

One of the book's appendices reproduces Borges's own printed copy of his short story "La lotería en Babilonia" as it appeared in the journal *Sur* in 1941. This copy shows hundreds of corrections in Borges's hand, to the point of creating an almost entirely different text, in its language if not in its content. Even the title is transformed, becoming "El Babilónico azar". However, these corrections never made it into *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, where the short story appeared later that year. Was Borges serious about these changes or was he simply playing with the possibilities? Balderston suggests that for Borges there never existed a final text; the ones we take for definitive today would have kept changing if the author had had the opportunity.

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BORSUK, Amaranth. 2018. *The Book*. Cambridge: MIT. ISBN 9780262535410. Pp. 344. Paper \$15.95.

Amaranth Borsuk's *The Book* works from the premise that our understanding of the titular subject is often a hazy nebula encompassing a range of texts, technologies, genres, ideas, experiences, and experiments. Audio-books, for example, occupy an identifiable position in this book galaxy, as do papyrus scrolls, unreadable "bookworks", and narrative-driven iPad apps. The codex is identified early and often, naturally, though its position in Borsuk's star chart is deliberately decentralized — except, perhaps, in the case of *The Book's* own material form, a "beautifully produced pocket-size" (5×7-inch) paperback (vii).

While primarily critical and historical in content, *The Book* also demonstrates a keen theoretical capacity through its four major subdivisions: "The Book as Object"; "The Book as Content"; "The Book as Idea"; "The Book as Interface". Borsuk characterizes the book as a "fluid artifact" (xiii), a productive contradiction of flow and stasis that encourages us to slide freely among different conceptions of it. "The Book as Object" begins in the traditional history-of-the-book fashion, with cuneiform wedges in Sumerian clay, meandering east and west until finally arriving at the codices of European manuscript culture in the Middle Ages. What distinguishes Borsuk's account is the commitment to fusing digital and print attitudes toward book study from the outset. In the opening paragraph, for example, the book is neatly distilled as a "portable data storage and distribution method", and the development of Egyptian hieroglyphics is likened to the proliferation of interactive video clips. "The Book as Content" shifts

to typography and the book world of and after Gutenberg, thus historicizing the link between book form and print technology. While many book histories, especially those in the spirit of Marshall McLuhan — such as Elizabeth Eisenstein’s seminal *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) — tend to emphasize the profound effect of print on culture as a whole, Borsuk closely examines how the emergence of print specifically shaped the modern understanding of the book. During the transition from manuscript culture, printed books “become the intimate spaces we expect them to be, whether guiding one through the stations of daily devotion or conveying ancient thought on the structure of tragedy” (84).

With these histories well told, the second half of *The Book* gains a provocative potency. If chapters one and two describe what the book has been, chapters three and four challenge readers to consider what the book can be. “The Book as Idea” is the heart of Borsuk’s work. An expansive look at the artist’s book tradition, this chapter runs through the historical gamut of usual suspects: William Blake, Stéphane Mallarmé, Ed Ruscha, Ulises Carrión, and the like. Aware of cultural representation and bias, Borsuk is careful when citing these typical “flashpoints”, as she calls them, resisting the establishment of a clear “lineage” of artist’s books while acknowledging the need for the presence of these major author-artists in an “essential knowledge” text (117). (*The Book* is part of the MIT Press Essential Knowledge series.) Much more than scholarly hedging, however, Borsuk’s framing emphasizes an imaginative attitude toward books rather than specific accomplishments in their tradition. The names and dates are not as important as the “energies motivating artwork in book form” that they represent (117). The historically inclined context created in the first half of *The Book* thus gives way to an intellectual context of innovation and experimentation in the second. This shift becomes a subtle invitation to readers to think like book artists, so that by the time we reach the end of the third chapter, the example of Dieter Roth’s *Literaturwurst* — a series in which whole books are processed like sausages — seems a perfectly sensible take on the ephemerality of books. Not that Roth’s work is derivative, only that the reader’s idea of the book has now become as capacious as the creator’s.

