Book-Space;

Exploring the potentialities for intimate communication within the photobook

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Dedicated to my dad, as I knew you then and as I know you now.

Pure, loving and generous no matter the changes, no matter the
progression, no matter our struggles.

And to my mum, whose unconditional love and support has been, without
doubt or comparison, the most vital resource I've ever had.

Introduction

0.1 The Codex

The word "codex" (Drucker, 2004:121) is a term used within academia to refer to the most widely understood idea of a book-form; a mass of pages (or book-block) is bound on one side and contained within covers. Its contents are accessed sequentially in parts (volumes, chapters, sections, spreads, pages, sentences, words) and it is usually consumed by one audience member at a time (per material manifestation). This term's usefulness within creative art discourse becomes quickly apparent when the plethora of forms artists' books have taken is considered: how could one effectively theorise about the physical potentialities of the book when it has taken on so many disparate and challenging forms, without pleading ignorance to these importantly challenging works? Thus, 'codex' allows for discourse to continue to develop around what is arguably one of the most intriguing, ubiquitous and uniquely affecting cultural artefacts of modern communication.

Defined as "close relations or familiarity: psychic, physical and/or sexual closeness" (Dean, 2015:179) intimacy is delineated from the notion of the private by its lack of "objective, tangible place in the world" (Arendt, 1958:39). The notion of intimacy within the context of this research is used to refer to the affective, experiential manifestations of this phenomena. While not exclusive of, it is not intended to refer to the content or nature of a particular genre, as in depictions of the intimate, but rather elicitations of intimate experience and affect through the book form. This research

project will be more concerned with works that elicit a real experience of intimacy through how they shape the encounters possible with them and thus their reception, as opposed to the representation or replication of intimate objects, acts, or relationships, for they can only ever go as far as simulation, for they necessarily "[borrow language] from the public and can never adequately mirror the intimate" (Keltner in Oliver, 2009:165). The framework specifically chosen to accommodate this is discussed below, in section 1.2. This research approaches the question of this elicitation of intimate affect from multiple angles, exploring the phenomenology of the book-object, the connections possible between reader, author and subject, and the potential for spatial, temporal, and material interruption as a means to produce or enhance such affect. Through experimentation, research, and analysis it is hoped that this work will act as a guide for individual artists, publishers and critics alike in the creation, publication and interpretation of photobooks.

In relation to the other forms the photographic artwork may take (most ubiquitous and usefully antithetical in this discussion being the exhibition), the photobook is a small object intended for and arising from intimate experience, its reading "miming the creation of both an interior text and an interior subject" (Stewart, 1993:xi). If the exhibition, then, may be considered "gigantic" and representative of "infinity, exteriority, the public" (Stewart, 1993:70), then the book may be posited to assume the position of "miniature" representing "closure, interiority, the domestic". The coincidence of individual experience and interiority is what ultimately produces intimate affect.

The codex specifically situates its affective parameters within the realms of intimacy in a number of ways irremovable from its essential form. Books are "by nature, zones of privacy. There is no way, short of censorship, for an outside observer to monitor or control the intimate encounters they offer and the education they provide" (Drucker, 2004:xii). Intersecting this inherently intimate form with photography, whose creation, according to Barthes, "corresponds precisely to the explosion of the private into the public, or rather into the creation of a new social

Figure 1. *Still from Un Chien Andalou, 1929*

value, which is the publicity of the private" (Barthes, 1981:98) should constitute an object of near unparalleled intimacy, yet it seems that this particular phenomena has yet to be specifically and independently explored in detail. While it is posited that "One of the essential differences between the private and the intimate lies in the latter's inability to be located in the world" (Keltner, 2009:165), I propose that the intimate photobook is not, through being physically locatable, "private" as in a diaristic understanding of the word, but is a physical manifestation of the intimate. What I propose then, is that it may be possible to deconstruct the affective elements of the photobook, thus opening up the possibility to decode the physical aspects of cause to this intimate affect. These aspects, once identified and explored both theoretically and (at least initially) visually, may then be taken forward (be this through further exploration, expansion, or refutation) to unlock new communicative potentialities for the photobook, the book, and photography.

Equally irremovable from the physical codex's construction is the enforced and intrinsic sequentiality of its contents. The binding of the codex denies transcendent simultaneity (Stewart, 1992:8), its delivery of content structured and paced out. Like a morphine drip, the codex restricts the overwhelming flow of information to manageable doses of discreet spaces, facilitating steady accumulation through time. A steady course, rather than an overdose. Cinema, a medium often used in the parallel

Figure 2. *Image of War Porn's fore edges (2014)*

Figure 3. *Image of War Porn's fore edges (2014)*

discussions between image sequence and narrative with the photobook, also unfolds across time using sequences of images that steadily accumulate and compound one another; what differs is the receiving audience's active/passive relationship. As highlighted in the opening sequence to Luis Buñuel's *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) (see fig.1), the cinema going audience is a passive spectator, eyes held forcibly open to be cut by the ensuing images. In consuming the photobook, however, the reader is actively engaged in a physical interaction with an object over which they have control; sequences may be slowed, quickened, skipped, altered, paused, stopped. The tempo of the book is the tempo of the reader; for a book to affect the reader, the reader must be affecting themselves. Christoph Bangert's 2014 photobook *War Porn* explores the notion of layered censorship and thus the relationship between reader and image through the book's physical form. The images contained within are from Bangert's career as a war journalist in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Gaza: the images that, for one reason or another, his publishers didn't want to run (Estrin, 2014). Coupled with the technique of joining the outer (fore) edges of the book's pages with a perforation (see fig. 2 & 3), the book seeks to draw out an active participation from the audience in censoring what they are exposed to (Koltermann, 2014) and thus confront either their own voyeurism or self-censorship. One may cut the pages, a visceral and violent act appropriate to the content of what is then revealed; or one may opt to press on the perforated edge to bow the pages out, the act of peeking thus experientially reflective of one's voyeurism; or the page may be skipped altogether, the required self-censorship arguably as ethically questionable as the voyeuristic stance adopted in the previous two options.

The temporal differences between the physical book and its digital, screen-based counterparts are a relatively new phenomena that, when considered experientially, provide grounding for the continued growth in popularity of the physical book-object. Where the screen's contents are momentary manipulations of emitted light, necessarily ephemeral, the book presents us with the very antithesis: physical, concrete and unapologetic finitude. The printed book represents resolve, commitment, stability and finality; the screen represents infinity, instability and redactable reservation. This instability is a constant, no diode in a screen remains unchanged for longer than is required for consumption, but goes further, as demonstrated in an incredible act of irony in 2009 when Amazon deleted George Orwell's *1984* from some customers' Kindles (Quinn, 2018). Rescinded in reaction to copyright issues with a digital publisher, the act, which saw a version of both *1984* and *Animal Farm* remotely disappeared from customers' devices, received widespread condemnation from customers, technology commentators, and consumer rights activists (Stone, 2009) and evokes some of the issues around the relationship between possession and ownership. Where ownership may refer to a social or legal right to an object, "'possession' usually implies personal identification with the item as an extension of the self" (Watkins et al. 2015:4), ownership not necessarily being inextricable from this. Distinct from the commodity, the possession usually comes into being through singularising and subjectifying practices such as cleaning, personalising, and sharing of histories over time (Watkins et al. 2015:5). While not inextricable from ownership, it is noted by Watkins et al. that "ownership is needed because it provides the space and privacy required for the cultivation of goods as expressions of one's identity and personality as acts of will" (2015:5). Illusions of permanence and relational concreteness guarantee an "expectation of future use and enjoyment" (Watkins et al. 2015:5) and thus encourage a stronger bond to be formed between consumer (reader) and object (physical book). One has only to consider the nature of Walter Benjamin's ruminations on his book collection in Unpacking my Library (1968) to realise that the significance of the act of purchasing and owning a book (or not returning the borrowed book, thus converting it into possession) is the paramount concern of the collector. Indeed, the language used in this seminal essay is not akin to academic scholarship, nor dry catalogue of titles, but aligns itself more closely to that of photographic description;

I must ask you to join me in the disorder of crates that have been wrenched
open, the air saturated with dust of wood, the floor covered with torn paper, to
join me among piles of volumes that are seeing daylight again after two years
of darkness, so that you may be ready to share with me a bit of the mood – it is
certainly not an elegiac mood but, rather, one of anticipation – which these books
arouse in a genuine collector. (Benjamin, 1968:60)

Throughout Benjamin's essay, of chief concern is acquisition; the hunt. Much like a collection of animal busts adorning the walls of a den, the intrinsic value is owed not to the object itself, but the labours that object's existence indexically represents, it's "arising directly out of an immediate experience of its possessor [placing it within] an intimate distance; space is transformed into interiority…" (Stewart, 1993: 147). The book-object surrogates time, transforms it into interiority (Stewart, 1993:147) and thus grants control and mastery over this most ephemeral of phenomena.

One has only to watch a collector handle the objects in his glass case. As he
holds them in his hands, he seems to be seeing through them into their distant
past as though inspired." (Benjamin, 1968:62)

The psychological phenomena of possession has been described by Hannah Arendt as being "master[y] over one's own necessities of life and therefore [the potential] to be a free person, free to transcend his own life and enter the world all have in common" (Arendt, 1958:65). This, compounded by the book's ability to exist abstractly across "a community of readers" (Stewart, 1993:21) creates the foundations for truly intimate, self-reflexive experience.

0.2 Practice

My practice centres around the relationships shared between my father, myself, and our respective disabilities. My father was diagnosed with MS around 30 years ago, subsequently being forced into early retirement from his career as a maintenance electrician at Grain power station; I was born with an unrelated connective tissue disorder, Ehlers Danlos syndrome, which relates to a chronic lack of collagen in my joints, resulting in scalloping of the joints, chronic pain and fatigue.

Throughout my childhood I used my father as a kind of distancing metric for what I saw being disabled as; constantly reassuring myself that I wasnt "really" disabled, because I wasn't as bad as him. Into my early adulthood, my symptoms progressed to the point where this distancing technique began to fail, slowly forcing me to come to terms with the fact of my being disabled. Seeing my father became less about denial and more about observing and learning how to live with a physical disability.

My work with my father thus far has resolved itself into a a number of exhibition installations, many relying on audience interaction and participation, all predicated on affectual experience. Intimacy is an essential component of this, it's emotional and psychic 'closeness' allowing for a greater sense of empathy, longing, and emotional alignment with the themes and subjects featured. Where irreverence, indignance, celebratory or counter-cultural themes may suit projects attempting to address wider social issues and issues of representation surrounding disability, intimacy is used in my work to address the depth and complexity of emotions involved in learning to become disabled on an individual level. My work is thus unapologetically individual and personal, this insular particularity somewhat ironically serving to create what I would deem to be more transcendentally affecting work. I also created a photobook during these early stages of the project, testing some ideas and theories for my MA, but the work has significantly developed since then to become the work presented as the practice element of this research; *Ever Forward, Back* (2021).

The different aspects influencing the elicitation and experience of intimacy within the photographic work discussed within this thesis necessarily relate to the book object; unique for its combination of abstract time/space forums, somatic physicality, intimate distance and possessive nature. Through sustained practice-led research these features will be identified, distilled and explored; harnessed (perhaps cursorily) to develop my work with my father into the intimately affecting pieces it needs to be. The subject matter and themes of the work demand sensitive and intimately engaged forms of communication for the really significant aspects of this relationship and experience to be conveyed with any success. As a starting point we may consider the subject
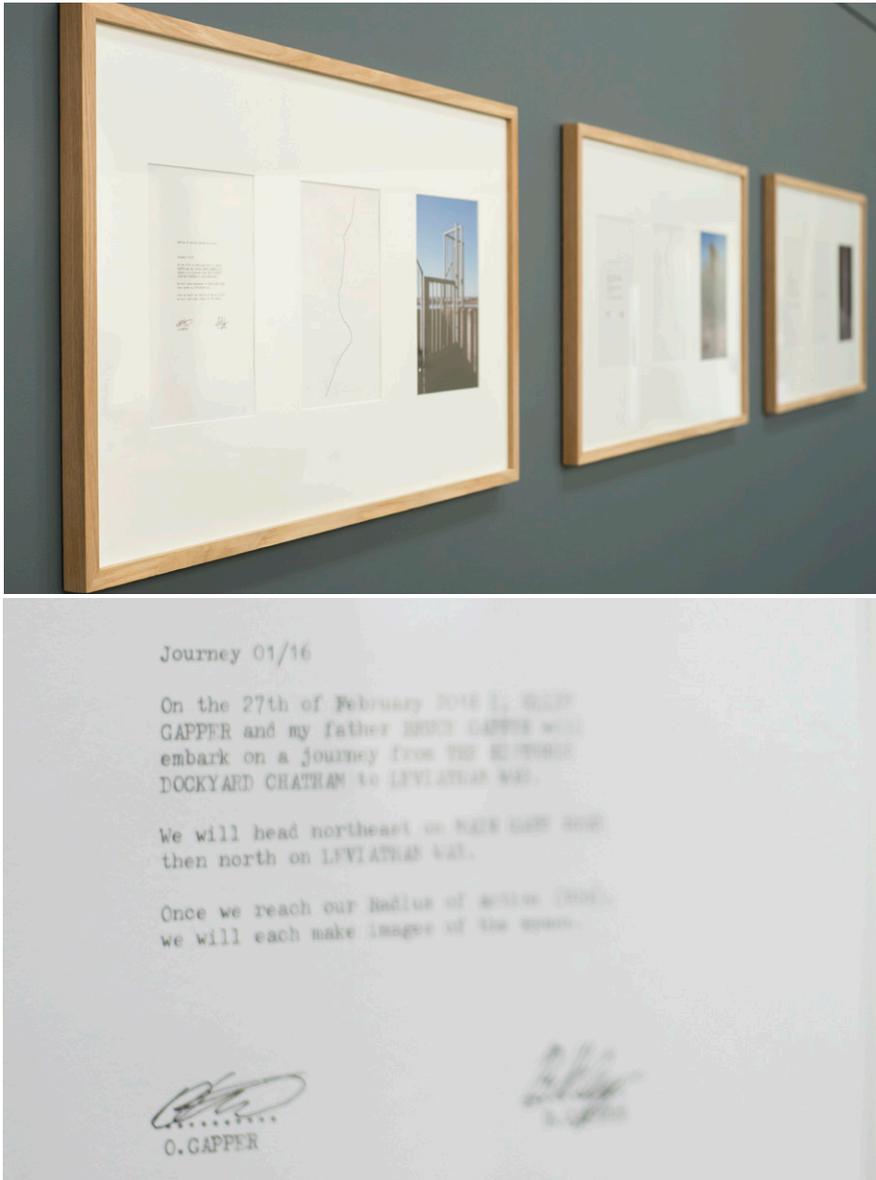
Figure 4. *Radius of Action installation at Powerful Tides, Chatham & The Sea, 2018*

matter as intimate, private, and in a way precious; I am proposing to create work documenting my father's gradual decline to illness and our changing and evolving relationship with one another.

My father and I view the creation of this work as a collaborative project, where we work together to produce the raw materials that I then edit, sequence and publish. Collectively referred to as *Action Potential*, the name of the signal type blocked in the brain by MS, the work from this project had manifested in a number of ways. The first, a methodologically structured performance piece, sought to explore the notion of physical ability and the failing body through a number of pre-arranged journeys.

