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The Enkindling Reciter: E-Books in the Bibliographical Imagination

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1. Introduction: Performing Reading, Concealing Texts

And this is what it's like to read a book.

Steve Jobs, first public iPad demo,
27 January 2010¹

When Steve Jobs made this offhand comment during the first iPad rollout event, while demonstrating the iBooks e-reading app, one was left to wonder what he understood the word *book* to mean. The offhandedness of Jobs's comment belies the ambiguity of the book's status at that moment, both materially and in the cultural imagination. Devices like the iPad have returned us to an age of interface as public spectacle, much like the original Macintosh computer's debut in 1984 and Douglas Englebart's legendary demo of now-commonplace interface elements in 1968. Jobs spoke from the center of that tradition when he performed the reading of an e-book at the iPad rollout, on a stage before an audience of Apple enthusiasts in San Francisco and a much larger audience online. All witnessed a performance based on a shared understanding of the genre of the tech demo, which in the case of e-books has also been shaped by Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos, Oprah, and others who enact the norms of reading on public stages.² This article reads the e-book demo as a performance genre, and traces the appearance and disappearance of texts as material artifacts in those performances. Understanding e-

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¹ See www.apple.com/apple-events/january-2010/ or the Apple Keynotes podcast on iTunes.

² Oprah Winfrey with Jeff Bezos, "Kindle Class," *Oprah.com*, 24 October 2008, <http://www.oprah.com/oprahshow/Take-Jeff-Bezos-Amazon-Kindle-Class>; see also Mike Matas, "A Next-generation Digital Book," TED Talk, March 2011, http://www.ted.com/talks/mike_matas.html.

books in the bibliographical imagination means reckoning with two very different kinds of spaces: the familiar analytical space of the rare book room, occupied by bibliographers and book historians; and the performative space of the media stage, occupied by public figures acting as avatars for the average reader. The future of textual studies is bound up with the contradictory kinds of explanatory narratives these spaces put forth.

The argument I will put forward has two parts. The first is that bibliography and textual scholarship are well equipped to articulate and answer questions about the material nature of e-books—especially questions about how texts change in transmission through different material forms.³ The second part of my argument, however, holds that such questions are not purely empirical matters, as traditional print bibliography or the newer field of computer forensics might take them to be, but instead require a synthesis between forensic methods and the humanities' interpretive strengths. This article considers how both modes of analysis function inseparably in relation to e-books. To test these ideas, I offer the case of a recent Canadian novel, *The Sentimentalists*, by Johanna Skibsrud.⁴ The fateful timing of the novel's publication as a limited-run artisanal book from a small press, then as an e-book, then as a mass-market paperback, was fraught with controversy in which the book was made to perform its materiality on stages provided by mainstream media.

In November 2010 *The Sentimentalists* was announced as the winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize, one of Canada's most prestigious literary awards, which promptly embroiled the novel, its author, and its publishers in a clash between artisanal and industrial modes of publishing. Although the case may not be as prominent a controversy as those concerning the Gabler *Ulysses*, Google Books, and the destruction of newspapers by libraries, the debate over *The Sentimentalists*' publication was nevertheless a controversy over related questions about the materiality of texts.⁵ What makes the case of *The Sentimentalists* so interesting is that the debate took place in the mainstream media. As textual scholars, we have the rare opportunity of watching the history of this book unfold right now, with the print and digital forms developing more or less simultaneously. These conditions enable us to test one of the assumptions

³ See D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); and D. F. McKenzie, "'What's Past Is Prologue': The Bibliographical Society and the History of the Book," in *Making Meaning: "Printers of the Mind" and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 259-275; Paul Erickson, "Help or Hindrance? The History of the Book and Electronic Media," in *Rethinking Media Change: The Aesthetics of Transition*, ed. David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003), 95-116; Adriaan van der Weel, "Bibliography for the New Media," *Quaerendo* 35(1-2) (2005): 96-108; N. Katherine Hayles, "Translating Media," in *My Mother Was a Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 89-116; and Johanna Drucker, *SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁴ Johanna Skibsrud, *The Sentimentalists* (Kentville, N.S.: Gaspereau Press, 2009; Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2010).

⁵ On *Ulysses*, see Michael Groden, *Ulysses in Focus: Genetic, Textual, and Personal Views* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2010). On Google Books, see Robert Darnton, "Google and the Future of Books," *New York Review of Books* 56(2) (12 February 2009); and Robert Darnton, "Google's Loss: The Public's Gain," *New York Review of Books* 58(7) (28 April 2011). On newspapers, see Nicholson Baker, *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper* (New York: Random House, 2001); G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Librarians' Double-Cross" [rev. of Baker, *Double Fold*], *Raritan* 21(4) (2002): 245-63; and Richard J. Cox, *Vandals in the Stacks?: A Response to Nicholson Baker's Assault on Libraries* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2002).

driving the media controversy, and one implicit in Jobs's iBooks demo: that readers of the print and of e-book versions are reading the same novel.

Historians of books and reading might recognize that Jobs was performing in a well-established role in the iPad debut. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, writing about the differing receptions of his poem *Christabel* in performance and in print, called this role "the enkindling Reciter," whose social performance of a literary text prompts affective relations between text and audience that differ from private reading in print. As he puts it in the *Biographia Literaria*, "this is really a species of Animal Magnetism, in which the enkindling Reciter, by perpetual comment of looks and tones, lends his own will and apprehensive faculty to his Auditors. They *live* for the time within the dilated sphere of his intellectual Being."⁶ Like Coleridge's poem, the iPad was a public performance before it became a published object. Coleridge's specific concern, we should note, was the "temporary sympathy" elicited under these circumstances when authors or their admirers perform readings of unpublished works. Performance tends to distort imaginative engagement and critical response, Coleridge would have us understand, and this distortion accounts for the media-specific divergences in the responses to *Christabel*. As Tilar Mazzeo puts it, Coleridge "invokes the figure of the 'enkindling reciter' as a means of suggesting that *Christabel*—or at least the version of it that was popularized and embraced within the literary coterie—was not the text he authored but was a performance brought into being by the relationship between speaker and listeners."⁷ If we keep in mind the Romantics' conflicted attitudes toward textuality, publishing, and the public, Coleridge's "enkindling Reciter" serves as a media allegory about technology and imaginative engagement. His prescient choice of words also serves to remind us of the power of metaphors, which can persist from a comment made about poetry in the Romantic era to the naming of a reading device in the twenty-first century.

With e-reading demos we see similar dynamics transposed from the author to the reader, and from the aural to the visual. Consider the spectacle of reading on display as Jobs demonstrates the iBooks store and reading interface, alone on a dark stage with just an easy chair, a table, a bottle of water, an iPad, and a giant screen on which the audience can scrutinize his simulation of the act of reading.⁸ Jobs takes the audience through the selection, purchase, and download of a new book, and goes through the motions of reading it, navigating between chapters, changing the font and layout, and showing the page-turning animation using the touch screen. Like all performances, this one conceals as much as it reveals. On the one hand, Jobs asserts a continuity between the new device and established conventions of reading: he reads straightforward prose—Ted Kennedy's memoir, *True Compass*—selected for pleasure and self-improvement, purchased from a retail bookstore, and in a form presumably identical to other copies. On the other hand, Jobs's performance also confers the object

⁶ S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria. Or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. James Engel and W. Jackson Bate, in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, gen. ed. Kathleen Coburn, vol. 7, part 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Routledge & Keegan Paul, Princeton University Press, 1983), 239-240; see also Tilar J. Mazzeo, *Plagiarism and Literary Property in the Romantic Period* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2007), 30-31.

⁷ Mazzeo, *Plagiarism*, 31.

⁸ On the coincidental symbolism this scene shares with *Hamlet*, see Alan Galey, "The Tablets of the Law: Reading *Hamlet* with Scriptural Technologies," in *Shakespeare, the Bible, and the Form of the Book: Contested Scriptures*, ed. Travis DeCook and Alan Galey (New York: Routledge, 2011), 77-95.

status of *the book* on a complex transaction of electronic signals, material inscriptions, and cultural codes, all of which circulate within what D. F. McKenzie termed a sociology of texts. Even the term *e-book* implies a unity that does not exist in practice. As we shall see, the term can refer to a variety of contexts, from a text read on a dedicated device like a Kindle or Kobo eReader, to one read on an app for other multiuse devices like iPads and smartphones, to an electronic text read on a personal computer.

Whether the enkindling reciter of an e-book happens to be Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, or a digital humanist demonstrating a new tool, we face the paradox that reading has become a more intensely public and culturally loaded act than ever, even as the transformations of texts have become more veiled than they were in print. For example, when Jobs points out how easily iBooks integrates images, he comments that the layout can be "whatever the author wants," as though books—in any form—do not also reflect the agency of designers, editors, and others who craft the relationship between form and meaning. The rhetoric of liberation that has long shaped discourse about electronic texts helps to enable the fantasy that books transmit texts in simple and straightforward ways, as emanations from the author's mind to the reader's. Margaret Atwood, speaking on a similar stage, confirmed this view to an audience of electronic publishing enthusiasts and practitioners in her keynote address at the 2011 O'Reilly Tools of Change for Publishing conference, where she defined publishing as "a transfer from brain to brain, via some sort of tool."⁹ Atwood's point was illustrated by her own hand-drawn slide of two brains, with a unidirectional arrow between them representing frictionless transfer via some idealized but invisible tool.

By contrast, textual scholarship concerns itself with the qualities of mediation as a social process. Models such as Robert Danton's communications circuit—which maps intermediaries on the book's paths from authors to readers (including booksellers, shippers, and binders)—have unpacked the processes elided by Atwood's innocent blue arrow into configurations of intervening agents.¹⁰ Authors and readers still matter, but they are never left alone in the same room, as it were; there are always others who have a voice in the text's discursive field. In particular, e-books raise the question of the role of designers, typographers, printers, programmers, and all those involved in the making of books in any form as products of human artifice.

Artifacts have politics, as Langdon Winner asserts in his foundational essay on the politics of design.¹¹ Like McKenzie, Winner steers us away from any notion that designed artifacts, including e-books, can be considered in purely technical terms *or* purely nontechnical terms: the categories inevitably mix. Winner's approach is remarkably bibliographical in spirit: "One strength of this point of view is that it takes technical artifacts seriously. Rather than insist that we immediately reduce everything to the interplay of social forces, it suggests that we pay attention to the characteristics of

⁹ Margaret Atwood, "The Publishing Pie: An Author's View," keynote address, O'Reilly Tools of Change for Publishing Conference, New York, 15 February 2011, <http://www.toccon.com/toc2011/public/schedule/detail/17569> (slide appears at 2:40).

¹⁰ Robert Darnton, "What Is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111(3) (1982): 65–83; Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Barker, "A New Model for the Study of the Book," in *A Potencie of Life: Books in Society*, ed. Nicholas Barker (London: British Library; New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2001), 5–43. Darnton revises his own model in "'What Is the History of Books?' Revisited," *Modern Intellectual History* 4(3) (2007): 495–508.

¹¹ Langdon Winner, "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" *Daedalus* 109(1) (1980): 121–136.

technical objects and the meaning of those characteristics."¹² Similarly, cultural theorists like Pierre Bourdieu have prompted book historians to consider the symbolic and material production of books within the same analytical framework, and to pay attention to the convergence of cultural, technical, and even political forces in bibliographical phenomena like typography, title pages, and epigraphs.¹³ These three aspects of the book's form are particularly sensitive to the remediating effects of e-books. Later in this article, these three features will provide examples for a bibliographical analysis of *The Sentimentalists* in print and digital forms.

As we shall see, e-books are human artifacts, and bear the traces of their making no less for being digital, though they bear those traces in ways bibliographers have yet to explain thoroughly. The bibliographic consideration of e-books is therefore a dual challenge in that it must reckon not only with unfamiliar forms of textuality but also with a pervasive cultural discourse that mystifies the textual condition itself. This article explores the dual nature of that challenge, and outlines some principles toward the bibliographical study of e-books. Our test case, *The Sentimentalists*, gives the lie to the enkindling reciters' version of frictionless e-book publication by generating variant forms that, taken together, exemplify what McKenzie called the "prodigality of texts escaping the definitive forms of print."¹⁴ Some differences between versions of *The Sentimentalists* are immediately visible, like changes in typography and title pages; others are subtle, like the reconfiguration of paratexts, requiring exploration of what we could call an e-book's backstage areas, in keeping with the theatrical metaphor of the enkindling reciter. However, on the premise that bibliography and book history do their work better together than apart, we will turn first to an overview of textual scholarship's engagement with digital textuality, and then to the controversy surrounding *The Sentimentalists'* publication. At stake throughout is the cultural construction of newness in relation to the book generally, a process that happens in the gap between how technologies work and how they are thought to work.

