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Book Magic

The long series of lectures of which this is but one used to be delivered in what was laughingly referred to as "the antique splendor" of Harkness Hall, which was a cave in the basement of Butler Library at Columbia. I am very glad that this whole program has been translated to a truly antique and splendid, a leafier and happier home and that it has now a lecture and exhibition hall that gives it the promise of glory. It is this very great pleasure of speaking in this room for which I both thank and congratulate Prof. Belanger.¹

In this talk I will make the following points:

1. that electronic information has put us in a position to re-discover the book;
2. that the history of the book is a broad and complex part of the history of communication and thought; and
3. that the printed book is a projection, an object in which people in the West have invested so much meaning that it came to be a symbol of the soul itself.

I hope that this will stimulate us to take a creative approach to the study of old books and especially to the curatorship and the exhibiting of collections of them. I have wanted to open up an area in which we will look at books not only as technology and not only as art or craft and not only as text and not only as publishing history but in the mode of being a book--in its own unique meaning and character fully and essentially conceived. This involves considering not the scientific or scholarly nature of the book but the emotional basis of our interest in books.

Each of my points has been made before, and each is attended by a large literature. Furthermore, I will not here support any of my ideas with documentary completeness. I am not presenting to you a scholarly study of a specific subject. I'm not a scholar of this sort because I don't have the time. I don't have the time because I have a different job. I am an antiquarian bookseller. It is my conviction, based upon my experiences as a bookseller, that these points are elements of an understanding of the book at a level so deep that it underlies all our work as scholars, collectors, and dealers and indeed that there would be no scholars, collectors, and dealers if such a basis did not exist; and it is my belief as a person that the religious dimension of this attitude to the book, even when it is expressed in ways we like to label primitive, is essential to justifying what we do. In other words, I think that there is a place in this world for the simple, primitive willingness to believe and to focus that belief on objects that conduct us to the sacred and the sacred to us. Books, the book has done that in the West, and it has served as an image of the freedom of the human mind.

In the premiere issue of the Los Angeles computer magazine *Wired*, the author of an article on electronic libraries says that in the future "Instead of fortresses of knowledge, there will be oceans of information"². This is now the image of books: they form walls, whether in bookcases or in stack ranges, ranks and rows of walls, at which one looks from the bottom toward an imperceptible top and the height of which one labors to scale. Electronic information, on the other hand, is splayed out in horizontal planes of endless circuitboards, oceans or fields on top of which one floats seeking direction and bearings in the midst of its own currents. If you touch a book, you touch only its epidermis, not anything of knowledge itself; but if you touch the ocean your hand is already in it. Electronic knowledge has no epidermis, no binding. You can't just float along the top of the ocean of information, as your eyes could scan the wall of books, because you must already know how to use some of the information even to get into the ocean. It seems harder to stand on the shore and look at this ocean than it is to stand in a library and look at the wall of books. This is because there is no shore, no three-dimensional situation, no physical separation, no wall. The ocean of information expresses the seamless continuum of knowledge.

A lot of text and data are slipping into this electronic ocean and away from the book. Now, the printed and electronic media will probably always co-exist.

The co-existence will become more and more complex as time adds layer upon layer of the resonances of these two with another. But the movement I have described is nonetheless ever more decisive and complete. With electronic knowledge, as in libraries of printed books, there is still in a sense a wall to climb: the great trouble it takes to learn and the greater torture required by any advance in knowledge. Computers have not changed this fact. But in a way they can tie us more intimately to our knowledge because of the ways in which the user can modify the data or images. They thereby give the knower power over the known. In this way they can identify the knower with the known, leaving us always launched upon their ocean of struggle, just as they are rapidly tying the world together. We do not know our fate if we seek to escape from this web, for now our most basic life and survival skills take us unresisting to our most complex science. Mankind now lives on the ocean of information. We have struggled long centuries to build a boat that enables us to navigate this ocean, building often while in the middle of the ocean, sometimes sinking; but we have now found more seaworthy ships than any of our ancestors had.