Through the meticulous mapping and documenting of these journeys and our ultimate points of no return (the point at which we need to return for fear of not making the return journey, dubbed the 'radius of action' in aviation terminology) we developed a body of work that simultaneously attempts to create a metric for measuring our physical ability, while highlighting the ludicrousness of such a notion (see fig. 4). The significance of our relationship is not lost on the work, the underlying pathos and ineffable melancholy bridging the incommunicable (and, thus, unbridgeable) gap in communication between the two of us. We can speak of many things, but for as long as I've been alive my father has struggled to speak about his disability.[1]

The second form the work has adopted has itself been the subject of many versions and reworkings. This work, a collection of images of various, disparate subjects drawn together by pathos and form, is made in a much looser, perhaps poetic manner, utilising the notion of resonance to unwrap some of the ever-complicating connections my father and I share with each other and with our bodies. Since beginning *Action Potential*, I have been having regular conversations with my father about the project's themes: failure, ability, connection, fracturing, etc. The search for resonance within my surroundings is working with the cumulative affect these conversations had on me over the two years I had been speaking openly with my father.

This body of work brings an editorially poetic approach to the incremental building of message and meaning between the images and the texts. Riffing off the

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1   I completed stage one of the research ethics process (Tier One Checklist) during the early stages of my research, not triggering any further processes in doing so. As the research has developed, I have continued to consider the ethical dimensions, and have used the Tier One Checklist again to diagnose whether further action is needed. This has not triggered the need for further ethical processes, with the key factor being that my father retains the ability to give consent, and is thus not deemed 'vulnerable' in safeguarding or ethical terms. Throughout my research I have and continue to hold my father's informed consent as to what the work is about and where it may be shown. He and all those discussed and featured in the work expressly consent to the work's creation and publication, and this consent is formalised in an Information and Consent form signed by my father.

sentiments, tones, shapes and melancholia held in surrounding images and texts, the work's presence as a book and as an installation makes use of the cluster and constellation, creating micro-series' within the wider edit which obsess and examine in a futile attempt to understand.

Throughout my Ph.D. my father's condition has changed/advanced/regressed (depending on your consideration of the appropriate term here) and thus so has my approach. My photographic approach has maintained the search for resonance and relative irreverence for subject matter, while taking a more focused turn to interrogate what the gradual fading away of my father looks like from such an intimate perspective. In this time, I have remained living in my family home so as to provide support and care where needed, to both my father and my mother - whose sense of loss has become more palpable in the last two years than ever before. She has lost her husband, her lover, her confidant, and thus her need for emotional support has grown proportionally. My Father is still, as of writing this paragraph, *compos mentis* but is largely dependent on others for daily care and support. We still have him, and in waves he is completely present with us; but like a receding tide these waves are becoming less frequent, less voluminous, less tangible. All my mother and I can do is stand by and watch as the distance between the two of us and my father grows, holding each other's hands, supressing our rage and anger and frustration for another time, another place.

Throughout my time researching this project I have been working to develop a body of work that will function as a demonstration piece for many of the theories and structures of communication mentioned in this thesis and that is the summative creative outcome presented in my Ph.D. submission. The two primary constituent elements for this project, *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) (see Fig. 5), may well be considered to be the images I have shot over the last five years, and the texts which are pulled from a nightly journaling habit I have maintained for nearly a decade now, but this summation misses the third crucial element of the work: the book. The work has been shot and written for book publication, relying on the creation of relationships across pages, spreads, and sections in order to properly communicate the fragmentary

Figure 5. *Untitled from Ever Forward, Back. 2021*

and repetitious nature of this time with my father. My approach to writing, too, has altered from being exclusively diaristic, extending into explorations with creative writing practices. The composition of both image and text is also formulated for the smaller form-factor of the codex it is destined to end up in. My research will thus be focusing on book-centric methodologies in the creation and heightening of intimate affect, as opposed to techniques exclusive to literature or photography individually; techniques that engage with page/spread design, materiality, haptic feedback, reader consciousness, proprioception, pagination, sequencing and theories and structures on reading will all play a part.

Intimacy as a term brings with it a number of connotations, the most prevalent in my experience being the link between intimacy and eroticism and/or sexual themes. The second assumption for research on 'intimacy within the photobook' (my common nomenclature in describing what it is I have been researching to friends and family) is that the research relates exclusively to the content of the work, being intimate images, texts, themes, etc. (essentially diaristic or voyeuristic documents). While the body of work I present does feature many intimate themes and subjects, it is more important for the work to foster a sense of intimate connection than it is for the book to communicate explicitly intimate messages. For this work I am more focused on the work communicating while the book makes a connection to my reader, rather than representing and reiterating the intimacy within the content itself.

While my research and practice is guided by existent practice, it is important to note that this in no way pre-supposes any outcomes; the research I conduct is not intended to simply validate existing works, but to lay the ground for that work to

develop and transform into new work suitable and capable of testing the theories held within this research. Confirmation bias is an epistemological issue many researchers must deal with, but as a student of the creative arts I feel this is less of an issue; to philosophise on any subject one must start with a perspective and seek the cultural, philosophical or phenomenological evidence to support or debase it; in many cases the true 'vision' of an academic/theorist lies in these most foundational, nascent ideas built ineffably over time, accumulating on the periphery of their mind until they swell to the point of demanding the spotlight: demanding consideration, formalisation and realisation as a set of new ideas, concepts and questions. This mode of abductive reasoning is described by Peirce as "putting together what we had never before dreamed of putting together which flashes the new suggestion before our contemplation" (Peirce in Paavola, 2013) – a moment of fallible insight born from the confluence of existing knowledge.

While certainly book-centric, one of the key ways in which this research aims to contribute and generate new knowledge is through the transposing of techniques, structures and approaches from other media onto the photobook-proper. While there are indeed junctures made with various divergent medial forms (such as the book-form with the exhibition and performance art) it is connections made between less distant forms from the photobook (such as the literary novel, poetry, and cinema) that offer perhaps a more nuanced perspective to the currently established potentialities, and those awaiting formal, conscious exploration within the photobook.

The aim for this thesis is to provide a formal study of an individual phenomena within photobook practice: intimate affect. However, the wider-reaching aim of this research is to provide the foundations for a new mode of exploring photobook practices which, as outlined herein, has thus far remained constricted to a handful of historiographic and iconographic approaches that fail to fully realise the communicative power of the photobook-form. Through exploration with my own practice, I hope to offer tangible results alongside theoretical analysis and hypothesis, more openly facilitating further critique, exploration and refutation.

The questions that drive this research are: What does intimacy, elicited by the material possession, look/feel like? What modes of intimate communication are truly particular to the photobook? How can the photobook harness modes of intimate communication from other mediums? How is intimate affect constituted in a reader? What effect does the relationship a reader shares with the book object have on the potential for the book to create intimate affect?

0.3 Critical Framework

Phenomenology, literally the study of "the meanings things have in our experience" based on their appearance within our experience, or the way in which we experience them (Smith, 2003), forms the critical lens for this thesis's approach. Its usefulness as a critical framework will come from its consideration of structures of experience, relevant conditions of experience, and the centrality of intentionality within the construction of experience (Smith, 2003). These conditions of experience, when thinking specifically about the book, may pertain to reading conditions; book size, format, design; cultural contexts; perceived book "genres" (and their attached baggage); historical and contemporary precedents; and so on. A key requisite for phenomenological examination is a conscious self-reflexivity;

> The basic intentional structure of consciousness, we find in reflection or analysis, involves further forms of experience. Thus, phenomenology develops a complex account of temporal awareness (within the stream of consciousness), spatial awareness (notably in perception), attention (distinguishing focal and marginal or "horizonal" awareness), awareness of one's own experience (self-consciousness, in one sense), self-awareness (awareness-of-oneself), the self in different roles (as thinking, acting, etc.), embodied action (including kinesthetic awareness of one's movement), purpose or intention in action (more or less explicit), awareness of other persons (in empathy, intersubjectivity, collectivity), linguistic activity (involving meaning, communication, understanding others), social interaction (including collective action), and everyday activity in our surrounding life-world (in a particular culture). (Smith, 2003)

And it is here, where ideas of interiority, intimacy, photography, and the book explode into one-another; the intimate being, as mentioned before, the intangible,

unlocatable interiorisation of the private (Keltner, 2009:165), the book's intersection of content and form annihilating exteriority (Kalaga in Fajfer et al, 2010:9) and yet manifestly occupying space; containing gravity; reflecting light. Where the extremely interior and ineffable aspects of loss and my relationship with my father may struggle in other forms, the book offers physical ground on which to lay the basis of communicating some sense of 'essence' while implicitly respecting the inherent issues of privacy and vulnerability. The book-object "turns out to be not simply a tool but a remarkable space-time forum, in which one of the most distinctive features of the human brain - its bilaterality - can experience itself." (Gallagher in Waekerle, 2013:19)"; the reflectivity/reflexivity of the photobook (or any book conscious of its physical form) thus extends beyond a meta-questioning of the book-as-medium or even the nature of its contents; it evokes inner reflexive responses to our own mind and the nature of our experiences; it is by very definition, a phenomenological object. By moving away from a documentarian attitude and approach of "show and tell", it is hoped that my practice will instead offer some semblance of experience to the audience; creating conditions set to facilitate an understanding not of 'what it *looked* like' but 'what it *was* like'. Julia Kristeva discusses how the same notion may equally be applied to the temporality of the photobook:

> "Kristeva elaborates the temporality of intimacy with reference to Freud's
> Zeitlos—the timeless or, more literally, lost time—and Proust's "sensible time":
> a "time of death" (1997, 49; 2002b, 31) or a "time outside time" (40; 25) that
> "approaches the somatic" (49; 31) and "where being itself . . . is heard" (80; 50)"
> (Keltner in Oliver and Keltner, 2009:165)

Applications of phenomenology to the study of books relate most keenly to what is arguably the most experiential aspect of the book's communication circuit: reading.

> In fact photobooks signal a phenomenological engagement with the work
> presented, for both their audience and producer. The reader 'uses' the book as
> an actual physical object and through this use gains an understanding of its
> meaning. And on the other hand, the artist creates this meaning through the
> play of the various structural elements they introduce to be used. (McNab,
> 2006:118)

The codex is small enough to be portable, and so may accompany its reader

anywhere; it may be drawn close to the body; it is held in the hand and so is in constant physical contact with the body; it demands interaction to incrementally grant access to the information it contains (Stewart, 1993:8); and so on (and on in expanding depth within each of these attributes). In considering the book in relation to the experience of reading within the context of this thesis, considerations circle back to the communicative abilities of book-space itself – that is, the codex's manipulation of (or communicative abilities within) the act of reading through its physical form. It is useful here to return to an earlier cited section from Susan Stewart's *On Longing* (1993), discussing the "exotic object" (1993:147)

> …on the one hand, the object must be marked as exterior and foreign, on the other it must be marked as arising directly out of the immediate experience of its possessor. It is thus placed within an intimate distance; space is transformed into interiority, into "personal" space… (Stewart, 1993:147)

The "immediate experience" from which the book arises is not necessarily related to the geographic worldliness of the possessor, but "… the whole background of an item […] whose quintessence is the fate of [the] object" (Benjamin:1968:62).

Susan Stewart's book *On Longing* (1993) has been a particularly useful text in the development of ideas around psychological/phenomenological aspects of object interaction, possession, and perception. The full title of the book, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* neatly alludes to the books research areas, with further clarification in the opening paragraph of the book's preface;

> This essay centres on certain metaphors that arise whenever we talk about the relation of language to experience or, more specifically, whenever we talk about the relation of narrative to its objects. These metaphors – history and stasis, inside and outside, partiality and transcendence – form the focus of the discussion in this work as I ask: How can we describe something? What relation does description bear to ideology and the very invention of that 'something'? and, analogously, what does exaggeration, as a mode of signification, exaggerate? […]Therefore my reader will discover that I am particularly interested in the social disease of nostalgia as I examine the relations of narrative to origin and object… (ibid, 1993:ix)

Of central relevance for this research is Stewart's characterisation of the notion of interiority in relation to the different themes she explores (the miniature, the domestic, the intimate). The true phenomena of the book is its ability to make physical – to embody – the very ephemeral interiority that defines intimacy as such. Suddenly intimacy, which "has no objective tangible place in the world" (Arendt, 1958:39) becomes printable, bindable, holdable; it becomes an intentional object of experience. The "stable finitude" (Drucker, 2004:218) of the book gives stability and space to the exploration of the dislocated and subjective imaginary (Dean 2015:179) of intimate space.

Another important text has been Jeremy Justus's thesis *Ever Forward Back: Temporal Crisis in Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five* (2000), a text which not only influenced the title of my practice, but whose approach to Vonnegut's work was of integral value to both my approach to my sources and to the creation of my corporeal/spatial planes of intimate affect (see Chapter 1). Similarly shaping to my theoretical approach was Joshua Rothman's 2017 article on Daniel Dennett, which exposed me to a series of essential theoretical structures and led to my essential engagement with Kristeva, Arendt, and of course, Dennett.

0.4 Problematising the framework

Perhaps less problematisations and more advancements on phenomenology stem from post-phenomenologist Peter Verbeek. In contrast with phenomenological structures which "[take] as its primitive the relationality of the human experiencer to the field of experience" (Ihde, 1990:25), Verbeek proposes that "the relation between subject and object always already precedes the subject and the object themselves, which implies that the subject and the object are mutually constituted in their interrelation" (Verbeek, 2005:9). Removing the primacy of subject over object neatly contextualises the theoretical premise of this thesis; it is not trying to prove the photobook to be "the best" or "most" or even "most effective/affective" form for the photograph in relation to intimacy, instead it proposes a uniqueness to the type and nature of intimacy the photobook is able to evoke between itself and its reader; this intimacy formed as part

of the relationality between subject and object (and thus, is mutually constitutive). Through an interrogation of temporal, spatial and material consciousness, my practice seeks to use the book as a discreet communication device for the evocation of intimate affect. Of course, with this logic, the same may irrefutably be done for all other photographic forms, this fact not detracting from the potential for dedicated studies being conducted into each. In the wider academic context within which this research positions itself, the notion of analysis rather than description central to post-phenomenological structures is also important, thus constituting this project's aims and contribution of new, unique knowledge.

Taking this further is Wimsatt and Beardsley's essay 'The Affective Fallacy' (1949) which argues that the figure of the reader should be excluded in its entirety from literary enquiry (Littau, 2006:9); suggesting that the literary object is part of the "cold sphere" (Wimsatt & Beardsley, 1954:31) designed to convey meaning over affect. The object in question here being the book-object, the material container of narrative/meaning. It is not difficult within contemporary artistic practice to discredit these ideas as belonging to a much-debased objective mode of criticism, however it is interesting to consider the significance of the motivations behind such an argument. Beardsley and Wimsatt view the affect-approach to art criticism and analysis as confusing the art/literary object with its results (Greene et al. 2012:11), comparable to the common misnomer of complimenting a *camera's* ability to 'take good photos'. This object-forward approach to the reception of works proceeded an earlier essay on 'The Intentional Fallacy' (1946) in which they lambast the approach of those who read a work by interpreting the intentions of authors, rather than the communicative means of the work in discussion.