2. Digital Texts as Bibliographical Objects

Gary Taylor's assertion that "editing is a ritual we perform over the corpus of an author who has passed away" captures the forensic orientation of textual studies, and hints at the complications that arise when the materials under scrutiny are not Shakespeare quartos and folios, but rather an e-book version of a novel published in the last two years.¹⁵ *The Sentimentalists* itself thematizes the reconstruction of the past as a text—one transmitted imperfectly, with interventions and gaps caused by material mutability and human weakness alike. In terms of plot, the novel culminates in a daughter's attempt to answer a specific historical question—what happened to her father on 22 October 1967 during the Vietnam War?—while struggling through barriers of her father's alcoholism and tense family history. Like bibliographical inquiry itself, the novel articulates

¹² Ibid., 123.

¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 37 and *passim*.

¹⁴ McKenzie, "Past Is Prologue," 273.

¹⁵ Gary Taylor, "The Rhetoric of Textual Criticism," *TEXT: An Interdisciplinary Annual of Textual Studies* 4 (1988): 39–57, 50.

various forms of the desire to uncover the past, replete with forensic imagery ranging from a town submerged for a hydro-electric dam reservoir, to repeated lines from Keith Douglas's World War II poem "Remember Me":

Remember me when I am dead
and simplify me when I'm dead.
As the process of earth
strip off the colour and skin:
take the brown hair and blue eye
.....
Of my skeleton perhaps,
so stripped, a learned man will say
"He was of such a type and intelligence," no more.

As if in answer to Stephen Greenblatt's famous characterization of historical inquiry as a "desire to speak with the dead," the Douglas poem reminds us of the ritual simplification of memory to which Taylor alludes.¹⁶ Even Douglas's own poem has been simplified after his death, with the clean pages and screens of the *The Sentimentalists'* material forms giving no hint of the textual variations between the poem as printed and its other published forms.

Beyond textual studies, other fields have responded to e-book devices by focusing not on texts as mediated artifacts, but on the act of reading and its viability on these devices. An early study of Kindle readers by researchers at Texas A&M University exemplifies the social science focus on reading as behavior—specifically as a behavior that readers undertake self-consciously, as reportable experience.¹⁷ The discussion of text in this study limits itself to the accessibility of what is casually called *content*, but regards the material nature of the e-books and their interfaces as beyond the study's scope. A similar omission takes place in Ted Striphas's otherwise vital study *The Late Age of Print*.¹⁸ Striphas devotes a whole chapter to the emergence of e-books ("E-books and the Digital Future"), including familiar book history topics such as the history of copyright in relation to Digital Rights Management systems, changes in the book trades over the twentieth century, and even the 1930s vogue for home bookshelf-construction as a marketing strategy encouraged by the publishing industry. While Striphas's work admirably achieves its goal of demonstrating the e-book's "embeddedness within the . . . history of consumer capitalism and property relations," e-books as bibliographical objects remain largely absent from his account of the "intricate web of social, economic, legal, technological, and philosophical determinations" that have produced e-books as "complex and contradictory cultural artifacts."¹⁹ Although the cognitive and socioeconomic approaches to e-books represented by these examples are valuable, their

¹⁶ Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

¹⁷ Dennis T. Clark, Susan P. Goodwin, Todd Samuelson, and Catherine Coker, "A Qualitative Assessment of the Kindle E-book Reader: Results from Initial Focus Groups," *Performance Measurement and Metrics* 9(2) (2008): 118–129.

¹⁸ Ted Striphas, *The Late Age of Print: Everyday Book Culture from Consumerism to Control* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

lack of a bibliographical perspective limits their ability to account for the form and meaning of e-books as material artifacts experienced by readers.²⁰

A more nuanced sense of e-books as artifacts—as built objects whose form and meaning depend on material contexts—appears in an early review of the Kindle by Brian Abel Ragen in the humanities journal *Papers on Language and Literature*.²¹ Although Ragen focuses on the viability of reading on the Kindle, some inevitable textual questions arise. Is the Kindle version distorting word-division? How do we distinguish unformatted block quotations from surrounding paragraphs? How do we know when important paratextual materials have been omitted, or when the navigational structure leads the reader to bypass them unwittingly when beginning the book? The example Ragen selects to illustrate the last question is the prologue and epigraphs to Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*. Disconcertingly, the Kindle edition he examined opened by default at a point following the paratextual elements, rendering them invisible to a reader who did not realize they were there. These are the kinds of phenomena that textual scholars should be able to explain, though it is worth noting that all of these questions about e-books also link closely with the phenomenology and political economy of reading as studied in other fields.

It is fair to say that e-books have caught textual scholars by surprise, with bibliographical studies of e-books remaining in their early stages even in 2012.²² How is it that we lack a coherent body of theory and method for subjecting the most ubiquitous and publicly recognizable forms of digital books to bibliographical analysis? Surely not for lack of bibliographical interest in new media, given the examples David Vander Meulen notes in his "Thoughts on the Future of Bibliographical Analysis," though we can find part of the explanation in his call for a bibliographical manual covering post-1950 book production.²³ As long ago as 1993, McKenzie warned that studying newly emerging digital texts was both opportunity and obligation. As he put it, "By the logic of our discipline, we're equally committed to acknowledge that these textual artefacts also embody the conditions of their construction."²⁴ By 2005, Adriaan van der Weel could credibly assert that "no-one can practise book history today without having a thorough understanding of the way text is transmitted digitally."²⁵ In the interim, however, the bibliography of born-digital texts has tended to take a backseat to digital scholarly editing. Notable exceptions include the work of John Lavagnino and David Greetham on word processor files, Matthew Kirschenbaum on born-digital literature,

²⁰ Kirschenbaum describes his current project *Track Changes* as similar in spirit to Striplhas's book, but with a focus on "material conditions of authorship and today's technologies of the literary"; "Track Changes," Matthew G. Kirschenbaum [blog], 10 April 2011, <http://mkirschenbaum.wordpress.com/2011/04/10/track-changes/>.

²¹ Brian Abel Ragen, "Reading Becomes Electric: The Amazon Kindle." *Papers on Language and Literature* 44(3) (2008): 328–332.

²² The impetus for this article was the 2011 MLA panel, "E-books as Bibliographical Objects," organized by Matthew Kirschenbaum. The other papers presented there are indicative of future approaches to the topic: Andrew Piper, "Open Objects: From Book to Nook"; Zahr Said Stauffer, "The Kindle Advertiser: E-Books, Advertising, and the Evanescent Edition"; and Yung-Hsing Wu, "Virtual Reading on Amazon.com."

²³ David L. Vander Meulen, "Thoughts on the Future of Bibliographical Analysis," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada* 46 (2008): 17–34, 31–32, 29.

²⁴ McKenzie, "Past Is Prologue," 272–273.

²⁵ Van der Weel, "Bibliography," 101.

and Steven Jones on video games.²⁶ All these examples show textual scholars engaging with digital forms that had been evolving for years, even decades, before coming under bibliographical scrutiny.

By contrast, e-books for dedicated devices like Kindles have come upon us without much warning, despite historical precedents like early tablet computers. A decade ago, when digital scholarly editions were the primary focus of digital textual studies, it was difficult to imagine an explosion of public interest in the reading of amateur-edited texts from Project Gutenberg on devices with negligible processing power and graphical range. Yet, for better or worse, bibliographers of the future must proceed on the understanding that e-books should be no less intelligible than those published in folio or octavo on parchment or machine-made paper. On this point, Vander Meulen presents the approaches of McKenzie, Fredson Bowers, and W. W. Greg as being in agreement that bibliography's unity lies in method and mindset, not in materials. Studying digital textuality therefore represents a natural continuity. More to the point, this continuity serves to validate what Vander Muelen presents as bibliography's long-standing core values: "Although the way in which a computer generates visible language differs from previous methods, the principles governing the analysis remain the same. A fundamental one is that the artifacts that result, rather than the statements about the artifacts, provide the primary evidence for the history of those artifacts" (2008, 28).²⁷ Vander Meulen expresses a dual commitment to breadth and empiricism, in the spirit of Greg's oft-repeated definition of bibliography as "the science of the transmission of literary documents."²⁸

Yet bibliography after Greg was not just scientific in its aspirations; it was specifically forensic, in the sense that bibliographers took physical artifacts as objects of the scientist's gaze, like a cadaver on the sterile surface of an autopsy table, stripped of context that could distract the researcher from the primary evidence of the object itself.²⁹ Books under forensic scrutiny could, like bodies, be made to yield up some hidden truth, often betraying the criminal interventions of nonauthorial agents through minute yet irrefutable traces of evidence. As Laurie Maguire describes, some of the New Bibliographers' early forensic triumphs—such as John Carter and Graham Pollard's exposure of the T. J. Wise forgeries using evidence of esparto grass and chemical wood pulp in the paper—could have come straight from the detective fiction that Greg so admired.³⁰

²⁶ John Lavagnino, "The Analytical Bibliography of Electronic Texts," paper presented at the conference of the Association for Literary and Linguistic Computing and the Association for Computing the in Humanities, University of Bergen, 1996, <http://www.hit.uib.no/allc/lavagnin.pdf>; D. C. Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (New York: Garland, 1994), 290–291; Matthew G. Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2008); Steven E. Jones, *The Meaning of Video Games: Gaming and Textual Strategies* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

²⁷ Vander Meulen, "Thoughts on the Future," 28.

²⁸ W. W. Greg, "Bibliography—An Apologia," in *Sir Walter Wilson Greg: A Collection of His Writings*, ed. Joseph Rosenblum (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 135–57, esp. 135, 137, 140, 141.

²⁹ Cf. G. Thomas Tanselle, "Bibliography and Science," *Studies in Bibliography* 27 (1974): 55–91; and David Greetham, "Textual Forensics," in *The Pleasures of Contamination: Evidence, Text, and Voice in Textual Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 56–86.

³⁰ See John Carter, *An Enquiry Into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* (London: Constable, 1934); and Nicolas Barker, *A Sequel to An Enquiry Into the Nature of Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets by John Carter and Graham Pollard: The Forgeries of H. Buxton Forman & T. J. Wise Re-examined* (London: Scholar Press, 1983). On the New Bibliographers and detective fiction, see Laurie E. Maguire,

The field of computer forensics has developed a body of knowledge about the recovery of data that resembles analytical bibliography and textual criticism in both aims and spirit.³¹ That field is premised upon the idea that digital texts are anything but ephemeral; rather, they work in specific ways, and interact with media and information systems according to identifiable patterns. The e-book version of Kennedy's *True Compass* that Steve Jobs purchased during the iBooks demo would have had a specific file format, assembled according to documented standards, and would have transferred from the server to Jobs's iPad in ways that are predictable and traceable. The fluidity espoused by early theorists of digital textuality may not be entirely fictional, given that e-book distribution exploits the transmissibility of digital information, but anyone who suggests that digital texts are irretrievably unstable has neglected to read the manual, as it were.

Kirschenbaum is one textual scholar who has read the manual, and his distinction between two kinds of materiality, *forensic* and *formal*, bridges the worlds of computer forensics and textual studies. *Forensic materiality*, the more familiar of the two categories, "rests upon the principle of individualization (basic to modern forensic science and criminalistics), the idea that no two things in the physical world are ever exactly alike."³² The term designates the qualities of matter that allow Sherlock Holmes to solve mysteries like the "Case of Identity," in which he traces a supposedly untraceable typewritten blackmail note by noticing telltale imperfections in the typewriter's letterforms—a technique not unlike the study of damaged type in compositor analysis.³³ As Kirschenbaum describes them, the qualities of forensic materiality apply to digital texts as well: "If we are able to look closely enough, in conjunction with the appropriate instrumentation, we will see that [forensic materiality] extends even to the micron-sized residue of digital inscription, where individual bit representations deposit discreet legible trails that can be seen with the aid of a technique known as magnetic force microscopy."³⁴

By contrast, Kirschenbaum's other category, *formal materiality*, rests upon the notion that "a digital environment is an abstract projection supported and sustained by its capacity to propagate the illusion (or call it a working model) of *immaterial* behavior: identification without ambiguity, transmission without loss, repetition without originality."³⁵ Kirschenbaum defines formal materiality as "the imposition of multiple relational computational states on a data set or digital object."³⁶ The predictability of those "computational states" (for the most part) is what allows us to generalize about a video game or website without accounting for every possible hardware configuration, given that variables like screen dimensions and graphics support tend to function

Shakespearean Suspect Texts: The "Bad" Quartos and Their Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 66–67.