These technologies have become more useful than books in many ways, although studies repeatedly show that people prefer to read books for many reasons. As books have become less uniquely useful, it requires a greater effort of thought to perceive them, to find a place for them in our lives. In many ways computers now seem more immediate and engaging and even more tactile. What is interesting about books from when we still had to use them all the time now that they have become immensely slippery objects? The questions this provokes about the future of books are akin to the question about the place of faith and religion that arose in the nineteenth century when science seemed to lead the march of progress, or the questions about the relevance of humanistic learning and culture that arose when materialism began to dominate education. These were all rear-guard battles fought by the traditional culture. The answer for books is generally along the same lines as the answers to these other questions: that there must be a place in our lives for meditation, contemplation, and reflection, for memory and hope, for things so deep in and so far out that we cannot directly describe or express them. We can say that the printed book has a place in the liberal education, that it is part of how we encounter the outside world and learn so to reflect upon it and ourselves that we might become better human beings and better citizens.

But how exactly does the printed book do this? How can it, if its historical mission of carrying our text and data has now been taken away from it, or at the least largely changed? Does not electronic information gives us a fuller engagement with the world? Are there not many new creative powers in seeking and employing the power of knowledge at a computer terminal than with a book or with a whole library of books? There certainly are, at least as far as the technology goes. Mankind of course was creative with no technology and then just a little technology and then with a pen and then with a press. Nevertheless, what shall we do with the retired technology? I want to answer this question because I should like us to avoid a prolonged death-rattle for our love of the book. Instead of rationalizing this affection, let's get to the heart of the matter.

The ways in which books act on our minds can show us that although computers may mimic our minds, our minds are not very much like computers. The computer analogy of data processing is very narrow and misses the insights thrown on the matter by other models or metaphors of thinking, reasoning, and memory. And now that the printed book has been liberated from the burden of carrying our text and data, the swaying, tottering burden under which it has staggered with wobbling knees, it can now appear more fully as an expressive object and recover some of the aspects and valency it had at its beginning, when the burden of text was yet small. Freed from its crinkled course, the printed book is no longer a tool but an object: an aesthetic, psychological, moral, intellectual, and philosophical object. As we use electronic information more and more, practically and concretely in our daily lives, printed data and text attract us for less practical and for more spiritual, subtle, and complex reasons. But in this movement we are re-discovering the book as a locus of meditation and contemplation.

The kind of “nature and meaning” I am talking about is so subtle it can exist even without the book itself. Books have this power even when they are represented only by the entry in a bibliography. A bibliography is a virtual reality for books. It is a public memory, as Christian Juncker called it³, in which books exist virtually, a shadow image of the intellectual and historical events that printed books record and in which they participated. But books are so powerful that they can express themselves---that is to say, evoke images and stimulate reflection---just by calling their name, as in a bibliography. Even the science of bibliography can't kill the book! So, when the book as a useful object, as a tool, has all but disappeared, we have the opportunity to see something else--just as we understand

a person differently when we stand in a disinterested position in relation to that person than we do when we want to use him. Books were originally made to be seen by a special function of sight called reading. And yet now they are in a sense invisible---or rather, visible to a yet more refined kind of perception.

Because of electronic information, all printed books are now “old books”. But very old books, the books that are objects coming to us from our forbears' culture, can express the meaning of the book more essentially than can later books. This expression is strongest in books printed in the first century of printing, mutates over the following three centuries, and enters into its weakest phase with the proliferation of books in the last century and a half. I contend that for the history of the book the Renaissance was a moment of purity, a moment when some kind of spirit entered into the book as text and image began to wrap around and to penetrate one another as they never had before, creating a new path of communication. The book could bring into the soul text and images and information and ideas, with new power and consequence.

Since we can now approach the old book, and especially the early printed book, in a new way because of electronic information, we have a quite different experience of the old book. This experience is the ground on which we can use the book to think about history, on which we can study printing history scientifically, and on which bibliography has grown into a study of the history of reading and of the transmission of texts, ideas, and images--in short, the history of communication.