Further investigations into phenomenology and theories around consciousness, notably Daniel Dennett's categorisations of consciousness into physicalist, design, or intentional "stances" (Rothman, 2018) and how these may apply to conscious perception of the book-object in relation to its communicative potentialities have been a useful inspiration to the introduction to my thesis. My current interest with this

Figure 6. *Image of book smoking at Unseen Amsterdam by Melinda Gibson, 2014*

line of research stems from the idea that the three "stances" offered by Dennett could in fact be considered as stages in the reception of a bookwork (a manipulation of the research admittedly, but a useful one). Traditionally, the first stage we experience is the **physical**, where weight, size, texture, and smell begin to shape our impending experience of the work. Subsequently to this we experience the **design** stance, which could be transcribed as the semiotic level of interpretation; the work's individual design elements are read for their "purposes and functions" in the context of the work as a whole. Finally, we decode the **intention** of the work's very existence, mentally removing ourselves from the immediacy of the book's being, and begin to consider the means to- and motivation of- its creation; experiencing the book from the perspective of the emplacers (artist/publisher/funding body/designer). These stages may be manipulated and explored through various interventions with the book's form: take, for example, Melinda Gibson's *SPBH BOOK CLUB VOL VI* (2014) which she smoked to impart the smell of fire as the reader read the book (about her burnt down studio) (see Fig. 6) (physicalist). Rafal Milach's use of tipped-in images that must be lifted to reveal their captions, thus evoking an essence of the notebook (design). Stepping in to the realm of literature, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) uses temporal shifts and authorial intrusions into the text, overlapping the author's time with the work's intratextual time, drawing the author-as-narrator closer to the text, and in doing so, re-evoking the intimacy of the oral storytelling tradition and the companionship inherent therein (Benjamin in Justus, 2004:31).

The crossover space of content and the "concrete physical textuality, [and] "all-at-onceness" of boundaries" (Stewart, 1993:8) that the book's form offers has been the focus of Liberatic theory, an area of research which proposes an approach to book making in which the exteriority of the book is annihilated and the semantics of matter communicate in synchronicity with the semiotics of language (Kalaga in Fajfer et al, 2010:9) in an effort to move towards a communicative totality. Synchronicity may be a problematic term to use in this context, as it is asserted early on in 'Liberature, or, Total Literature: Collected Essays' (Fajfer et al, 2010) that "[liberature] is not merely the matter of synchronizing the shape or contour of the poem with its content but of the exploration of the visual-semantic potentiality of the linguistic sign." (Kalaga in Fajfer et al, 2010:10); the liberatic book is a "symbiosis of textual semiosis with the semiosis of the material vehicle" (Kalaga in Fajfer et al, 2010:9). It is the body of work in which neither form nor content is treated as complimentary, but where form and content have no definable individuality; it is the homogenous book.

While marred by repetition, inter-reflectivity and self-referentiality, *Liberature, or, Total Literature: Collected Essays* (Fajfer et al. 2010) does provide useful and interesting expansions and recontextualisations on existing theory surrounding artists' books and poetry.

Writings around Liberature will be referenced throughout my thesis for their usefulness in considering the book-object as a semiotic whole, but I will refrain from utilising the taxonomy proposed by Fajfer out of concern for further muddying an already opaquely complex area of artists' book scholarship. This thesis will instead utilise the now ubiquitous term 'photobook' as its primary taxonomy, for its wide-reaching understanding and culturally cumulative self-definition. This ubiquity, while assisting in an initial assumed understanding of the field, is not the sole definition relied upon; in section 0.5 an exploration of existing terminological explorations will be conducted to more formally situate the context of this research, its historicisations, lineage and futures.

Key to this thesis' approach to its subject matter is the critical framework outlined above; by focusing on the analysis of experiential phenomena within the photobook-object it is proposed that new understandings and potentialities may be established, furthering the consciously perceivable and useable communicative abilities of photographic and book language. With this in mind, it is apparent that this work must, while engaging with, not become lead by terminological, taxonomical, or overtly historical considerations around photobook practice. A glancing look at some key scholarly texts from the last 30+ years, such as *Artists' books: a critical anthology and sourcebook* (Lyons, 1985), *Scenes in a library: reading the photograph in the book* (Armstrong et al., 1998), *The photobook: A history* (Parr & Badger, 2004 (vol. 1), 2009 (vol. 2) & 2014 (vol. 3), *The century of Artists' books* (Drucker, 2004), *Liberature, or, Total Literature: Collected Essays, 1999-2009* (Fajfer et al., 2010), *The photobook: from Talbot to Ruscha and beyond* (Di Bello et al., 2012), *Booktrek: selected essays on artists' books* (1972-2010) (Phillpot, 2013), *Unshelfmarked: reconceiving the artists' book* (Hampton, 2015), *Publishing as artistic practice* (Gilbert and Bajohr, 2016), and *The many faces of the photobook: establishing the origins of photobookwork practice* (Neves, 2017) establishes these debates, while ultimately unresolvable, as well established. Instead, an approach more akin to the already mentioned key text from Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (1996), will be used to explore the more transcendent affective qualities of this form, in an effort to build upon the base created by these historical and taxonomical texts.

This said, as the photobook is a form seemingly undergoing an academic renaissance, it is vital that this thesis situates itself within relevant contextual discussions. There will be a number of areas that will need to be considered in order to build a comprehensive picture of this context; issues of **terminology** for example, establishing the terms that will be utilised throughout this research, their critical underpinnings and cultural contexts. Here, primary focus will be placed on the use of the term "photobook", this being potentially the most contentious and culturally loaded term used. Secondly, **taxonomy**, or the classification of works will be an important area for careful consideration, this ultimately providing the remit for the types of works considered by this research. Finally, the structure of specific

historicisations will need to be explored to highlight the different shapes given to artists' book and photobook lineages, ranging from technological to canonical to political ideals.

0.5 The elephant in the room

"It's not an innocent word. It has been welcomed and taken up in order to impose some kind of unity where there simply was none and perhaps should be none."
(Campany, 2014)

The not-so-innocent word in question here is, perhaps unsurprisingly, "photobook". A compound of the two most bare-bones essential elements of the works it refers to, it is nonetheless a contentious moniker among many actively engaged critics and theorists. David Campany has dubbed it a "nifty little invention, designed to turn an infinite field into something much more definable" (Campany in Campany, 2014), referring to Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's employment of the term in their influential book series *The Photobook: A History* (2004, 2006, 2014) (the cited article was written in conjunction with a review of their third volume of the series). While it is perhaps harder to prove the limiting effects of coining such a term on the practice within an area, it is less difficult to see the effects such a delineation has on the critical studies that followed. Jose Luis Neves, in his excellent thesis *The many faces of the photobook: establishing the origins of photobookwork practice* (2017) highlights how a vast majority of works that identify as "photobook" studies, echo the methodology used in Parr and Badger's tomes, "particularly the study's attempt to reveal potential thematic and geo-specific 'photobook' practices" (Neves, 2017:85). He goes on to claim that now "geo-specific surveys amply dominate the field of 'photobook studies" (Neves, 2017:85); a claim not too difficult to prove with even a glancing look at recent literature in the area: *Japanese Photobooks of the 1960s and 1970s* (Kaneko and Vatanian, 2009), *Schweizer Fotobücher 1927 bis heute: Eine andere Geschichte der Fotografie* (Pfrunder, Fotostiftung Schweiz, 2011), *Photobooks: Spain 1905-1997* (Fernández, 2014), *Deutschland im Fotobuch: 287 Fotobücher zum Thema Deutschland aus der Zeit von 1915 bis 2009* (Wiegand and Heiting, 2011), *The Dutch Photobook: A Thematic Selection from 1945 Onwards*

(Giertsberg and Suermondt, 2012), *10x10 American Photobooks* (Carson, Lederman and Yatskevich, 2013), *10x10 Japanese Photobooks* (Carson, Lang, Lederman and Yatskevich, 2014), *The Chinese Photobook: From the 1900s to the Present* (Parr and WassinkLungdren, 2017), *CLAP! 10×10 Contemporary Latin American Photobooks: 2000-2016* (Yatskevich, Lederman and Carson, 2017), to name a small selection.

Neves' thesis is not just useful to consider in relation to the recent historicisation of the field; the definitions offered also assist greatly in identifying the works that this thesis will be exploring. Neves argues that the definition offered of "photobook" in *The Photobook: A history* (2004) is inadequately vague, hampering its ability in demarcating a history of the relationship of book and photograph (Neves, 2017:37-38). In its place, Neves proposes the adoption of the neologism "photobookwork", first coined by Alex Sweetman in his 1985 essay *Photobookworks: the Critical Realist Tradition* (Lyons et al., 1985) to describe a body of work which is the "function of the inter-relation between two factors: the power of the single photograph and the effect of serial arrangements in book form" (Sweetman in Lyons et al., 1985:187). Neves takes this definition further, attaching it exclusively to works which "construct multi-layered relational photographic narrative throughout the entire volume" (Neves, 2017:35). He suggests that "'photobook' should be used as a basal term to designate titles in which the photographic image occupies a discrete place on the page"(Neves, 2017:40) and thus "does not produce a suprasegmental and relational visual discourse throughout the book" (Neves, 2017:94).

Strangely, and perhaps in a nod of respect for the term's usefulness and ambiguity, the term 'photobook' is used in Neves' thesis in two contrasting ways. The first as a term literally referring to books containing photographs, the second, when in quotation marks, "should be interpreted as a synonym of the term 'photobookwork'" (Neves, 2017:38). This neatly highlights both the issue and potential virtues of the term 'photobook'; its ambiguity perhaps a bigger asset to theoretical discourse than it is an imposition; "It might be early days for the discipline, but is discipline what is needed?" (Campany, 2014). It is for this reason, along with the pragmatic

concerns of critical self-contextualisation, that this thesis opts to use the term 'photobook' in referring to its subject matter. In this context, the term is used to refer to photographic bookworks which use the book space and formal, interactive characteristics to create intra- and extra-textual narrative elements. In some cases these elements will be self-reflexive, opening up meta-questionings of either forms (or both), in others they will simply add up to a progression of intra-textual narrative. Within my practice, engagement with extratextual narrative elements is achieved through the synthesis of the relation of written word to imagery in concert with the codex book's formal material attributes.

0.6 Thesis structure and practice outcomes

Set across three chapters, this thesis seeks to explore the photobook's particular claim to intimacy by first exploring the term intimacy in detail, looking at definitions offered over time by Hannah Arendt and Julia Kristeva, Jürgen Habermas, Ziyad Mirar, David Shumway and S.K. Keltner, before exploring some of these distinctly phenomenological approaches in relation to theories of consciousness and intentionality from Daniel Dennett. Alongside photobook publications, Kurt Vonnnegut's *Slaughterhouse- Five* (1969) and *The Big Lebowski* (Joel and Ethan Coen, 1998) will be discussed for particular instances of intimate connection that are felt to have transferability to the photobook form. This is a method used throughout the thesis, proposing new connections with other media while also using other media to better express what is felt to be significant elements to be understood. Transmediation is a theme taken up more directly later on in this chapter, where Marie Laure Ryan's and David Habermas' theories on remediation and transmedial narratology are explored in relation to the photobook and intimacy. Here I aim to address questions such as: what is intimacy in the context of the photobook? How can transmediation be used as a method for the development of new forms of intimate communication?

Proceeding each chapter will be an "Application" section, which sets about applying the specific theories and structures of thought explored within the chapter to my practice. It is felt that by separating these reflections and explorations the language and tone of the main chapter could remain untouched by first-person ruminations

and slips in syntactical language and rhetoric. It is also a practical consideration for future readers of this paper whose interest may be purely in the academic critique and research, and not at all in my practical application thereof; for this set of readers the application sections may be passed over or read at a greater "altitude" than the more theoretically severe sections. Within my practice I set about exploring ways to interrupt the process of making a book, reworking the traditional order of publishing stages, experimenting with the permanence of the book object and heightening conscious perception of the physical object by fracturing and fragmenting intratextual time and audience positioning. The discussions on my practice are not presented chronologically and are instead selected based on their particular relevance to the themes discussed within each chapter. Such an approach to structuring does also mean that some aspects of my practice are suitable for discussion across chapters, and thus may indeed bear repeating at points.

Chapter two makes use of the phenomenological approach to explore some of the key theories around intimacy in relation to time and space. Here the thesis looks at the space of reading, the act of reading and the reader within the photobook's various communication circuits, considering the implications of private space, interiority and exteriority. Hannah Arendt, Johanna Drucker, Alberto Manguel and Karin Littau will all be drawn upon in these explorations, looking at the history of the book and of reading, examining key points of change and development in its material and experiential makeup. Schema theories of reading will also be considered, particularly in relation to the space and time of reading. Here I will approach questions of how we may better understand the structures of intimate communication via formal structures, such as spatiality and temporality. I will also ask: how can methodologies for reading influence phenomena like intimate affect? Thus, how can we influence reading styles through photobook design?

Chapter three approaches its respective questions (what role does the possession/ownership dichotomy play on intimate connection? How does materiality influence the potential for intimacy? How can interruptive techniques be used to enhance or create

intimate connection with an audience?) using a structure that is otherwise obscured by chapter one and two's reliance on time and space; materiality and interaction. Interruption will be explored in relation to *verfremdungseffekt*, *erschütterung*, and *ostraneniye*, with theory from Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno, and Viktor Shklovsky. Husserl, along with HR Jauss's 'Reception Theory' will also be explored here, to examine exactly what interruption predicates on, how it may be constituted, and what makes it so useful to the artist striving for intimate connection.

The conclusion will draw together these central point and will also make an attempt at the visualisation of some of the key theories of communication circuits using diagrams made in response to discussion had at various stages in this research.

Intimacy and The Book

1.1 Introduction

Exploring the relationship between intimacy, the book and the photobook will require a careful and considered approach to the methodologies and 'critical lens' applied. Existing studies of photobook practices tend to share a general pattern of historicisation and trajectory mapping following a vague notion of genre or "type", exploring included works in relation to their epistemological, ethical, or aesthetic (McNab, 2006:118) impact along a trajectory which follows technological, canonical, or historiographic models. In considering the photobook in relation to communication, interaction, and intimacy, however, I propose a phenomenological approach should take precedent, for its particular considerations on the "study of structures of experience, or consciousness" directed towards the "appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience." (Woodruff, 2003). Clearly this is an approach that, while dependent on the notion of experience (and, by extension, cultural context), transcends the aforementioned chronological/genre dependent studies that have preceded, and requires an approach whose structure reflects this.

While many studies of the book-form and photobook tend to foreground the materiality of the object-proper, I would like to more centrally (or, at the very least, equally) position the reader within this communication-circuit. Phenomenology's

reliance on first person experience necessitates an approach that utilises a constant reflective process, a kind of reversed version of cause and effect (or, perhaps, affect), where a particular phenomenon is identified and the book's signifier decoded and examined, allowing for further positing of potential uses, adaptations and manipulations.

The particular focus of this thesis will be the phenomenon of intimacy as experienced through the photobook, an exploration of the structures integral to this, and considerations for developing new approaches to utilising these. In this chapter the concept of intimacy, and of the book as phenomenological object will be explored through psychology, literature, and narrative theory. The book's histories will then be examined to uncover the links such histories bring to the signification possible/inherent/unavoidable from such a culturally engrained signifier (Barthes 1987:27). Barthes is a useful theorist to include here, for the overarching aim for this chapter will be to establish the constituent parts that lie within the intersection of the book-object, the photograph and the experience of intimacy.