³¹ Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms*, 45–53.

³² *Ibid.*, 10.

³³ Arthur Conan Doyle, "A Case of Identity," in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. Richard Lancelyn Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 30–48.

³⁴ Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms*, 10.

³⁵ *Ibid.*; cf. Johanna Drucker's distinction between literal and probabilistic approaches to materiality in "Intimations of (Im)materiality: Text as Code in the Electronic Environment," in *SpecLab: Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 145–64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

within rational systems. Although Kirschenbaum's distinction does not hold up under all scenarios, the concept of formal materiality does what most recent definitions of materiality seek to do: it names and draws attention to important aspects of textuality that have otherwise gone unnoticed, thanks in part to overgeneralizations about instability and immateriality. Kirschenbaum's work stakes out a middle ground where a bibliographical perspective can make a difference.

As part of the broader discussion of how bibliographical understanding of e-books relates to their depiction in the cultural imagination, let us pursue specific questions with regard to *The Sentimentalists* as our test case: how do the published versions differ in print and digital forms, and how do those different forms effect meaning? This question—which draws upon McKenzie in language and orientation³⁷—is the kind that new media scholars often overlook, yet cannot be answered without recourse to the vocabulary and methods that bibliographers have refined in the manuscript and print worlds. As Randall McLeod's self-fulfilling axiom puts it, "The struggle for the text is the text."³⁸ However, while concepts inherited from print bibliography may help us classify *The Sentimentalists'* material instantiations, the question of what those instantiations mean—why they matter—is, at bottom, a social and even political one. Before proceeding with a bibliographical analysis, then, let us take stock of *The Sentimentalists'* place in the very recent history of the book in Canada.

3. The Struggle for *The Sentimentalists*

This section unpacks the kinds of processes and relationships that were elided in Jobs's effortless purchase of the Kennedy memoir in iBooks and compares them to the publishing history and reception of *The Sentimentalists*. It is worth noting in advance that many of the topics raised in the following account are already well covered in other areas of book history, including: publishing as a risky game of numbers, with the sizes of runs keyed not to literary value or even popularity, but specifically to marketability in relation to cost³⁹; the poetics of paper and the determining role of papermaking in publishing⁴⁰; and the connection between any given book and the rest of a printer's concurrent activities.⁴¹ In this case, the business of book history, as a discipline, was unfolding before the public's eyes in media coverage and blog posts.

³⁷ McKenzie, *Bibliography*, 13.

³⁸ Randall McLeod [as Random Clod], "Information [up]on Information," *TEXT* 5 (1991): 241–81, 279; emphasis (and error) in original.

³⁹ For examples, see Peter W. M. Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in *A New History of Early English Drama*, ed. John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 383–422; and James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007).

⁴⁰ For examples, see Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775–1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 185–196; and Joshua Calhoun, "The World Made Flax: Cheap Bibles, Textual Corruption, and the Poetics of Paper," *PMLA* 126(2) (2011): 327–344.

⁴¹ For example, see D. F. McKenzie, "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing-House Practices," in *Making Meaning: Printers of the Mind and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 13–85. On Gaspereau's other activities during the *Sentimentalists* controversy, see Andrew Steeves's blog posts of 8,

The Sentimentalists was first published in 2009 by Gaspereau Press, a well-reputed small press based in Kentville, Nova Scotia, established by Gary Dunfield and Andrew Steeves in 1997. Gaspereau is a small press by choice, part of a Canadian tradition of independent publishers whose small runs allow them to take risks that large publishers cannot, such as publishing relatively unknown authors like Skibsrud.⁴² As publisher, printer, and binder all in one, Gaspereau exerts an unusual level of control in material production, from paper to typography to binding. When *The Sentimentalists* first appeared from Gaspereau in 2009, each copy exemplified not only the publisher's attention to design but also the convergence of specific aesthetic, literary, and ideological orientations, as the biographical note on the Gaspereau blog makes clear:

Gaspereau Press publishes some of Canada's most original and innovative authors and is dedicated to editing, designing and manufacturing their books in a fashion that honours their content as well as the great humanist tradition of printing and publishing. Employing a wide range of modern and antiquated production techniques and technologies, Gaspereau Press creates books that marry function and form. From limited-edition letterpress projects to Smyth-sewn trade paperbacks with handprinted jackets, every project carries some trace of the human mind, eye and hand. The result is a unique publishing list of award-winning books—affordable, beautiful, and designed to endure.⁴³

The "expressive form," as McKenzie terms it, of every Gaspereau book constitutes a material incarnation of this statement about the nature of writing and reading. This orientation toward the privileged materiality of printed books will prove to be essential context for understanding the relationship among all of the published forms of *The Sentimentalists*.

The description of the first edition of *The Sentimentalists* offered by Steeves, its designer, makes clear that the Gaspereau editions combine letterpress, offset, and digital methods of printing within the same hybrid object.⁴⁴ The book's removable jacket, with French flaps, is made of Neenah Classic Laid Camel Hair paper and features an original pencil drawing by Wesley Bates, letterpress-printed using a photopolymer plate, which, according to Steeves, "gives it a really gritty look." The rest of *The Sentimentalists* was printed on modern Heidelberg offset presses in the Gaspereau shop, on Rolland's Zephyr Antique Laid paper manufactured to order by Québec papermaker Cascades. The text is set with a ragged right margin, a design choice that distinguishes the book from most mass-produced novels, whose page layouts tend to be

18, and 25 October 2010 ("What's Good for the Goose Is Good for the Giller," "Printshop Notes," and "Wayzgoose!" <http://gaspereaupress.blogspot.com/>).

⁴² On small press publishing in Canada, see David McKnight, "Small Press Publishing," in *The History of the Book in Canada*, Vol. 3, 1918–1980, ed. Carole Gerson and Jacques Michon (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 309–318.

⁴³ Introduction, *Gaspereau Press* [blog], <http://www.gaspereaupress.blogspot.com/>.

⁴⁴ Andrew Steeves, "A Few More Design Awards," *Gaspereau Press* [blog], 31 March 2010, <http://gaspereaupress.blogspot.com/2010/03/few-more-design-awards.html>; Kate Taylor, "Gaspereau Press and the Peril of the Giller," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 25 October 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/gaspereau-press-and-the-peril-of-the-giller-prize/article1771622/>.

justified. In this and other features, *The Sentimentalists'* bibliographic form overtly references the early-twentieth-century typographer Eric Gill. His 1931 *Essay on Typography* stands as an invisible yet vital intertext for Steeves as a designer, just as several literary texts do for Skibsrud as an author.⁴⁵

The Sentimentalists' design not only references Gill but also serves as a typographic recovery project: Steeves was reworking the off-the-shelf digital version of Gill's typeface Joanna (about which more below) to restore some of the elements present in the version Gill had cast in a foundry in 1930, but were not adopted when the Monotype corporation revised the font for commercialization. In this way, even before *The Sentimentalists* became an e-book, the first printed copies bore the marks of digital technology in the form of the digitally modified Joanna typeface, with Steeves using the malleability of digital type to recover typographic forms that Gill had cast in a foundry over eighty years earlier. In this sense, an artisanal small-press book like *The Sentimentalists* and a mass-market bestseller like *True Compass* share the same trait of technological hybridity, reminding us that rigid oppositions between print and digital technology are of little use in the complex world of modern book production.

The hybrid nature of *The Sentimentalists* was further reinforced by its early recognition for literary and design merits in separate awards. The Giller nomination in September 2010 was preceded by an award for Excellence in Book Design in Canada from the Alcuin Society. Even so, the book's retail price on the Gaspereau website was (and still is) \$27.95 CAD, hardly making it an out-of-reach luxury book. *The Sentimentalists'* initial print run of 800 copies was a respectable number for a first novel from a small press, well below the scale of a mass-market paperback from a large publisher, but also well above the scale of a book intended for the hands of an elite few.

This, then, was the material form of the novel that found itself a nominee and then winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize in the Fall of 2010. The Giller is one of Canada's most prestigious literary prizes, and nomination alone will boost a book's sales considerably. Winning can make a career for a first-time novelist like Skibsrud. That brings us to the controversy, sparked by the disproportion between the initial run of 800 copies and the demand generated by the Giller nomination, and deepened by philosophical differences between Gaspereau and the mainstream publishing industry.

Initial media coverage expressed some anxiety about the availability of some of the nominees.⁴⁶ The day after the announcement, Steeves posted a mixed reaction on the Gaspereau blog, expressing enthusiasm for their author's success along with reservations about the publishing consequences:

When we are running behind (and this year, we are running very behind) an award nomination can mean that we end up having to decide whether or not to delay fall books in order to print more copies of the nominated

⁴⁵ Eric Gill, *An Essay on Typography* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1931).

⁴⁶ James Adams, "The Giller Prize: Could This Be the Year of the Small Press?" *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 5 October 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/the-giller-prize-could-this-be-the-year-of-the-small-press/article1744097/>; "Independent Presses Dominate Short List for \$50,000 Giller Prize," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 5 October 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/independent-presses-dominate-short-list-for-50000-giller-prize/article1743188/>; "Some Bookstores Out of Stock of Giller Prize Finalists," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 3 November 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/the-giller-prize/some-bookstores-out-of-stock-of-giller-prize-finalists/article1784173/>.

book in case there is a sudden demand that exceeds our present inventory. And what if you reprint a book and then the sales are illusionary? That can quickly take a book from break-even to loss. We have to consider whether it is better to fill big retail orders for the promotional displays that have been organized around the award instead of filling orders from small booksellers, and whether shorting the chain stores will preempt the inevitable returns or hurt sales. . . . In fact, when all is said and done, we've often found that long lists and short lists only result in increased book *returns* (unless the book actually wins).⁴⁷

Here Steeves summarizes the dilemma of small presses in a world of big retailers like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and (in Canada) Chapters–Indigo. In a similar fashion, the material realities of the book trade also surfaced in mainstream media coverage through a *Toronto Globe & Mail* story by Kate Taylor, which gave particular attention to the economics of papermaking.⁴⁸ For Gaspereau's part, many of the blog posts leading up to the Giller win serve to educate the public about Gaspereau's publishing methods and philosophy, including videos demonstrating the making of books. That education was sometimes blunt. For example, Taylor's *Globe & Mail* story quotes Steeves's categorical rejection of the suggestion that Gaspereau should accept one of the reprint offers it had received from larger publishers: "If you are going to buy a copy of that book in Canada, it's damn well coming out of my shop."

By the time *The Sentimentalists* was announced as the Scotiabank Giller Prize winner on 9 November, mainstream media were reacting to the extraordinary absence of copies in print. Even in an urban center like Toronto, one could not walk into a large book retailer like Chapters–Indigo and purchase a print copy of the book that had just won one of the nation's most prestigious literary awards.⁴⁹ Steeves and his colleagues found themselves torn between the design principles on which their press was founded, and the best interests of Skibsrud as a young author whose career would be jump-started if her prize-winning book could only reach its readers. Gaspereau's efforts to reprint approximately 1,000 copies per week could not meet the rising demand, and the press found itself under pressure from various quarters—including Skibsrud herself—to accept one of the reprinting offers it had received from larger publishers such as House of Anansi and Random House.⁵⁰ Although books become unavailable all the time—and even aspire to the condition of out-of-printedness, as William Germano has

⁴⁷ Andrew Steeves, "Skibsrud on the Giller Long List," *Gaspereau Press* [blog], 21 September 2010, <http://gaspereaupress.blogspot.com/2010/09/skibsrud-on-giller-long-list.html>.

⁴⁸ Taylor, "Gaspereau Press."

⁴⁹ A *Toronto Globe & Mail* story from 10 November notes that "there are already 211 'holds' at the Toronto Public Library, and zero copies are listed as available. Vancouver's libraries have 96 requests for zero copies (three on order) and Halifax has 134 holds for three copies (15 more on order)." "Giller Is Enough to Drive You to Gasperation," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 10 November 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/editorials/giller-is-enough-to-drive-you-to-gasperation/article1794157/>.

⁵⁰ John Barber, "Author's Angst Grows Over Unavailability of Giller Winner," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 10 November 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/authors-angst-grows-over-unavailability-of-giller-winner/article1794186/>.

argued⁵¹—what makes this case exceptional is the degree of media scrutiny of the economics and politics of small-press publishing, and the consequences for the public's understanding of the materiality of the book. Canadian media provided a stage for the debate, with one side casting Gaspereau Press as inefficient, insensitive to its author's plight, and out of step with the modern publishing industry, while the other side applauded Gaspereau's commitment to the forsaken ideals of small-press publishing.⁵² In the meantime, the initial run of 800 copies of the first edition had become rare books.