There are two sources of the value of the book in the study of the history of communication. The first is the better known: a book has a different kind of “surface” from works of art, that is, its text. It is literal and not representative. But the second is this: the book has a representative function as well, just like a painting, because it symbolizes with unique fullness all the aspects of the history of communication, involving semiotics, epistemology, museology, literary history, artistic history, intellectual history, cultural history, economic history, religion and devotion, etc. We can use it to feel history, or to study technically the history of printing; but behind these endeavours old books have a special meaning for us that impells us toward working with them in the brilliant ways that have been developed in the last century and especially in the last quarter-century, or just to collect them.

This is a version of the “paradigm-shift” D. F. McKenzie described, when he said that bibliography must, at this stage in history, deal more fully with meaning in texts and with the transmission and reception of meaning, than it hitherto had done, and that therefore “now all bibliography, properly speaking, is historical bibliography”⁴. And it is a version also of what those artists do who make *livres d'artiste* and of the work of conceptual artists working with the book as an object. The lifting of the burden of being a useful object from the book has opened up a vast new field for creative and scholarly activity with the book, as it has for book collecting. All of these activities are trying to express what is left in the book after its immediate utility is gone. I contend that this essence also impelled the earlier bibliographers, even the driest of them, and the earlier generations of collectors; but that before the computer age it was very difficult to reflect on the impulse to possess physically or intellectually the rare and curious old book.

Please note that I am describing this new era not as one in which meaning is “deconstructed” and crushed under the suicidal nihilism called “deconstructionism” but rather as one in which our encounter with meaning and with history is even richer, deeper, tougher, and more authentic than ever before. Old objects gain meaning through time like a snowball rolling downhill. The cumulative efforts of all an object's makers, users, readers, and owners give it more meaning, not less.⁵

Our perception of old books is a complex process separate from the complexity of reading. We are not just reading books anymore. And the reason we turn therefore to the study of early books is because they then were not just reading them either. In the early period books were the locus of meditation and reflection. Why? Because the book served to remind one. The printed book served this purpose to a degree exponentially greater than the manuscript book because it was standardized, widely available, and had special capacities for combining images and texts. All books were an engine of memory and became so closely associated with and so useful in mental functions that they became a sort of symbol of the mind and even of the soul itself. With the printed book, this became individualized.

In her profound study *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990), Mary Carruthers has argued that the medieval mind was memorial and that ours is documentary. In the memorial culture the mind was stocked with numerous

sayings and stories and ideas clustered around various subjects that were absorbed deeply by "memorization" and that then informed the production of images and thoughts. In each person these grew more from the conscious and unconscious workings of his own mind than from external authority, whether it be empirical observation or authoritative text. Text for us has become something like empirical observation--to be certified and verified by the science of text editing. But before the development of empirical ways of thinking, books stored temporarily the material that went into the permanent memory, whereas now memory stores temporarily what goes into the permanent written record. Ms. Carruthers has even shown many ways in which the illumination and calligraphy of mediaeval manuscripts were parts of memory systems.

In a remarkable article on the early devotional pamphlet, called the "libellus", associated with the Franciscans in Italy, Anne Boureau has described this:

The libellus was the site of a continuing incarnation and a special mediation between the hand and the memory, between God and man.... It quite literally functioned as a memorandum, an external aid to memory. It applies not to a libellus or to a thick volume but to the knowing mind. It signalled, it represented, somewhat as did liturgy. It originated a cultural tradition of the bedside book--a domestic and religious work that was both intimate and universal, small and exhaustive, a work to return to again and again, always held, always open, a hand book and a "soulbook".⁶

All books were powerful forms of memory; it is only the religious character of devotional books that highlights their role as physical incarnation and as connector to the unseen. We must remember that memory was a loaded idea in the Renaissance. It was not a mechanical function but a deep psychological and spiritual enterprise. When the printed book entered the scene, and stepped powerfully into the psychodrama of memory, it became a symbol of the memory itself. Memory was understood to be a set of images by which one was reminded. Thus the printed book was soon an image of images; and when it began to include illustrations as well as text, this dialectic became immensely subtle and profound. When in the Renaissance a printed book reminded you of something, whether it was legal formulae or theological truth, the book itself was an image or symbol of memory and reflection. The printed book became an image of the mind and the soul.