The significance of dedicating an entire chapter to this phenomena may work well enough to mark its significance to the thesis overall, however the word 'intimacy' itself possesses a complexity, lexically and conceptually, that is worth giving some time to here. Beyond dry definition, the term "intimacy" brings with it cultural baggage that can serve to both clarify and complicate our individual understanding of and relationship with the term. From poignant elicitations of "pathos and promise" (Mirar, 2014:25) to more pragmatic lexical ambiguities (the term may be an adjective, noun or verb, each with a number of possible uses and meanings). Of course the term would not be in everyday parlance had it not an extended usage beyond the notion of cultural phenomena:

> The metaphorical extension of the term "intimate" [...] resonates with many connotations. These include close-up scrutiny (with perhaps a voyeuristic edge), connection, privacy, depth of knowledge, the smallest scale of daily life, heightened emotion, something personal or customised (rather than standardised), friendship and ambivalence, as well as, of course, eroticism and sexuality. (Mirar, 2014:24)

Mirar goes on to describe the term as one which, unlike 'closeness' and 'familiarity', "has a quality that reverberates and unsettles" (Mirar, 2014:29); this notion of "reverberation" neatly typifying the kind of connection through being understood and understanding so integral to the human *desire* for intimacy. The term refers to that which "is closely held and personal and to what is deeply shared with others. Intimacy designates the sphere of the inmost, of the private, and also the realm of cherished connection and association" (Yousef, 2013:1). Resonance and reverberation are terms also used in this chapter's exploration of another key phenomena in relation to intimacy: affect theory. Section 1.2 will introduce and explore this term in more detail, contextualising its usage in relation to intimacy and individual planes of perception.

In section 1.3 *"Why Intimacy?"* the significance of intimacy to us as conscious beings will be explored, looking at Daniel Dennett's work on consciousness and the notion of the intentional object, before exploring some of the ways Kurt Vonnegut elicits heightened intimate connections with his readers in *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), and how these and similar methods of communication have been used in visual artistic practices.

Despite its ubiquity in contemporary parlance, Jürgen Habermas shows us that intimacy's development was in "correlation with developing social, economic, and ideological distinctions between public and private in the eighteenth century" (Dean, 2015:179), while David Shumway asserts that "As a distinct discourse, intimacy doesn't exist until at least the 1960s, and it is only in the 1970s and later that a significant body of it appears" (Shumway, 2003:134); a perhaps perplexingly late order of events. One must remember, however, how dynamic language is, and just how rapidly new terms are adopted by society as a universal. "Cyber" and "virtual", for example, are two terms essential to everyday discourse, but in their most widely understood forms these are considerably younger than "intimacy". "Cyber" and "virtual" here are not used merely as random examples, but rather examples of terms and ideas that share a cultural development with intimacy and, inversely proportionally, private space. The developing need for the concept of intimate space shares well-explored and

strong links with the proliferation of virtual space which often comes at the expense of private space; the intimate, as mentioned previously, stands in as an "unreliable substitute" for this lacking physical space. Where private space may be tangible, bounded and physically definable; intimate space relies on a confluence of culturally-agreed conditions that fluctuate and change as taboos expand and contract, and the divide between public and private softens, thus increasing the need for a more stable alternative to ever shrinking private space.

Section 1.2 will also posit two experiential planes in the perception and reception of intimacy: spatial and corporeal. The term 'plane' is carefully chosen here to better reflect the nature of these ideas, which in earlier drafts were referred to as 'phases'; Where 'phase' infers a temporal aspect, and thus a sequentiality, 'plane' is a spatial term which allows for synchronicity, simultaneity, omission, and/or chronology. The importance of this becomes clear when considering the definitions of each respective plane, and how they are perceived/felt. The plain/plane homophone also happens to be one where each word may be used in the description of the flat expanse of the page, a coincidence of language I am only happy to embrace.

Section 1.3 *"Why Intimacy?"* will explore in greater detail the proposed reasonings of why this particular phenomena is worthy of such a detailed analysis in relation to artistic practice. Here an exploration of knowing and being known, orality, and intentionalism work to underpin the significance of intimacy to audience engagement and affective communication. Significant within this section is the diversity of examples used in the illustration of individual concepts and ideas; this is not to undermine of the existence of suitable examples within photographic practices, but instead to allow for a greater diversity of examples to permeate the research. This diversity is key to the creation of new knowledge and positing of new areas of potential exploration than would not be possible from dryly examining existing work more strictly situated within a discourse area and is thus a methodology that is repeated throughout this thesis. Central to the research within this section will be examples pulled from literary, cinematic, and photographic practices; all practices

whose utilisation and exploration of narrative and storytelling underpins their communicative power; their meta-questioning of the influence of form on content, conscious engagement with multiple facets of the work's creation, dissemination and consumption, and irreverence for existing and habitualised modes of engagement.

1.2 Intimacy, the phenomena

Intimacy may be best delineated from the notion of the private by its lack of "objective, tangible place in the world" (Arendt, 1958:39), yet it is a term that shares a complex relationship with the physical, particularly in language. Indeed, Alison Dean's definition uses the term "close relations or familiarity", relying precisely on the notion of proximity and 'closeness' to help foster an understanding of the term. It is as though physical location in relation to another object or person may be understood as a kind of physical simile for intimacy. Worth considering here is the impetus for this loan of language from the physical to the anti-physical; Is it purely through necessity stemming from a lack of sufficient existing language that we make these metaphorical junctures? Or is it due to a psycho-somatic relationship the intimate phenomena shares with our experience of the physical world? S.K Keltner posits that "Any light that illuminates the intimate in language is borrowed from the public and can never adequately mirror the intimate" (Keltner in Oliver and Keltner, 2009:165), thus suggesting that this use is not only an involuntary necessity, but an entirely inadequate one. Ziyad Mirar draws a similar conclusion, asserting that the "flatter aspects of 'closeness' or 'privacy' are relevant, but fail to capture the essentially dynamic or relational aspect of intimacy" (Mirar, 2014:20). There is, however, something to be said for the interlinking of physical space and the description of intimate affect; Susan Stewart's theories of the miniature and the gigantic use the idea of "interiority" and "exteriority" as key terms in describing each respectively, for example. But it is in definition that the inadequacies of this loan of language becomes untenable, thus leading to definitions like Arendt's "subjective [mode] of existence" (Keltner in Oliver and Keltner, 2009:165). Total omission of the physical in the creation of definition, however, is problematised by Julia Kristeva in her assertion of corporeality's centrality in the understanding of intimacy (Schippers, 2011:81), a point Cecilia Sjöholm asserts

as being one of Kristeva's major correctives "to a political theory that lacks attention to corporeality and sensibility" (Schippers, 2011:81).

The Arendtian stance on this places a focus more specifically on the notion of intimacy as a site or space, "into which one can withdraw." (Keltner in Oliver and Keltner, 2009:165). As a specific aspect of the phenomena of intimacy and of the book, notions of space will be more comprehensively covered in Chapter 2: Intimacy, Space & Time, though it is relevant to consider the significance of space in relation and contrast to corporeality here. **Corporeally**, intimacy may be understood as the somatic experience of mediation upon the body; the psycho-somatic impact of the body in relation to affect. This particular definition holds the potential to share commonalities with eroticism and arousal, though this is not necessarily the case: the body's experience of intimacy may indeed be better understood as being closer to that of the body's experience within private space, the notion of the intimate acting as either the reactionary affect of existing in such a space, or as "an unreliable" substitute for a lacking private space (Keltner in Keltner and Oliver, 2009:165). **Spatially** we may refer to the psychological affect of mediation on perceived experience, as a reaction to an affecting object; intimacy here existing as a virtual 'space' in its own right. Where corporeally we may refer to the body's shifting experience within space, spatial considerations may better be understood as a spatio-temporal shift within the psyche, a shift to intratextuality and interiority. It is important to note here that what has been outlined as the corporeal and spatial planes of intimate affect are considered as just that: planes. It would be impossible to treat these as 'stances' or any other mutually exclusionary theoretical structures as they work in no way to preclude one-another; rather they are planes/stages/phases/types of perceptory reaction to a given phenomenon and thus may each be proven without contradictorily disproving each other.

1.2a Corporeal plane

The unheimlich is an interesting way of evidencing and exploring in more detail the corporeal plane, for what the term represents is interestingly opposed to much

Figure 7. *Gardens I Didn't Have Permission to be in, 2014*

of what may be defined as "intimate". Exploring Sigmund Freud's seminal text on the subject, makes it perfectly possible to deduce a definition of the unheimlich as the opposite phenomena to intimacy; indeed, many of the widely researched definitions for the term's etymological opposite, "heimlich", reference "intimacy" directly.

> The German word *unheimlich* is obviously the opposite of heimlich, meaning "familiar," "native,"

> *Heimlich*, adj.: I. Also *heimelich*, *heimielig*, belonging to the house, not strange, familiar, tame, intimate, comfortable, homely, etc. "belonging to the home"

> *(c)* Friendly, intimate, homelike [...] "I could not readily find another spot so intimate and heimlich as this" (Freud, 1919:2-3)

We may then cautiously proceed with the deduction that the unheimlich represents the anti-intimate; that which is "frightening precisely because it is *not* known and familiar" (Freud, 1919:2). Interestingly, the term's reliance on the intimate as a point of opposition or contrast places it directly within its remit of influence: without the intimate, the unheimlich simply couldn't exist as it does (or at the very least it could not have the affect it does). Thus, this reliance for contrast's sake, actually embeds the sensation of the unheimlich within the gamut of intimate reactionary affect.

Take for example Theo Acworth's graduate project *Riding Bikes into Hedges & Other Adventures* (2014) (see Fig. 7), which features a section whose methodology is set out through its title: *Gardens I didn't have permission to be in*. In this section, the artist takes self-portraits in the gardens of apparently unknowing subjects whose only presence within the images is indexically represented through the detritus of their outdoor lives. Seemingly abandoned garden furniture, swing sets, compost heaps and flower beds form the varying foregrounds to these otherwise unnervingly identical portraits. The artist, dressed in the same dark, ill-fitting and unthreatening clothing in each image, is posed in a defamiliarisingly deadpan manner, as though plucked from some anthropological study. Through the repetition of his gaze, pose and position, his presence feels less that of an emotionally-engaged human being, and more that of

the automaton. This doubt of animation, borne through repetition, is one technique identified by E. Jentsch (in the aforementioned Freud paper) as being an example of a way in which the uncanny or unheimlich may be forced (Freud, 1919:5). Acworth becomes a foreign object in an otherwise private, utterly domestic and uncannily familiar group of settings. The particularity of this repetition to the book form should not be underestimated either, for it is the asynchronous, the sequentiality that is crucial to the gradual accrual of the sensation of the unheimlich. While the posing style may indeed begin to evoke aesthetic connections to topographical studies, it is the significance of what is happening between the pages, the experience of their unfolding within a sequence, that is so crucial to the success of a work like this. Such engagement with repetition as a communicative tool is explored in the context of my practice in section 1.5, where such repetitive structures are used to build a similar sense of the uncanny and *unheimlich*.

Through the heightened sense of not belonging, constructed by the section's opening title and the artists' dehumanised pose, a sense of experiencing something completely unknown, yet knowledgeably familiar is created. This phenomenon is known more succinctly as *'jamais vu'*. Jamais vu is "the intense feeling that the current circumstances are novel and strange, while objectively realizing that they have, indeed, been previously experienced" (Burwell & Templer, 2017), and is often regarded to be the opposite of *déjà vu*, the more widely known phenomena that a given situation is familiar, though it is known not to be. In the same common grouping too is *presque vu* "which is a term used to describe the subjective sense of an impending insight or discovery" (Kostic, Booth & Cleary, 2015), otherwise know as the 'tip of the tongue' phenomenon. The connecting themes drawing together these very intimately felt sensations are familiarity and knowledge (as in knowing, the known). This constitutes a foundational characteristic of intimacy, constituting a "persistent tension between a confidence in the possibility of knowing and being known by others and an implicit commitment to existential privacy" (Yousef, 2013:2). Once complicated by presque-, jamais-, or dé jà vu, the resulting engagement may indeed be the heightened, extratextual consciousness of intimate affect.

1.2b Spatial Plane

The causal relationship between content and semiotic decoding may be investigated using a number of theoretical frameworks, perhaps most pointedly those posited in Liberatic theory, concrete poetry, and many studies on the photobook; essentially the intersection of materiality with the semiotics of a piece. However, the fecundity of this as a research area and thus potential as a framework for exploring the spatial plane of our experience with the book does not exceed that of a more widely transcendent set of ideas: affect theory. Affect theory presents useful frameworks for the exploration of the spatial plane in its focus on resonant forces arising from the in-between, as an "impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation" (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010:1). Indeed, the in-between space of object and experience, object and perception, or object and observer is precisely what the spatial plane is built upon; the psyche-shift to intratextuality and interiority must arise from such altered, heightened or obscured relationships, and a conscious awareness of their existence.

The notion of accumulation is another central tenet of affect theory (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010:2) and one that may perhaps initially be thought of in opposition to the spatial plane's perception/consciousness altering nature - the sudden awareness of one's position in the world in relation to an artwork, for example. This being the case, however, does not preclude or exclude the possibility for accumulative affect to exist within the spatial plane; sudden, epiphanic revelations can, in their own right, build upon one-another, their accumulation widening the communicative breadth for these phenomena beyond its normal remit.

To offer an example of the spatial plane at work, Alec Soth and Brad Zellar's 2012 photobook *House of Coates* is an interesting form to consider (see Fig. 8 & 9). The book, containing a third person, prosaic account of the life of fictional character and alter-ego to Soth, 'Lester B. Morrison', alongside less-than-illustrative images taken by 'Lester' himself, attempts to address the themes of loneliness, human connection, and redemption. These materials come together in a spiral-bound, pseudo-notebook
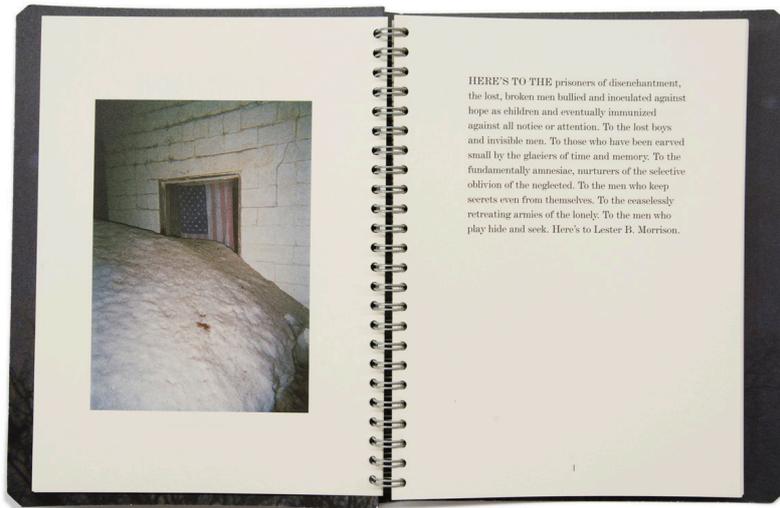
Figure 8. *House of Coates, 2012*
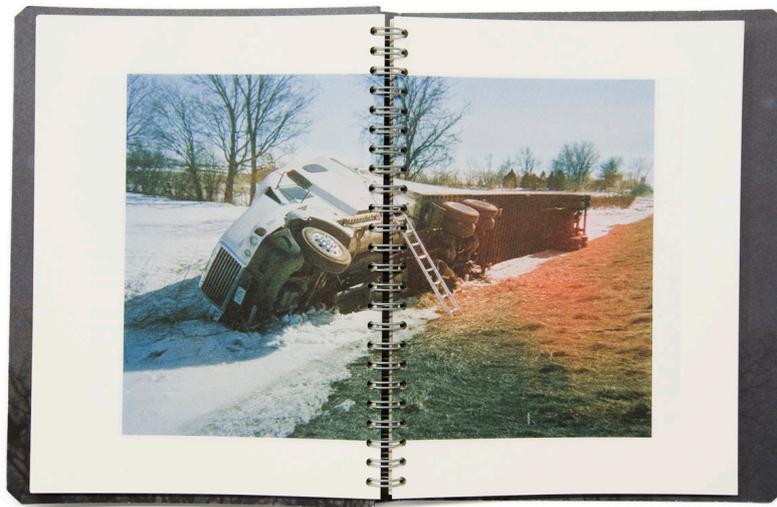
Figure 9. *House of Coates, 2012*

form, which persistently lifts the reader out of the narrative proper, and into a psychological space of ethical ambiguity; should we be reading this very intimate account of the life of a self-proclaimed recluse? The use of double-page spreads is one way in which the physicality of the book and its inherent cultural baggage is brought to the fore, the spiral binding simultaneously injuring and stitching back together the images contained – the images are scarred by being presented like this (or, indeed, by being presented at all). The readers spatial cognition is the impetus for constant and accumulating relational re-evaluations and a subsequent heightened sense of intimacy.