The controversy over the printing of *The Sentimentalists* began to resolve in mid-November with an agreement for a mass-market edition from the Vancouver firm Douglas & MacIntyre, known for their attention to design in books by typographer-poet Robert Bringhurst and others. The relationship ensured that the original design of the Gaspereau *Sentimentalists* would be respected, at least in matters of typography and layout if not paper and binding, while printing could proceed on the scale of tens of thousands.⁵³

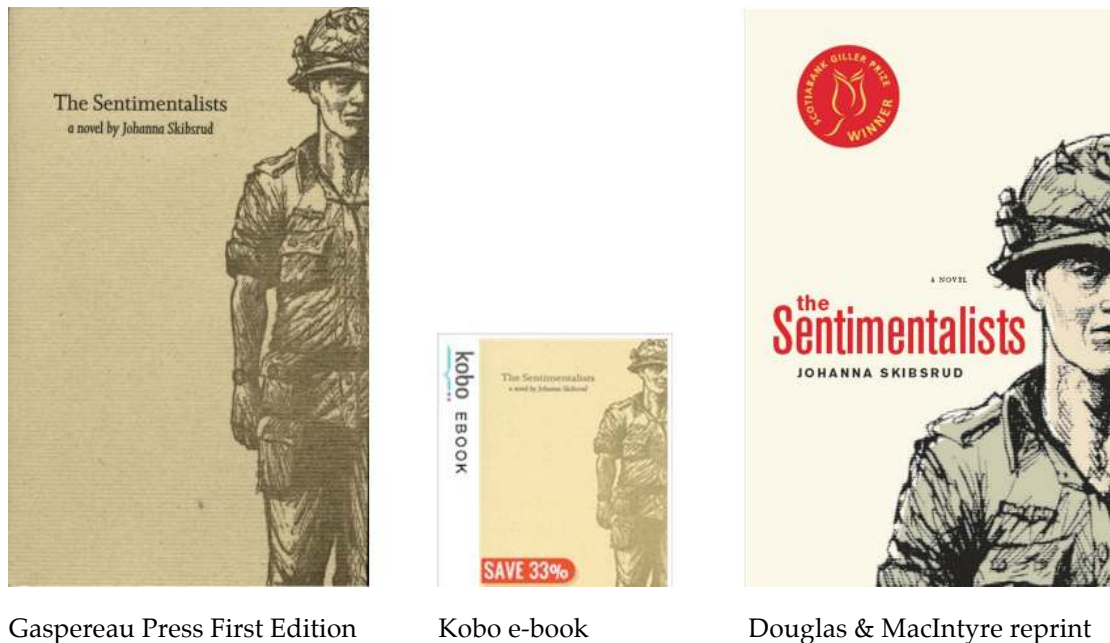


Figure 1. Editions of *The Sentimentalists* up to late November 2010.

⁵¹ William Germano, "Out-of-Print Culture," Rethinking Early Modern Print Culture Conference, Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, University of Toronto, 23 October 2010.

⁵² Representative responses include Taylor, "Gaspereau Press"; Jack Illingsworth, "The Giller Prize Script," *National Post*, 9 November 2010, <http://arts.nationalpost.com/2010/11/09/the-giller-prize-script/>; Ron Nurwisah, "Literary Community Weighs in on Gaspereau's Giller Dilemma," *National Post*, 10 November 2010, <http://arts.nationalpost.com/2010/11/10/literary-community-weighs-in-on-gaspereaus-giller-win-online/>; "Giller Is Enough to Drive You to Gasperation"; Mark Medley, "The *Sentimentalists* Wins Giller Prize, but Copies in Short Supply," *National Post*, <http://arts.nationalpost.com/2010/11/10/the-sentimentalists-wins-giller-prize-but-copies-in-short-supply/>; and Shaun Smith, "Grappling with the Giller Effect," *Quill & Quire* 77(1) (2011): 9–10.

⁵³ Smith, "Grappling with the Giller Effect," reports that the initial Douglas & MacIntyre run was 40,000 copies, but by December the company had ordered a fourth printing, which brought the total run (at that time) to 105,000 copies.

The lessons this case holds for understanding the materiality of e-books depend on what happened in the interval between the Giller short list in early October and the availability of the mass-market edition in early December. During that interval, the only readily available form of the novel was an e-book for the Kobo eReader device and software platform marketed by Chapters–Indigo, an exclusive arrangement at the time resulting from Kobo approaching Gaspereau soon after the Giller nominations (see Figure 1).⁵⁴ If a reader purchased *The Sentimentalists* as a result of the awarding of the Giller Prize, prior to the appearance of the Douglas & MacIntyre edition, that reader almost certainly purchased it as a Kobo e-book. The media began to comment on the Kobo version's unique status as the only available format during that interval, during which time *The Sentimentalists* became Chapters–Indigo's best-selling e-book.⁵⁵ Recent decades of digital humanities projects have familiarized scholars with representational tensions between older rare books and their digitized surrogates, such as the digitized microfilms offered by Early English Books Online—but this case is different, and in ways that increasingly pertain to commercial e-books in general. For Skibsrud's readers on the Kobo device and platform, their version of *The Sentimentalists* was not a surrogate for the novel; for them it *was* the novel.

Looking back on the media coverage, it becomes clear that the struggle for *The Sentimentalists* was presented to the public as a struggle between two material forms of the same book, each of which embodied different ways of thinking about publishing and literary culture. The media tended to fall back on a narrative structure often used to make sense of postindustrial publishing, with Gaspereau cast as the fiercely independent small press, holding on to noble but unsustainable values from a bygone era, and the Douglas & MacIntyre compromise as the inevitable capitulation to a media-driven market that cares only about large scales. The differences between these editions, however, cannot be mapped onto any simplistic technological binary between printing's past and future, with humanistic resistance to alienating new production models, on the one hand, and industrial-scale commodification of mass culture, on the other.⁵⁶ Although each Gaspereau copy of *The Sentimentalists* "carries some trace of the human mind, eye and hand," as the Gaspereau blog asserts, those human traces also take digital form in the modified Joanna typeface. Each Gaspereau copy paradoxically demonstrates that digital objects can be handmade—think of Steeves reshaping the Monotype letterforms on a screen—and that modern printed books *are* digital objects.

⁵⁴ Nick Patch, "Scarcity of Giller-Winning 'Sentimentalists' a Boon to eBook Sales," *Toronto Star*, 12 November 2010, <http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/article/889818--scarcity-of-giller-winning-sentimentalists-a-boon-to-ebook-sales?bn=1>.

⁵⁵ Medley, "Sentimentalists Wins Giller Prize"; Claire Sibonney, "Prize-Winning Canadian Novel Already a Rare Book," *Reuters*, 11 November 2010, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/11/11/us-giller-idUSTRE6AA3ZK20101111>; Zoe Whittall, "Supply Issues Make *The Sentimentalists* an E-book Bestseller," *Quill & Quire*, 11 November 2010, http://www.quillandquire.com/google/article.cfm?article_id=11580; Patch, *ibid.*

⁵⁶ Judith Timson, "Book Me: I Want My Skibsrud and I Want It Now," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 11 November 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/relationships/news-and-views/judith-timson/book-me-i-want-my-skibsrud-and-i-want-it-now/article1795770/>; Whittall, "Supply Issues"; Smith, "Grappling with the Giller Effect"; Victoria Ahearn, "Book Industry Starting to Embrace Digital Chapter," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 21 December 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/technology/digital-culture/social-networking/book-industry-starting-to-embrace-digital-chapter/article1845961/>; John Barber, "Getting a Read on the Future of Publishing," *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 17 March 2011, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/time-to-lead/getting-a-read-on-the-future-of-publishing/article1945133/>.

4. Reading an E-book's Expressive Form

Proceeding from an understanding of a book's social context, how should textual scholars retrain their eyes to see meaning in the fine details not just of paper and letterpress typography, but of file formats and source code? The case of *The Sentimentalists* requires us to draw upon the terminology of print bibliography as defined by Fredson Bowers and others—such as *edition*, *impression*, *issue*, and *state*—as well as Kirschenbaum's complementary set of terms for digital texts: *layer*, *version*, *release*, *object*, *state*, *instance*, and *copy*.⁵⁷ For the period of the book's history I examine in more detail in the following sections, from roughly 2009 to the end of 2010, we have two *editions* (Gaspereau; Douglas & MacIntyre) and at least two *issues* within the Gaspereau edition (the initial issue of 800 copies, and subsequent reprintings after the Giller nomination).

Overlapping temporally with these editions we also have at least two forms of *The Sentimentalists* as an e-book in the Fall of 2010: the e-book was that was downloadable from the Kobo website as a standalone EPUB file protected by the Adobe Digital Rights Management system (which I will call the *Kobo-EPUB* version), and the e-book that could be purchased from the Kobo store via the app itself and automatically loaded into the Kobo reading software (the *Kobo-app* version).⁵⁸ Using Kirschenbaum's terms, we are dealing with the same *object* (the EPUB version first created for *The Sentimentalists'* publication as an e-book) in two different *states* (the standalone EPUB file and the version of the same file imported into the Kobo software's local SQLite database). Furthermore, we are also dealing with one *state*, the *Kobo-app* version, as it appears in three different *instances* or environments that may affect functionality: I have examined the *Kobo-app* version of *The Sentimentalists* using the Kobo Desktop Application (on a MacBook Pro running OSX Lion), the Kobo iPad app, and the Kobo eReader device.

An exhaustive bibliographical study of *The Sentimentalists* might begin with traditional print bibliography's key step of collation, comparing the Gaspereau and Douglas & MacIntyre editions page by page in search of textual differences. That collation process might be extended to compare the Gaspereau first edition (one of the 800) against a reprint, and to compare all of these versions against editions published overseas. These, however, are steps for a larger study; my purpose here is exploratory, using *The Sentimentalists* to imagine how the bibliography of e-books might be carried out by textual scholars on a broader scale. With that goal in mind, I restrict my scope to three familiar textual phenomena that are especially sensitive to digital translation in our test case and beyond: typography, title pages, and epigraphs.

⁵⁷ See Fredson Bowers, *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), 39–42 and *passim*; and the appendix, titled "Toward Some Principles of Computational Description," in Kirschenbaum, "Editing the Interface: Textual Studies and First Generation Electronic Objects," *Text* 14 (2002): 15–51, 43–51.

⁵⁸ The Chapters–Indigo product page for the e-book describes the Kobo-EPUB version specifically as an "Adobe DRM EPUB" file. An information link explains the difference between this download option and purchasing the e-book directly through a Kobo app, noting that the Adobe DRM EPUB version allows readers to open the e-book on non-Kobo devices and in the Adobe Digital Editions software.

4.1. *Typography*

Typography in any form serves as an interface between the visible surface of the text and the invisible processes of its production. As mentioned above, the typeface for the Gaspereau edition of *The Sentimentalists* was not chosen idly. The book's back matter includes a "Note on the Type" to that effect (Figure 2), written by Steeves, which describes the history of the Eric Gill typeface Joanna from its beginnings as punches cut by the Caslon foundry in 1930, to its use in Gill's *Essay on Typography* in 1931, to its transformation into a Monotype and then digital typeface. *The Sentimentalists* thus ends not with the last page of its author's prose, but with a short lesson from its designer on typography and its transition from letterpress to digital form over the twentieth

A NOTE ON THE TYPE

In 1928, the British sculptor, wood engraver and type designer Eric Gill (1882–1940) moved to Pigotts in Buckinghamshire and set up a workshop. Among his ventures there was the establishment, in 1930, of a printing business with René Hague. As he had done for the Golden Cockerel Press the previous year, Gill designed a proprietary typeface for use at his press, naming it after his daughter Joanna – who later married Hague. The H.W. Caslon foundry cut punches for the roman in 1930, in time for its use in the production of Gill's *An Essay on Typography*, which appeared in June 1931, one of the first books produced by Hague & Gill. A second edition, published by Sheed & Ward in 1936, introduced Joanna's italic. In 1937, the Monotype Corporation released a version of Joanna for their composition casters. A digital version appeared in 1986, with semi-bold and bold weights added by the Monotype drawing office.

Figure 2. The "Note on the Type" as printed in the Gaspereau edition. Image courtesy of Gaspereau Press.

