though popular with Disney, the portal book as an opening to visual narrative is not exclusive to Disney: Warner Brothers' *Steven Universe: The Movie* directed by Rebecca Sugar (2019), Hasbro's *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* television series (9 seasons, 2010-2019, 222 episodes), and three of the four Dreamworks' *Shrek* films are framed by their own portal books.[63] Another text that uses the material book to perform metalepsis and enter the space of narrative is the American television

[61] Though extending beyond the scope of this chapter, I would also argue that the various presentations, accoutrements, and decorations of each book matches its content in some way, a tactic that centers the material book as a signifier of textual meaning – similar to the argument made in this dissertation's discussion of material texts in *Le Morte d'Arthur* in Chapter 2. Each of the princess narratives (*Snow White*, *Cinderella* directed by Clyde Geronimi et al [1950], and *Sleeping Beauty* directed by Clyde Geronimi et al [1956],) are decorated with gold leaf, ornately stamped and illustrated, or heavily jeweled. The key to clasp sits on the table next to the book in *The Sword in the Stone* directed by Wolfgang Reitherman (1963), which has a rugged and aged finish, perhaps foreshadowing Arthur's unlocking of Excalibur's power. *Pinocchio* is modest and utilitarian; two clasps protect the book, but its cover is plain, brown leather with simple cameo portrait and title. The *Jungle Book* and *Robin Hood* depict printed books rather than manuscripts, and when the covers open, they realistically flip through the front papers, title pages, and table of contents. Finally, the opening to *Enchanted* features a pop-up book, which mimics the films live-action and animated hybridity.

[62] "Storybook closings," *Disney Wiki*, Modified Dec 13, 2020. Accessed June 15, 2021. https://disney.fandom.com/wiki/Storybook_closing.

[63] *Shrek* (directed by Andrew Adamson and Vicky Jenson, 2001), Shrek 2 (directed by Conrad Vernon, Andrew Adamson and Kelly Asbury 2004), *Shrek: Forever After* (directed by Mike Mitchell 2010; only *Shrek the Third* (directed by Chris Miller, 2007) does not start with a storybook opening.

series, *Wishbone* (two seasons, 1995-1997, 50 episodes), which aired from 1995-1997 on PBS. The series was and remains popular; *Wishbone* received a Peabody Award and four Daytime Emmys, and in 2020, the creators were attempting a reboot until Universal Studies and Mattel Films announced plans for a feature-length film produced by Oscar-winning director Peter Farrelly.[64] Each half-hour, live-action episode follows Wishbone, a Jack Russell Terrier, as he draws connections between the storylines of classic literary narratives and events in his everyday life. These connections are presented through metalepsis; when Wishbone realizes the day's conflict reminds him of a classic narrative, he enters that narrative world and acts out the plot as one of the characters. For example, in "Bark to the Future," he despairs over having to wait until dinnertime, which inspires his entrance into the world of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*.[65] The episode then alternates between the diegetic level of Wishbone's life with his family and his hypodiegetic performance in the narrative plot. Though Wishbone's imagination fuels his entry into narrative, the mechanism of each metaleptic shift is a book. The way these books are presented as portals through which Wishbone travels to perform his role in the hypodiegetic narrative both performs and reinforces the culturally understood spaciousness of books.

With the tagline, "what's the story, Wishbone?" it's not news that the series is interested in stories and narrative; however, the role of the book in presenting Wishbone's stories and in supporting each episode's larger didactic lesson has been understated. In the pilot, "A Tail in Twain," the book is represented as both a portal to the world of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and, more generally, as the proper tool for maintaining and sharing social narrative.[66] To summarize briefly, the episode starts in Wishbone's living room as his owner, Joe, laments his boring life to his mother, Ellen. Wishbone connects Joe's desire for adventure to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, his reenactment of which comprises the hypodiegetic narrative. On the diegetic level, Joe and his friends learn that a suspicious stranger has been tampering with the local "No

[64]Rob Owen, "Release the Hound: Wishbone Creators on the Show's History—and Its Uncertain Future," in *Paste Magazine*. July 27, 2020. https://www.pastemagazine.com/tv/wishbone/wishbone-tv-show-history/; Anthony D'Alessandro, "Universal & Mattel Developing 'Wishbone' Feature Based On PBS Jack Russell Terrier TV Series," *Deadline*. July 15, 2020. https://deadline.com/2020/07/universal-mattel-developing-wishbone-feature-based-on-pbs-jack-russell-terrier-tv-series-peter-farrelly-producing-1202986165/.

[65] Rick Duffield, "Bark to the Future," *Wishbone*.1.23 (Nov 14, 1995) PBS. This episode is a true dystopian tragedy; Wishbone later has to wait ten whole seconds before they give him a treat.

[66] Ken Harrison, "A Tail in Twain," *Wishbone*.1.1 (Oct 9, 1995) PBS.

Name Grave," and they decide to investigate. After a number of scares and adventures, they learn that the graverobber, Lazlo, is the descendant of an immigrant family who dug the grave and who filled it their possessions. A member of the local historical society, who has joined the hunt for the graverobber, asks Lazlo to share his story for the local archives and everyone attends a community picnic, at which Ellen gives a speech about community and togetherness. In the course of Joe's adventure (and Wishbone's within the hypodiegetic narrative), the episode considers how history is created and shared, and ultimately argues for the book as a superior method of textual and historical retention.

"A Tail in Twain" begins in the family's living room, where the didactic connections between the diegetic and hypodiegetic narratives are established; a book is used both to represent these connections and, as a portal, to initiate Wishbone's metaleptic shift the world of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. First, the book is present through the entire scene: Joe enters the room spinning the book between his hands and continues absentmindedly to play with the book while complaining about the town's lack of adventure. Before leaving the room, he places it on the couch; Ellen retrieves the book from the couch, looks at the cover, and moves it to a bookshelf across the room. Though neither Joe nor Ellen engage with the book as a Thing, its movement in Joe's hands and Ellen's decision to put it away invite the viewer to take notice of its presence. After they leave, the camera and Wishbone call direct attention to the book, asking the viewer to ponder the book as a Thing; Wishbone immediately runs to the bookshelf, where, surrounded by other books, it has physically and metaphorically been placed among a larger literary history. While Wishbone looks at the book, the camera pans from looking at Wishbone to looking at the book from his point-of-view. The book's movement from family couch to the full bookshelf mirrors the episode's upcoming movement from the family's diegetic narrative to Wishbone's adventures in the world of narrative, a transition that begins to set up the book as a portal. The book turns from receiving passive attention to active focus, and its consistent presence in the scene marks it as something the viewer should pay attention to.

After the book is moved to the bookshelf, a move that initiates the viewer's full attention to the book, both the camera and Wishbone represent the book as a source of adventure and a portal. Looking at the book, Wishbone declares he can "sniff out" an adventure for Joe, because it "is buried right here, on this shelf. It's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, written in 1876 by the American author Mark Twain." By talking about the search in physical terms — as something

"buried" on a shelf and that he can find through sniffing — Wishbone directs attention to the physical book rather than the narrative.[67] This description, as well as the camera's focus on the book as it lies on the shelf, centers the viewer's sight on the book right before it turns into a portal to the hypodiegetic world. The camera reaches Wishbone's point of view and holds on the cover as Wishbone continues to introduce Twain's narrative; after a moment, the cover starts rippling like water. As the camera holds on the cover, the screen transforms to show the waters of the Mississippi River. The camera's direct line on the book and the digitally produced imitation of the river's water both represent the book as a portal through which Wishbone (and the viewer) are transported to the hypodiegetic, three-dimensional world of Twain's narrative. Wishbone crawls out from under a front porch in the hypodiegetic world, where he takes on and performs the role of Tom Sawyer; his interaction with both the physical landscape and the characters of Twain's novel depicts his metalepsis in both narrative and physical terms. In other words, by using the book as a portal, Wishbone crosses moves from the diegetic narrative and lands in the book's three-dimensional inner space.

*Wishbone*'s use of the book as a portal that initiates both physical movement and narrative metalepsis is a constant mechanism throughout the series, and each transition designs and presents the book in a way reflective of the episodes didactic or hypodiegetic theme. In "Bark to the Future," the episode about Wells' *The Time Machine* and a deficiency of snacks, the camera pans to the kitchen clock, where it zooms in through the clock's face and focuses on a complex set of moving gears. Rather than a "real" book, a three-dimensional graphic rendering of Wells' book flies onto the screen. The author's name and "The Time Machine" are printed on the metallic cover; the silver surface reflects the light as it floats onto the screen, and six screws seem to hold the cover in place. The lettering on the cover zooms towards the screen, creating a tunnel through which the camera passes into the book's internal space. Rendering the book as having a screwed-together metal cover and turning the portal into a sci-fi wormhole mimic the technological theme of *The Time Machine*, illustrating the understanding that a book's material form signifies its narrative content or influences the reading experience.[68] While "A Bark in Time" uses graphics, a "Twisted Tale" is similar to "A Tail in Twain." Trying to distract himself from his hunger, Wishbone enters the

[67] See Chapter 5 of this dissertation for a longer consideration of the cognitive effects of finding things within books as exemplified in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*.

[68] A theme I discuss in more length in Chapter 2, concerning material texts in *Le Morte Darthur*.

family's library and paws down from a shelf a brown, leather-bound book with gold-stamped cover, saying, "This must be *Oliver Twist*. The perfect story for a dog alone and hungry."[69] The metaleptic shift into Dickens' narrative is introduced by zooming in on Wishbone as he looks at the book. Rather than taking a direct angle on the book, the camera holds on both Wishbone and the cover as smoke ripples from the center of the screen and the scene transitions to early nineteenth-century London. As a series, *Wishbone* is about narrative, but it depicts narrative as an imaginative playground by representing the book into a space that someone can enter.

The space within books and the book's performance as a portal are consistent threads throughout the series, and this manifests not only in how the episodes initiate metalepsis, but also, often, how they move Wishbone back to the diegetic narrative and how they use books to introduce other forms of nonfictional knowledge. The series consistently shifts back to the diegetic narrative in ways that give the impression of moving back and forth through a portal. "A Twisted Tail" transitions back to the diegetic narrative when Wishbone (as Oliver Twist) is thrown out of a soup kitchen; Wishbone is tossed off the right side of the screen dressed as Oliver and enters the left side of the screen, airborne, as Wishbone. He screeches to a halt in his kitchen, as the hypodiegetic action propels him back through the portal and into his diegetic world. Though there is no book, the momentum suggests his physical experience of the hypodiegetic narrative, into which the book sent him. Similarly, at one point during "Bark to the Future," Wishbone is returned to the diegetic when he uses the time machine, itself a portal device in Wells' narrative. The portal book is more explicit in "A Tail in Twain"; as Wishbone walks away from the camera dressed as Sawyer, the book fades back onto the screen. The camera's view returns to where it was before entering the portal, representing Wishbone's return to the diegetic level as a return passage through the book. Finally, some episodes conclude with video clips explaining how the creators designed the episode's sets, props, or visual graphics. These metanarrative addendums are introduced by a three-dimensional, digitally rendered book that flies on-screen; the cover mimics white leather with black, decoratively stamped borders and a woodcut-like rendering of Wishbone. The book opens, the camera zooms into an image on the book's first page, and as the image grows larger, it starts moving. Opposite to *The Time Machine*, the simple cover, woodcuts, and rough-edged photos all suggest a pre-modern book; the aesthetic is more educational than flashy. When the

[69] Rick Duffield, "Twisted Tail," *Wishbone.*1.3 (Oct 10, 1995) PBS.

section ends, the camera zooms out, the viewer is pulled out from the page, the book closes, and it leaves the screen. Wishbone consistently uses the material book as a visual device that brings narratives and knowledge to life for the reader; the resulting bookish metalepsis represents books as spacious while both building and confirming culturally understood ideas about the book.