Early books were complicated objects because they contained many images with differing yet related purposes. I propose that we see the ways in which books act as icons---that is, images with talismanic, magical, or thaumaturgic powers---as part of the process of reading and thinking. This is fairly obvious in the case of books with religious purposes, but even with books that transmit philosophical or scientific ideas something of this remains, serving as part of the propellant that fuels the book in moving ideas from one person or place to another. And, as the printed book became the locus of scientific and philosophical debate, this added to its primitive power as a place of contemplation, reflection and memory, albeit within the world of rational, ordered knowledge that grew in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. And now that this world has become our own and has fully realized itself, it is casting off the last husk of the printed book and book-magic that remained clinging in shreds to its body.

When we look at the late manuscript and the early printed book, we can see that from time to time it is treated as a material object marked by the presence of the sacred—that is, as a fetish. There is evidence of this even earlier when early manuscripts were fetishistically regarded. Coptic culture imputed magical powers to the manuscripts. In Jewish tradition, the book retains something of the magic it gained in the first millennium B. C. Thus Talmud is regarded as the most beautiful, involving, and fulfilling endeavour to which life can be devoted. The “libelli” that Anne Boureau discussed were sometimes laid upon the altar like an icon.

When the book was read and handled, it produced once more the supernatural efficacy..... The book here is an object to transmit the thaumaturgic powers described in its text (for) the propagation of the sacred..... Reading in this case becomes a magical practise The dual nature, theological and magical, of the hagiographic book made it a sacred object that one could manipulate It takes its place among medals, pious images, and pilgrimage tokens When it was read, leafed through, or put on display it became a spiritual guide, along with breviaries, missals, and books of hours⁷

There are numerous instances of the way in which the book was regarded as having the power to instill immediate belief.⁸ For example, David Cressey says that

Even in austere New England, in a religious culture set firm against superstition, the physical bound volume possessed some of the attributes of a religious icon or talisman.⁹

The printed book was instrumental in changing these earlier forms of devotion into more modern forms, as Roger Chartier has shown.

Silent reading radically transformed intellectual work, which in essence became an intimate activity, a personal confrontation with an ever-growing number of texts, a question of memorization and cross-referencing. It made possible a more personal form of piety, a more private devotion. The reading of books of magic became a paradigm for all reading, which had to be done in secret and which conferred upon the reader a dangerous power. Privately owned books and the place where they were kept and consulted commanded special attention.¹⁰

It was this privacy of the book that made it an image of the human mind. Its texts and images protected by a binding, it was the place where a person thought, contemplated, reasoned and worshipped, independent and free to think and even to act. This book was not a wall to climb or an ocean to navigate but was an object that people believed helped to make possible the power of the free thinking mind.

Of course many books were physical objects of little sentimental or even intellectual value. They were simply used or enjoyed and then discarded. But even when books reminded the reader of an age-old folk-tale cycle or what part of the horse to lance in order to cure its illness, they were functioning as tools of memory that presented images to the mind. And because of this the book itself was an image of the mind---the moral parent, or the curious farmer, or the intellectual scientist, or the worshipping soul. In the early period relatively few publications were literary. Most dealt with one or more of the four basic occupations of man: eating and drinking, sex and relations with family and community, making money, and worshipping God. Since the book was itself a memory or could aid in memory, which was a matter of the images by which one was reminded and through which facts or ideas were fixed in memory, books symbolized the powers of the mind, whether these were put to concrete or abstract uses.