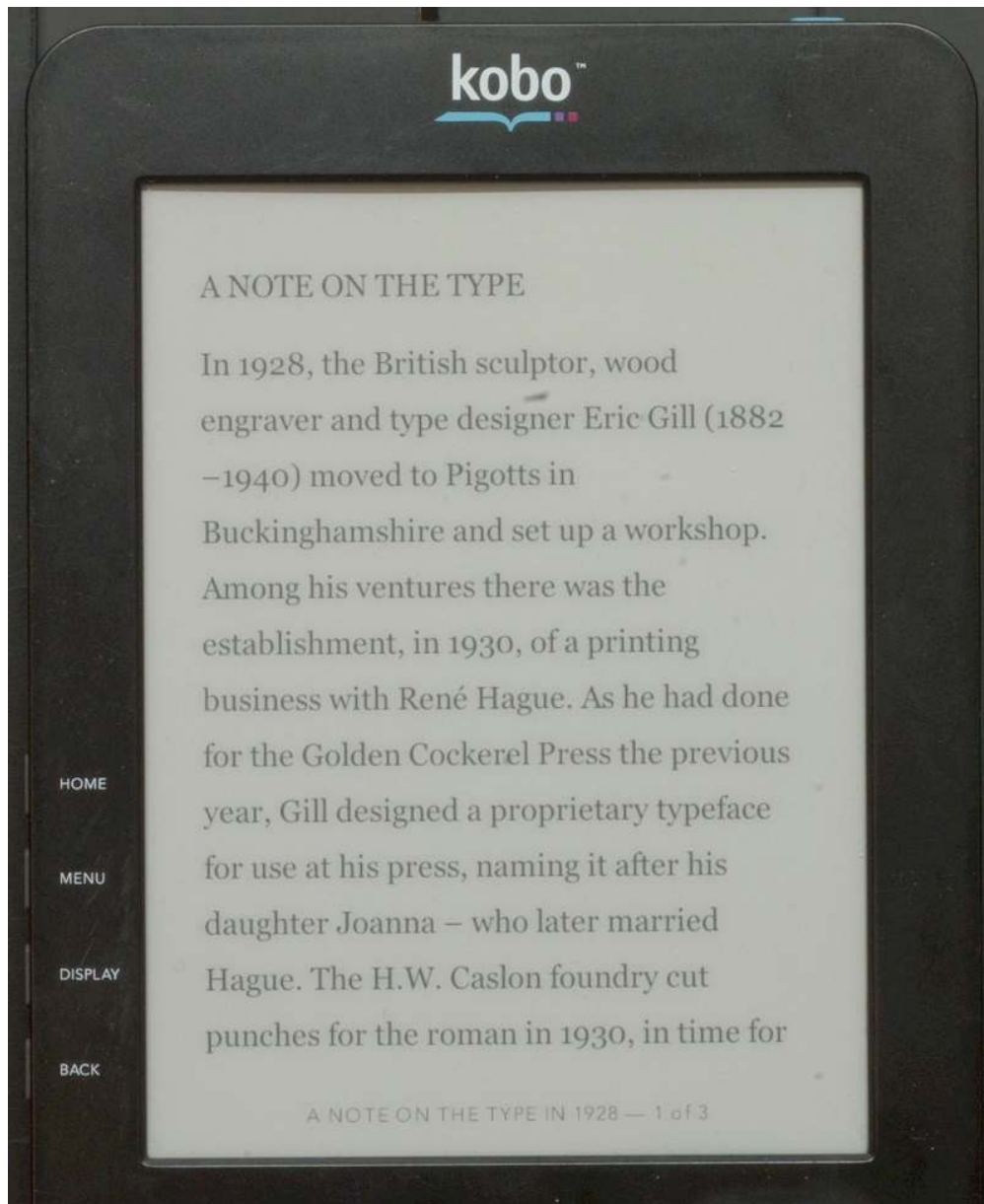


Figure 3. The “Note on the Type” as it appears on the Kobo eReader.

century. The note also refers indirectly to the thematic structure of this novel about a father, daughter, and traces of the past: Gill named the typeface Joanna for his daughter, who shares a first name with Skibsrud—who, in turn, had drawn upon her own father’s experiences in the Vietnam War for the novel. The thematic link between author and typeface receives even more emphasis in the Douglas & MacIntyre edition, which places the “Note on the Type” (reset but still in Joanna) on a page facing Skibsrud’s biographical note and photograph. The original typeface is retained in the major English-language international editions from W. W. Norton (U.S.) and William

Heinemann (U.K.).⁵⁹ The U.K. edition also retains the ragged right margin along with another typographic Gill-ism, the paragraph marks (¶) that initiate unnumbered subsections (used in Gill's *Essay on Typography*, as shown in Figure 4). Curiously, the American edition from Norton omits these two Gill-isms, and even dispenses with the "Note on the Type" itself, despite retaining the Joanna typeface.

The "Note on the Type" appears in the Kobo versions as well, and is reproduced identically in most respects—with the exception of the typeface (Figure 3). If one reads the Kobo e-book on the Kobo device, desktop application, or iPad app on their default settings, the note that so carefully describes the Joanna typeface appears in the default serif font, Georgia. The Kobo e-book version thus ends with a note on an absent typeface—one that, as far as I can determine, cannot be readily downloaded on any Kobo platform. One can choose other typefaces—a feature that Jobs and Oprah emphasize in their demos—but Joanna is not among the default options on the Kobo

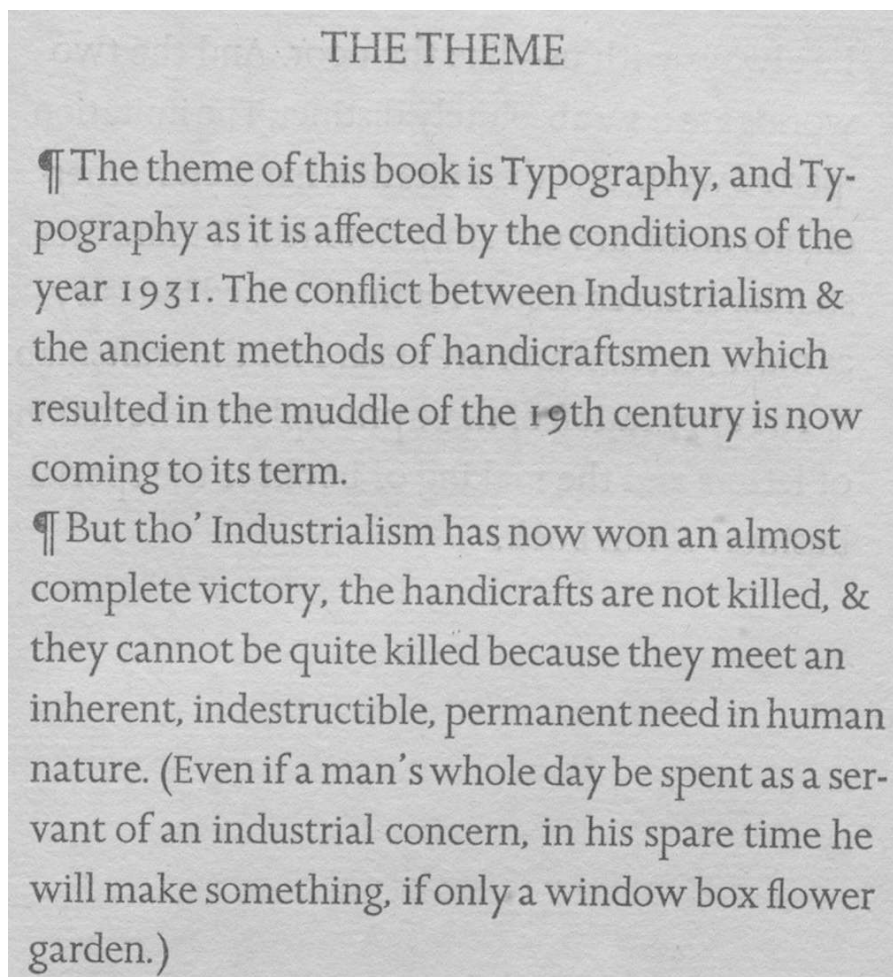


Figure 4. Example of the Joanna typeface as it appears in Eric Gill's *Essay on Typography*. Image courtesy of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

⁵⁹ Joanna Skibsrud, *The Sentimentalists* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011); Joanna Skibsrud, *The Sentimentalists* (London: William Heinemann, 2011).

platform. The same is true of the rest of the Kobo version of the novel, which also omits the paragraph symbols (§) mentioned above.⁶⁰ In the Kobo versions the "Note on the Type" stands not as an informative and imaginative paratext, as it does in the print versions; rather, the Kobo "Note" becomes a textual fossil from a previous edition, which serves either to remind readers of the absent print version, or worse, to mislead readers into thinking that what they see on their Kobo screen represents the design philosophy of Eric Gill.

The difference in typography is not just a matter of aesthetics, for the simple reason that typography is political, just as all design is political.⁶¹ Eric Gill was a champion of small-press publishing at a time when mass culture and the industrialization of printing were becoming the norm, as described in the excerpt from Gill's *Essay* in Figure 4—an example of the marriage of form and content that Gill envisioned for Joanna. As Steeves's "Note on the Type" points out, Gill created his typeface Joanna specifically for the private press he set up in 1930, which signified a rejection of industrial printing and the alienation it promulgated. As Gill puts it in the *Essay*, "there will always be many who will choose to be masters of their own work & in their own workshops rather than masters of other men working under sub-human conditions, that is to say conditions which deny them intellectual responsibility."⁶² This describes the battle that Gaspereau Press itself was fighting during the controversy over *The Sentimentalists*, and the philosophy voiced by Steeves echoes Gill's resistance to a publishing world "wherein no man makes the whole of anything, wherein the product is standardized and the man simply a tool, a tooth on a wheel."⁶³ Considering this context, it is no small irony that the typeface that replaces Joanna on a Kobo screen is none other than Georgia, a screen font developed by Matthew Carter for the Microsoft Corporation. The Kobo version does not simply get the font wrong; it completely reverses the typographic politics of the print editions.

4.2. *The Title Page*

Although identifying typographic differences between e-book versions and platforms may be worthwhile, explaining those differences and interpreting their meaning does not particularly challenge bibliographical method. Indeed, the analysis offered above shows how interpretations based on McKenzie's notion of expressive form or Jerome McGann's distinction between bibliographic and linguistic codes can extend more or less straightforwardly into new materials.⁶⁴ However, accounting for other kinds of variation requires a bibliographer of e-books to explore the source code of databases

⁶⁰ By way of comparison, the more recent iBooks version of *The Sentimentalists*, published some time after the Kobo version and likely derived from the Douglas & MacIntyre reprint, retains the paragraph symbols but omits the "Note on the Type" entirely—perhaps appropriately, given that the iBooks default serif font is Baskerville.

⁶¹ On the politics of typography, see, for example, Jan Tschichold, *The New Typography*, trans. Ruari McLean (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

⁶² Gill, *Essay on Typography*, 18.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ See "The Book as an Expressive Form," in McKenzie, *Bibliography*, 9–30; and Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), 56–87.