The spatial plane is acutely demonstrated in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughter House-Five* (1969), a literary novel that uses its own temporality and blends it with that of

both the author and reader to create a kind of symbiotic relationship for the reader to experience and digest. At times this is a direct, intratextual reference to the concept of time as felt by both the protagonist, who jumps forward and back through time without conscious control, and the Tralfamadorians – an alien race whose concept and experience of time is better aligned with our experience of space; all at once and along a plane whose entirety is always apparent. In terms of temporal experience, Vonnegut's is a book whose "narrative loops also... create an intratextuality that deuces the readers into a more intimate familiarity with the story's protagonist" (Justus, 2004:10). While the text makes direct reference to the notion of time existing spatially within its narrative, the book-object is itself a physical manifestation of three layers of time; the time of the authors writing, the intratextual time of the text, and the time of the reader – as, it may be argued, are all literary books. Vonnegut, however, works to explore these layers of time and temporality through exposing them to the reader, urging them to "metaphorically step back from the narrative; thus, the reader's time overlaps with both the narrative time and the story's chronology, creating a simultaneity which crosses temporal and physical boundaries and creates a narrative "sphere" around [the protagonist], Vonnegut, and the reader" (Justus, 2004:20-21). This relationship is further complicated by the authors "intrusions" into the text, whereby the authors time overlaps into the intratextual time, drawing the author-as-narrator closer the text, and in doing so, re-evoking the intimacy of the oral storytelling tradition and the companionship inherent therein (Benjamin in Justus, 2004:31). The effect of this constant temporal realignment on the reader is cumulative; it creates a visceral force-reaction that lies outside of conscious knowing; it is a psycho-somatic resonating that rings through the reader and back into the narrative. In section 4.1 this concept of temporal 'spheres' was used as the impetus for a visual representation of some of the routes for photobook communication.

My practical output, the photobook *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) explores this in the temporal fracturing of both image and text across the linear sequence of pages and through a constant altering of the relationship between author, text and reader. See section 1.5 for an expansion on this.

Vonnegut's work is also marked by a certain innocence to the language employed to discuss difficult or challenging ideas, in a way that communicates well beyond the literal and into the psychologically engaged readers' interpretive digestion of the work. One notable example of this is the recurring use of the phrase "so it goes" to mark and punctuate death within the narrative. On face value this phrase possesses a reticence and tragic acceptance that jars with many of the traumatic recollections of Vonnegut within the narrative (it is important to note that the work is well known as being a document of trauma and catharsis for Vonnegut). However, through its repetition, the phrase develops a poignancy impossible to replicate more directly; suddenly the term begins to feel as though it is a coping mechanism for the author/ narrator, as they deal with the deaths being written about; it is also a pseudo-numerical way of highlighting the sheer amount of death within the narrative - for the reader it begins to become a kind of tally; each repetition also brings with it the weight of each instance of its use that came before, slowly accumulating on the reader's conscience with a terrible detached coldness that more direct language could not sufficiently describe; it places equal emotional weight on the deaths presented, be they friends, comrades, Nazi's, entire bombed-out towns, the protagonists fiancée, or the universe itself - a borderline indifference that intricately suggests an unresolved relationship with mortality for the author, underscoring the work's claim to being a truly traumatic document/document of trauma. One other thing such an innocuous and recognisable phrase has the ability to do is to create the "community of readers" Susan Stewart spoke of earlier - "So it goes," for example, is one of the most popular Vonnegut inspired/literary tattoos - it is an intratextual code that has spilled out into the 'real world' as a kind of literary easter egg for fellow readers to decode.

1.3 Why intimacy?

Exploring intimacy as a cultural phenomenon leads predominantly to explorations of the 'what' and 'how' surrounding the term; the 'why' however is often better approached from the perspective of psychology. Here the most foundational distillation consistently focuses on the notion of connection, particularly of connection through

a kind of shared, reciprocal knowledge between two minds. Any sense of hierarchy between knowing and being known precludes the true complexity of this relationship; if we consider the book as surrogate object of the mind that created it, the symbiosis between knowing and being known becomes clear. Consider the ruminations of fictional character Winston Smith in George Orwell's *1984* (1949);

> The blissful feeling of being alone with the forbidden book, in a room with no telescreen, had not worn off. Solitude and safety were physical sensations, mixed up somehow with the tiredness of his body, the softness of the chair, the touch of the faint breeze from the window that played upon his cheek. The book fascinated him, or more exactly it reassured him. In a sense it told him nothing that was new, but that was part of the attraction. It said what he would have said, if it had been possible for him to set his scattered thoughts in order. It was the product of a mind similar to his own, but enormously more powerful, more systematic, less fear-ridden. The best books, he perceived, are those that tell you what you know already. (ibid, 2018(1949):229)

Here spatial and corporeal types of intimate connection shared with the book object are, as mentioned in section 0.3, simultaneously and mutually constituted (Verbeek, 2005:9); the sense of safety and solitude (the distinctly positivistic term as opposed to isolation) are, ineffably beyond the assertion, described as physical; facilitating reflections and ruminations to be made outside of the temporality of Winston's immediate context. The most important aspect of the book in question, a highly illegal, anti-establishment manifesto in this case, is its seeming knowledge of Winston's thoughts beyond his own effable capability; the book knows him intimately, but it can only do so if Winston (or any reader) knows too the author's mind. This is a point made too by Socrates to Phaedrus, the god Thoth of Egypt, that "a reader […] must be singularly simple-minded to believe that written words can do anything more that remind one of what one already knows" (Socrates in Manguel, 1997:58). It is here that the codex form's inherent cultural and semiotic transparency creates a kind of supra-anthropomorphism, whereby the book is not a physical representation of another being, but is rather an object of, as Daniel Dennett would have it, intention. Dennett, a theorist tiptoeing the lines of science and philosophy, utilising "nearly every related discipline: evolutionary biology, neuroscience, psychology,

linguistics, artificial intelligence" (Rothman, 2017) in his many explorations of human consciousness, describes his intentional stance as treating an object "as a rational agent with beliefs and desires and other mental stages exhibiting [what has been called] intentionality" (Dennett, 1987:15). The intentional object may, with predictability, work to further its goals based on its desires; while we understand the human mind as an agent of desire and intention, when the mind is employed to create the object, said object may (perhaps in the book more than any other form), stand in as surrogate for the intentionality that created it.

> … we tend to lose sight of the photographer's presence, as though the image somehow came into existence by its own accord to function illustratively in the context in which it is seen. The sequential image in the photobook tends to resist this. To be sure there are still varying degrees of referentiality but the primary stimulus of meaning is the relationship *between* the images, whether in small clusters or over the book as a whole. Taken singly out of context these photographs are mute [...] But leafing through the pages of a photobook the photographer's intentions become apparent, the book is dynamic. (Mcnab, 2006:118 emphasis added)

The book's communication of intentionality may be constituted by a number of elements within its communication circuit. Narrative space, for example, may be used to manipulate the temporality of a work, resulting in altered experiences of time relative to both the act of reading and the time-space of the text's narrative. This type of manipulation may best be exemplified again by Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969), a work which intersperses authorial intrusion and first person accounts into the otherwise third person narrative. To re-quote Jeremy Justus's excellent essay on the temporality of *Slaughterhouse Five*, this "simultaneity [...] crosses temporal and physical boundaries and creates a narrative "sphere" around [the protagonist], Vonnegut, and the reader" (Justus, 2004:21). Through crossing these boundaries, the author is able to evoke a sense of intimate connection, of 1:1 exchange, synonymous with oral story telling traditions, bringing with it the desires and, thus, intentions of the narrative voice. The transparency of the book/literary form is shattered to reveal an object stemming from human thought and design, and a connection is thus shared with the suddenly very human creator. Section 1.5 looks into the ways in which my

Figure 10.   *The Big Lebowski, 1998*

practice experiments with the altering of perception and intention through image, language and design, particularly taking language cues from *Slaughterhouse Five* as a means to rapidly alter the object of conscious perception. The Big Lebowski (1998) uses a similar technique, where Sam Elliot's character "The Stranger" represents the observing audience as narrator, storyteller, and embedded character within the story; The film opens with his (not particularly well rehearsed) narration introduction, later revealing him as a character in his own right (who has, apparently, been watching the story unfold along with us), and closes with a monologue reflecting on the film in its entirety. Within the sequence where the film's protagonist, played by Jeff Bridges, and Elliot meet for the first time, there is an instant familiarity between the two. The familiarity shared is sudden and unexplained, and is left as a kind of passing, warm connection shared between reacquainted, distant friends. This baseless familiarity is another central tenet to the oral story telling tradition, and in this context serves to bridge the gap between the extra-textual time of the audience, and the intra-textual time of the narrative. The closing summary of the movie offered by Elliot's character (a warm-spoken, cowboy type) (see Fig. 10) mimics the dialogue shared between movie goers at the end of a screening, while positing a narrative that continues off-screen;

It was a pretty good story. Don't you think? It made me laugh to beat the band.

Parts, anyway. I didn't like seein' Donny go. But, then I happen to know that

there's a little Lebowski on the way… (*The Big Lebowski, 1998*)

"The Stranger's" temporal and spatial position is truly one that sits across the boundaries of narrative and audience; this non-diegetic monologue serving to subvert the conventional time-space of observed narrative/observing audience. Here, as the book-object in Slaughterhouse Five, the cinematic piece is a surrogate for the intentionality of its emplacer(s). The seeming transparency of the cultural artefact is thus shattered to reveal the very human intentionality behind its creation.

Connection, knowing, being known and intimacy share a somewhat fluid and organic relationship – while not necessarily syntactically interchangeable, they are terms and phenomena that may well be considered to be mutually constitutive of one-another.

The term "intimacy" (from the Latin intimus, "most inner") refers both to what

is closely held and personal and to what is deeply shared with others. Intimacy

designates the sphere of the inmost, of the private, and also the realm of

cherished connection and association. (Yousef, 2013:1)

Thus, the dialectical relationship between privacy and the innermost, and of sharing and inter-knowledge between private individuals creates the foundation for the creation of intimacy through surrogate forms and across conceptual and physical distance. One needs not stand close to develop such a connection, indeed any reference to proximity is, as discussed earlier, metaphorical and insufficient in the definition of intimacy as we know it.

The intention of a work is not always aligned precisely (or exclusively) with the intention of its author. Alec Soth's photobook *The Loneliest Man in Missouri* (2010) (see fig. 11)
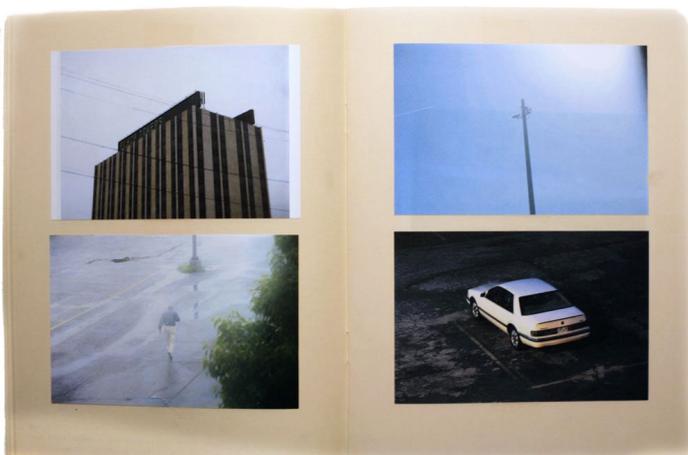
Figure 11.   *The Loneliest Man in Missouri, 2011*

is a wandering project which seeks, on a literal level, to find the book's namesake; an ultimately fruitless and futile task. The intention of the artist, however, is not exclusively the pursuit of the book's; wider intentions may indeed be using this base, literal structure or design as a vehicle to communicate what may otherwise be ineffable. The intention of the author may be to pursue a structure, and the book's intention may be the structured presentation of this act, yet the resulting affectual experience is always something else. The book, after all, is its own semiotic field; what the photobook-reading audience are presented with are not photographs, nor prints, but the photobook-signifier:

> … the link between signifier and signified remains if not unmotivated, at least entirely historical [...] Signification, in short, is the dialectical movement which resolves the contradiction between cultural and natural man. (Barthes, 1987:27)

Significant too is the physical presentation of the book; not only is the work published as a soft-back, pamphlet-like zine, it is also hidden in the back of another of Soth's books *From here to there: Alec Soth's America* (2010) (see fig. 12). The very act of accessing and putting away this zine is in its own right an act of coded secrecy. Strong connections to the book as a place of secret thoughts and objects are created; the zine becomes a kind of forbidden piece of literature hidden within the more acceptable covers of another - the pornography hidden in the textbook, the whiskey hidden in a bible. This sub-existence of the zine to a larger body of work grants it a certain impunity from function or purpose that published pieces usually need to possess; it is allowed to be rambling, wandering, functionless and gratuitous. It is also freed of the usual accoutrements necessary when publishing, such as a colophon or even author's name, as these are burdens carried by the encasing book-object. This zine is allowed to be a zine in the purest sense - rough, explorative and immediate.

Figure 12.　　　*From Here to There, 2011*

Repetition is perhaps one of the most important ways the photobook foregrounds the intention of the author over the photographic referent or photobook-object.

Figure 13.　　　*Missing Buildings, 2015*

Repetition "could be likened to fieldwork or a quasi-scientific testing of a hypothesis. Repetition turns speculation into proposal, for the repetitive act seems to offer proof of something." (Cotton, 2009:42). Thus, repetition may be used to shift the focus from content or semiotics of the individual image, and onto the "motivations of those who put them in place" (Edwards, 2006:68). The arrangement of photographs into a series helps to provide signs for decoding as *tableaux*; it is repetition that allows the focus to be shifted away from the "superficial series" of the image (de Duve, 1978:114) and instead placed on the symbolic significance of the similarities, differences, and interrelations therein. Repetition forces the audience, were they not already, to consider authorial intention.