# CHAPTER 5. IN CHAUCER, X NEVER, EVER MARKS THE SPOT … EXCEPT IN CODEX

Within the dream landscape of Geoffrey Chaucer's vision, *Parliament of Fowls*, the narrator finds himself at the gate to Venus' garden, inside of which he is promised "mater of to wryte" (*PF* 168). He stops short at the gate, which is inscribed with what he interprets as contrasting messages. As a (literal) gateway between the general dreamscape and the contents of Venus' garden, the dreamer must engage with, open, and enter the gate before he can access what's inside. In this way, I suggest that the gate is presented in very bookish terms:

> And over the gate, with lettres large y-wroghte,
> Ther weren vers y-writen, as me thoghte,
> On eyther halfe, of ful gret difference,
> Of which I shal yow sey the pleyn sentence.
> `Thorgh me men goon in-to that blisful place
> Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
> … This is the wey to al good aventure;
> Be glad, thou reder, and thy sorwe of-caste,
> Al open am I. Passe in, and sped thee faste!'
>
> Thorgh me men goon,' than spak that other syde,
> `Unto the mortal strokes of the spere,
> Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
> …Thise vers of gold and blak y-writen were,
> Of whiche I gan a stounde to beholde (PF 124-40, emphasis mine)

The narrator is able to read the text inscribed on the gate and to explain the text's "sentence." However, the gate is not presented as disembodied textual content. Rather the gate's text is surrounded and interrupted by descriptions and invocations of the gate's material features—and these features echo the features of a book.[1] The material construction of the gate – large letters in gold and black – begin and end his description; a call to "thow redere," which is "spak" by the gate, falls in the middle of the gate's text. By speaking, the gate delivers its sentence in a way that

[1] The gate is (to adopt Heather Blatt's term) an "extracodexical" text: "a written work that circulates outside the boundaries of the familiar codex, whether manuscript or print book. Heraldry, dishes, walls, tapestries, and embroidered or woven textiles and other objects are common surfaces for medieval extracodexical texts, which can also take the form of various charms and talismans." Heather Blatt, *Participatory Reading in Late-Medieval England*, Manchester Medieval Literature and Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019) p. 106.

mimics the narrator's interaction with his book at the beginning of the poem (which I discuss below); moreover, by speaking and remaining closed, the gate mimics the bookishness of the book in its ability to enclose the garden's content. In its material design and function, the gate impersonates bookishness, and the dreamer finds himself interacting with a book before he can enter the garden, which itself becomes a covered collection of textual "mater of to wryte." In this way, both the narrator's dream and his entrance into the garden are scenes initiated by interaction with a material book.

This chapter argues that books in Chaucer's dream visions are, first and foremost, represented as realistic, material objects, and that the book's realistic representation enables – rather than hinders – their metaphorical capacity. In both *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Book of the Duchess*, the book's ability to inspire creative thinking, immersive dreaming, and textual composition is explained as a result of the book's materiality rather than (or, at least, in addition to) the book's textual content. The hinged, bound, covered shape of books allows them to be searched through and investigated as well as entered and exited. They are vessels through which the narrators search, and they are containers in which narrative content is kept safe for future readers. Recognizing the role of bookish materiality in Chaucer's works offers a perspective of material manuscript culture, as Chaucer plays not just with the cognitive affordances of textual content, but also of the material apparatus that carries a text through space and time. In this way, I suggest we read Chaucerian instances of book-use with the same methodological lens that book historians claim we should use when looking at medieval manuscripts: each artefact is a unique item and should be studied and interpreted for its individual details and affordances. When Chaucer's narrators interact with the books they hold in their hands, we should appreciate the singular features of those artefacts and appreciate what reading experience they offer their reader.

I start with a look at Venus' gate because, if it is a bookish object that must be accessed in order to start a new chapter in his dream journey (and initiate textual composition), it is also another instance in which dream content is initiated via the materiality of a book – a narrative device that is considered novel to Chaucer. Though invoking a book is a common device for introducing a narrative, these are most often an invocation of the book-as-metonym for its text, its text's generic expectations, or its text's author and contingent authority.[2] Chaucer may be the first western author

[2] Chaucer does this himself when he invokes his source narrative for *Troilus and Criseyde*: "And of his song naught only the sentence,/ As *writ myn autour* called Lollius, / but pleinly (TC i. 393-—emphasis

to invoke the book as a means of initiating a narrator's journey into the landscape of a vision, and I suggest that this works because Chaucer invokes the book-as-object (rather than the book-as-metonym). Marshall Stearns found only one Chaucerian exemplar in which a book is used at the beginning of the poem: Froissart's Old French *L'Espinette Amoureuse*.[3] Here, though, the book is only incidental to the vision: a pretty maiden walks up to the narrator carrying a codex copy of "De Cleomades,"[4] the two talk about the maiden's beauty, and the narrator retires to write a love lyric.[5] Though the French exemplar introduces a book into the story, the narrator has no interest in the book as a material object. It may set the stage, so to speak, for the narrator's forthcoming composition by calling to mind the generic conventions of its text, but the narrative has no interest in the book as a material presence. As a model in the vision tradition, the French poem uses the book incidentally, while Chaucer's narrator positions the book as a central part of his experience. His narrators interact with a real object and that object allows them to become transported to the visionary landscape of the dream. In this way, Chaucer may present the first portal book, and, more to this chapter's point, he does so because he invokes the book's bookishness for how it affects the reading experience.

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mine). The narrator of *Troilus and Criseyde* references a written source text composed by Lollius about forty times in the poem—despite the fact that no such book, text, or author ever existed. Reference to the Lollian text symbolizes something else both directly (an older, more authoritative narrative) and indirectly (lending the *Troilus* an air of truth, authority, or authenticity). By casting a fictitious book as his source, Chaucer employs the book as a metaphor for his own fidelity to history. George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Lollius," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 28 (1917): 47-133, p. 47) This is confirmed more recently by Bella Millett, "Chaucer, Lollius, and the Medieval Theory of Authorship." *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1984): 93-103. Geoffrey Chaucer. "Troilus and Criseyde," in *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

[3] Marshall W. Stearns, "Chaucer Mentions a Book," in *Modern Language Notes* 57.1 (1942): 28-31.

[4] Presumably *Li roumans de Cléomadès* by Ardenet le Roi (c. 1240-c. 1300), a story involving a wooden flying horse, not unlike the brass horse in Chaucer's *Squire's Tale.*

[5] A closer analogy is in the *Roman de la Rose,* wherein the narrator cites the *Somnium Scipionis* as an authority on dreams. Neither poem features someone actually reading the book (or tale, even) that initiates the dream. In considering *Book of the Duchess* as a philosophical vision, Cherniss notes that the narrator reading a book to initiate interaction with moral content is new to the Boethian genre. Despite a number of similarities between *Book of the Duchess* and its source narratives, the explicit act of reading a book is considered Chaucer's invention. See Michael D. Cherniss, *Boethian Apocalypse: Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1987); James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets: The Literary Background of* The Book of the Duchess, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

This chapter will demonstrate that the books in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and *Parliament of Fowls* can be interpreted in realistic, material terms, and that appreciating them as material objects—rather than as representing other texts, authors, or genres—offers new understandings of how these poems represent both reading and the apparatuses that makes reading possible. When the narrators of both poems read or write, their books are not props; they do not make an appearance and then disappear; they do not represent another object or concept. By taking a metaphorical perspective of the books in *Duchess* and *Parliament*, scholarship has effectively defined books as tropes for introducing creative thought, rather than the vehicles that make those creative thoughts possible. The book is the object upon and in which its reader performs reading, and the narrator's engagement with those books has consequences for the narrators' lived experiences. The *Book of the Duchess* features an especially material depiction of reading focused on the physical book. The book, its contents, and the reader's access to those contents are explained as a process of searching, finding, and discovery. The process of discovery – made possible, the poem makes clear, by the book's material bookishness– is stimulating enough that it allows him to surmount his insomnia, creatively reconstruct what he's read in terms he understands, and to compose a new text. In *Duchess*, the book's bookishness provides a playground in which his mind can play. Moreover, because of the material book's role in the process, the book he reads—not the tale he reads—receives credit for the book he ends up producing. Appreciating the narrator's experience with the book *as* experience with the book, reveals a more heightened sense of the book's importance within the narrative (particularly in terms poetic composition). Similarly, the *Parliament of Fowls* presents a narrator who reads a book, his interaction with which leads to creative dreaming and composition. Like *BD*, the book is credited as the reason for both the content of his dream and the content he will compose afterwards; the full extent to which the book is credited with creative output is only visible when recognizing the sensorial experience of reading. Moreover, the book —not the text— is presented as the key to maintaining the narratives that preserve social memory and allow for the creation of new memory. Both narratives offer depictions of material books that benefit from, if not require, the book to be a physical object that can be touched, seen, and investigated. This materiality, and the bookishness it allows, grant the book the ability to speak to the future and from the past.

## 5.1 'Seventy percent of all archaeology is done in the library': Bookish Discovery

During the *Book of the Duchess*, we see a man think, read, sleep, dream, and write. Along the way, he describes reading as a cognitive process with a physical dimension; in fact, the language he uses to explain his reading process is similar to that of searching through a physical, unknown space. Moreover, the act of finding something in a book transforms from an action of discovery to the production of literary works. The book, as I will show in this section, is not only pivotal to his ability to read, but its very physicality is what leads to his creative process. The narrator does not represent reading in abstract or metaphorical terms in which he simply has or gains knowledge of a text; rather, the narrator describes reading in realistic terms, using a material book to carry, deliver, and reveal the story he reads. In *Book of the Duchess*, stories are gathered through a process of discovery that involves (and requires) sensory interaction with a material, physical book. In other words, reading is portrayed as a process of looking, finding, and discovering that happens on the physical plane through a sensory experience with a book. The tactility with which the narrator represents reading in turn becomes a part of how he is able to write, another process that, as I will show, also relies on the physicality provided by the book. In Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* (as well as the *Parliament of Fowls)*, reading involves physical books and writing is a byproduct of physically grounded reading. Acknowledging that the book he reads is a material book, allows us to appreciate how the book is given credit for the narrator's resulting poetic output. Perhaps more importantly, interpreting the narrator's book in material terms reveals both how the book allows such creative thinking to happen and how the book's bookishness operates as a vehicle for metaphor.

Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* uses a language of physicality and discovery that represents reading as an action involving material books. After the narrator, at the beginning of *BD*, decides to pass the time by reading, he describes reading as the result of, first, being handed a material book, and second, searching through that book; both accessing and interacting with the book are depicted in terms related to the book's material presence:

> So whan I saw I might not slepe,
> Til now late this other night,
> Upon my bed I sat upright
> And bad oon *reche* me a book,
> A *romaunce*, and *he it me tok*
> To rede and drive the night away;

For me thoughte it *better play*
Then playe either at ches or tables.
And *in this bok* were *written* fables
That clerkes had in olde tyme,
And other poetes, put *in* rime
To rede and *for to be in minde,*
While men loved the lawe of kinde.
This bok ne *spak* but of such thinges,
Of quenes lives, and of kinges,
And *many other thinges* smale.
*Amonge al this I fond a tale*
That me thoughte a wonder thing. (*BD* 44-61--emphasis mine)

In summary, the insomniac narrator decides to occupy his time by reading, asks someone to hand him a book, describes the book, and finds a tale that spurs the rest of his story. The book "spak" to him of many old tales and fables, and "amonge al this," he "fond a tale" of particular interest to him.