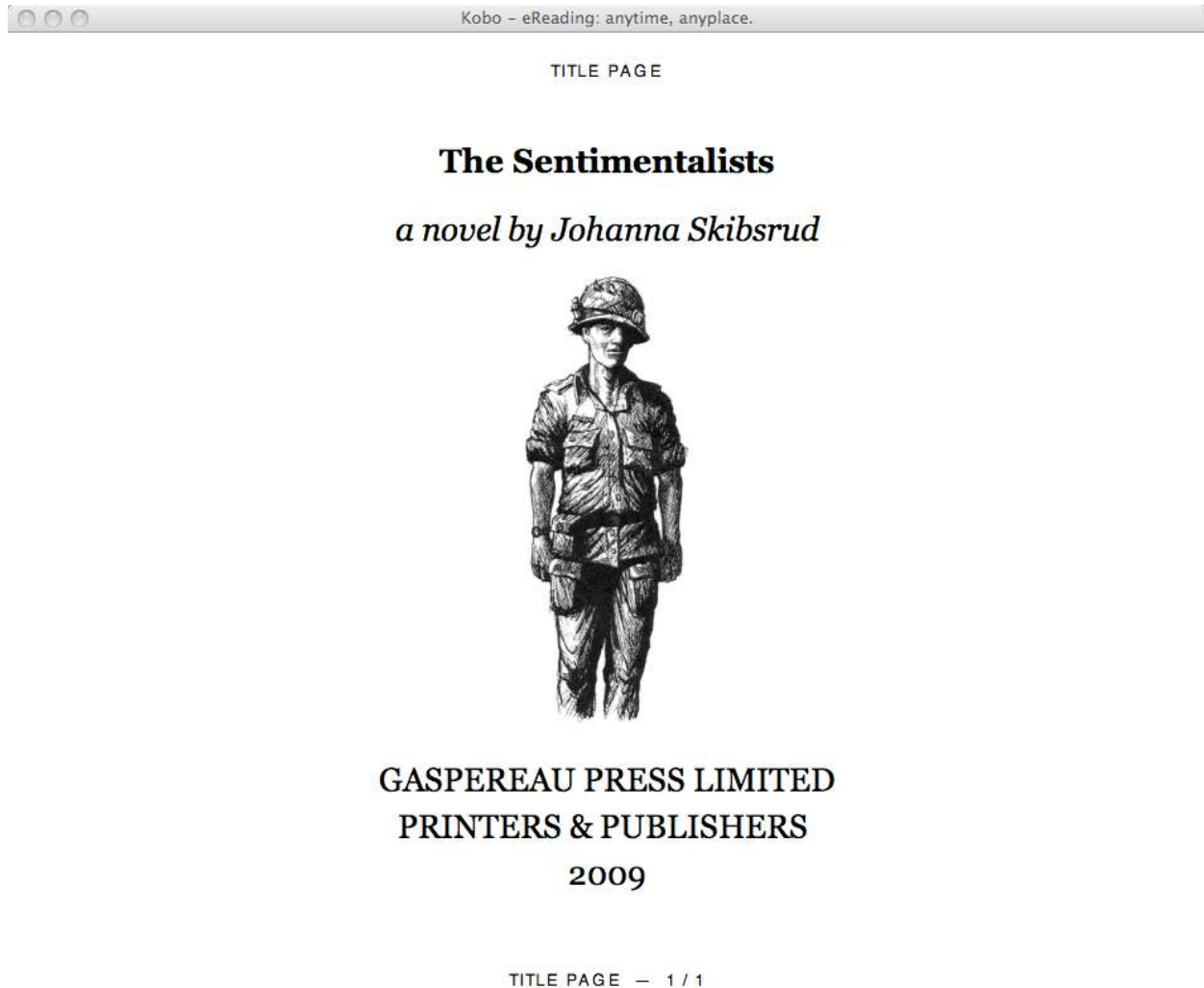


Figure 5. *The Sentimentalists'* title page as it appears on the Kobo desktop reading app.

and file formats—territory for which traditional bibliography cannot (yet) supply a map. Understanding the title page of the Kobo versions of *The Sentimentalists* requires us to work our way from the visible surface of the screen down to buried layers of code, with significant obstacles in between.

Title pages, like colophons and typographical notes, are threshold spaces where traces of a book's material and symbolic production appear in the same space. To return for a moment to Figure 1, note that the icon used on the Kobo retail website listing uses the Gaspereau cover. Something similar happens on the title page of the Kobo e-book versions, shown here in a screenshot from the Kobo-app version, which overtly presents the e-book as a Gaspereau book (Figure 5). The Gaspereau imprint on the Kobo e-book marks the Kobo versions of *The Sentimentalists* as a strange object, caught between very different forms of materiality. Does this title page designate the object on our screen as a genuine Gaspereau e-book, despite Steeves's adamant position that e-books are

fundamentally different from the objects Gaspereau makes?⁶⁵ Is the Kobo title page perhaps a digital image of the printed title page, like the facsimile title pages sometimes added to copies of rare books lacking the original? To the latter question, a cursory comparison with the Gaspereau print edition reveals the answer to be no: although the vertical order of textual and graphic elements is the same, the typefaces differ. (For example, the publisher's imprint at the bottom appears in full capitals in Figure 5, but in small capitals in the printed edition.) The Kobo title page and imprint send contradictory signals, especially in light of the publication history. Interpreting those signals requires us to delve beneath the typographical surface and explore the source code.

Fredson Bowers's metaphorical description of textual criticism's goal—to "strip the veil of print from a text" to reconstruct its creation—may resonate even more strongly with bibliographers of e-books faced with a veil of code.⁶⁶ The Kobo Desktop Application for Mac and Windows computers, for example, itself does not easily admit

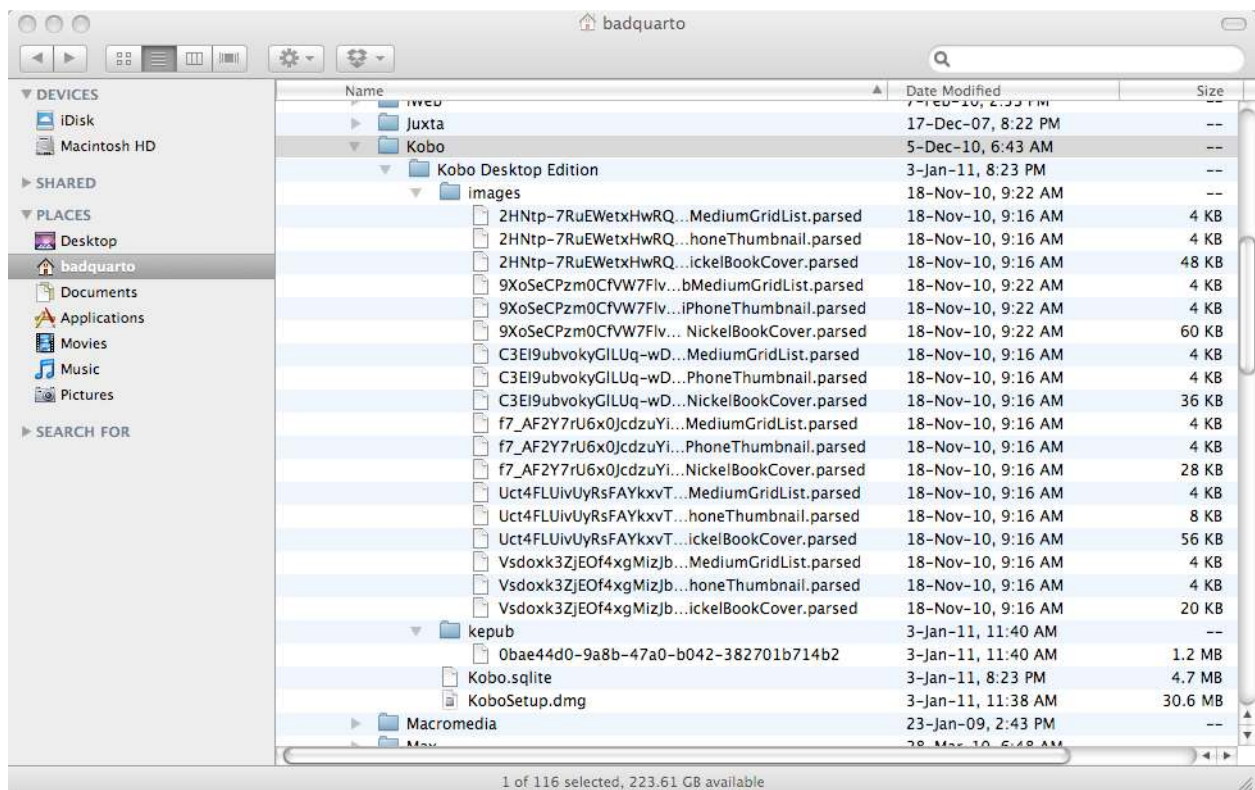


Figure 6. Location of the Kobo desktop application's database in a Mac OS X file system.

⁶⁵ See, for example, Steeves's comment about the Kobo version of *The Sentimentalists*: "that's not a book; that's the text" in "Gaspereau Press and the Giller 'Problem,'" interview on the CBC Radio program Q, 12 November 2010, <http://www.cbc.ca/q/blog/2010/11/12/gaspereau-press-and-the-giller-problem/> (the comment appears at approx. 5 min., 20 sec.).

⁶⁶ Fredson Bowers, *On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Library, 1955), 87.

readers to the backstage area, so to speak, where the source code of its e-books becomes visible. The ability to view source code with ease distinguishes Web pages from applications. Most Web browsers have a *view source* feature that permits users to view a page's underlying code, whether HTML, XML, or XHTML, but e-reading applications and devices usually have no such feature. If one goes digging into the application code for the Kobo desktop software, one eventually confronts the veil of code visible in Figure 6, which shows the Kobo application folder as it appears in my computer's file system.⁶⁷ The arrow indicates the database file ("kobo.sqlite") that contains metadata about the e-books stored in this installation of the Kobo app. (The text of *The Sentimentalists* happens to be stored in the database file visible just above, in the "kepub" folder.) This window represents the limit of casual exploration using the standard interfaces provided by the operating system, such as file system windows and text editors. To dig deeper we need specialized tools and methods.

For recently published e-books, stripping the veil of code likely involves examining a single file in the EPUB format—an e-book standard designed to work consistently across multiple devices, platforms, and languages, much like mp3 audio files.⁶⁸ John Maxwell and his coauthors make a point about EPUB files that should guide our thinking here:

An ePub file is, anatomically, a simply disguised zip archive [in the sense that one can manually rename the file suffix from ".epub" to ".zip"]. Inside the zip archive are a few standard component parts: there are specialized files that declare metadata about the book, and about the format of the book. And then there is the book's content, represented in XHTML. *An ePub book is a Web page in a wrapper.* This simple fact needs to be recognized, if only for the sake of demystification; this is not rocket science.⁶⁹

For this reason, EPUB will probably be the easier of the two forms to subject to bibliographical analysis, though commercial e-books such as the Kobo EPUB *Sentimentalists* are likely to be encrypted—protections that obstruct scholarly analysis as readily as they discourage piracy. It is possible to change the downloaded *Sentimentalists* EPUB file suffix to ".zip" and decompress the file like any other zip file, as Maxwell indicates, revealing a folder containing recognizable graphics and text files, with the novel's textual content arranged in forty-six HTML files (Maxwell's "Web page

⁶⁷ I conducted this research on an Apple MacBook Pro running the operating system OSX Lion (v. 10.7.1), and using the most up-to-date version of the Kobo software. On this system, the Kobo application folder's default location is "[hard drive name]/Users/[user account name]/Library/Application Support/Kobo/" ("Library" and its subfolders may be hidden folders, requiring the user to change a global system setting to make them visible). The investigative steps described here should translate without much difficulty to Windows, Ubuntu, and other operating systems.

⁶⁸ The EPUB standard is defined by the International Digital Publishing Forum; see <http://idpf.org/epub/>; for an overview of the current state of the standard, see Keith Fahlgren, "Fighting Complexity in EPUB 3: Modularization and Delegation," *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 14(1) (2011), <http://hdl.handle.net.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/2027/spo.3336451.0014.107>.

⁶⁹ John W. Maxwell, Meghan MacDonald, Travis Nicholson, Jan Halpape, Sarah Taggart, and Heiko Binder, "XML Production Workflows? Start with the Web," *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 13(1) (2010), <http://hdl.handle.net.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/2027/spo.3336451.0013.106>.

in a wrapper"). At this stage, we are dealing with file formats and structures familiar to anyone who has created an e-book or Web page, and the functions of each part are well documented in online tutorials for creating EPUB files.⁷⁰

But how do we know which files contain which parts of the book, such as the title page? Here we encounter one of the inevitable barriers that e-books throw into the path of bibliographic analysis: Digital Rights Management (DRM). Like most retail e-books, this EPUB file has its contents encrypted to prevent piracy. As critics of DRM point out, such constraints prevent owners of e-books from making copies to read on devices that do not support the DRM system chosen by the publisher and retailer (see note 51). Others argue that DRM affects the appearance of e-books.⁷¹ Circumventing DRM for purposes other than piracy is a legal gray area, hence the current debate over DRM software and its circumvention.⁷² In the case of the EPUB file before us, the DRM encryption means that when we attempt to read any of the HTML files with, say, a simple text editor, we see only a mass of random characters. The same is true of most of the other files in the EPUB package, including the metadata and table of contents files. In other words, our bibliographical analysis can proceed no further without somehow circumventing the DRM software to decrypt the files. (I return to this disquieting aspect of the bibliography of e-books in the conclusion.) Online communities have created and disseminated free software to strip DRM protection from e-books, and it was fairly straightforward to take this step to make the EPUB files human-readable for research purposes.⁷³

Once we have removed the DRM protection, it is a simple matter of browsing through the HTML files using a generic text editor or specialized EPUB editor such as Sigil to determine which one contains the title page—which, as one would expect, is near the beginning of the sequence, the third in order.⁷⁴ After all those steps we finally reach code that could appear on a Web page:

```
<p class="bkt" id="d7e153"><b>The Sentimentalists</b></p>
```

```
<p class="txc" id="d7e203"><i><big>a novel by Johanna Skibsrud</big></i></p>
```

```
<p class="ser"><img alt="Sentimentalistsfinalforfilm_0003_001"
class="imgpub" id="d14e44"
```

⁷⁰ For a sample EPUB construction tutorial, see Harrison Ainsworth, *Epub Format Construction Guide*, http://www.hxa.name/articles/content/epub-guide_hxa7241_2007.html.

