

each new book removes all others from view, but some will make themselves 'present tho absent' in memory. This process repeated over a life adumbrates – Skeat: 'to shadow forth' – a life's reading list, which underlies & overlays every new act of reading. Each new reading reasserts, modifies, or rejects, previous readings

the ancients, Plato for instance, who opposed reading/writing to memory, had not lived for long enough with reading/writing *and* memory to live in their intimacy, their interdependence, their deep &/or dire need for each other, the symbiosis that required a historical development to emerge

expunge all religiosities from the register – 'in the beginning was the word' a hubric rubric if ever there was one. The earth does not care what foolishness we adopt to exercise power over other books, other selves

if 'secular' is of this age or generation, it comes from a root meaning 'to sow'. The seeds we sow that generate the world of & for others. Karmic, in the best sense, of the effect of what we do upon what happens to us – in 'this' life

is it really so, extrapolating Hegel via Blanchot, that the book is for us 'a thing of the past'. But is not the making of art, the life of being in the process of art, always a thing of the present, no matter the antiquity of whatever is at hand or before the mind. Only one not an artist could relegate or delegate art to 'a thing of the past'

☞ how may I understand this – over all the planet millions of words in unrelated & related languages are at this moment not being read, and many won't be. What words can be uttered about these words. Can 'words' even be a proper term for them. What holds these collections of words together other than the books they're written/printed in and the shelves they stand or lie upon. We say of someone that they are still 'on the shelf', they are yet to be chosen by another, to be activated in various social senses. Myriad flowers, insects, fish, grasses are not seen, yet that they are there and have their own histories we take to be undeniable. Are unread words like that. Out of sight, into mind. Each volume has its small history, even if, after its manufacture, it was unsold & destroyed by its publisher. Yet to say of unread words or books that they are merely 'unread' seems insufficient

the inertia of the book

I once had a small 'vision', triggered by seeing television coverage of a large crowd in a sports arena. The overall vocal effect of the crowd was of a vast jumble of sounds in which no particular word or even syllable could be separately detected. When the camera zoomed in on a small group within the crowd, the sound one heard was still that of the crowd. I suddenly imagined that each of the persons within this isolated ensemble and, by implication, all other individuals in the crowd, was making the precise vocal jumble of unintelligible noises audible from the crowd itself. This may well have been my first experience or at least inkling of the idea of the murmur of language. People speak, crowds murmur, yet every intelligible individual's speech is a component in the crowd's unintelligible murmur. This is no doubt the outer form of the internal ('out there') murmur of language. Over earth, the murmur, the whole human murmur, cannot be heard, and the whole collection of printed/written words cannot be seen. They can, therefore, never be fully experienced. They can only be imagined or implied or extrapolated from other experiences. The murmur is a site in which every possible assertion will find its expression, its modification, its denial, its contrary. In the blur of printing/writing, we will find the same. How would it be if every such assertion were to make the same claim on someone. Impossible, of course. But if it were possible, would that someone be ever able to discriminate anything within the 'ten thousand things'

☞ I am unable to take the book on trust. That any book might trust me is an intolerable proposition

positing the murmur is lifting the noise of speech away from speaking. It joins all other noise, wind in trees & grass, birds, traffic, sea-sound, the noise anything makes when it moves or breathes or stands in the way of other movement. Noise of the earth, earth-sound, neither music nor language, nor even anything specifically human. It has long been time to demystify and deprivilege our role/position in the so-called scheme of things

what if, haunted by a book, one's haunted not by any of its content, but by its form. This has certainly been my tendency, since childhood, when I wanted books but almost never read them. Even now I rarely read a book from cover to cover

☞ by what lore is the book bound. The anxiety of those, for instance, who find it hard to cope with paper bound books whose leaves break off from the brittle glue of their manufacture. Such a breaking off, a falling out, rarely elicits a neutral response. Why don't 'they' do it better, or properly, or differently so the book stays together. If a book simply falls apart, its leaves separated & scattered by historical process, then we can regret it while understanding how it happened. But to split the book up deliberately for personal, pecuniary advantage is usually to provoke as much outrage as understanding. Something terrible has happened in this instance, but what, exactly. The sale of separated leaves from rare books has more than conversational consequences

the terms often used for well-written well-bound books include 'magisterial', 'authoritative', 'definitive', 'the last word' etc, all proposing a judgment unlikely to be altered, a text not to be surpassed, and a virtual prohibition against any but the most trivial questioning. But take one of these solid tomes and rip out some of its pages, burn some, trash some, sell some. The book's life & flow in the world is interrupted, its progress from one authoritative page to another, one generation to another, has broken the lore & law of the bound book. For the book to be binding for us, its binding must cohere. For us to remain at liberty in the book, the book itself must be chained to its