First and foremost, the narrator's book should be, I argue, understood as a material object; the narrator describes the book in physical and specific terms that give the book not only a singularity, but position the book's functions as specific to its bookishness. After deciding to read and being handed the book, the *BD* narrator says, "*in this bok* were written fables." (*BD* 52) Describing the fables as "in this bok" indicates proximity—"in" connotes physical space and positions the fables firmly within the confines of "this" book. The language implies the presence of a book and also points to the book's importance as a vessel "in" which old rhymes are carried through time and space. These stories are available for the reader only because of the book's ability to act as a container that protects and preserves its contents (an aspect of bookishness that I will return to in detail when discussing the *Parliament of Fowls*). Moreover, he goes on to give the book singularity by describing its making: "And *in this bok* were written fables / That clerkes had in olde tyme, / And other poetes, put in rime." (*BD* 52-54) He defines "this" book, *in* which fable *were* written, as having a making and a lineage, details that ask us to consider the object he is holding and reading from as much as they point to the fables inside. While these details are vague, to the narrator, "this" is a specific book made in a specific way by various actual people.[6] It is not,

[6] This also reflects the off-made observation that medieval manuscripts are each singular objects. Chaucer doesn't grab at the generic idea of the codex, but handles a unique artefact. Though much has been made of studying medieval manuscripts as individual, unique objects, this hasn't transferred into how we interpret moments of book-handling that occur within narrative.

as characterized by Stearns, "minor and incidental" as is the book that appears before the vision-proper in Froissart's *L'Espinette Amoureuse*. As a model in the vision tradition, the French poem uses the book incidentally, while Chaucer's narrator positions the book as a central part of his experience.

Moreover, the narrator's description is fitting given the nature of medieval miscellanies, which this seems to be. Arthur Bahr identifies the medieval miscellany as "a multi-text manuscript book whose contents exhibit a substantial degree of variety (of languages, genres, authors, literary forms, etc.)."[7] The narrator's first mention of the book classifies the object in its entirety as a "book, / A romaunce," (47-48) which contrasts with the great variety used to characterize its contents: The "fables" are explicitly plural; composed long ago by both clerks and poets; are both "smale" and not; and discuss "quenes lyves, and of kinges, and many other thinges." The only thing the various fables seems to have in common is that they were composed "long ago" and are in this particular book. Further, when taken literally, the narrative distinguishes between the scribal act of writing and the authorial act of poetic composition: "And in this bok *were written* fables / That clerkes had in olde tyme, / And other poetes, *put in rime*." (*BD* 52-54) The book holds "written" iterations of verses that were "put in rime" by clerks and poets. As the two separate verbs suggest, "put[ing fables] in rime" is not necessarily the same as inscribing them inside a book. The narrator's interaction with the book is presented in realistic terms; the book is not a metaphor for knowledge, literature, or reading in general. To the narrator, "this bok" is a specific object he holds in his hands and in which he finds a variety of tales. Interpreting the book as a material book makes visible the physical tactility involved in reading, which in turn makes visible the searchable, explorable, and thus stimulating, nature of books.

[7] The second part of Bahr's definition notes that the medieval miscellany is a book "whose variety, in turn, creates some degree of unwieldiness for modern readers." Arthur Bahr, "Miscellaneity and Variance in the Medieval Book," *The Medieval Manuscript Book: Cultural Approaches,* ed. Michael Johnston and Michael van Dussen, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 94 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 181-98, p. 182) He admits to the subjective nature of the definition, but for my purposes, I find this definition both practically and theoretically useful, as it points out the difficulty modern readers may have recognizing when a material book appears in the medieval literary wilderness. The narrator's description of his book may seem unwieldy, but it's a mistake to interpret his words as flighty or circumstantial. Another definition is offered by Seth Lehrer who categorize miscellanies as "collections of text that grew by accretion over time or that were brought together by chance" (which is similar to anthologies, collections with a coherent or designed theme). Seth Lehrer, "Bibliographical Theory and the Textuality of the Codes: Toward a history of the Premodern Book," *The Medieval Manuscript Book,* 17-33, p.21.

The opening scene of *Book of the Duchess* depicts reading as a physical act not only necessitating, but made possible by, the presence of a material book. The narrator describes his reading process as "finding" something "amongst" others ("amonge al this I fond a tale" 60). This descriptions furthers the book's presence by nestling the tale "among" others bound in the same book. The tale has not become a disembodied entity that lives in his head or memory; he remembers its position bound within the book. Further, the physical materiality implicit in describing the story in proximity to others also makes reading an activity contingent on materiality. When reading is "finding" something "amongst" others, it is a physical performance that, here, results in an act of discovery. Moreover, this depiction of reading first and foremost features digging through a book—not reading a story. Whatever happens next (namely reciting a tale, dreaming, and writing) results from his ability to search "among" the book's pages to "find" inspiration. Noting the centrality of the book-object in this scene is essential to appreciating the role of the book in the way Chaucer's portrayal reading and writing across many of his narratives. The book is not reduced to a metaphor for reading, for the generic tropes of the genre, or for injecting authority into the narrative; it is not pushed aside or forgotten – the book is essential in delivering the tale he reads and inspiring his upcoming actions, and it does not fade away as the dream vision progresses. Here and elsewhere, the presence of a "wonder"-ful story is attributed to the presence of a book capable of containing wonders.

In fact, in *Book of the Duchess* inspiration depends on physical interaction: Reading inspires *because* the book allows the reader to search within its spaces and "find" a tale, resulting, in this case, in the narrator overcoming his melancholic insomnia. More than forty opening lines outline the extent of the narrator's insomnia, melancholy, and his "felynge in nothyng" (*BD* 11). He says that both "many an ydel thought" and "fantasies ben in [his] hede," yet neither idle nor fantastic thoughts have broken his melancholic "felynge [of] nothyng." (*BD* 4, 28, 11) His own mental processes, whether mundane or fantastic, have not been helped him – but reading a book breaks the pattern, allowing him to find a story that he "thoughte a wonder thing." (*BD* 61) Reading cures his melancholy, demonstrating that the mental processes inspired by the book are in some way different from those without the book; the difference, in this portrayal of reading, is that the material matrix of the book allows concurrent mental and physical engagement. The act of reading is physical, engaging the reader on both textual and material planes in ways distinctly more

stimulating than the other forms of thinking he finds futile.[8] The physically manifested reading process of "finding" something "amongst" the pages of a book inspires mental excitement that cures his "felynge in nothyng."[9] As the book literally and physically takes on the characteristics of a container in which he may search, the narrator is able to access a state of "wonder" previously lost to him. Because he is able to search and find, actions made possible by the physical book, the narrator is able to engage with creative thinking rather than a mental process of, perhaps, simply remembering or thinking about a story he knows. In Chaucer's portrayal, reading is physical, and the physicality is what allows productive mental engagement with the stories inside books.

Interpreting the book in terms of realistic, material presence also makes apparent ways that the book is distinctly inspiring compared to other forms of interaction; that the narrator's inspiration results in textual recitation and composition implies a link between the book's textuality and its ability to inspire creative thought. The narrator calls the tale, which he has found for the first time, to be a "wonder," (*BD* 1, 61) a form of interest or curiosity that is in direct conflict with his self-diagnosed melancholy from the beginning of the tale: "Ne me nys nothyng leef nor looth./ Al is ylyche good to me." (*BD* 8-9) The book provides the necessary inspiration to shake him from his melancholy, in which nothing is delightful nor horrible (and I would love to think that "leef" is a clever entendre, noting the lack of written manuscript leaves in his life to this point). Not only

[8] That the narrator happens upon the tale, instead of searching for it, adds to the realistic portrayal of reading. The narrator doesn't begin reading with any specific ambitions or outcomes in mind; more simply, he chooses to read to pass the time ("To rede and drive the night away", *BD* 49), and, in Cherniss' phrasing, for amusement (*Boethian* 174). We learn, over the course of the tale, that he falls asleep, dreams, and is compelled to write his own verse, but first, reading happens for the sake of having something to do. Chaucer's portrayal of a reader for whom inspiration (and sleep) is a lucky side effect of reading rather than an ulterior motive, offers an air of innocence or happenstance to the sense of "wonder" at finding his tale. It also adds to the scene's portrayal of a realistic narrator who is reading a realistic (/material) book.

[9] Corinne Saunders alludes to this interactive, influential aspect of books when she states that "desires, dreams and books provide occasions for imaginative encounters with the supernatural and for visionary experience." For Saunders, the "book" mentioned isn't actually referring to the book he reads (but the poem he writes after dreaming). Saunders misses the chance to tie book-use into her argument that "physiological processes and exterior influences can interweave to produce powerful psychological experiences." The book, as textual and material object, offers both physiological and exterior influence – and it leads to the psychological experience of dreaming. Corinne Saunders, "Thinking Fantasies: Visions and Voices in Medieval English Secular Writing," in *Visions and Voice-Hearing in Medieval and Early Modern Contexts*, ed. H Powell and Corinne Saunders, Palgrave Studies in Literature, Science and Medicine (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 91-116.

does the book solve his problem, but he also passes on other options, believing reading will be "better play / Then playe either at ches or tables." (*BD* 50-51) Reading is set up in direct contrast to both chess and backgammon (and, less explicitly, to conversing with the person who hands him his book). These games are touched and seen—they are physical—and as far as games go, chess and backgammon are strategic and thoughtful in nature; their inability to stir him from melancholy tells us that the book must inspire a thought process distinct from that inspired by other forms of engagement. That nether his own "ydel" or fantastic thoughts, conversations, backgammon, nor chess have offered sufficient mental stimulation, points to the book's distinct ability to inspire awe. I believe the reasoning is revealed when we interpret the book, which is both material and textual: The book's materiality, as physical codex and textualized object, gives him both a physical object to interact with and the textual content to inspire mental creativity. In other words, the narrator's engagement with a manuscript matrix – which engages cognitive functioning via both textual and visual signifiers – is able to stimulate the narrator's mind when other objects and methods of engagement have failed.[10] Chess and backgammon may require strategic thinking and physical touch, but they do not carry what other poets "in olde time" have put into rhyme; games do not provide a template from which to base new creative thinking or storytelling, nor do they carry new (or old) information to players. We know, in metaphorical terms, that the book holds a broad metaphorical capacity, and we understand this capacity to be associated with its textual and material reality; interpreting the book as material shows us how – the book's materiality makes it a vessel that delivers old texts, and its old texts provide a narrative template for further storytelling, writing, or fantastic dreams.

In the *Book of the Duchess*, the narrator credits the book as carrier and deliverer of tales, a vessel in which to find awe-inspiring (or sleep-inducing) content, and this type of physically driven engagement extends to how he defines productive reading. Even when he discusses the tale (instead of the book) he depicts reading as a sensorial experience with the object in front of him:

[10] Placing the narrator's book in contrast with chess and backgammon also, perhaps, illustrates the singular experience of touching parchment, which Michael Camille has posited as an additional layer of cognitive engagement when considering the textual and visual nature of the manuscript matrix. Michael Camille, "Sensations of the Page: Imaging Technologies and Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts," in *The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, ed. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 33–53.