⁷¹ Unsigned post, "Using Inept to Strip DRM for Better Viewing," *I'm Addicted* [blog], 9 March 2009, <http://imaddicted.ca/ebooks/using-inept-to-strip-drm/>.

⁷² See Michael Geist, "30 Days of DRM," *Michael Geist's Blog*, <http://www.michaelgeist.ca/daysofdrm/>; and Tarleton Gillespie, *Wired Shut: Copyright and the Shape of Digital Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).

⁷³ For example, see "Circumventing Adobe ADEPT DRM for EPUB," *I ♥ Cabbages: Still Another Reverse Engineering Blog*, 18 February 2009, <http://i-u2665-cabbages.blogspot.com/2009/02/circumventing-adobe-adept-drm-for-epub.html>; cf. the same blogger's post about a Digital Millennium Copyright Act infringement notice (pertaining to a different but similar DRM circumvention post) relayed by his or her blog host, "No Free Speech for You," March 4, 2009, <http://i-u2665-cabbages.blogspot.com/2009/03/well-that-didnt-take-very-long-hello.html>.

⁷⁴ The Sigil e-book editor is an open-source software project hosted at <http://code.google.com/p/sigil/>.

```
src="images/Sentimentalistsfinalforfilm_0003_001.jpg"/></p>
```

```
<p class="txc" id="d7e303"><small>GASPEREAU PRESS LIMITED<br />
PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS <br />2009</small></p>
```

This code answers the question posed at the outset concerning the uncertain origin of the title page, confirming that the e-book title page is not a single scanned image, but a combination of machine-readable text and a JPEG image of the Wesley Bates cover illustration. In particular, the name of the image file ("Sentimentalistsfinalforfilm_0003_001.jpg") suggests that Gaspereau was involved in the production of the original EPUB file, at least to the extent of making its typesetting files available. (Recall that the Bates cover image was printed from a photopolymer plate.) That point may be speculative, but we do know that no attempt to specify the typeface as Joanna appears to have been made in the encoding. The Cascading Style Sheet (or CSS) file linked to this HTML page, which controls fonts and other presentational information for an HTML page, does not specify any particular font, only relative sizes and alignments. These traces of the e-book's formal materiality indicate that any attempt to translate the Gaspereau Eric Gill designs was abandoned as the EPUB file was created—though the telltale presence among the EPUB's images files of a paragraph mark, apparently unused in the e-book itself, suggests that the EPUB's creators did not surrender the Gillisms without a struggle.⁷⁵

4.3. Epigraphs

My final example has to do with the ordering of structural units in *The Sentimentalists*, specifically its paratexts: those textual thresholds that stand, in Gerard Genette's definition, as "a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text)."⁷⁶ The "Note on the Type" and title page are but two examples. *The Sentimentalists'* paratextual structure is both complex and subtle, serving as a formal and thematic device to frame Skibsrud's novel about the difficulty of recovering the past through human memory and written records. Fragments of texts are thematically as well as structurally integral to the novel.

For example, the "Note on the Type" mentioned above is part of a chain of paratexts that serves as an ending for the book in the absence of a clear conclusion for the plot. Here Skibsrud's literary design, which defers any clear answer to the novel's central question about certain events during the war, combines with the book's design in a complex ending that transitions from narrative into the uncertain evidence of archival records—including records of the book's authorship and production. Following the final sentence of the final chapter (on page 171 of the Gaspereau edition) appears a section marked "Epilogue" in which the narrator describes receiving a transcript of her father's court martial testimony. Several pages of court transcript

⁷⁵ Cf. the mysterious unlinked "Jung" node that Kirschenbaum locates in the source code of Michael Joyce's hypertext story *afternoon*; Kirschenbaum, "Editing," 32–33.

⁷⁶ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 2.

follow, bracketed by the narrator's unsuccessful attempt to get to the truth behind it. Then follows the Douglas poem "Remember Me," parts of which have already been quoted by characters in the novel. Then follows an "Acknowledgements" section that begins with the pronoun "I," marking a change in voice from the novel's narrator to Skibsrud herself. Following this is Steeves's "Note on the Type," then Skibsrud's biographical note on a facing page, and finally a page of copyright and cataloging information overleaf.

The literary effect of this paratextual transition from narrative into archival records, intertext, record of authorship, colophon, biography, and finally publishing metadata makes for an appealing harmony between *The Sentimentalists'* themes and bibliographic form. It may be art by accident, but it is art—specifically the arts of authorship and bookmaking working together. If we were to draw an analogy from print bibliography—a technique to be used cautiously, with respect for media differences as well as similarities—then accounting for these units could be the e-bibliography equivalent of analyzing the imposition and assembly of a hand-press book's preliminaries and postliminaries.

Epigraphs are no less important forms of paratext in the architecture of Skibsrud's novel, but in the Kobo-app version they do not stay put. An epigraph from e. e. cummings's poem "i sing of olaf glad and big" prefaces the novel itself, and all but one of the named sections has an epigraph placed on a verso page, between the section title itself (overleaf) and the beginning of the chapter text (on the facing page). In the Kobo-app version these epigraphs appear out of order, as follows:

Named section	Opening epigraph (print, Kobo-EPUB)	Opening epigraph (Kobo-app)
Fargo	none	none
Casablanca	William James, "The negatives that haunt our ideals . . ."	none
Casablanca 1959	John Berryman, "from them blue depths . . ."	William James, "The negatives that haunt our ideals . . ."
Vietnam 1967	Gary Lane, "With Olaf it is different . . ."	John Berryman, "from them blue depths . . ."
Epilogue	none	Gary Lane, "With Olaf it is different . . ."

Each Kobo-app epigraph has shifted to the end of its original chapter, such that each appears to preface the following chapter. In the table above, each of the elements in the right-hand column has shifted down one row, so the Epilogue now has the Gary Lane epigraph and "Casablanca" now has none. Recall that during the initial period of *The Sentimentalists'* Giller fame, before the Douglas & MacIntyre reprint, the Kobo e-books

(both Kobo-app and Kobo-EPUB) were the only versions available to most readers. Although the Kobo-EPUB version presents the epigraphs correctly, readers who purchased their Kobo e-book through the Kobo app itself (as Jobs encouraged iBooks readers to do in his demo) would have experienced the epigraphs out of sequence. The point is not just that the order of epigraphs differs between print and e-book versions; rather, the point is that Kobo-app readers would have no way of knowing they have not, in a basic sense, read the same novel as the other readers.

What interpretive consequences might result from this reordering of epigraphs? As the table above indicates, a reader of any of the print editions would begin the section named "Casablanca" with the following epigraph from William James: "The negatives that haunt our ideals . . . must be themselves negated in the absolutely Real. This alone makes the universe solid. This is the resting deep. We live upon the stormy surface; but with this our anchor holds, for it grapples rocky bottom."⁷⁷ A reader of the Kobo-app version, however, begins the "Casablanca" section with no epigraph, and encounters the James quotation only at the end of the section. Clicking the "next page" arrow then brings up the title for the next section, "Casablanca 1959," which may strike the reader as oddly placed, but with another click the reader moves reassuringly forward to the prose one would expect to follow an epigraph. In this case, the opening sentence of "Casablanca 1959" seems to pair naturally with the preceding (out-of-place) James quotation about the real and the ideal: "When he was a small boy the moves they made dotted the pink map of the world, which was Canada and the United States." (Perhaps this was a childhood with a stormy surface, whose moves around the country denied any chance of a rocky bottom for an anchor—the memory of which serves as the negative that haunts the ideal representation of the map.) It may be an interpretive leap, but that is exactly what an epigraph elicits: the reader transitions from one text to another, making sense of the juxtapositioning of the two, and doing interpretive work to bridge the gap between texts. An engaged reader might assume that the out-of-place epigraphs were designed to appear at the ends of chapters, and just as easily construct valid interpretive links between the epigraphs and chapter endings.

The question we are left with, then, is the kind of textual mystery that bibliographers can excel at solving in more familiar media: why does the order of epigraphs differ between versions? We can answer that question by comparing the structure of the Kobo-EPUB and Kobo-app versions, looking for clues in the source code using the methods described above. To take the correctly sequenced Kobo-EPUB version first, we can decompress the EPUB file and examine the contents of the subfolder "OEBPS," which contains the textual, graphic, and structural components of the e-book. Among the various files required by the EPUB standard, we see a set of over forty HTML files with sequentially numbered file names. Figure 7 shows these files as viewed in the open-source Sigil e-book editor (in the left-hand pane), with formatted text and source code views of the William James epigraph in the right-hand panes. Each of these files contains a textual subunit of the book, including the copyright page, title page, author's bio, the "Note on the Type," and each of the numbered subsections of the

⁷⁷ Skibsrud, *Sentimentalists*, 46 (in both the Gaspereau and Douglas & McIntyre editions); cf. original in William James, "Pragmatism and Humanism," in *Pragmatism in Focus*, ed. Doris Olin (London: Routledge, 1992), 116-129, 125.

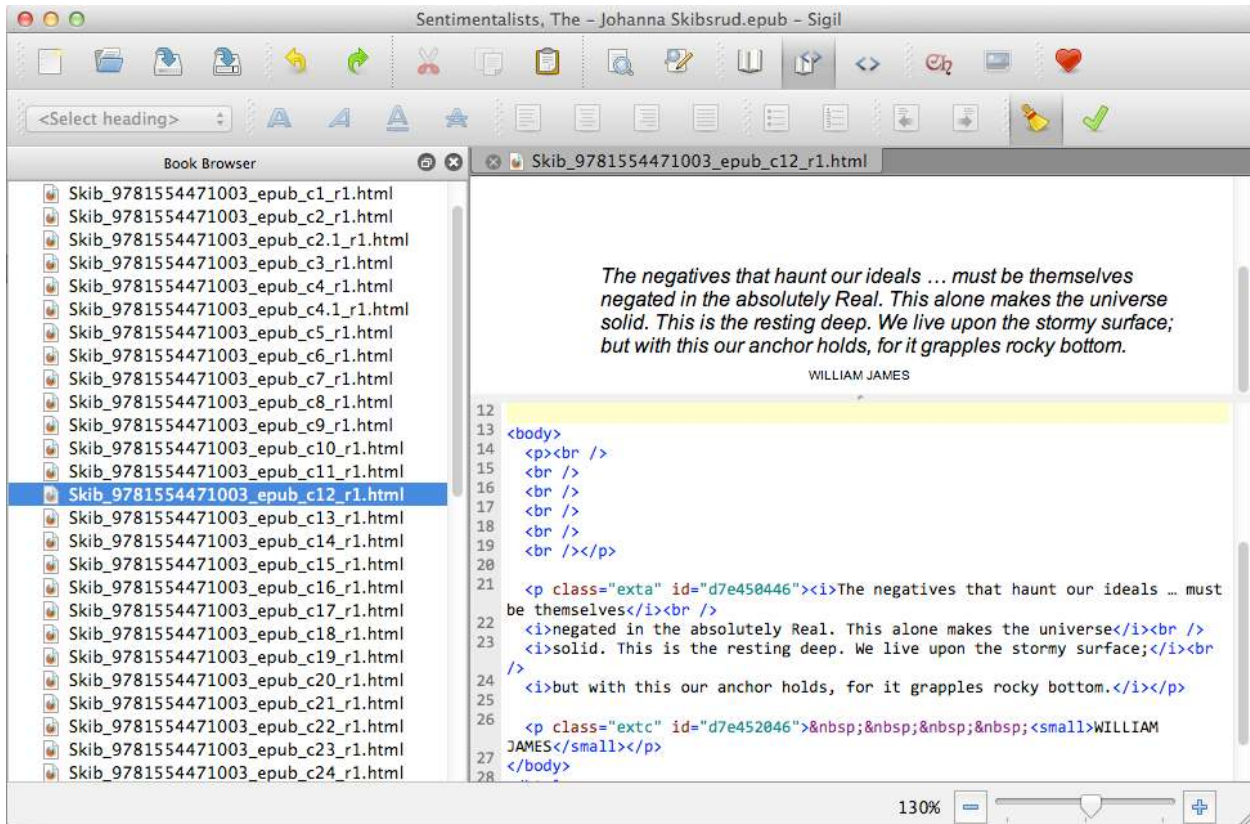


Figure 7. Part of the Kobo-EPUB version’s internal file structure and content, viewed using the Sigil EPUB editing software.

novel. This sequence of HTML files could be regarded as the e-book’s equivalent of gatherings, with the numbered sequence of file names equivalent to signatures.⁷⁸

Like gatherings, these files may differ in size, ranging from the file named “Skib_9781554471003_epub_c6_r1.html,” which contains all the paragraphs of the first numbered section in the chapter “Fargo,” to “Skib_9781554471003_epub_c3_r1.html,” which contains only a single line of text, the novel’s dedication (“To my mother”). As the list visible in Figure 7 shows, we need only pay attention to the last part of the file names (“_c3_r1,” “_c6_r1”) to see how the numbering system works. We can see that there are separate files for the “Casablanca” title, the James epigraph, and the prose of “Casablanca’s” first section, labeled “_c11_r1,” “_c12_r1,” and “_c13_r1,” respectively. We can find similar sequences of files for the chapter titles, epigraphs, and opening sections in the rest of the novel, all conforming to the arrangement of the print editions. Further confirmation of the sequence of file names can be found in the EPUB’s two structural metadata files: the table of contents file, named “toc.ncx” (the “.ncx” stands for “Navigation Control file for XML”); and the .opf (or Open Packaging Format) file,

⁷⁸ Furthermore, the OPF files required by the EPUB standard are much like the registers of quires that hand-press books sometimes included to aid binding. I am grateful to Rebecca Niles for this observation.