The early printed book contained many images for its reader. Knowledge was gained by marching from the known to the unknown along a train of stepping-stone images. Throughout the Renaissance there were numerous attempts to systematize imagery, under a general neo-Platonic influence, to give it a structure in which images could be manipulated so as to create or to fix knowledge. This was the aim of the systems of artificial memory. Later these became mechanisms of rote memorization; but in the Renaissance they were deeply tied to a world-view in which allegory and emblem revealed truth, in which the knower and the known were chained together by profound bonds and secret communications, in which the phantasms of the mind could be manipulated by wise and powerful persons so as to affect the real and external world.¹¹

The symbolic values of books became geometrically more complicated when visual images were first introduced into books. In fact, one of the most glaring deficiencies of the study of early book illustration is that it has failed to consider this spiritual environment in which book illustration was invented and refined, because it has largely been mired in a very antique form of connoisseurship or choked in the limitations of standard art historical practice. As Chartier put it,

The image was joined with text in a mobile relation of implication, proximity, and hierarchy; The question of the inherent force of the figure--of reproduction and of the reproduction of reproductions---is thus situated at the crossroads of the history of technology, the history of knowledge, and political history.¹²

Illustrations increased the potency of the book as an image of the soul. The printed book was an image full of images, at first only textual but then both textual and visual. These worked at different levels and resonated with one another ever more effectively as technique changed and grew. Thus even the first illustrated books were richly layered semiotic experiences, rather like the great Dutch engraved political caricatures of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, where levels of text formed hyper-text and commented on numerous figures that were themselves in complex relation to one another as well as to the interfolded texts.

The text helped to give images life and power, and images helped to give the text life and power. The source of this power was the source of the power of the book, since the book comprised these several and many images. In his brilliant if

verbose study *The Power of Images*, David Freedberg asks "In what senses can images have the effectiveness attributed to them?"¹³ He answers that they are perceived to be an incarnation of the transcendent that retains its real force. Thus, in images of the Virgin, the believer feels that the prototype, the Virgin herself, is actually fused with the image. Even the centuries-long polemic against images acknowledges the strength of this animistic belief by its protests against its supposedly harmful effects.¹⁴ An image reconstitutes a living being or brings its virtual or artistic reality alive with the power of physical, living reality, as when a statue or image is suddenly complete and suddenly powerful when as the last step in its manufacture the eyes are inserted or painted in.¹⁵ The graphic image, both letter-form and pictorial, may also have had power from having been touched by the original---that is created by contact with the plate or block---which transferred to them authenticity and permanence by contact, as a seal affixed to a document made it official or as touch had meaning in many areas of mediaeval life.¹⁶

Freedberg cites Proclus's explanation of Plato's myth of creation in the *Timaeus*.

... the central theurgic procedure consisted of the concealing of "symbols" or "tokens" of the god within the statue itself, in order to give it life, or of inscribing certain characters on the image, or of attaching phylacteries to it, for the same purpose.¹⁷

A book is like the living statue-god created by Plato's Demiurge: it is an image full of images animating it. I propose that this is the deep background in which the early printed book was made and understood. And as throughout the Renaissance the Platonic play of ideas about reality and shadow, transcendent and earthly, object and image is woven in its art and literature, so these Platonic themes gave the printed book its animistic, iconic character, until they were supplanted generally in Western culture by the different movements that led to modern science and philosophy.

Thus early illustrated books can be seen as an attempt to fulfill this iconic nature of the book within the Renaissance ideas of the relation of word and image. "Ekphrasis" is interesting in this regard. This was the practice of describing a painting or work of art in words. The words were a literal reproduction of the visual image. Sometimes art was based on such descriptions of earlier works of art---this was the system of some Renaissance imitation of lost works of antiquity---

and one author has gone so far as to say that “the history of Western art can be seen as a cycle of such exchanges, the intercalation of text and picture through the helix of time---image begetting image”.¹⁸ I don't know about the whole history of Western art, but this idea provides an interesting approach to book illustration. Like Renaissance paintings, the book illustration had to be “legible”. Picture and text were analogous, and they had twin functions in memory and learning. Both images and words had a magical power, and the early printed book was a vessel for them that became standardized and widely available.

In the culture of the early printed book, books were powerful psychic projections, reflections of the mysteries and the magic of the human soul. The texts and images described human passion and suffering, which seemed to animate the book until its images drew the soul of the reader or the owner into the book and drew the book into his soul.

I would like to give three brief examples of the ways in which this line of thinking can stimulate research.