For I ne myghte, for bote ne bale,
Slepe or I had red thys tale
Of this dreynte Seys the kyng
And of the goddes of slepyng.
  Whan I had *red thys tale wel*
*And overloked hyt everydel*,
Me thoghte wonder yf hit were so,
For I had never herd speke or tho
Of noo goddes that koude make
Men to slepe, ne for to wake  (*BD* 227- 236—emphasis mine)

The narrator attributes his understanding of the "goddes of slepyng" to a reading process dependent upon physical interaction between book and reader. The narrator defines reading as an active process that can be done well or poorly, stating that, in this instance he "red thys tale wel / and overloked hyt everydel" (*BD* 231-32). He clarifies that he read the tale *wel*, an adverb connoting an invested, competent, and concentrated reading (while also implying the possibility of reading poorly); he also tells us that reading well involves some effort in the form of "and overlok[ing] hyt everydel."[11] In sharing these details, he makes sure we know that he is a good reader and describes what good reading looks like: Reading well involves looking (more than once) at all parts of the pages in front of him. The idea of "*over*lok[ing] hyt everydel" echoes the idea of physicality demonstrated elsewhere in his description of reading. Reading *wel* is done by engaging the physical senses via "*lok*[ing]." Taken literally, this phrasing claims the book is something to be looked at (and which has parts through which to look, *everydel*). In this way, the physicality portrayed when he is handed a book and finds things within it is echoed in the sensory engagement needed for reading *wel*. We are encouraged to picture a reader who is focused on the object in front of him, turning pages and reading lines of text – this is not a scene of imaginative thinking or of daydreamy pondering in which the physical book slips away from the scene, an absent part of a reader's journey to understanding. Rather, the book is constant and necessary, and it is credited with his ultimate ability to fall asleep, to dream, and to write. In the *Book of the Duchess*, therefore,

[11] The idea that "wel" connotes performing an act with investment or competency is supported by senses recorded in the *MED*. Two of the three instances attributed to the Book of the Duchess fit this type of "accurate" or "shrewd" interpretation. (*MED*, "wel, adv." 4 (a) Accurately, exactly; rightly, truly; (b) aptly, fittingly; congruently; also, freely; accorden (semen, sitten, etc.) ~; as ~…as; (c) sincerely, genuinely; (d) with reason; clearly, conclusively; also, shrewdly, perceptively; sen (sheuen, witen, etc.) ~; (e) in proverbs.)

books are not metaphors for disembodied stories; they are present as the vessels in which stories are carried, enabling readers to engage with voices from a different time.

In addition to providing our narrator a chance for physical discovery and the resulting "wonder," the book remains a constant presence throughout his tale, reinforcing its performance as a book and its role in the narrator's creative and literary production. He begins reading "[u]pon [his] bed" and "Such a *lust* anoon me took / To slepe that *ryght upon my book* / Y fil aslepe." (*BD* 46, 273-75) Perhaps more interesting —and certainly contributing to our understanding of the book as literally present— the book does not simply disappear from the narrative when he enters into the dream vision; instead, the book is present when he wakes at the end:

> And fond me lyinge in my bed;
> And the book that I hadde red,
> Of Alcione and Seys the kyng,
> And of the goddes of sleping,
> I fond hyt in myn honde ful even. (BD 1325-29—emphasis mine)

In both of these passages, the narrator literally holds the book. This fact is so obvious that we tend to overlook it – but the narrator emphasizes both his physical position and what he is touching before and after the dream vision. These small narrative details—falling asleep upon the book and waking with it in his hands—depict a literal reading experience. Further, like the cover that holds his *romaunce*, his *romaunce*-book wraps around the narrator's tale. If we wanted to speak metaphorically, the dream that falls in the middle is bound by the book it echoes from; but the book is, first and foremost, literal— no matter what happens in the middle, the narrator sleeps and wakes with a book in his lap. Moreover, similar to the "wonder" that strikes his waking consciousness, his sleep is depicted as an active and exciting action, as "a lust" takes over his body and compels him to sleep-- if the book grants him the ability to sleep, it does so by stirring him mentally and physically. And though he wakes with the book open in his hands, the depiction of "fil[ing] aslepe… ryght upon my book" invites the reader to picture our narrator actually tipping onto the open pages, almost metaphorically entering the book and certainly actually touching it.

The book does not disappear when he begins reading or even sleeping, instead becoming the structure that catches him as he falls into his lustful sleep. After falling asleep upon his book, it should be no surprise, then, that our narrator wakes up inside of one:

> And sooth to seyn, my chambre was
> Ful wel *depeynted*, and with glas
> Were al the wyndowes wel yglased

Ful clere, and nat an hoole ycrased,
That to beholde hyt was gret joye.
For hooly al *the story of Troye*
*Was in the glasynge ywroght* thus,
…….[12]
And *alle the walles* with colours fyne
Were peynted, *bothe text and glose*,
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose. (*BD* 321-34—emphasis mine)

The physicality inherent in our narrator's reading process extends into his dream, demonstrated in how the structure in which he wakes mimics the last physical object he touched. The entire story of Troy is etched in the glass, and the *Romance of the Rose* is painted on the walls. Important, though, is that the dreamer does not describe these as *images* but, instead, uses language denoting the texts themselves – the "text and glose" are "peynted" on the walls and the whole "story" of Troy is "ywroght" into the glass. Specifically, "text and glose" is bookish parlance referring to the layout of written text on the page, a description that emphasizes the role of the physical book in the narrator's dream, mind, and subconscious response to reading.[13] He is not surrounded by images or pictures that merely represent stories he is familiar with but, instead, finds himself surrounded

[12] "Of Ector and of kyng Priamus, / Of Achilles and of king Lamedon, / Of eke of Medea and of Jason, / Of Paris, Eleyne, and Lavyne." (*BD* 329-31)

[13] While the MED notes a range of contemporary meanings for "glose, n." there is precedent for considering "glose" as an aspect of physical manuscript design as it guides how the reader looks at and navigates within the object. The *Oxford Companion to the Book* defines "gloss" as "An interlinear or marginal explanation of text, ranging from the translation … to extended commentary submerging the text." The extended definition clarifies that glosses were "written in smaller letters than the main text…were linked to the relevant portion of text by their position on the pages…by symbols or superscript letters." *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, eds Michael Suarez and Henry Woudhuysen, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2: 753. For the functioning of glossed books in memory training, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 70 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), especially 261-73. Salda, attempting to locate a physical space that may have inspired the dreamer's bedchamber, comes to similar conclusions, claiming that the bedroom must contain text, textual commentary, and complimentary illustrations to mirror the book he falls asleep upon. Michael Norman Salda, "Pages from History: The Medieval Palace of Westminster as a Source for the Dreamer's Chamber in the Book of the Duchess," *Chaucer Review* 27.2 (1992), 111–25 at 113).

by physical manifestations of pages he has seen.[14, 15] Even as he transitions into his subconsciously created allegorical landscape, the book is present. Rather than being dropped into an unknown dreamscape, the narrator passes through a transitional space; the book becomes a portal through which he moves from conscious reality into dreaming, and that portal looks like the pages of a book.

That the book is represented as an essential part of the narrator's creative output is, therefore, evident in how he reads and also how he dreams; I argue it is also present in how he invents and composes. Inside his book, the *BD* narrator finds Ovid's tale of Ceyx and Alcyone, which he summarizes in the frame narrative before moving on to his dream. The narrator is variably considered to have missed any moral or ethical lessons offered by the Ovidian tale[16], and it is generally understood that Chaucer has transformed rather than replicated his source materials.[17] However, if we consider how the narrator is inspired not just by reading the tale, but

[14] Though Fumo is discussing the ways the dream represents the role of authorship (rather than considering the book in itself), she says "a bedroom with walls engraved with the stories of Troy and the Roman de la rose, enfolds the dreamer as if within the pages of an illuminated manuscript anthology." Jamie C. Fumo, Making Chaucer's Book of the Duchess: Textuality and Reception (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2016), 40. I enjoy that her reading of the room's bookishness includes illuminations in addition to the textual mise-en-page implied by "text and glose." And I wish I'd written that sentence.

[15] Of the bedchamber, Salda notes that: "The dreamer seems to see a book, even though he clearly is within a building. At the same time, the dreamer unquestionably sees a building, yet one so much like a manuscript that he can describe it only according to a textual idiom" ("Pages from History," 113). In reverse, in fact, Salda finds that the walls of St. Stephen's and the Painted Chamber (both within the Palace of Westminster) appear as "pages' executed in manuscript style," because they employ both text, textual commentary, and illustration ("Pages from History," 118).

[16] Commenting on the narrator's misinterpretation of the Ovidian moral, Cherniss claims he is taking a "foolishly narrow, parochial attitude towards the story of Ceyx and Alcyone and, in consequence, fails to derive from it the kernels of genuine wisdom which it contains," and Lynch says that readers "sympathize with his lack even as we are meant to scoff at the absurdity of his reading of the story." Michael Cherniss, *Boethian* 174; Kathryn L. Lynch, *Chaucer's Philosophical Visions*, Chaucer Studies 27 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 41) As I will detail below, I think gauging the accuracy of the narrator's intellectual reception of the Ovidian tale is less interesting than what he does with that narrative.

**[17]** As summarized by Elizaveta Strakhov: "Chaucer demonstrates that he has appropriated the tale for thoroughly different purposes; far from replicating it, he transforms it entirely." Elizaveta Strakhov, "'Counterfeit' Imitatio," in C*haucer's* Book of the Duchess*: Contexts and Interpretations*, ed. Jamie C. Fumo, Chaucer Studies 45 (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2018), 157-76 at 171. For more on the genre of *Book of the Duchess* (and *Parliament of Fowls*), as well as Chaucer's response to and use of French traditions, see Muscatine, Wimsatt, and more recently, Heinrichs and Strakhov. Also, Palmer outlines how *BD* deviates from traditional tropes of the *dit amoreux* in its inclusion of Boethian ideals; similarly, in response

also by interacting with the book, the ways he transforms the Ovidian narrative become more interesting than whether he has learned anything. Interpreting the narrator's version of Alcyone and Seys as a product of the type of interactive reading he performs reveals a new story that is a collaborative blend of the book's contents and the reader's anxieties rather than a pure *imitatio*, translation, or even summary. Notable among these changes are an increased attention to sleeplessness as well as physical embodiment, topics that reflect both our narrator's personal concerns with insomnia and his depictions of reading as dependent on physical books.

When considered in relation to the book, the narrator's version of Alcyone's story is evidence of purposeful, creative composition that adopts the tale to his own circumstances. Indeed, he clarifies his "first matere" two times, and is cognizant of how his words do or do not align with that main purpose. For example, after he relays his interpretation of the Alcyone and Seys narrative and moves on to telling us about his dream, the narrator tells us how the story fits in his greater goal:

> But what she sayede more in that swow
> I may not telle yow as now;
> Hyt were to longe for to dwelle;
> *My first matere* I wil yow telle,
> Wherfore I have told this thyng
> Of Alcione and Seys the king,
> For thus moche dar I saye wel:
> I had be dolven everydel
> And ded, ryght thurgh defaute of slep,
> Yif I ne had red and take keep
> Of this tale next before. (*BD* 215-25—emphasis mine)

What he shares of the Ovidian piece (and more importantly, how he reshapes the Ovidian piece) is supplied insofar as it complements his own story— he will tell us why ("wherefore") he has told us this thing as it related to his "first matere." This narrative aside connects the two subjects of

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to the poem's categorization as a dream vision, Lynch reveals how the poem's topical concerns categorize it more specifically as a "philosophical vision" (*Philosophical Visions*). See: Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957)**;** James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets: The Literary Background of The Book of the Duchess* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968); Katherine Heinrichs, *The Myths of Love: Classical Lovers in Medieval Literature* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Elizaveta Strakhov, "'Counterfeit' Imitatio"; R. Barton Palmer, "The Book of the Duchess and Fonteinne Amoureuse: Chaucer and Machaut Reconsidered," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 7 (1980): 380-93.

which he speaks (his melancholy and Ovid's tale) and imposes some structural connection to *Book of the Duchess*. Further, he tells us that the Ovidian Alcyone's complaints are "to longe" to dwell upon, meaning that what he does tell us is of importance, is not too long, and does relate to his "first matere": that he would be "ded, ryght thurgh defaute of slep" if he had not read the tale. If we take his word for it – and I think we should – the narrator adapts and includes Alcyone's story because it is fundamental to his primary concern: bringing purpose back into his life by giving him a way of sleeping and giving him stories to tell.[18]

Recognizing that the narrator has a sense of which parts of the Alcyone story he wants to share helps us to appreciate how his version is suited to his "first matere" (and how these changes align with thinking about his interactive relationship with the book). This purpose, and his claims of keeping things to the point, explain his depiction of Alcyone's prayers, which differ greatly from the Ovidian version of the tale:

> So whan this lady koude here noo word
> That no man myghte fynde hir lord,
> Ful ofte she swouned, and sayde "Alas!"
> For sorwe ful nygh wood she was. (*BD* 101-04)

Alcyone finds herself stuck, lacking answers that would allow her either to move towards or away from processing her grief. In this way she resembles our narrator, himself unable to move towards either "leef or looth." This rendering is also quite different from Ovid's, in which Alcyone prays tirelessly, but also prepares outfits for her husband's celebratory return: "[Alcyone] is filled with hope that he'll return," and "[she] counts off the nights; already she prepares the festive clothes that he and she will wear / At his homecoming."[19] By both preparing for the future and sending prayers, the Ovidian Alcyone has a hopeful (if misguided) emotional relationship with her husband's absence. In *BD*, reading leads to a blending of the Ovidian tale with what the narrator can relate to. Another example of this is how Alcyone prays for sleep and for a dream (desires that quite obviously echo those of our narrator): "Send me grace to slepe, and mete / In my slepe som certeyn sweven." (*BD* 115-19) In Ovid, Alcyone does not pray for sleep or for information; Juno,

[18] I appreciate Cherniss' point that, "There is simply no reason to distrust [the narrator]. Indeed, when Chaucer represents him as having omitted a portion of what he has read, he makes him say so even though his alleged reason and Chaucer's real reason may not be the same." The narrator's ability to learn Ovid's lesson is less interesting than what he is capable of. Michael Cherniss *Boethian Apocalypse* 173.