The screenshot shows the SQLite Database Browser interface. The table 'content' is selected, and its data is displayed in a grid. The columns are 'BookTitle', 'Title', and 'Attri'. The rows are numbered from 313 to 332. The 'BookTitle' column contains '(The Sentimentalists)' for all rows. The 'Title' column contains various titles, including 'CASABLANCA', 'The negatives that haunt our ideals ... must b', 'CASABLANCA 1959', 'from them blue depths nor chopping down', and 'VIETNAM 1967'. The 'Attri' column contains numerical values ranging from 1 to 8.

	BookTitle	Title	Attri
313	(The Sentimentalists)		4
314	(The Sentimentalists)		5
315	(The Sentimentalists)	CASABLANCA	
316	(The Sentimentalists)		1
317	(The Sentimentalists)		2
318	(The Sentimentalists)		3
319	(The Sentimentalists)		4
320	(The Sentimentalists)	The negatives that haunt our ideals ... must b	
321	(The Sentimentalists)	CASABLANCA 1959	
322	(The Sentimentalists)		1
323	(The Sentimentalists)		2
324	(The Sentimentalists)		3
325	(The Sentimentalists)		4
326	(The Sentimentalists)		5
327	(The Sentimentalists)		6
328	(The Sentimentalists)		7
329	(The Sentimentalists)		8
330	(The Sentimentalists)	from them blue depths nor chopping down	
331	(The Sentimentalists)	VIETNAM 1967	
332	(The Sentimentalists)		1

Figure 8. The Kobo-app version’s sequence of sections in the “kobo.sqlite” database, as viewed through the open-source SQLite Database Browser (with some columns collapsed for viewing).

another XML file that contains a complete list of the e-book’s parts in their reading order.⁷⁹

At this point we might reasonably say that we have stripped the veil of code enough to be sure of the proper structure of epigraphs and chapters in the Kobo–EPUB version. To compare the Kobo–app version, we need to return to the “kobo.sqlite” file located among the Kobo application files, as discussed above. Here we are not dealing with a set of easily readable HTML files wrapped into an EPUB package, but with an SQLite database, which requires specialized software to read its contents. Again, we can turn to the e-book user community for resources, such as an open-source SQLite Database Browser that enables users to view and manipulate SQLite databases without

⁷⁹ Two of the standard elements in the .opf file are named <spine> and <manifest>, each of which alludes to key stages of Darnton’s communications circuit—binding and shipping, respectively.

knowing the SQL language.⁸⁰ Viewing "kobo.sqlite" in the database cannot reveal the underlying HTML-encoded text of the novel due to DRM encryption, but the SQLite database browser can show us a structure of database tables matching the names of the HTML files in the EPUB version (the files I compared to gatherings, above), and with titles and first lines visible in the "title" field (Figure 8). Here we can see that the highlighted record "c12_r1," which contains the James epigraph, appears out of sequence between "c16_r1" (the last section of "Casablanca") and "c17_r1" (the title page for "Casablanca 1959"). The other misplaced epigraphs are similarly misplaced in the database's order of tables, even though they are correctly named; one can simply scan down the "ContentID" column looking for numbers out of sequence, checking them against the values in the "title" field. With that we have the explanation for the out-of-sequence Kobo-app epigraphs: an incorrect sequence of database tables.

What we have learned, then, is that *The Sentimentalists* was almost certainly assembled correctly as an EPUB file, with the epigraphs in their proper places, and that the order became distorted when the EPUB data was imported into the Kobo app's SQLite database. One imagines a scenario in which Steeves or an assistant created the EPUB file in-house, the components of which were later rearranged by a Kobo database manager—but this is speculation. To attribute the error to a human agent—like the infamous Compositor B of the Shakespeare First Folio⁸¹—one would need to reconstruct the workflow by which the Gaspereau digital typesetting files were converted to EPUB, especially the stage at which they were reformatted by Kobo for retail delivery—and even then the agent responsible might not be human, but a quirk of a particular template, script, or style sheet. Such a step might require investigation of a publisher's archives, a form of historical e-bibliography not so different from McKenzie's own investigations of Cambridge University Press.⁸² Tracing the error to the architecture of the SQLite database lets us draw another analogy between the bibliography of e-books and print books: it is as though gatherings have been printed correctly with the correct signatures, but bound out of order. As any number of examples from the history of the book will show, erroneous transpositions of whole units of text, for whatever reason, are nothing new to bibliographers.⁸³ There is something both unsettling and comforting about this fundamental kind of error being shared by e-books and hand-press books, despite being manufactured using techniques developed centuries apart.

⁸⁰ The project may be found at sqlitebrowser.sourceforge.net.

⁸¹ For a bibliographic analysis of Compositor B, see Charlton Hinman, *The Printing and Proof-Reading of the First Folio of Shakespeare*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963); see also Jeffrey Masten, "Pressing Subjects: Or, the Secret Lives of Shakespeare's Compositors," in *Language Machines: Technologies of Literary and Cultural Production*, ed. Jeffrey Masten, Peter Stallybrass, and Nancy J. Vickers (New York: Routledge, 1997), 75–107.

⁸² McKenzie, "Printers of the Mind."

⁸³ Cf. the account of Henry James's transposed chapters in McGann, "The Case of *The Ambassadors* and the Textual Condition," in *Palimpsest: Editorial Theory in the Humanities*, ed. George Bornstein and Ralph G. Williams (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 151–166; and what appear to be multiple transposed sections in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals*, as discussed in the translator's note on the text in Mary Gregor's Cambridge edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), xxxii–iv. I am grateful to Rachel Wong for the latter reference.

5. Conclusion: The Negatives That Haunt Our Ideals

To ask *do these documents present the same text?* is to recapitulate one of textual scholarship's basic questions—one at least as old as the Library of Alexandria, whose librarians were among the first scholars to collate different copies of the same work.⁸⁴ In this sense, the bibliographic analysis of the e-book edition of *The Sentimentalists* exemplifies the methodological continuity emphasized by McKenzie, Vander Meulen, Kirschenbaum, and others who would widen the circle of traditional bibliography to include born-digital texts. Although I share that desire, I also believe that the values at bibliography's center are changing even as its edges expand outward.

One of the consequences that the bibliographical study of e-books forces upon us is the need to rethink traditional bibliography's basis in empiricism. To reverse the terms of the errant William James epigraph, the different forms of e-books may have no rocky bottom, no absolute Real that serves to anchor the evidence of our senses. The reason is simple: e-books, like all digital texts, require us to interpret phenomena not directly observable by the senses. We must rely on layers upon layers of digital tools and interfaces, as we have seen in the examples above. A purely empirical and forensic perspective assumes that objects speak for themselves, and yield up their evidence to the observation of human senses and the inquiry of human reason. My purpose in drawing attention to the role of the enkindling reciter is to emphasize that digital objects do not speak for themselves; someone always speaks for them.

Here it is worth revisiting Bowers's highly gendered metaphor of "stripping the veil of print," in which a bibliographer reveals the face of the text like a groom reveals his bride's face at a wedding—a ceremony to counterpoint Gary Taylor's comparison of editing to funeral rites, as mentioned above. Both rituals happen on stages of sorts, before audiences, and—depending on the doctrinal context—may evoke the transmutation of matter: bride and groom as one flesh, and the deceased as dust returning to the earth. The challenging materiality of e-books—intractable, sometimes inaccessible—forces us to confront a possibility that McKenzie, Bourdieu, and others have raised about the study of books generally: that our ways of seeing and interpreting the material production of texts are inseparable from their symbolic production. That said, neither is the materiality of e-books entirely veiled to bibliographers, especially if approached with a sense of the interplay of social and technical forces that e-books embody. As the discussion of typography above shows, reading the form of e-books politically requires serious attention to how they work.

In particular, the prevalence of DRM constraints on e-books also means that they cannot be studied apart from sociotechnical considerations. Put more bluntly, it is possible that bibliographers of e-books cannot do their work without breaking the law, or at least coming disconcertingly close. In Canada, a recent draft of the Copyright Modernization Act contained an exemption for the breaking of digital locks for educational purposes, which presumably would protect the kind of research I have pursued here. As of March 2012, however, the latest draft (Bill C-11) contains no clear protections for circumventing digital locks for research purposes.⁸⁵ The fact of DRM

⁸⁴ Greetham, *Textual Scholarship*, 14–15.

⁸⁵ The earlier bill was drafted in 2010 but not passed into law due to the dissolution of parliament for a federal election. See the sections on bills C-32 and C-11 on Michael Geist's blog, <http://www.michaelgeist.ca/>.

along with the necessity—and, indeed, the ease—of its circumvention puts bibliographers of e-books into positions they do not normally face, where idealistic theories of digital textuality offer no help. As Kirschenbaum puts it, "electronic document security . . . can only underscore the limited and arbitrary nature of any medial ideology that celebrates only the fluidity and fungibility of electronic text. Powerful and well-financed constituencies are lobbying for a very different electronic textual condition."⁸⁶ These political forces were at work on Steve Jobs's stage, too, and their power is all the greater for their invisibility in e-reading demos. Digital bibliographers may find themselves engaging in policy questions to a greater extent than their print and manuscript counterparts have done.⁸⁷

A correlative of this conclusion, however, is that bibliographers of e-books also need to learn from the online communities that develop tools and methods for working with e-books. Communities of amateurs have amassed a body of practical knowledge much faster than academic specialists. Many of the resources I have drawn upon for this analysis—including tools for DRM circumvention—were supplied by bloggers and online communities of e-book designers and enthusiasts. These communities are more than just a source of tools and documentation; some are asking the same kinds of questions as textual scholars, and pursuing answers worth hearing.⁸⁸ Academic book historians, though arriving somewhat late to the discussion of e-books, can contribute theoretical frameworks to interpret the meaning of evidence, and historical perspectives to situate that meaning in the long continuities and discontinuities that make up the book's history.

The intensely public nature of e-books reminds us that the fundamental challenge facing digital textual scholars goes beyond adapting bibliographic vocabulary and methods to new materials. We must also question the normative modes of reading that new technologies assert, and understand the power of the enkindling reciters who precede us in telling the story. All of these conclusions point to the need for more bibliographical research on e-books, of course, but also to the only viable context within which that research can happen: the growing tendency toward the interconnection of all aspects of the study of books, from the forensic to the poetic. The negatives that haunt our ideals—the stubbornly human aspects of digital textuality—remain submerged beneath the surfaces of e-books and e-reading performances alike, and the rocky bottom of the Real is a long way down.

⁸⁶ Kirschenbaum, *Mechanisms*, 58.

⁸⁷ Striphas's book *The Late Age of Print*, cited above, provides a valuable introduction to these questions from a political economy perspective.

⁸⁸ For example, see David Rothman, "The ePub Torture Test: Starring 'Three Shadows,' a Graphic Novel," *TeleRead* [blog], 27 July 2008, <http://www.teleread.com/ebooks/the-epub-torture-test-starring-three-shadows/>.