First, many early illustrated books can be seen as pattern-books, whether they are lace-pattern books or not. Thus many illustrated editions of the Bible, Ovid, and Livy were sources of design ideas in many decorative crafts. Detailed study of the paths of influence of book illustration as patterns will help in understanding books in the large context of decoration, collecting, and utility that has marked the relationship of persons to things in our civilization.

With respect to bindings, there has been precious little study of the imagery of bindings. Some work has been done in the framework of art history, but I think that not only should this work progress but furthermore that the book gives us an even larger and in a way subtler context for understanding what Bernard Breslauer has called “one of the subtlest of the decorative arts”.¹⁹ For example, I think that the increased use of gilt in bindings in the sixteenth century may be a sign of this, since gold had been a symbol of the soul since prehistory. Whereas blind-stamped ornaments seem as if they were dropped onto the book, gilt decor seems to come from within the book, to glow up and out through the binding, the power of the book shining through. I suggest that the attraction to gilt decor developed within such a psychological context, until much later when the technique became more and more stylised, superficial, and strictly decorative. The use of metals and

precious stones on some mediaeval bindings also suggests the psychological power of the book.

Finally, it will be interesting to evaluate the history of book design in this context. What can we learn about the growth of “book magic” by the appearance of various kinds of book designers, exercising their art in different ways as printing became firmly established, ranging from imaginative artists like Geoffroy Tory to intense scholars like Aldus Manutius and from flamboyant eccentrics like Leonhard Thurneysser to sober aesthetes like Henri Estienne?

The blow-book is a little-known specialized technique of book production, traceable to the sixteenth century, that made a magic trick.²⁰ A book is so constructed that when one flips its pages one image, say a cup, appears; but upon flipping what seem to be the very same pages again a different image, such as a bunch of grapes, appears; and then all the pages are blank; and then another, and another different figure appears.

The blow-book gives us the mystery of the book objectified, made literal. The book itself is a mystery. It reveals itself slowly, concealing in its pages, underneath the boards, many images and ideas. Often the book itself hides. Thus Theodor Adorno recently notes how difficult it is to find a book that one has moved from its accustomed place on the shelf. This reconditeness is part of what he calls the physiognomy of the book---its fate to be used, worn, and lost expressed in its worn face---due in turn to the fact that "the book form signifies detachment, concentration, continuity: anthropological characteristics that are dying out".²¹ And there are numerous old stories of buried books--for example, that of Christian Rosencreutz, buried in his tomb, which is the founding legend of the Rosicrucian movement.

Today the power of the book as an expressive object is revealed when it is no longer wholly a useful object. We can see a bit more clearly the emotional powers that bind us to the book. The printed book is an image of the soul, a powerful psychic projection by the soul that expresses the mysteries of its life.

In the mass reproduction made possible by the press, images were standardized and widely distributed, but most of all they were given immortality. Today all images have become irrevocable. Through television, we are the greatest

magicians ever in manipulating phantasms so as to change reality. The reproductive media have done for all sensation what the press began to do for visual images. The source of this history---of the historical self-consciousness, of our transcendent environment of images, of our exploding oceans of data--lies in the printed book. It was an image of the word, of text, of memory, of images, of knowledge, of the mind, and of the soul and has remained such an image as Western society became more rational and literal through the centuries.

These thoughts are a report on my efforts to make sense of the business of old books. Over these last fifteen years, I have often felt that we---curators, collectors, and dealers---were like monks and nuns in some religious community, isolated in a vast ancient structure on top of a craggy hill. Inside, we move statues, paintings, altars, relics, and icons of every kind from great nave to painted chapel to dark reliquary, from one room to another. All these rooms, and the objects in them, are beautiful but mysterious and of unexplained utility. There seemed no order to our movements but only the sense that the task in general was worthwhile, although the particular movements had no pattern.

I do not yet know if the particulars have any logic or pattern, but I have tried to think about why the labors of this community are worthwhile. It seems that they are worthwhile because of the strong spiritual basis underlying the attraction to old books and because this basis is one approach to the world of shadows and images the rules us even as attempt to navigate the ocean of information.