It is this more complex, deeply subconscious game of "spot the difference" (or, indeed, familiarity) that builds an audience's understanding of the author they are so intimately entwined with through the surrogate object they hold. The power of this visual game is demonstrated elegantly in Thom and Beth Atkinson's photobook *Missing Buildings* (2015) (see Fig. 13) where the indexical remnants of bombed out buildings from WWII are photographed and presented in a Becher-esque document of standardisation through repetition. The work's title sets the audience off in a particular direction, setting the scene for a kind of "where's Wally?" game to be played with the book's namesake. Indeed, by the time the reader reaches the afterword in the back, the book is itself a gamified object, this sense of light-hearted gamification struck by the very visceral, human contents of the closing essay, drawing attention to the lives that perished with the buildings, the softness of the interior domestic violated and destroyed by the cold indifference of war. This afterword opens with a testimony from an ARP incident report:

> As we stopped near what had been a large block of flats we were met by many people, some trying to find relatives or friends, others demented and just running around wildly. I remember one chap covered in blood running down the road carrying what once had been a whole, live baby, calling his wife, and some people grabbing him and leading him away. (Chandler in Atkinson et al., 2015:unpaginated)

Up to this point the audience is as indifferent as to the human aspect of the bombings as the bombs themselves, reading this deeply affecting essay, however, transforms the work, and forces a re-reading with the added weight of this new perspective: the added weight of guilt. The book's propensity to amalgamate image and text into a singular (or at the very least co-planar) semiotic field is utilised to first seemingly solve the work's "rebus" (Scott, 1999:49), before the afterword shatteringly reveals the true punctum of the work.

Up to now, this section has focused largely on how authors, artists and directors utilise different aspects of their media's forms to divert and direct attention away from the "superficial series" of the image (de Duve, 1978:114) and onto what we have identified as authorial intention. This extratextual consciousness may indeed facilitate the creation and exploration of metanarratives and heightened forms of affect and intimacy, essential aspects to successful communication of the transcendent within the photobook. In section 1.5 I will explore the use of repetition, fracturing and fragmentation within my practice to create such messages. But what then of the many forms that do not consciously draw attention to their medial forms? Or those which intentionally position conscious perception well within the intratextual narrative space (and thus, firmly away from the physical)? What of escapism?

1.4 Narrative, perception, and intimacy.

In discussing *The Big Lebowski* earlier, the necessity to wander into the realms of orality and storytelling became unavoidable; areas whose size and relevance to this research project warrant a more sustained approach. The narrational and perceptual structures in place within the photobook - indeed within all story-holding forms - possess the propensity for cross over and, by extension, transfer from one form into others. The particularity of one form or type of media in presenting or representing phenomena such as intimacy may thus be explored through the examination of that which may be translated, and that which remains affectively proprietary to the original form/media. Such an approach also possesses the opportunity to posit new ways of working with existent media through unexplored forms of synthesis.

The potential for narrative and narrative structures to transfer from one form to another is a particularly fecund area within contemporary media studies; one of the most succinct and useful texts here is David Herman's *Toward a Transmedial Narratology* in Marie-Laure Ryan's *Narrative Across Media: The Languages of Storytelling* (2004). Within his essay, Herman explores the ontologies and subsequent degrees of applicability the term may have.

Transmediation; The degree to which narratorial elements of a media are dependent (or not) on the formal qualities of their presentational structures. David Herman's essay *Toward and Transmedial Narratology* explores three approaches to the idea of transmediation: thesis, antithesis, synthesis. The **thesis** stance takes view that "any sort of narrative message [...] may be transposed from one to another medium without losing its essential properties" (Herman in Ryan, 2004:51). It proposes independence of narrative from medium, presenting the latter as vehicle for communication, minimising its significance in the creation of essential meaning within the narrative. This proposition is often affirmed passively;

> Thus, Gerald Prince argues that, because narratives and nonnarratives can center around the same topics and develop the same general themes, the substance of the content side does not define narrative (Herman in Ryan, 2004:52)

Such justifications of a notion as extreme as the thesis stance on transmediation propose some interesting interrelationships, but are both quick to debase and easy to outweigh with the more actively addressing exemplars used in the discussion of antithetical and synthetical stances. The **antithesis** stance (that narrative is radically medium dependent), for example, argues that "the narrative-determining force of sign systems stems from their being not only media of expression but also resources for (inter)acting" (Herman in Ryan, 2004:53). The context of a narrative telling is also central to the antithetical stance; Herman goes on to explain this significance within conversation-analytic perspective as "necessarily particuliz[ing] [...] hence, retellings produce not different versions of the same story but new narratives-in-contexts." (Herman in Ryan, 2004:54). The logical third category, **synthesis**, then

provides the middle ground between these two extremes - porridge not too hot, nor too cold. Synthesis asserts stories as possessing a degree of medium dependence, which fluctuates as on a "continuum of relative focus on interpersonal involvement vs. Message content" and that this continuum thus exemplifies a "variable and open rather than fixed and impermeable" boundary between narrative types and their medial support (Herman in Ryan, 2004:55).

We may also consider **remediation** here, not necessarily as a counter theory, but as a co-existent structure of theorisation. In differentiating the two, the etymology of the terms' prefixes is perhaps the logical place to start:

> **Trans-** word-forming element meaning "across, beyond, through, on the other side of, to go beyond," from Latin trans (prep.) "across, over, beyond," perhaps originally present participle of a verb *trare-, meaning "to cross," from PIE *tra-, variant of root *tere- (2) "cross over, pass through, overcome. (Harper)

> **Re-** word-forming element meaning "back to the original place; again, anew, once more," also with a sense of "undoing," c. 1200, from Old French and directly from Latin re- "again, back, anew, against," "Latin combining form conceivably from Indo-European *wret-, metathetical variant of *wert- "to turn" (Harper)

Where "re-" possesses an implicit sense of progression, obsolescence, and newness, "trans" may be seen as a side-stepping less burdened with the obligation to 'improve'.

Looking at the book *War Primer 2* (2011) by Broomberg and Chanarin (see fig. 14), a work that 'updates' the pages of the 1998 English edition of Brecht's *Kriegsfibel (War Primer)* (1955) with low resolution images of the war on terror, taken from online image searches, we can see both re- and trans-mediation in effect. In the creation of the work, Broomberg and Chanarin take the original copies of the Brecht text and render it obsolete through an intentional overlaying and reworking; the sans-serif font silkscreened on the cover resonating with the low-resolution colour images neatly pasted throughout doing little to assuage the temporal chasm between the two works. It is precisely this gulf and the "astute juxtaposition of historic

and contemporary material [which]
encouraged consideration of different
political contexts" (Evans, 2013). The
same work demonstrates the potential
for transmediation in its presence across
both print and digital spaces; the work,
long out of print in first edition (and
only as recently as 2018 reissued in
facsimile second edition) was also issued
as an iPad app and eBook, allowing its

Figure 14.   *War Primer 2, 2011*

pages to be viewed divorced from their original material carrier. This transmediation,
as evidenced by the subsequent reissuing of a popular second print edition, does
little to obsolesce the print object in its transparent subservience to it; the digital
artefact at all times paying reverent homage to the material page so integral to the
works' creation and existence. In the interest of access and availability, the work is
transmitted via another medium which only ever alludes to the actuality of work it
represents, without ever attempting to re imagine or re-present it.

    Remediation then, may be understood as describing the intention-relationship
between new and old media.

- New media acts as transparent carrier of new, to grant access to old media. The
new media seeks to erase itself in order to maintain the original relationship
with old media (this is never completely possible) (Schram, 2010)

- New media wants to offer improvements over old form - it seeks to highlight the
differences between the two media. (Schram, 2010)

- New media aims to refashion old media entirely, while still marking the presence
of old media and thus producing a sense of multiplicity or hypermediality.
(Schram, 2010)

- New media wants to absorb old media in its entirety, while never managing
its complete effacement (due to its similar reliance on content, for example)
(Schram, 2010)

Remediation is also a term used to define medium itself; "medium is that which remediates" and thus media require one-another to "rival and refashion [one another] in the name of the real." (Bolter and Grusin, 2003:65). The significance of the word 'intention' is clear when considering the definitions offered here, but also in facilitating their consideration at all. The issue of the transferability of a narrative or its structure at all is considered more in relation to **transmediation.** The notion or act of remediation supersedes narratological structures, and instead seeks the constant cannibalism of one medium by another, the identification of perceived restrictive structures and thus attempted removal of them. Where orality was plagued by ephemerality and a reliance on memory, concrete, written literature offered the solution. Where issues of access limit the reach of the book, digital media offer wider and more instant reach, and on and on. The etymological significance of the term 'transmedia' asserts a transition or transfer, explicitly not inferring any kind of progression or improvement. It may be posited that in many cases transmediation loses at least as much as it adds to a medial form; the oral story is transformed and constituted by the numerous cultural revisions as it is told (the fallibility of memory an important developmental tool rather than flaw); literature's physical boundedness gave birth to the book-object and physical connections possible therein, and so on. The impossibility of a singular 'ideal' medium means this rhetoric is and will remain inevitable, the real proving ground for remediation is the extent to which it heightens the narrative experience for an audience. This is to say, that Bolter and Grusin's notion of all remediation being in the name of the "real" feels too reductive; Ballet, music and painting are just a few examples which could quickly debase this. Instead, I would posit the foregrounding of making more *acute* the experience of narrative.

While the degree of particularity an individual media may have over its narrative structure is a relevant discussion here, it is important to reiterate the focus for this thesis is on the particularity of the various forms of intimacy within both these narrative structures and the extratextual relationships fostered by the book-form. Through exploring transferability of these individual intimate phenomena, it is hoped that those particular to the photobook form may be identified.

1.5 Application

Print media has an exhaustive history with the private, the secret, the sensitive, in both daily life and media representation: from diaries and journals to medical notes and documents, government reports, "Top Secret" intelligence files and research dossiers; the secret, the sensitive, the private and the intimate all have such an extensive relationship with print culture so as to become materially codified (simply reading the above list quite effortlessly conjures up distinct imagery). It is this codification which can be further broken down so as to provide the photobook practitioner with fertile methods for communication through the material form of the book. Building on from McLuhan's now ubiquitous affirmation of medium and message being inseparable from one another, book-art theorists often work to highlight the semiotic opacity of the book's material form.
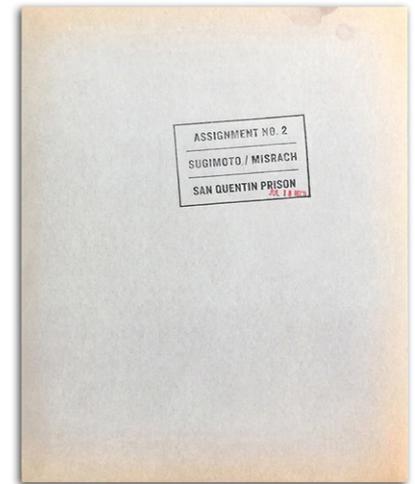

Figure 15.   *Assignment No.2, 2014*

One aspect this research proposes as being central to the creation of these tacit messages is size and shape. The crux of the argument to be made here is not one of radical challenge to conventional forms, but a more active sensitivity to the potential held by very subtle design cues. Certain proportions, aspect ratios, sizes are so ubiquitous in our lives that they become loaded signifiers for document type. If we look to the book *Assignment No.2* (2014) by Hiroshi Sugimoto, Richard Misrach and Michael Nelson (see Fig 15 & 16), for example, we can see size and shape being integral to the initial reception of the work. This book, presented as a pad of US legal paper, case-bound by the photographs described in the hand-written text, lapses as a book in our perception, giving way to material links derived from our own lived experience. Alec Soth and Brad Zellar's *House of Coates* (2012), earlier discussed in relation to the spatial plane, may equally be considered for its use of the notebook's form and the baggage of privacy and

Figure 16.   *Assignment No.2, 2014*

voyeurism this brings with it. This is something I have explored in my publication *Radius of Action* (2016), where the final print book was designed in rigid A4 format; I wanted to communicate some sense of dehumanisation within that work, and sought inspiration from conference handouts, medical journals and research papers so common to the medical profession. Around this time I worked extensively as a conference photographer for many governmental and medical bodies, exposing me to a certain type of print paraphernalia distributed at such events. The notion of dehumanisation was an important sub-topic for this body of work and as

Figure 17. *Ever Forward, Back, 2021*

such required a subtle but sure mode of communication, precisely where I feel these kinds of techniques are useful for the photobook designer. Sub-topics, secondary themes, minor narratives, etc. all have important roles in photobook works, but may at times be at odds with the content-proper of the images themselves. For my book, the issue was more to do with the form of my images, which were themselves very human, very fragile, particular and specific. For a book to be able to simultaneously communicate this dichotomous relationship, multiple layers of storytelling are essential.

The size of *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) (see Fig. 17) was arrived at through a lot of trial and error until a set of proportions were found that supported the work well and fitted the body of the reader. My desire was for the book to support private, intimate and intensive reading, which is a style of reading conducted in a certain place relative to the body, not necessarily relative to a location. What I mean by this is that it is far more important for the book object to be able to be held close to the chest, the face, to be manageable with one hand and to occupy the centre focus of the eye while allowing the periphery to remain unfilled, unchallenged. I feel that there is an instinctive vulnerability created by the hampering of peripheral vision which thus refutes the

Today all the helping out, all the questions, the looks, the hovering, all of it just felt too much to deal with. I feel low and lonely, unable to communicate what I need nor how I feel.

Today has gotten the better of me.

At first his symptoms are subtle and infrequent, slowly building in you a dreadful suspicion of what is to come. This feels like hypersensitivity, paranoia, over-thinking. At this point you yearn for certainty one way or the other - until you get it.

As things become more certain you realise how foolish you were letting the vague hope of uncertainty slip by so unappreciated.

Certainty is hell.

My father reading this book is one of my biggest anxieties at the moment. He sits across from me as I write even these words, but the silence of writing, the silence of the book blocks him from hearing what I'm writing, what I'm thinking.

I love how, through all of this, he still has an innate ability to fully appreciate what's in front of him - to appreciate the objectively beautiful whilst in the subjectively awful. I'm jealous of that sometimes. Sometimes not.

Figure 18.   *Variable typeface testing in Erode, 2021*

ability to 'get lost' in the act of reading and truly immerse oneself in the pages. By facilitating this, our subconscious self-preservation mode of thought is given space to work while one's conscious mind is fully immersed in the work. Being a book of almost two-hundred pages also introduces considerations of weight and interaction – after turning a hundred-or-so pages, one's care for each sheet of paper may wain, and on larger and more delicate pages this invites inadvertent damage from normal usage.

In *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) I worked with Studio Mothership to create typography that would communicate the text's fractured chronology along with the essential sub-layers of meaning for the work; humanism, warmth, openness and fading– while actively refuting the notion of the diary or facsimile thereof. The selected typeface, "Erode", has a high X-height and open forms, giving it a classical character without appearing too conventional. One major advantage of this typeface in the design of the work was that it is a "variable font", meaning that it's weight can be adjusted with absolute precision from 300-700, allowing for the entries to each receive a completely unique weighting relative to their chronological creation (see Fig. 18). This kind of 'coded' design possesses an unspoken rebus logic, one which, with some conscious effort from the reader, may be decoded and understood. Layers of communication like this act to enrich each reading with new discoveries, new depths of perception, and more personal (feeling) understandings of the narrative. The relative weight of the text, transitioning over its intratextual time from thick to very thin, will also help to reinforce the notion of fading and loss integral to this body of work.

Significant across many of the works discussed in this chapter has been the respective author's use of repetition as a means of heightening or altering communication and messages. Within my series I explore this in a number of ways, from clusters of images that differ very slightly from one another (usually images taken in quick succession), to sequences that fracture and fragment their own sequentiality across spreads. This, coupled with the broken chronology of the text is what moves the audience's temporal experience of the work forward and back, constantly challenging them to make sense of the sequences relative to each other and to the text pieces they hold. The text too utilises repeating words and refences to particular points in time or events in order to shuttle the audience through the time of their writing, and to tentatively suggest connections across the book.