[19] Ovid, *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993), 379, 383.

unprompted, sends confirmation of Seys' death because she knows Alcyone's hopefulness is in vain (and, more selfishly, because Juno doesn't appreciate Alcyone desecrating her altar with mournful hands). To the narrator, reading from his own view of the world, Alcyone provides him a way to fall asleep; he sees his desire reflected in Alcyone's, who becomes the protagonist in his personal narrative when she teaches him how to speak to the god of sleep. The *Book of the Duchess* is not a faithful retelling of the Ovidian tale; it is instead the product of creative adaptation that blends his own concerns with the framework he has read, paralleling the collaborative type of reading demonstrated in his interaction with the book. This reinforces the idea that the inclusion of the Alcyone story is, in fact, not dislocated from his "first matere," but instead portrays the narrator's understanding that reading old tales from old books can produce new ones. Moreover, it is a narrative performance of his understanding that attaining information relies on material interaction; just as his book is essentially material, so too are other forms of evidence.

As Alcyone takes on aspects of the narrator, bodies take on aspects of books. In Chaucer's version of Alcyone and Seys, metaphors, semblances, or visions are not suitable methods of delivering a message, a very distinct change from the Ovidian tale. Chaucerian Juno gives Morpheus thorough and explicit instructions on delivering her message, and Seys' physical body plays a central role:

> And byd hym that, on alle thyng,
> He *take up Seys body* the kyng,
> That lyeth ful pale and nothyng rody.
> Bid hym *crepe into the body,*
> And *doo hit goon* to Alcione
> The quene, ther she lyth allone,
> And *shewe* hir shortly, hit ys no nay,
> How hit was dreynt thys other day;
> And do *the body speke* ryght soo (*BD* 141-49—emphasis mine)

In short, Morpheus is to take up the body, inhabit the body, make the body move, show her the body, and make the body speak. This is starkly different from the Ovidian version, which relies on semblances and imagery to deliver the news:

> … bid the God
> Who rules the night by visions with a nod,
> Prepare *a dream, in figure, and in form*
> *Resembling* him, who perish'd in the storm;
> This *form* before Alcyone present,
> To make her certain of the sad event.
> And have [Sleep] send Alcyone a dream,

> And *image that appears in Ceyx' shape*
> And shows him dead and *tells of* his true fate. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 384—emphasis mine)

The Ovidian Sleep is commanded to create a vision, form, or image that resembles or appears to be Seys, leaving Alcyone to find the body floating in the ocean. In other words, he is to appear as a metaphorical semblance of the material body. The importance of the body increases immensely from Ovid to Chaucer, and the shift parallels the importance placed on the materiality of the physical book in the frame narrative. Just as the narrator experiences the book by looking at, searching within, and sleeping upon it, so the narrator thinks Alcyone must look at and hear directly from her husband's actual body.[20] In Chaucer, metaphorical semblance is changed to experience; similarly to how the book is transformed into the dream's bedchamber so the narrator can make sense of entering the dreamscape, so too is the book transformed into Seys' material body, so the narrator can make sense of Alcyone's experience. Juno's motives and method of responding to Alcyone's prayers are modified (from Ovid) to align with the narrator's primary concerns as well as his methods for understanding those concerns. His new poetic content aligns with his lived experience, and this echoes the narrator's portrayal of how reading from a book is a material experience. To make her message understandable, Juno employs a physical manifestation, a performance of physical interaction echoing that of the narrator interacting with the book his friend pulls from a shelf.[21] To the narrator, book-use is material and physical, and this method of understanding the world affects the stories he writes—and the dreams he dreams.

Just as the narrator's understanding that knowledge is best attained via material interaction influences his revision of the Ovidian narrative, his material understanding of the book influences the content of his dream (and, eventually, what he writes). It's been generally accepted that the *Book of the Duchess* exemplifies contemporary understandings of how dreams can reflect waking concerns.[22] In acknowledging the "imaginative potential" of the dreamspace, Fumo categorizes the

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[20] Indeed, in her analysis of how Chaucer engages with the concept of *imitatio*, Liza Strakhov argues that, "By having Morpheus 'crepe' inside Ceyx, rather than simply replicate his external appearance, Chaucer suggests that *imitatio* is the process of inhabiting someone or something from the inside, rather than merely reproducing external appearances" (Strakhov, "Counterfeit" 170).

[21] This pattern remains consistent throughout each poem (i.e., in Chaucer, Iris commands Morpheus to use the body and so he does; in Ovid, Iris commands Sleep to use a vision and so he does).

[22] An idea also pondered by the narrator of the Parliament of Fowls in his claim that people dream about their primary desires: "The juge dremeth how his plees been sped; / The cartere dremeth how his cart is

narrator's "casual dismissal" of chess as a form of entertainment as a narrative strategy that allows it to become "displaced in the dream [as] the Man in Black's deployment of a chess analogy for matters of life and death."[23] She also interprets the narrator's description of his book's contents ("of quenes lyves, and of kinges, and many other thinges") as contributing to the Man in Black's chess analogy. I would argue that Fumo's interpretation, which implies authorial design, can be productively expanded to include how the narrator's experience with a material book influences the content of his dream: just as the narrator finds himself inside a book-like bedchamber, surrounded by the pages of books he has read, so the various fables of his miscellany take shape in how the Man in Black describes his woes. Where Fumo sees authorial design, I point to a narrative development resulting from the narrator's experience with the book.[24] Moreover, the narrator's general misunderstanding of what the Man in Black is telling him seems, to me, to reflect the experience of waking up inside of a medieval miscellany. Perhaps the author has designed the poem so that chess (but not backgammon) echoes through the narrator's dream, but, if we prioritize the narrator's experience in more material terms, we see ways that the book echoes through the dreamscape.

The physicality of the book makes it searchable, interactive, and inspirational, as seen in how the dreamer describes his reading, modifies what he has read, falls into the book and into his dream, and—finally—how he sets to work on new composition. Not only does the book not disappear from the narrative, bookending both the *BD* and dream, so does the concept of "finding." At the beginning of *BD*, he "fond a tale," an action made possible by the book's physicality and which incites his feeling of wonder (*BD* 60); the act of finding reoccurs after he awakes from the

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gon; / The riche, of gold; the knyght fyght with his fon; / The syke met he drynketh of the tonne; / The lovere met he hath his lady wonne." (*PF* 101-05). For medieval dream theory and Chaucer, see Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle* Ages, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); A.C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); R. Barton Palmer, "The *Book of the Duchess* and *Fonteinne Amoreuse*."

[23] Jamie Fumo, *Making Chaucer's Book of the Duchess*, 38, 39.

[24] I find Robert M. Jordan's characterization of *BD* as one of "aggregation" compelling in thinking of how the dreamscape is a response to the narrator's reading, and how the poem he produces is a response to what he's dreamed. The language of aggregation implies a type of collecting, which links the production of new texts to the preservation of old ones. In order to collect matter of which to write, that matter has to exist: the bookishness of books makes such preservation possible. It also links the content inside his dream (of which he eventually writes) to the experiences with the book that comes before. Robert M. Jordan, "The Compositional Structure of the *Book of the Duchess*," *Chaucer Review* 9.2 (1974): 99-117 at108.)

dream: "And *fond* me lyinge in my bed…I *fond* hyt in myn hond ful even." (*BD* 1325, 1329) Moreover – and most importantly – he later attributes his ability to write as a form of finding: "Thoghte I, 'Thys ys so queynt a sweven, / That I wol, be processe of tyme, / *Fonde* to put this sweven in ryme'." (*BD* 1330-32) If, as I have argued, "finding" is a positive side effect made possible by the book's physicality, then it is just as important that this side effect continues on after the reading is done, after the dream has passed, and as he is starting a new day. In the MED, "fond" primarily means to discover, come across, or encounter but it also signifies artistic production.[25] Throughout *Book of the Duchess*, the act of finding transforms from an action of discovery to the production of literary works. Just as the mundaneness of touch, of sitting, of holding a physical book are detailed and repeated, so the idea of finding begins with opening the book and is echoed throughout the process, demonstrating that the creative effects of the book linger long past the presence of the book itself.

In the ways I've outlined, the physical book is at the center (and beginning and end) of the narrator's story -- the book grants him the inspiration he needs to sleep, to dream, and to wonder; the book locates his new tale in relation to the old; and a book is the final product of the entire process. The book is present (as a literal book) throughout his reading, is present (as Seys's body) throughout his retelling of Ovid, and is present (as a glass chamber) within his dream. Even when the book is transformed metaphorically (as the chamber or Seys's body) it is still recast as a firmly physical object —not a metaphysical concept or metaphor. The stories he reads are found within books, and the books do not disappear at any point in the process. The book is obviously important to the narrator's understanding of literary production, and that the book plays out in physical terms in every depiction shows us that materiality is a key aspect of that importance.

[25] The MED citations attributed to the *Book of the Duchess* delineate a connection between finding and poetics. The MED cites 436 quotations for 23 different senses of the word "finden, v." Of the 36 citations attributed to Chaucer, 20 are from CT and 9 from TC; 3 are from dream visions (1 each from LGW-12a, find while hunting; and *PF*-18a, find by mental effort). The only citation for the *Book of the Duchess* is filed under sense 23a: "23 (a) To compose or produce by way of artistic endeavor (a literary or musical work); to produce (a treatise); ~ of neue, to compose or tell in a different or original form; ~ notes, to sing a song, recite." The citation references the birds he awakes to in the glass temple, specifically their endeavor to produce music: "Ech [bird] of hem hym peyned / To fynde out mery crafty notes" (*BD* 318-19). The only noted use of "finding" is connected to artistic production and aligns with the argument that handling a physical book allows a sort of creative thinking that translates into literary composition.

## 5.2 'It's not the years, honey…': Bookish Vessels

The structure of *Parliament of Fowls* is similar to the *Book of the Duchess* in both form and function: the narrator reads, sleeps, wakes, and continues to read and write. What is interesting here is how *Parliament of Fowls* is more explicitly concerned with the role, causes, and maintenance of literary works and demonstrates this concern in terms that connect the physicality of reading with its effects on creative thinking.[26] The narrator's book is described in material terms and its material features make it capable of delivering old words to new readers. Not only does the narrator of *Parliament of Fowls* perform a sensorial form of reading contingent upon looking at a physical book (similar to that in BD), but he also describes how this looking makes the book authoritative and informative. The effect is a depiction of the book as both preservational and educational guide that makes old texts accessible to new readers. This preservational and educational functioning extends into the narrator's dreamworld, which takes on the shape of a book. The narrator of *Book of the Duchess* may pass through the book as a portal, but the narrator of *Parliament of Fowls* enters a book and never leaves. Ultimately, its bookish features are represented as key to how books are able to share texts and teach readers, and these functions are positioned as central to literary memory and textual production.