“The Book as Interface”, as the technological word choice implies, traces the development of book production from manuscript texts and print books to their modern electronic counterparts. The small-scale craft and focus on material aesthetics of Gutenberg’s printing process described in chapter two lays the groundwork for the emphasis on plain text and mass accessibility of the e-books of Project Gutenberg — an immense digitization effort begun in the 1970s — cited in chapter four. Beyond Project Gutenberg and

digitization, Borsuk discusses born-digital books as explorations into the affordances of evolving and emergent digital media — a narrative mobile app that may make use of a phone's geolocation data or internet connectivity, for example. Google Books, the Internet Archive, Kindles and eBooks, and interactive fiction are all relevant plot points for the story of the book now. Borsuk plays off the preceding chapter's focus on artist's books as a model for digital books: "because [digital books] are fundamentally interactive, tactile, and multisensory: the reader must manipulate them to experience their full effect" (255). In the opening pages of *The Book* early inscription practices were described with a forward-looking sensibility, and Borsuk now comes full circle in accounting for digital advances in the book through print-based precedents. While this print-digital dialectic is typical in comparative media histories, in Borsuk's treatment it serves to flatten chronology; she remains emphatically resistant to timelines and lineages, in favor of what we might call an expansive intellectual geography of the book. This strategy contributes to *The Book's* birds-eye view of the book as a "fluid artifact" under continual change "whose form and usage have shifted over time under numerous influences: social, financial, and technological" (xiii).

For this reason, *The Book* is not easily placed into a standard scholarly category like book history or media studies. More complete and traditional histories can be found in classics like Warren Chappell's *A Short History of the Printed Word* (1970, 2000), and a more richly illustrated study of medium can be found in David Pearson's *Books as History* (2008, 2011). Each chapter of *The Book* does offer a kind of primer in the spirit of one or the other, but the ingenuity of *The Book* is a material and conceptual fusion of these varying perspectives in one text. Borsuk, an accomplished book artist as well as scholar, exhibits a masterful approach to the design and function of her own codex, even while no doubt grappling with the limitations of producing the book within an established university press series. The material novelty of *The Book* includes, for example, several dozen "hypertextual" inserts — pages that contain illuminating and provocative definitions of the book, each presented in an oversized font and inverted white-on-black color scheme to further distinguish its role from *The Book's* primary text. The inserted quotations cite a variety of sources, from scholarly to artistic, and are thought-provoking digressions for the reader, such as Dieter Roth's enigmatic "A book is a knot" (212) or Andrew Piper's simple observation that "[b]ooks are things that hold things" (107). Excerpts that might be lucid and analytic in their original context are transformed into metaphysical ruminations through Borsuk's stylized treatment. Accumulating these defi-

nitions has become its own project, in fact, as Borsuk continues to update a project website (t-h-e-b-o-o-k.com) with quotes solicited from colleagues. In a final design touch, Borsuk takes full advantage of the codex's paratextual capacity, providing exceptionally useful appendices: Chronology, Glossary, Notes, Bibliography, Further Reading and Writing, and Index.

When projects seem to occupy (or defy) a number of fields at once, it can sometimes be difficult to find an audience. The risk in this case is that it's both a series edition with introductory content and also a text that requires enough advanced knowledge to appreciate how Borsuk's innovative treatment of the subject informs *The Book's* refined argument. These risks pay off as a tremendous resource for classroom use, however, because the content is designed to stimulate discussion and engagement rather than rote consumption. I recently used excerpts of *The Book* in teaching an undergraduate course on contemporary experimental novels, and, for approaching a variety of historical or theoretical topics, it seemed to our class both accessible and boundlessly useful.

The Book is undoubtedly a welcome addition to the book history scene, especially as the field continues its recent and culturally savvy alignment with new media and digital studies. Borsuk's history is one built for the future. *The Book* is a digitally literate, materially self-aware study of one of humanity's most durable technologies and malleable concepts. In our digital age, *The Book* prepares us not for the end of the book but for its exciting next chapter.

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BURNS, Edward M., editor. 2018. *Questioning Minds: The Letters of Guy Davenport and Hugh Kenner*. Berkeley: Counterpoint. 9781619021815. Pp. lxxvi + 1817, in two volumes. Hardback \$95.

“[P]eering, absorbing, translating” — that's what Walt Whitman (in “Out of the Cradle”) discerned to be the stages of the scholar-poet's work, and the correspondence of Guy Davenport and Hugh Kenner exemplifies and confirms the soundness of Whitman's insight. Davenport may have written more than a few substantial poems and translations, and Kenner may have scribbled a few bits of light verse (some of them in these letters), yet neither is particularly known as a poet. But they *think* like poets, they follow Whitman's direction, Davenport in his translations, assemblages, and essays — and in his drawings and paintings — and Kenner in his myriad critical essays and books. Both of them, too, have the wide-range of playfulness