The use of repetition takes many fractured and fragmented forms in my work: clusters of images across a single spread, sequences set over multiple pages, and linked images separated by dozens of pages (see fig. 19). Motifs and locations also repeat, causing the work to circle around an ever shrinking and restricting set of environments, only briefly breaking away to more tropical locations before returning to the familiarity of English woodlands and the family home. Setting the repetition like this allows the work to subtly build a sense of closeness and closedness of the world surrounding my father, communicating more effectively the shrinking of his world as dictated by his illness. In another instance, two portraits of my mum are separated by ninety-three pages (see fig 20), and are identical other than her sunglasses being worn on her head in one, and on her face in the other; such is the similarity that the reader is encouraged to doubletake the first in order to contrast and compare. Such an internal crisis of comprehension, memory and *déjà vu* is central to the heightening of conscious perception, proprioception and the consequent fostering of intimate connection between my work's themes and my audience.
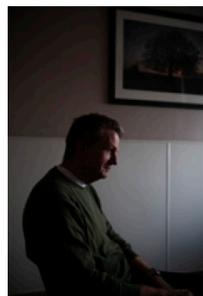
**Figure 19.** *Ever Forward, Back, 2021*

042
I know mum and I are highly strung at the best of times, and I know this doesn't always align itself well with the care of someone like Dad, but we have to allow ourselves this flaw I think; we just desire control over that which we can control, when so much is outside of it. How we deal with our reactions though is quite another thing.

048
My sister's illness has finally been under control for a few months, and it's only now that we realise just how totally paralysing that whole time has been. For ten years now, we have had regular bouts of severe illness with her, rarely venturing far from life threatening.
The mental toll this has isn't immediately apparent, it's only with time and healing that you come to appreciate what feels like new energy - new freedoms, are really just things that for so long have been paralysed by fear, mourning, grief, and anxiety.

Figure 20.   *Ever Forward, Back, 2021*

Chaper One

Intimacy, Time & Space.

2.1 Introduction

> The process of intimate discovery [...] is fundamental to the experience of
> the book as a form. From its many daily functions to its metaphoric existence,
> the book has the potential to provide a private space for communication and
> exchange across vast spaces of time and geography. (Drucker, 2004:357)

In considering the photobook in relation to communication, interaction, and intimacy, it may be posited that phenomenological concerns should take precedent over epistemological, ethical, or aesthetic (McNab, 2006:118) attributes; for the particular considerations it places on the "study of structures of experience, or consciousness" directed towards the "appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience." (Woodruff, 2003). Clearly this is an approach that, while dependent on the notion of experience (and, by extension, cultural context), transcends the aforementioned chronological/genre dependent studies that have preceded, and requires an approach whose structure reflects this.

Tantamount to this structure of approach will be the synchronous consideration afforded to the reader within the book's communication cycle. Phenomenology's reliance on first person experience necessitates an approach that utilises a constant reflective process, a kind of reversed version of cause and effect (or, perhaps, affect), where a particular phenomena is identified and the book's signifier decoded

and examined, allowing for further positing of potential uses, adaptations and manipulations.

The particular focus of this thesis will be the phenomena of intimacy as experienced through the photobook; an exploration of the structures integral to this, and considerations for developing new approaches to utilising these. In this chapter, the concept of intimacy, and the book as phenomenological object will be explored through psychology, literature, and narrative theory. The book's histories will then be examined to uncover the links such histories bring to the signification possible/inherent/unavoidable from such a culturally engrained signifier (Barthes 1987:27). Barthes is a useful theorist to include here, for the overarching aim for this chapter will be to establish the constituent parts that lie within the intersection of the book-object, the photograph and the experience of intimacy.

The structuring of this chapter is first divided into considerations of space and then time, and how these aspects manifest within the book form in relation to themes and elicitations of intimate affect. Due to my focus on the receptive part of the books' communication cycle, a central area of research within each of these sections has been the theories and histories around reading and the reader. Two books worth mentioning from the outset for their service to this chapter as a whole are Alberto Manguel's *A History of Reading* (1997) and Karin Littau's *Theories of Reading: Books, Bodies and Bibliomania* (2006). These excellently curated and written texts facilitate understandings of reading theory so well that to attempt to replicate them would reproduce with less efficacy, and would thus be a disservice. Instead, I have opted to dissect and implement their various arguments and explorations into sections whose structure better serve the overarching purpose of my thesis; the exploration of the book's particular claim to intimacy.

2.2 Space: Establishing stability

While perhaps more keenly discussed in relation to ideas of the "private", due to its more physically definable nature, the concept of space in relation to intimacy

is a key area for understanding how the book has become a form so ubiquitous with communication of the intimate. It may be useful here to consider the characterisation of intimacy, as put forth by Hannah Arendt and later by Julia Kristeva, as a "strange region that lacks a proper spatiotemporal, that is, worldly, place" (Keltner, 2009:165), a key delineation between notions of the intimate and the private (Keltner, 2009:165). Further, this means by extension that neither can the exteriority "against which it protests and asserts itself" be identified with any objective or concrete certainty (Arendt, 1958:39). This antithesis is not, as one may assume, the 'public', as the 'public/private' dichotomy may suggest, nor of the political sphere, but of the *social*. It is the social, whose growth and expansion (which may well be called insidious in this context), along with the public and political spheres, which has had the most profound impact on private space and the concept of intimacy. Where the previously sacred private space of the household – the example given by Hannah Arendt – has been encroached upon by the rise of the city-state and the public realm, the more malleable, intangible and less stable substitute "intimacy" must take over (Arendt, 1958:29-33).

Figure 21.   *Spreads from William Eggleston's Guide, 1976*

> The astonishing flowering of poetry and music from the middle of the
> eighteenth century until almost the last third of the nineteenth, accompanied by
> the rise of the novel, the only entirely social art form, coinciding with a no less
> striking decline of all the more public arts, especially architecture, is sufficient
> testimony to a close relationship between the social and the intimate. (Arendt,
> 1958:39)

If considered in relation to Liberatic Theory (see Fajfer, 1999-2009) where it is posited that "the material book…becomes an integral component of the literary work. It becomes its spatio-temporal foundation" (Bazarnik 2010:7), the book may be seen to assuage some of these issues of ephemerality, giving "concrete physical textuality, an "all-at-onceness" of boundaries" to that which it contains (Stewart, 1993:8).

Consider here the significance of materiality to a publication such as *William Egglesgton's Guide* (1976) (see Fig. 21). Published to mark the first show of colour photography ever presented at The Museum of Modern Art (and thus the museum's first publication of colour photography), this book and exhibition is often cited as a pivotal moment for colour photography's acceptance into the art world. *William Eggleston's Guide* is a book which expertly uses paper stock and cultural association to create an object of uncanny familiarity. As though pulled from some family archive of universal humanity, the book presents the world view from outside of the 'cooked' context of the family album, and utilises subtle layout variations with its images to alter the viewer's spatial awareness; where an image's viewpoint is gazing up, the image is high on the page, when looking down, it is low. Rudimentary, playful, childlike, this seemingly innocuous yet logical structure allows the book to reinvest a semblance of spatiality through experience to the images - not quite three-dimensional, but certainly a hat-tip towards it. I experimented with a modified version of this technique in *Ever Forward, Back* (2021), creating two sequences that stagger across their pages to intertwine the material space of the book and photograph together – see section 2.5 for a detailed look at this.

The foundation of a physical space for the communication of intimacy is an essential component of material book structure; it is through this "stable finitude" (Drucker, 2004:218) that the dislocated and subjective imaginary (Dean, 2015:179) of intimate space may be explored - interiority is embodied (Dean, 2015:179), if only to be abstracted once again through its reading (and, thus, interiorised). Here we could make a detour into Louise Rosenblatt's Transactional reading theory, which compassionately situates itself between Information theory (the notion that meaning is transmitted undistorted from sender to receiver) and Gestaltist reading theory (the theory that all meaning is created solely by the receiver, and textual stimulus is of secondary importance) (Mahreni, 2016:207). The resulting structure of communication allows for influence from both textual stimuli, and reader context to constitute a reading;

> For me, even today, it is as if the invention of printing had never taken place, and each copy of a book remains as singular as the phoenix (Manguel, 1997:16)

Take here, for example, much of my work experimenting with the communication of disability and failure alongside my father. Both *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) (see Fig. 22) and some early versions of my body of work *Radius of Action* (2016) use photography, fracturing and repetition to explore my themes in relation to feelings of solitude, isolation, pain, familial relationships and the potentialities of the book. Many of the images depend upon a kind of unwritten resonance and tonal form to speak with one-another, producing relationships which were then magnified, altered, tested and revealed by text-extracts from the many conversation transcripts and self-reflections I had made during my time working on the project with my father. Beyond a mere manipulation a lá the Kuleshov effect, these relationships became spaces themselves, of interiorised narrative for the reader, creating a safe space where personal experience and intratextual narrative may come together; where self-reflection and interiorised trauma may be explored and felt in new contexts. The work uses the closeness, privacy, and intimacy of the book-object in relation to the
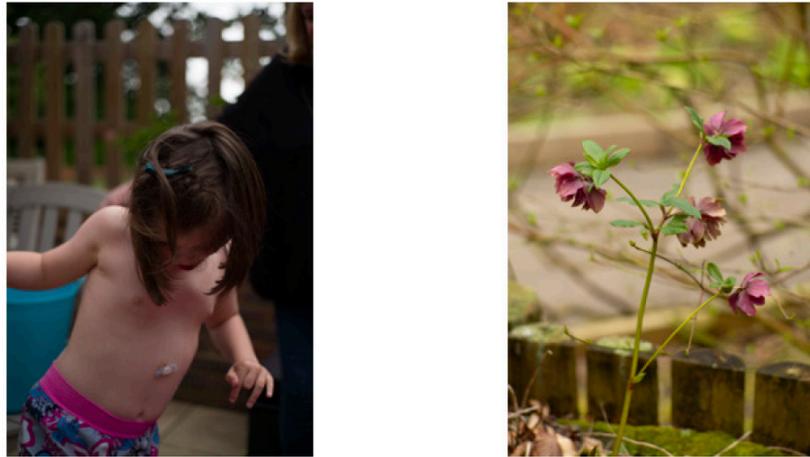
Figure 22. *Spread from Ever Forward, Back, 2021*

photographs to open up dialogues with readers that depend on personal reflection and introspection. More so than forms with a stronger connection to the 'hand of the artist', photography's relative transparency as a mechanism for carrying information can often lead to a shifting of emotional placement: Where the sombre tones of a painting, for example, would lead to an interpretation of the artist's state of mind, the photograph is often interpreted in a kind of self-psycho-analytical manner, as though the emotional charging placed on the image is in some way stemming from the mind of the reader, and not the author. This is not to say studied examinations miss the author's influence, but to say that passing, fleeting, half-engaged readings assume a hierarchy not often found in other artistic media.

2.2a The book-space

More than embodiment, the physical space of the book becomes integrally entwined with the message it conveys, its "space exists outside [of] subjectivity. If two subjects communicate in the space, then space is an element of this communication" (Carrion, 1985:36). This seemingly simplistic statement belies the true complexity of what is being said, particularly in relation to the codex book-form, whose physicality contains in it generations of cultural baggage that have become so engrained within our psyche that to separate historical lineage and semiotic affect is simply impossible. This, a trite point made by many Reading theorists (such as Alberto Manguel and Karin Littau), again represents the validity of the interactive model of reading; semiotic decoding and the individual schema of the reading audience must contribute equally to the message derived from a text. A point whose resonance echoes in the writings of Hannah Arendt:

> [Humans] are conditioned beings because everything they come in contact with turns immediately into a condition of their existence. The world in which the vita activa spends itself consists of things produced by human activities; but the things that owe their existence exclusively to men nevertheless constantly condition their human makers. (Arendt, 1958:9)

Even earlier, the speech and subsequent essay *The American Scholar* (1837) by Ralph Waldo Emerson asserts that:

"There is then creative reading as well as writing. When the mind is braced by
labor and invention, the page of the book we read becomes doubly significant,
and the sense of our author is as broad as the world." (Emerson, 1837:5)

Alongside lived experience, the particular types of background knowledge and experience that a reader may bring with them are described within the Schema Theory of reading as **Formal schemata**, **Content schemata**, **Cultural schemata**, and **Linguistic schemata**. Each of these terms refers to different types of "past reactions or experiences" (An, 2013:130), which are navigated based upon the navigation provided by read texts. It is a theory that suggests that written text (which, in this context, we may surmise as being interchangeable with the photograph within the photographic series) does not carry meaning by itself and that readings are at the very least constituted by the reader's schema.

Formal schemata refers to knowledge of the "rhetorical organizational structures of different types of texts" (Urquhart and Weir cited in An, 2013:130), a type of knowledge well represented by our ability to recognise genre through visual and textual coding, for example. **Content schemata** is knowledge or experience of the text's content, and may include generalised information about how individual happenings relate to one-another to form a whole; for example we may predict that the driver who is pumping fuel into her car will need to go into the service station to pay. Due to its cultural specificity, it is common for cultural schema to be categorised as content schema. **Cultural schemata** is shared knowledge based on wider cultural/ social structures. Utilisation of this particular schemata possesses perhaps the most clearly defined route to the establishment of familiarity with a reader and author, implicitly inferring a shared experience between distant beings. **Linguistic schemata** refer to the knowledge of language and grammar (again, here we may expand the remit of the term "language" to include visual/photographic languages) in the interpretation and comprehension of a text. Beyond literal decoding of a text (from symbols or ink blots to mental images and meaning, for example) this particular schema relates further to the notion of form and the less overtly communicated aspects of narrative communication.

By looking closely at the specifics in life, you discover a wider view. And although we can't speak with much assurance about how this is conveyed, it does seem to me that among the most important ways it's conveyed by artists is through attention to form. (Robert Adams as cited in Vanthuyne, 2015)

It becomes clear from reading these cursory definitions of the various types of schema how much of a reliance we as readers have on them in the everyday interpretation of everything from menus in a restaurant to the works of Shakespeare; essentially texts are designed to work *upon* us, to activate lines of thought and considerations that were perhaps before unexplored or only tentatively and fleetingly considered. The "more powerful, more systematic, less fear-ridden" (Orwell, 2018 (1949):229) mind described by Orwell earlier in section 1.3 may indeed find this power, confidence and systematic organisation through assemblage as a book; the fleeting and ephemeral given concrete, three-dimensional space and outward existence. The potential for book-space to influence, structure, and/or transform the content of the work it presents is then shown to be a type of potential reliant upon existing structures of knowledge and experience; it is a language that is both enacted upon and elicited from its audience. The proposition I would like to make, linking back to the earlier established link of knowing and being known with intimate connection (see section 1.3), is that this activation of pre-possessed knowledge structures constitutes a large part of the book's claim to intimate connection, particularly due to the book's relatively unchanged physical form and structure throughout recent human history. We experience each new book not as a new 'thing' or foreign item, but instead as a new or yet to be consumed *version* of a familiar, heimlich object of quiet, private consumption.

Joan Fontcuberta's *Herbarium* (1985) predicates its entire affective language on the audience's possession of **formal** knowledge of the codes and conventions of 19th century botanical and Darwinian literature. The images inside, heavily reminiscent of Karl Blossfeldt's work, feature modified 'natural' forms or "pseudoplants" (Fontcuberta cited in Jeffries, 2014) that work to build an alternative document of botanical study; complete with obligatory Latin classification.