Similar to the narrator of the *Book of the Duchess*, this narrator describes reading with a language of physicality. As elsewhere, reading is a sensory experience centered around a material object:

> Of usage—what for luste and what for lore—
> *On* bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde.
> But wherfore that I speke al this? Nat yoore
> Agon, hit happede me for to *beholde*
> *Upon* a bok, was write *with lettres olde*,
> And ther*upon*, a certeyn thing to lerne,
> The longe day ful faste I redde and yerne. (*PF* 15-21—emphasis mine)

[26] While proving a chronology of themes within Chaucer's body of work is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is noteworthy that the device of reading a book to introduce a dream vision appears in his earliest vision, *Book of the Duchess*, and again in *Parliament of Fowls*, which is considered both much later and more sophisticated. The depiction of realistic book use in both implies that books, at least, were on Chaucer's mind when thinking about creative composition.

Both *on* and *upon* are prepositions signifying proximity (between himself and the object he is reading, and also between written letters and the pages they are inscribed upon). By claiming that he reads "on" books by "beholding" the letters written "upon" them, the narrator represents book-use as a process requiring sensory interaction with a physical object. The narrator tells us he reads books often, but, more importantly, in this description of reading, he focuses on a specific book. At this particular time, "nat yoore agon," a specific physical object "upon" which letters have been written and "upon" which he gazed, inspired the ensuing events. This book is not metaphorical or idiomatic to its user, the narrator, who is remembering an actual book. Even if the author, perhaps, perceives the book as bearing metaphorical associations, to the narrator the book is a material object. It is not a prop used to invoke the idea of thinking about literature or reading or for recalling a text that he expects his readership will be familiar with (such as the copy of "De Cleomidas" that makes an inconsequential appearance in Froissart's *L'Espinette Amoureuse*). It is a book with which the narrator performs reading by looking at the inscriptions upon its pages. Moreover, the narrator describes reading as "*beholding*," which requires both eyesight and something to look at. Beholding entails seeing, a link so mundane that we may overlook its dependence on the physical. While beholding may have connotations of observing with reverence, in wonder, or with awe, it first and foremost indicates a physical, sensory experience. In Chaucer's depictions of reading, reading is not represented as a lofty or metaphorical mental process, but a physical act. The content of books—tales, stories, fables—are not turned into collections of disembodied stories that exist purely for mental consideration or inspiration; they are and remain bound as letters written "upon a boke."

The narrator also emphasizes how he is using a physical book by employing specifically bookish terms to indicate the book's usefulness. The book he looks upon is "write with lettres olde," and he also tell us that "This bok of which I make of mencioun / Entitled was al ther, as I shal telle,/ `Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun.' / Chapitres sevene it hadde." (*PF* 19, 29-32) Even as he moves towards telling us about the book's content, he frames the content in physical terms, each relating back to "it," "this bok": this book is old, contains only one story, and is divided into seven sections. Though this still leaves a lot of imaginative room for a reader to picture the book however they want, the narrator describes a precise material book, and that precision is described in terms

specific to physical books.[27] This also applies to how he offers the book's title. The "bok" is "entitled" as "Tullyus of the Dreme of Scipioun," terminology referencing specific words he sees written upon a specific page within (or, though less likely, upon the outside of) his specific book. Conversely, if the narrator were thinking in metaphorical terms, he could just say the story is "*called* X" or "is known as X" (or "Cicero's work" or the "*Somnium Scipionis*") which would refer to the text as it exists in the collective, social library.[28] Instead of dismembering the tale from its book, the content is tied directly to "this bok" he beholds. The physical representation of reading attributes the forthcoming imaginative content to the book – not to the story.

The book is a central part of the narrator's reading process, and, as in the *Book of the Duchess*, the book remains a consistent presence through the poem. Acting to bookend the poem, the "Tullyus" is present at the beginning and turning to other books is his first priority when he wakes: "I wok, and othere bokes tok me to, / To reede upon." (*PF* 695-96) Immediately upon waking, he brings himself to other books—not to tales, studying, or thinking. In addition to the explicit reference to books, the language of "taking himself to" books implies the presence of physical books rather than disembodied stories or metaphorical reading. By stating that he "tok me to" other books, the narrator positions his body as the grammatical direct object that he navigates through physical space towards his books. The line also, again, notes that books are things "upon" which he performs reading. The language invites us to picture our narrator navigating a physical space as he moves from one object to another, gathering knowledge by seeing words written upon pages and bound within books. The description shows books as material objects that take up space and uses books as material objects to imply the narrator's laborious movement and action. Books bookend the narrator's experience in the *Book of the Duchess*; so,

[27] One affordance of the material book (and one that made it a useful textual technology) is indexing factors (e.g., indices, chapters, headers). The affordances of indexing facts as elements of bookishness is a topic for further discussion. It is also potentially interesting that he describes the codex as holding a single text, which would be a relatively rare occurrence compared to the frequency of miscellanies.

[28] That literary criticism conventionally refers to the narrator's book/text (interchangeably) as the "Dream of Scipio" is an example of how scholarship has metaphorically transmuted the narrator's material book into something else. Whether or not you find it useful to consider this book for its material affordances, the narrator does assign the book a specific name; that scholarly convention encourages scholarship to refer to it as something else exemplifies the way books are often metamorphosed into something else, in this case, a text that exists in the social collective. In this respect, I will [obstinately] be referring to the narrator's book as *Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun*.

too, they are a physically present at beginning and end of the *Parliament of Fowls*. Moreover, these books are present in the poems, not as metaphors for some other form of mental activity, but as physical objects that make reading possible by providing access to written content.

Where *Parliament of Fowls* begins to differ from *Book of the Duchess* in its representation of books and reading is an acknowledgement of the social realities surrounding book use, textual production, and book reception. The narrator describes reading as a material, sensory experience, and he extends the portrayal by referencing realities of medieval book use: "The day gan faylen, and the derke nyght / … / Berafte me my bok for lak of lyght." (*PF* 85, 87) By noting that the lack of light requires him to stop reading at nightfall, he portrays reading as contingent on sensory experience and calls on a very real limitation placed on medieval book use. Reading requires sight, and sight requires light; the fact that the narrator employs this fact further reinforces the scene as a literal representation of reading. Here, as elsewhere, beholding is iterated as a physical, sensory process affecting how he interacts with the objects in his world. When Chaucer talks about reading, his descriptions suggest a real act, using real objects, subject to real limitations. It is this reality—the materiality of reading and book use—that has been skipped over in how we interpret Chaucer's relationship with textual production and reading.[29] As he relates the story that inspires the impending dream vision, he does not initially (or even secondarily) recollect the story, its meaning, or the lessons gleaned —he recites the experience of visually examining letters on a page, including the very real need for a light by which to read. This points to, again, the narrator's material experience with the book, which becomes important for understanding how the book continues to play a role in his dream and textual production.

The book's material bookishness makes an appearance in the narrator's dreamworld as both material object and explanation for the dream. As the narrator falls asleep, Affricanus appears, "right in the selve aray / That Scipion hym say byfore that tyde, / Was come and stod right at my beddes syde." (*PF* 96-98) Mimicking the story he has read, Affricanus appears to our narrator in

[29] I have noted two such interpretations that skip over the material presence of the book in favor of the metaphorical in Chaucer (See Chapter 1 on Boitaini, and above on Fumo, n. 26). For more on contemporary book use and production as it relates to Chaucer, see Linne Mooney and Estelle Stubbs, (*Scribes and the City: London Guildhall Clerks and the Dissemination of Middle English Literature 1375-1425,* Manuscript Culture in the British Isles 4 (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013); Lawrence Werner, *Chaucer's Scribes: London Textual Production, 1384–1432,* Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 106 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); and to a lesser extent, Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

the same clothing and "aray" in which he had appeared to Scipio. In a sort of reversal to the *BD* narrator falling into his book, here, Affricanus seems to fall *out* of the narrator's book as a materially instantiated presence. The effects of reading are echoing into his dreamspace. Moreover, while content from the *Tullyus of the Dreme of Scipioun* (that is, Affricanus the guide) appears as he imagines it inside his dreamspace, the book maintains its materiality as a book. Even in a space implicitly controlled by dream logic (in which a character from a story can appear without rational explanation), the guide attributes his arrival to our narrator's labor in looking at the book that he describes in realistic, material terms:

> … thus seyde he, "Thow hast the so wel born
> In lokynge of myn olde bok totorn,
> Of which Macrobye roughte nat a lyte
> That sumdel of thy labour wolde I quyte." (109-12)

Affricanus defines reading as a labor of "lokynge*"* at a book, and the book in question has a singularity defined by its old age, torn state, and potentially large size (given that Macrobye's commentary is "nat a lyte"[30]). The book's influence travels into the dreamworld as both Affricanus made manifest and as the object the narrator labored over; even here it is referred to not as a representational metaphor for reading or learning or labor, but as a material object that has an age,

[30] These lines have received attention based on Chaucer's apparent misattribution of the *Somnium Scipionus* to Macrobius, who was not the author of Cicero's *Somnium Scipionus* but authored a commentary to the text that. Similar misattributions occur in Chaucer's depictions of the *Somnium* in his *Roman de le Rose, Book of the Duchess* and the "Nun's Priest's Tale." See Stahl's introduction to the *Commentary* for an overview of work on Chaucer's access to and knowledge of Macrobius. William Harris Stahl, "Introduction," Macrobius, Ambrosius Aurelius Theodosius. *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio,* trans. W. H. Stahl, Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies 48 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 52-55. I do not think Chaucer's misattribution affects my reading of this moment as one that refers to physical features of a material book. In fact, Chaucer's slippage between original author and author of a later commentary is potentially interesting in the context of my argument. First, as this chapter argues below, the *Parliament of Fowls* offers a social view of textual production; Macrobius-as-author aligns with the poem's representation of books enabling texts to move to different readers through time, thus producing "new corn/newe science," of which the Macrobian book/text is an example. Another interesting question would be if or how the internal layout of the narrator's (or, maybe, Chaucer's) book affects his understanding of the text's authorship. If the pages were laid out as text and gloss, then Affricanus' comment about Macrobius' verbosity could refer to the material appearance of glossing on the manuscript page. Likewise, in at least one manuscript of the Macrobian Commentary, Macrobius' authorial performance is built into the book itself as miniature.
Nevertheless, as Chaucer's interaction with the *Somnium* is likely from its appearance in the *Roman de la Rose* (and likely not an actual copy of Macrobius' Commentary), this is probably a moot point.

condition, and size. Even in dreaming, a space in which metaphors are welcomed if not expected, the book is spoken of as a material, physical object. That the book retains its bookishness, even while the narrative turns to allegorical dreamscape, implies that the book has significance even — and maybe especially— as a material object.