Footnotes & Comments:

1. I should like to thank my colleague Michael Ryan, who first urged me to put these thoughts to paper; my friend and client Joe Menosky, who consistently suggested the most fruitful reading; and my teacher Terry Belanger, who has provided this opportunity for presenting these ideas.
2. Browning, J. "Libraries Without Walls for Books Without Pages", in *Wired* (January, 1993), pp. 62-65, 110.
3. Balsamo, L., trans. W. Pettas, *Bibliography* (Berkeley, 1990), p. 98.
4. McKenzie, D. F. *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London, 1986), pp. 3-4.
5. It is seen here that the study of old books as an historical study of expressions of meaning is deeply implicated in the many complicated issues of historiography and literary theory that have occupied scholars in the last decades. Thomas Tanselle, in particular, has addressed deconstructionism from the perspective of textual criticism. In his "Textual Criticism and Deconstructionism" (*Studies in Bibliography* v. 43 (1990), pp. 1-33) he distinguishes between the texts of works and the text of documents. All the factors that affect the texts of documents---the process of publication---affect the books that often present these documents. In addition, books

are affected by many processes of readership and interpretation. In fact they physically preserve the vestiges and effects of very intimate kinds of contacts between reader and text, such as ownership and heavy annotation. Thus each old book is an individualized case of the complex social collaborative publication, dissemination, and reception of works in a form that can include document and image and the artistic and casual arrangements of their presentation. In this way, each copy of every book is a case, almost infinitely analyseable, of the growth of meaning in historical contexts. Indeed many early manuscripts, as Mary Carruthers has argued, do not attempt to present the text as an external authority but rather as a locus for reflection and meditation, as expressed in annotations or use in memory. So the old book is already proof that there never has been a text innocent of human agency after leaving the hands of the creator of the work. Yet all these agencies do not prove the work corrupt or meaningless. The author is a creator of meaning, and so is everyone else who interacts with the text of every work in the creation and evolution of the texts of documents and of the book-objects in which they reside. There is not nor could there be a perfect innocence of a text, as if the purpose of expression were to strive for an innocence that has the air of moral purity, any more than there is or could be a perfect unassailable logic in each idea or argument of each work. Neither faults of logic nor circumstances of history vitiate meaning. Publication, dissemination, and reception are, like logic itself, a means and not an end--like a lingua franca: a way to bridge the gap between one mind and another. The failings of a lingua franca do not prove it useless, that there is nothing to communicate independent of the lingua franca or that meaning is insubstantial in the presence of an imperfect means of expression.

6. Boureau, A. "Franciscan Piety and Voracity", in R. Chartier, ed. *The Culture of Print* (Princeton, 1989), pp. 17-18.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16, 18-19.
8. Ducreux, M.-E. "Reading Unto Death", in R. Chartier, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 215.
9. Cressey, D. "Books as Totems in Seventeenth-Century England and New England", in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 21, no. 1 (1986), pp. 92-94.
10. Chartier, R. "The Practical Impact of Writing", in P. Ariès, ed., *The History of Private Life*, vol. 3 (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 125-126, 137-138.
11. See the profound but weird and disturbing book by I. Couliano, *Eros and Magic in the Renaissance* (Chicago, 1987). Couliano was a disciple of Mircea Eliade. He was shot to death in mysterious circumstances one night in 1990 on the University of Chicago campus.
12. Chartier, R., "Introduction" to part 3, in Chartier, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 233.
13. Freedberg, D. *The Power of Images* (Chicago, 1989), p. 26. In his *Truth and Method* (New York, 1975), pp. 134 *et pass.*, Hans Gadamer argues at length in a different way that pictures have their own kind of power, being neither simple pointers to the objects they represent nor replacements for those objects.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 175-179.
16. Talbot, C. "Prints and the Definitive Image", in Tyson and Wagonheim, ed., *Print and Culture in the Renaissance* (Newark, 1982), p. 193-201.
17. Freedberg, *op. cit.*, p. 88.
18. Rosand, D. "Ekphrasis and the Generation of Images", in *Arion*, 3rd ser., vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter, 1990), p. 61.

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