### 5.3 '…It's the mileage': Beholding as Bookish Experience

The book's significance is implied by its mention in the dream and is reinforced by the way the narrator describes the book and dream guides in parallel terms. Namely, the narrator uses the same verbs to describe the book's actions as he does to describe the actions of the dream guides—showing and telling. Both guides and books perform through showing and telling; the mirrored descriptions imply that books serve the same educational purpose at the guides that appear within the dream visions. When the narrator is relating the content of the *Tullyus*, he describes Affricanus as guiding Scipio by "saying" and "showing"; Affricanus "seyde" his lessons to Scipio three times (46, 52, 73), and he "shewede" four times (44, 56, 57, 59; Carthage, the galaxy, the Earth, the spheres). Variations of showing and telling are the only verbs the narrator uses to describe Affricanus' performance within the *Tullyus*.[31] Whatever language the text actually uses, the narrator understands the guide's educational role as taking place via showing images and speaking words. This continues within the narrator's own dream, in which Affricanus continues to show and tell: He "seyde" his reason for appearing (109) and also his explanation of why the narrator doesn't need to fear the gates (155). The narrator describes his dream with a bit more verbal variety, but all of Affricanus' actions work towards the actions of showing and telling. Affricanus "hente" (brought) the narrator to the gate, "hente" (grabbed) his hand, and "shof" (shoved) him inside the gates. (*PF* 120, 154) After the bringing and shoving, the dreamer spends 21 lines describing all that he "beholds"; Affricanus is described with more verbal variety, but the result is the same—he shows his dreamer content from which he should learn a lesson. (*PF* 126-147) Indeed, Affricanus makes clear that *showing* is a primary educational form when he says his goal is to "shewe mater of to wryte … if thow haddest connyng for t'endite." (168, 167) The narrator perceives and represents Affricanus' functions as happening through sight and sound, by showing and telling.

[31] The only real variation is that Affricanus "bad" Scipio to avoid worldly delights (64), and he "tolde" Scipio that the world's delights will come to an end (67) –both forms of instruction through speaking.

This in itself is not necessarily interesting; indeed, medieval comprehension of memory and learning relied on visual and aural modes of reception. Saunders describes the medieval cognitive process demonstrated in narratives as "giving rise to visual images, voices and other kinds of unbidden sensory experience," and as "rarely exclusively visual or aural, but rather multisensory, involving some form of material or felt presence or entry into a three-dimensional dream world."[32] This is supported further by Mary Carruther's note that the "importance of visual images as memorial hooks and cues is a basic theme in all memory-training advice and practice from the very earliest Western text we possess."[33] The guides, as interpreted by the narrator, teach by showing and telling, invoking the kind of multisensory experience that makes the dream vision an ideal space for cognitive interaction and is believed to solidify learned material into lasting memory.

The guide performs his didactic function by showing and telling, and in Chaucer, these same verbs are used to represent the functioning of books. The narrator describes his books not as convenient props that fall into the background, but as objects that make information accessible and memorable because they are materially instantiated in front of him. When the narrator summarizes what he has read from the book, he describes this as the book "telling" the matter: the book "Fyrst telleth it, whan Scipion was come"; "Thanne telleth [it] here speche and al the blysse / That was betwix hem"; and "Than telleth it that, from a sterry place, / How Affrycan hath him Cartage shewed" (*PF* 36, 39-40, 43-44). In fact, the book "telleth it" is the only formulation used for recounting the book's content, a portrayal that mimics the speaking actions of Affricanus within both the *Somnium* narrative and the narrator's dream. His dream guide appears to show him something to write about, but the book speaks to him first. Moreover, because the book is still a material object, this speaking is the result of reading, a process that is, first and foremost, contingent upon sight (as discussed above). The narrator describes his reading as "to beholde / upon a boke"; he stops reading when darkness "berafte" the book from him; and as Affricanus states, the narrator was "lokyng of myn olde bok totorn." (*PF* 18-19, 87, 110) Reading necessitates sight, which requires something to look at; before the book is able to speak, it must be seen.

This is only possible when the book is a material object taken in material terms. In the narrator's portrayal of book use, the book cannot fade into the background after serving as a

[32] Corinne Saunders, "Thinking Fantasies," pp. 93, 94.
[33] Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, p. 274.

metaphorical signifier, because the book must be material and present to serve its functions. This dynamic reflects Carruthers observation that even aural signals must be attached to visual signifiers in order to be retained in memory: "Even what we hear must be attached to a visual image. To help recall something we have heard rather than seen, we should attach to their words the appearance, facial expression, and gestures of the person speaking as well as the appearance of the room."[34] In our narrator's case, "behold[ing] / Upon a bok" acts as the "visual image" that allows the text he reads to turn into the scene he remembers and the dream he dreams. In other words, the book's bookishness—as a material object in which text is inscribed—makes it an educational agent in the same manner as Affricanus. The text he reads may inform the content of his dream and the poetry he goes on to produce, but the text is only able to speak to him because it is positioned upon the pages of a material book.

While the book's performance as a visual aid allows the reader to access interesting textual content, the book is also represented as playing an essential role in the production and preservation of textual content. The visual nature of reading and learning is reflected inside the dreamscape, in both Affricanus' "shewing" and in the dreamer's reaction to what he sees, and all of these sights are linked to producing new texts. Affricanus brings the narrator not only to, but through, the gate in order to, "shewe mater of to wryte … if thow haddest connyng for t'endite." (*PF* 168, 167) Likewise, though more coyly, the narrator claims he, "in bokes reede… a *certeyn* thing to lerne" (*PF* 10, 20—emphasis mine) and gives a similar statement after he wakes:

> I wok, and othere bokes tok me to
> To reede upon, and yit I rede alwey;
> I hope, ywis, to rede so som day
> That I shal *mete* som thyng for to fare
> The bet, and thus to rede I nyl not spare. (*PF* 695-99—emphasis mine)

In these two statements, the narrator claims that he reads to learn "certeyne" things and to "mete" something that helps him behave or live better ("fare the bet"). Affricanus tells us that the narrator is seeking content to write about, implying that faring better involves poetic composition.[35] The

[34] Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, p. 122.

[35] The role of reading, writing, and how meaning is generated and shared has been at the core of conversations about the *Parliament of Fowls*, specifically, and the dream visions, generally. Williams calls the dream visions "an allegory of the processes of reading and writing," stating that Chaucer's visions "dramatized the experience of being a writer in the late 14th century England. Raising questions concerning inspiration and transmission as well as interpretation and authority, they destabilize tradition instead of

narrator also offers another moment of book/guide alignment by saying that he reads so he shall "mete" something. To *mete* may signify "to come across" something he finds in the pages of a book, as well as "to dream of" something shown to him by a dream guide. Whether the word points to dreams or to books, the narrator turns to books as a way of accessing the "som thing" he desires; whether his inspiration is from reading or from dreaming, books are placed in the center of textual production.[36] Both guides and books are attributed with inspiring further creative content, and both do so through showing and telling.

### 5.4 'There! X marks the spot!': Material Bookishness and Bookish Metaphors

Recognizing when material properties of the book (including its ability to be held, searched, and looked at) are represented in narrative, helps us acknowledge the functions afforded by those material properties. Moreover, recognizing such bookishness allows us a richer understanding oh the bookish metaphors that pop up within these narratives. Returning to the gate offers an example of how recognizing bookishness when we see it can offers a new appreciation for both metaphors that engage with bookishness. Here, if the closed gate impersonates the cover of a book, then the garden's contents echo the contents of books.[37] The *Parliament of Fowls*' "jagged structure," often characterized by its "sudden, unexpected transitions and by the juxtaposition of unrelated material," stalls any attempts at imposing a coherent unity on the poem.[38] However, when we consider the

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reaffirming it. Deanne Williams, "The Dream Visions," in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 147-178 at 149). See especially McGerr, *Chaucer's Open Books* and T.S. Miller, "Writing Dreams to Good: Reading as Writing and Writing as Reading in Chaucer's Dream Visions," *Style* 45.3 (2011): 528-48.

[36] The MED doesn't help clarify the meaning of this *mete*, as it can mean either to dream or to discover/come across something: "mēten v.(3)": (a) To have a dream; "mẹ̄ten v.(4)" : (a) To come across.

[37] Here I would diverge from Blatt's argument that extracodexical texts demonstrate that the materiality of books is insignificant in relation to their texts: "It is not simply that books mattered in the later Middle Ages: it is that texts mattered, and mattered in and across a variety of media. In other words, attending to extracodexical texts enables a de-centring of the book format in manuscript and print, and facilitates attention to and engagement with the variety of forms that medieval literary texts could assume" (Blatt, *Participatory Reading* 106). As I hope this dissertation demonstrates, linking texts to material objects is not restricted to the book, but physical features of the book served (and continue to serve) a particularly meaningful purpose in the sharing and preservation of texts.

[38] Jörg O. Fichte, *Chaucer's 'Art Poetical': A Study in Chaucerian Poetics* (Tübingen: Gunther Narr, 1980), pp. 63-64.

dreamer walking into the pages of a book, the "abrupt transitions" and "unrelated material" echo the composition of a medieval miscellany. As the narrator moves from a Dantean gate, to Boccaccian garden, to de Lillian court of Nature, he wanders through the garden as one may flip through the pages of a book. A similar interpretation is noted by T. S. Miller, who states the dream is "a picture of various authorities, texts, interpretations, and problems in literature and in life."[39] Miller is concerned with Chaucer's source texts and the mounting number of authorities that make their way into *Parliament of Fowls*, which he links to Chaucer's readerly nature. While reading certainly influences the content of the dreamscape, I would add that the book influences the shape that it takes and offers a rationale for its apparently disparate parts. The dream vision supplies an adequate multisensory landscape in which the dreamer may cognitively interact with his thoughts—and that landscape looks and acts like a book.[40]

Appreciating these metaphors allows a deeper understanding of how the narrative portrays the book. Perhaps the most prominent of these metaphors is given when the narrator explains why he spent the "longe day ful faste I radde and yerne":

> For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn fro yer to yere;
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere. (*PF* 22-25)

This metaphor (like most metaphors) works by using the reader's understanding of a known object to express the functions of another. Here, the narrator relies on the audience's understanding of old fields to express more fully the functioning of old books. The soil in fields used for farming enriches with age, making the production of future crops both healthy and possible. As these fields

[39] Miller, "Writing Dreams to Good," p. 537.

[40] Moreover, though a little beyond the concerns of this chapter, The narrator's struggle at the gate also mirrors the learning crisis he faces at the beginning of the poem, the entire dream becoming the response to the initial stanza. The narrator claims that when he thinks on Love, "Nat woot I wel wher that I flete or sinke" (*PF* 7). when at the gate, he similarly claims that, "No wit had I, for errour, for to chese / To entre or flee, or me to save or lese" (*PF* 146-47). I do not want to engage with the narrator's actual ability to learn or to make an argument about his understandings of love; however, by shoving him through the gates, Affricanus solves the narrator's textual problem at the beginning. If we understand entering the gate as opening a book, Africanus' lessons seems to be that one should just read more books – a sentiment echoed by the narrator's final lines, in which he claims "to rede I nil not spare." (*PF* 699) Africanus tells him that the gate's textual content (or the garden's textual content) will not affect the narrator because he is not really in love. The lesson seems to be that reading cannot hurt you unless you are the subject being written about.

age, they carry, preserve, and process the nutrients from each season, transforming them into nutrients for next year's crop. Not only can old fields produce new crops, but the older a field, the more reliable its ability to produce new corn year after year. Because soil is what it is, the statement implies, it ensures the production of future crops. This metaphor, then, portrays books as objects that enrich (in themselves) over time and carry forth new learning for people to access. Just as fields preserve their nutrients so corn can grow, so too books maintain their contents so "newe science" may be cultivated by future readers. Likewise, just as fields enrich with age, the metaphor implies, so too books can become more rich, valuable, or even influential with time. While new corn and new science are the products of the dynamic displayed in this metaphor, the product wouldn't be possible without the fields/books in which they are held. The poem portrays books as capable of preserving and protecting their contents over huge swaths of time, and it is this preservational delivery that makes them important. In addition to enabling a multisensory, educational experience for the reader, the book is depicted as a type of protective vessel that carries old texts to new eyes.

The poem depicts preserving and teaching as the primary functions of books, and, more importantly, these functions are made possible by the specifically bookish materiality of books. Like the gate protects and preserves its garden, and old fields hold and cultivate their nutrients, books are portrayed as protecting and sharing their contents. In this way, the poem presents books as vessels in which "lettres olde" reach the sight and mind of future readers. In material terms, their bookishness—their sealing, binding, and covering—is what makes books capable of bearing old texts to new readers. Moreover, just as the garden was an active, living space in which the narrator witnessed sights he would never see otherwise (and fields are, literally, living, growing spaces), so books are spaces connected to living, generative power. In the *Parliament of Fowls*, the inside of books is where texts are able to live, process, and develop while time passes around them. And, as the narrator reads to see matter on which to write and "a certeyn thing to lerne," books are the vessels in which learning and writing are carried from age to age.

The metaphor also positions books, and the learning they enable, as a vital—even basic and fundamental—aspect of human life. Just as new corn feeds the population, "newe science" is presented as a source of nourishment that sustains life. Throughout much of his poetry, Chaucer presents books as the key to learning, to thinking, and to new literary production. By highlighting books' ability to preserve texts over and through time, *Parliament of Fowls* addresses the effect

that texts have on the people who interact with books, making textual production a social activity and books a social glue. The preservational quality of books echoes a claim shared more explicitly in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*:

> Than mote we to bokes that we fynde,
> Thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde
> …
> And yf that olde bokes were aweye,
> Yloren were of remembraunce the keye. (*LGW* F17-18, 25-26)

This narrator reminds readers that books are not only key to accessing "olde thinges" but that without them the key to remembering would be lost. Books may produce new science, but they are also keepers of the collective literary past. While the narrator may be waxing poetic in imagining what would happen if all the old books disappeared, his argument relies on books as material objects –not metaphors. Here, as elsewhere, books are important as books, and they serve that importance – preserving "olde thynges"—through their bookish materiality. By bringing texts to new audiences, books turn the concept of social memory into a material reality. Books are the key to connecting people across time and space through texts that are read, written, edited, and shared. The sentiment, in fact, is not far from that expressed in Chaucer's closure of *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which he instructs his book not only into the world, but to other people: "Go, litel book, go / … / O moral Gower, this book I directe / To the and to the, philosophical Strode, / To vouchen sauf, ther nede is, to corecte" (*TC* 1786, 1856-58).[41] Textual production, making, and sharing is a social endeavor, and in *Parliament of Fowls* (as well as the *Legend of Good Women* and *Book of the Duchess*) the process is positioned as a benefit to the real people who interact with material books. When the narrator promises to always read upon other books, so he may "mete som thyng for to fare / The bet," I find it compelling to pretend his *fare* is a play on *fare-the-well*, as he writes new works to benefit his future readers and wishes them (and his books) safe travels through the realities of time and space.

[41] Geoffrey Chaucer. "Troilus and Criseyde," in *The Riverside Chaucer*. Larry D. Benson ed., (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987).

# APPENDIX. DEFINING THE BOOK

This appendix collects together a brief selection of quotations that define or discuss the book in academic or metaphorical terms. The variety represented in these definitions suggests the range of metaphorical meanings inhabited by the book. My hope in collecting and presenting these together is to demonstrate the range of relationships that people have with the book—as an object, idea, symbol, and metaphor. From authors of fiction and nonfiction, in and out of academic conversations, these definitions demonstrate the ubiquity of the book as it exists in and throughout the cultural imagination.

**Imaginative**

"Books are the windows through which the soul looks out. A home without books is like a room without windows."

Henry Ward Beecher. *Eyes and Ears* (1862)

"A book is a garden; A book is an orchard; A book is a storehouse; A book is a party. It is company by the way; it is a counselor; it is a multitude of counselors."

Henry Ward Beecher. *Eyes and Ears* (1862)

"Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

Francis Bacon. "Of Studies" (1625)

"A good book is a good friend. It will talk to you when you want it to talk, and it will keep still when you want it to keep still – and there are not many friends who know enough for that."

Lyman Abbott. *"Abundant Life," The Outlook* (1901)

"Second-hand books are wild books, homeless books; they have come together in vast flocks of variegated feather, and have a charm which the domesticated volumes of the library lack. Besides, in this random miscellaneous company we may rub against some complete stranger who will, with luck, turn into the best friend we have in the world."

Virginia Woolf. *Street Haunting: A London Adventure* (1930)

"The contents of someone's bookcase are part of his history, like an ancestral portrait."
Anatole Broyard. "Recoiling, Rereading, Retelling," *New York Times* (1987)

"I love books. I adore everything about them. I love the feel of the pages on my fingertips. They are light enough to carry, yet so heavy with worlds and ideas. I love the sound of the pages flicking against my fingers. Print against fingerprints. Books make people quiet, yet they are so loud."
Nnedi Okorafor. *The Book of Phoenix* (2015)

"A book is simply the container of an idea — like a bottle; what is inside the book is what matters."
Angela Carter. *Shaking a Leg: Collected Journalism and Writing* (1997)

"That's the thing about books. They let you travel without moving your feet."
Jhumpa Lahiri. *The Namesake* (2004)

"Books are a uniquely portable magic."
Stephen King. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (2010)

"In books I have traveled, not only to other worlds, but into my own … Books are the plane, and the train, and the road. They are the destination, and the journey. They are home."
Anna Quindlen. *How Reading Changed My Life* (1998)

"Books are the training weights of the mind."
Epictetus. *Discourses of Epictetus* (c. 108)

"A book should serve as the ax for the frozen sea within us."
Franz Kafka. "Letter to Oskar Pollak," *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors* (1904)

"You open doors when you open books ... doors that swing wide to unlimited horizons of knowledge, wisdom, and inspiration that will enlarge the dimensions of your life."
Wilferd Peterson. *The Art of Living* (1961)

"Books are meat and medicine / and flame and flight and flower / steel, stitch, cloud and clout, / and drumbeats on the air."
Gwendolyn Brooks. "Book Power" (1969)

"For Books are not absolutely dead things, but doe contain a potencie of life in them to be as active as that soule was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and

as vigorously productive, as those fabulous Dragons teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men."

John Milton. *Areopagitica* (1644)

"What is a book? A book is an experience … A book starts with an idea. And ends with a reader."

Julie Chen and Clifton Meador. *How Books Work* (2011)

"Books are the ultimate Dumpees: put them down and they'll wait for you forever; pay attention to them and they always love you back."

John Green. *An Abundance of Katherines* (2006)

Our favourite books are prisms through we which can view our own lives. You get a fleeting reminder of the first time you read it, the feelings you had at the time, the place you were in. I love grabbing this opportunity to time-travel with both hands. Remind yourself of happy times, sad times and rekindle old memories you'd have otherwise forgotten.

Lizze Woodman. "The Joy of Re-Visiting a Good Book" (2019)

"Drink deeply from good books."

John Wooden. *My Personal Best: Life Lessons from an All-American Journey* (2004)

"Books are the quietest and most constant of friends; they are the most accessible and wisest of counsellors, and the most patient of teachers."

Charles William Eliot. "The Happy Life," *The Durable Satisfactions of Life* (1910)

"Books are the gardens of scholars."

Ali ibn Abi Talib. *Ghurar al-Hikam wa Durar al-Kalim* (c.500)

"Buying a book is not about obtaining a possession, but about securing a portal."

Laura Miller. *The Magician's Book: A Skeptic's Adventures in Narnia* (2008)

"A book, too, can be a star, a living fire to lighten the darkness, leading out into the expanding universe."

Madeleine L'Engle. *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962)

"Books—lighthouses erected in the great sea of time—books, the precious depositories of the thoughts and creations of genius—books, by whose sorcery times past become time present, and the whole pageantry of the world's history moves in solemn procession before our eyes…"

Edwin Percy Whipple. *Literature and Life* (1871)

“Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilization would have been impossible. They are engines of change, windows on the world, and (as a poet has said) “lighthouses erected in the sea of time.”

Barbara W. Tuchman. *The Book* (1980)

“So there you have it, a lifetime of first *smelling* the books, they all smell wonderful, *reading* the books, *loving* the books, and *remembering* the books. The Egyptians often, in death, had their favorite cats embalmed, to cozen their feet. If things go well, my special pets will pace me into eternity, Shakespeare as pillow, Pope at one elbow, Yeats at the other, and Shaw to warm my toes. Good company for far-traveling.”

Ray Bradbury. “Foreword,” *A Passion for Books: A Book Lover's Treasury* (2001)

“Our generation in the west was lucky: we had readymade gateways. We had books, paper, teachers, schools and libraries. But many in the world lack these luxuries. How do you practice without such tryout venues?”

Margaret Atwood. “Margaret Atwood: Why Wattpad Works” (2012)

“A book is a door, you know. Always and forever. A book is a door into another place and another heart and another world.”

Catherynne M. Valente. *The Girl Who Fell Beneath Fairyland and Led the Revels There* (2012)

“All books are doors; and some of them are wardrobes.”

Susanna Clarke. “Imagined Worlds” (2009)

“A book is a device to ignite the imagination.”

Alan Bennett. *The Uncommon Reader* (2007)

“Books are the mirrors of the soul.”

Virginia Woolf. *Between the Acts* (1969)

”For reading new books is like eating new bread.”

James Russell Lowell. *A Fable for Critics* (1948)

“‘Books are like oxygen to a deep-sea diver,’ she had once said. ‘Take them away and you might as well begin counting the bubbles.’”

Alan Bradley. *The Weed That Strings the Hangman’s Bag* (2010)

"The books transported her into new worlds and introduced her to amazing people who lived exciting lives."

Roald Dahl. *Matilda* (1988)

"The library is inhabited by spirits that come out of the pages at night."

Isabel Allende. *The House of the Spirits* (1985)

**Academic**

"This work treats a "book" as a storehouse of human knowledge intended for dissemination in the form of an artifact that is portable—or at least transportable—and that contains arrangements of signs that convey information."

Frederick Kilgour. *The Evolution of the* Book (1998)

"A book might be best understood as the material support for inscribed language, a category that includes rolls and codices and even monumental inscription, both written by hand and printed by many different mechanisms, and also a wide variety of digital media."

Jessica Brantley. "The Prehistory of the Book," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009)

"The term "book," then, is a kind of shorthand that stands for many forms of written textual communication adopted in past societies, using a wide variety of materials."

Martyn Lyons. *Books: A Living History* (2011)

"A book is never simply a remarkable object. Like every other technology, it is invariably the product of human agency in complex and highly volatile contexts."

D. F. McKenzie. *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (1999)

"We should keep in mind that no text exists outside of the physical support that offers it for reading (or hearing) or outside of the circumstance in which it was read (or heard). Authors do not write books: they write texts that become written objects—manuscripts, inscriptions, print matter or, today, material in a computer file."

Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier. *A History of Reading in the West* (2003)

"We have already moved far enough beyond the book that we find ourselves, for the first time in centuries, able to see the book as unnatural, as a near-miraculous technological innovation and not as something intrinsically and inevitably human."

George P. Landow. "Twenty minutes into the future, or how are we moving beyond the book?" *The Future of the Book* (1997)

"A book is a machine to think with."

I. A. Richards. *Principles of Literary Criticism* (1924)

"Books are simultaneously sequential and random access ...; books are volumetric objects …; books are finite …; books offer a fundamentally comparative visual space; the two-page opening of a standard codex …; and last, books are writable as well as readable."

Matthew Kirschenbaum. "Bookscapes: Modeling Books in Electronic Space" (2008)

"If the book's handiness has been fundamental to the way we have taken stock of the world, its ability to serve as a container has been another way through which we have found order in our lives. Books are things that hold things."

Andrew Piper. *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (2013)

"What counts as a book? For more than 1,500 years, the answer was simple: a collection of pages with writing (or pictures) on them, bound together …You could smell its binding. Admire it on a shelf. Lend it to a friend. Lose it. Burn it."

Naomi Baron. *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* (2015)

"The book: a stack of paper sheets printed on both sides, bound on one end, and encased between covers."

Amaranth Borsuk. *The Book* (2018)

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