The idea is to challenge disciplines that claim authority to represent the real
– botany, topology, any scientific discourse, the media, even religion. I chose
photography because it was a metaphor of power. When I started in the early
70s, photography was a charismatic medium providing evidence. (Fontcuberta
cited in Jeffries, 2014)

The very fact that something as – objectively speaking – disconnected from these photographs as a Latin name (in an English language book) feels appropriate or, as stated above 'obligatory', highlights the subconscious power of formal language in our interpretation of a text. We have developed sets of expectations based on every experience we have ever had with images of plants and nature that, when fulfilled, trigger a sorting mechanism that places a text in the context of those perceived to be categorically similar. What Fontcuberta does with *Herbarium* is to trick these mechanisms of automatic categorisation and organisation with perhaps the most contentious dichotomy within the photographic (and, more recently, political) sphere: fact and fiction. The second-take confusion this triggers from a reader causes a shift in spatio-temporal perception, forging an instant heightened consciousness of the book's physicality, its constructedness, and our often troubling relationship with the truth as a coded set of signs and symbols. This is what artists' like Fontcuberta do so well with their work: shine a light on the troubling nature of truth and authenticity stemming from a set of semiotic devices.

2.2b The space of reading

But the constituent elements of a book work are not the only things in communication within this exchange; the book must outwardly communicate to someone – a reader – in order to function. This physical act of reading and interacting with the book-form must occur within physical space, making it, as stated by Carrion above, a part of this communication (Carrion, 1985:31). Susan Stewart writes how "the solitude of [reading] takes place within the milieu of the bourgeois domestic, a milieu of interior space mining the creation of both an interior text and an interior subject" (Stewart, 1993:xi), linking physical reading space, an ultimately unpredictable variable for an author, with the interpretative possibilities and tendencies of the book audience.

The concept of a social space of reading, though, is almost inevitable: always interior, always intimate, presenting itself as "temporally and spatially...outside and above the [everyday]" (Stewart, 1993:14). Alberto Manguel describes this phenomenon in the context of his first personal encounter with its reach and power remarking how "no one [...] could enter my reading-space, could make out what I was being lewdly told by the book in my hands, and that nothing except my own will could enable anyone else to know" (Manguel, 1997:12). This most extreme of private spaces has not always enjoyed a positive reputation, however; indeed, communist and totalitarian governments alike have shared troubling relationships with reading for this very reason: that the message conveyed in the exchange between book and reader is ultimately a private one, unfettered by taboo, embarrassment or, in such circumstances, legality.

> Almost everywhere, the community of readers has an ambiguous reputation
> that comes from its acquired authority and perceived power. Something in the
> relationship between a reader and a book is recognised as wise and fruitful, but
> it is also seen as disdainfully exclusive and excluding, perhaps because the image
> of an individual curled up in a corner, seemingly oblivious of the grumbling of
> the world, suggests impenetrable privacy and a selfish eye and singular secretive
> action. (Manguel, 1997:21)

One of the key roads leading to the unrivalled privacy of this kind of reading lies in its silence; an attribute often taken for granted by contemporary audiences even though it, as a characteristic of reading is relatively new. Prior to this, reading (particularly that of religious texts) was a strictly public affair, open to the "immediate clarification or guidance, condemnation or censorship by a listener" (Manguel, 1997:51). By learning to move this communication inside, into an interior space of protected self-reflection, interpretation and criticism, the act of reading was given enormously more significant power. Politically and religiously the threat to power this introduces is clear and has played out in one way or another for the past millennia; the effect it had on the educational systems, however, was far more pivotally profound. The move from public classrooms and dogmatic teachings of accepted and recognised readings of a text, to "circumscribing the act of reading to [a student's] own intimate world and experience [allowing the assertion of] their authority as individual readers

over every text" (Manguel, 1997:83) not only moved forward, but splintered the very structures of knowledge and philosophical debate among the masses. Canonised critiques lost their foothold to intimate thought and activity.

The relationship between silence and reading is so ubiquitous in contemporary understandings of the term that it almost never need-be specified, and yet historically, it is a relatively new concept. In *A History of Reading* (1997), Alberto Manguel details one of the first recorded instances of reading in silence as belonging to Augustine in his *Confessions* (~AD 397-400), when describing theologian and Bishop Ambrose. (Ibid, 1997:42-43). "But when he was reading, his eye glided over the pages, and his heart searched out the sense, but his voice and tongue were at rest." (Ibid, 1997:42) - such was the peculiarity of this at the time that its unfamiliarity is carved out in the text as the absolute subject of description, and not merely a descriptive aid. Manguel goes on to state that this form of reading was not common practice until the tenth century (ibid, 1997:43). Karin Littau attributes this more widespread adoption (which she states as being closer to the eleventh century) to the increasingly widespread use of interword spacing within the written word, which thus required less 'sounding out' in order to understand (Littau, 2006:14). Silent reading permitted speed reading and thus allowed for greater quantities of works to be consumed (Ibid, 2006:15). This may well be understood as a logical progression for societies with rapidly growing literacy levels, increasing access to printed materials, and increasing reliance on these forms of communication for day-to-day life, but it is more than that; it represents a movement from the public to the private, from external expression to internal introspection. The individual was handed the space they required to establish themselves as just that. This not only altered the types of text published (the blossoming of erotic novels, love letters, salacious crime dramas just a few evidential examples) but also fundamentally transformed all texts it touched; The intimate privacy of silent reading allowed not only for private material to be consumed, but for all materials consumed to have personal reflections based on individual experiences enact upon them; it is the fertiliser required to allow for the schema type of reading to prevail. In attempting to refute this theory of silent reading's history, James Fenton provides evidence that, in the context presented here, actually reinforces it:

It is a myth that the ancients only or normally read out loud – a myth we
appear to want to believe, since the evidence against it is strong. In Euripides's
Hippolytus, the King, Theseus, confronted with the corpse of his wife, Phaedra,
finds a letter fastened to her hand. While the Chorus expresses its foreboding,
Theseus silently reads the letter (which contains Phaedra's false accusation that
Hippolytus has raped her). Then he has an outburst, whose meaning takes force
from his silent reading. The letter, he says, "shrieks, it howls horrors insufferable
… a voice from the letter speaks …"

Plutarch, in a speech called "On the Fortune of Alexander", tells us that, when
Alexander the Great was silently reading a confidential letter from his mother,
Hephaestion his friend "quietly put his head beside Alexander's and read the
letter with him; Alexander could not bear to stop him, but took off his ring and
placed the seal on Hephaestion's lips". Plutarch tells this story four times: the
point is that Alexander does not have a fit of temper at his friend's presumption:
he behaves "like a philosopher" simply reminding his friend that such letters are
highly confidential. (Fenton, 2006)

The central linking theme of each of these is the notion of privacy, a privacy
necessary for the consumption of private correspondence, and as a means of dramatic
juxtaposition of visceral outbursts.

This interiorisation of reading space is made physical in Christian Boltanski's
Scratch (Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther Konig, 2002) (see Fig. 23), a book
containing a small collection of 'forbidden images' (the title of the 2002 exhibition
the book was created for) each covered with a metallic coating for the reader to
scratch off. By doing so graphic images are slowly revealed, the act of revealing, like
War Porn (2014), an act of voyeuristic confession. The reader sits with the coating
shoved beneath their fingernails, covering their laps or desk with the detritus of their
curiosity. Compared with the relatively absolute nature of *War Porn's* cuttable pages,
where *Scratch* continues to reveal is in the extent and in the mark-making nature of
the reader's experience with the book; each page bearing its scars as a testament to
the voracity and extent of the individual reader's desire to reveal the image beneath.
At any point the act may stop, may be more or less targeted – this level of the reader's
interest and interaction with the book irreversibly marks it forever. Thus, as the book

Figure 23.   *Scratch, 2002*

embodies the interior safe space of reading, it destroys it and its ultimate privacy.

So then, the space of reading exists both physically as an identifiable and locatable space – literally the *place* where reading occurs – and as a less stable, ephemeral psychological space. By extension, the book is a private object, an object/space of 1:1 interaction, and reading an intimate act, the known and unknowable, the irreducibly personal and interior. The book is aligned with private space, reading with intimate. This juncture, beyond mere metaphor, may provide us with the beginnings of a synergetic understanding of the relationship we share with reading, the book, and intimacy.

2.3 Temporality

Considering time in relation to reading and the book is a complex area to navigate; primarily for the lack of formal delineation or hierarchy between the many modes of temporality we may experience at any given time. This is a characteristic (a deliberately neutral term) of the book that is particularly interesting to explore in relation to notions of possession, intimacy and the psycho-somatic functions of the brain when reading. Reading imposes its own experiential properties on a text, the codex's binding denying a transcendent simultaneity to its contents (Stewart, 1992:8), enforcing instead the sequential experience of its spaces (or moments) (Carrion,

1985:31) through time. How then can this be utilised, resisted against, highlighted and hidden within the photobook, and what are the potential effects of doing so on both the audience and the text?

The relationship of the reader to a book brings about a unique set of temporal arrangements; the arrangement of reader, author and narrative means that, at any time, the reader may be experiencing the time presented in the bookwork - its diegetic time (intratextual) - or they may experience their own temporality, or that of the author's outside and above that of the text's re-presentation (extratextual). These two seemingly opposing time-spaces may be assimilated by the annihilation of the book's exteriority, merging physical form with content (Kalaga in Fajger et al., 2010:9), drawing closer together the time of the author, the reader, and the text; or perhaps implicitly evaporating it altogether, synthesising a pseudo-contemporaneity through lack of defined temporal difference, rather than through definitive temporal/ contextual similarity. Is this an argument for an annihilation of physical books? Not quite. To "annihilate the exteriority" of a book is not a call for a destruction of its exterior materiality, but rather a removal of the dichotomy between the interiority of the text and the exteriority of the object - it is a call for the book-object to *exist*.

This particular set of ideas has been debated and discussed for decades (see Carrion in Lyons (1985) and Drucker (2004) for a few examples) and so as a concept adds nothing new to existing structures of knowledge. How this creation of a "total" literature (Kalaga in Fajfer et al., 2010:11) relates to the book's ability to elicit intimate affect is, however, an area of lacking research. The previously mentioned area of research *Liberature* (2010) is a theory that proposes itself as "a distinct literary genre whose constitutive feature is an organic unity of the linguistic content with its material form" (Bazarnik in Tabakowska et al. 2007:191). Where Liberatic theory differs from similar theory around artists' books is in its overt focus on textual components over all other material and medial aspects of a publication; it is a decidedly literary theory/genre. The photobook, as defined earlier in section 0.4 (and many artists' books, for that matter) however, do not treat all other aspects as subservient

to the image, but instead place above this the underlying thread of narrative woven between images, pages, spreads and chapters; they are works whose communication is less aligned with that of sculpture and art-object, and more with poetic and literary traditions. They are, essentially, image-based texts.

This simplification however fails to fully encompass all that is at play in the translation of such titles into newer, digital forms. Rather than existing solely as a new and unique form, "the digital page [...] is always a simulation" (Neves, 2019:298) mimicking the aspects so key to our interaction with the page that they often miss the opportunity to establish their own contours.

> The loss of the codex's three-dimensionality represents perhaps the loss of narrative montage or at least a profound transformation of the book making mechanism (Neves, 2019:298)

When new media, capable of arguably more sophisticated and certainly more expedient forms of communication attempts to replicate the linear index system of a form physically bound to them, (Nelson 2007:257) it is often to the frustration of the reader, whose understanding of more efficient webs of associative pathways to knowledge and understanding sees the linearity of the physical codex as an unnecessary compromise outside of its material bounds.

The unique nature of our spatio-temporal experience with the book may perhaps be discussed more neatly, as suggested by Sharon Helgason Gallagher, in relation to the somatic (Gallagher in Waeckerlé et al., 2013:18). Gallagher makes the argument that what lacks in the translation of a book into a digital form is both the physical movements enacted in reading a book, and the "awesome, truly distinctive choreography of movement in [the] brain from left to right, from right back to left, from spatial to temporal processing, from visual to verbal and back again..." (Gallagher in Waeckerlé et al., 2013:19). It may be counterpointed that the brain makes similar movements in processing a digital book, or a text message, but this movement, this "dance" should not be understood so cynically - reading the temporarily manipulated diodes of a screen, destined to change irrevocably in half a moment's time is to eek out a shape of the text it presents; to dance our eyes around the ink permanently

(reasonably speaking) staining the cotton or wood-based sheets amassed (and a mass) in front of us is to absorb the very finitude of an idea, the outer boundaries of its territorial claim and the very soul of its meaning. We see the edges of its reach, its failures more content - more real, than its infinitely retractable digital facsimile. Where the digital provides the opportunity for redaction, retraction, editing, and constant instability; the physical provides concreteness, resolve, and stability. Is there not some sense of loss in the presence of the italicised footnote "Edited on…" ubiquitous to so many forum posts? The loss of an error, a comment, a sentiment that the instability of digital publishing deemed expendable.

Antony Cairns' 2015 publication *LDN EI* (self-published) (see Fig. 24) is a photobook publishing project that takes this sense of digital instability and uncertainty and attempts to dumbly embrace it; making the intentionally immaterial, purely digital e-publication as physically located as its printed predecessors by hacking old e-readers to only display this one body of his work. Unable to install other titles, login, interact via keyboard or cursor (thanks to the physical interventions imposed by the artist) the reader may only open the device,

Figure 24.   *LDN EI. 2015*

select a chapter or page, view said page and go forwards and backwards. Limits that go some way to restoring parity with the print book they were once poised to place in decline. The e-ink display's transition's between images offering flashes of beautiful contrast and tonal confusion as material shifts before our eyes; the Kuleshov effect (the phenomenon of image sequencing directly influencing conveyed narrative through implied interrelation) is complicated by the page turning here; it's as if the ghost of an in-between image lives between the pages of the book, fading in and out of sight in the half a second it takes to change the page.

Gallagher's "dance" is retrospectively applicable to almost any book-object we come in contact with; from literature like the previously discussed *Slaughterhouse-*

Five (1969) with its temporal loops encircling author, protagonist and reader, to a restaurant menu that demands prospective construction of the dishes being described, and consideration of it in relation to immediate physical hunger and taste. But how do books that are conscious of these spatio-temporal layers overtly engage with them to heighten intimate experience for their audiences?

Mariela Sancari's book *Moisés* (2015, La Fabrica) (see Fig. 25 & 26) seeks to explore the loss of her father, who committed suicide when the artist was 14. As she was never able to see her father's body, Sancari spent many years in denial, fantasising about her father leading another life somewhere (Seymour, 2018). For this body of work, Sancari placed newspaper adverts for men of the age her father would have been, had he still been alive. "She wanted to meet, and photograph, men who might look a bit like the man she lost, to discover in them a tiny fraction of the

Figure 25.   *Moises, 2015*

relationship so finitely denied to her (Seymour and Padley, 2018). The book is made up of two individual codex's bound together, one left and one right, with the pages from each interleaving one-another (see Fig. 25). The work also features sporadic gatefolds, which open to reveal a continuum of images, photoshop montages evocative of Muybridge's studies of motion, that melt and bleed into one-another, attaching a sense of empirical study and "proof" (Cotton, 2011:42) through their repetition (Sancari in Colberg, 2017:123). The focus here is not so much craft-centric, as it is structural; the book's construction manipulates the structure of the work, and the experiential structure for the audience. Sancari cites one of the purposes of the book's structure as being "to slow the viewer's pace by having to unfold the pages, searching, discovering and finding as [she] was..."; drawing the reader and author closer together, the book functioning more as a conveyance of experience than a presentation of findings.

The work's multi-linearity (an intentional, self-cancelling oxymoron) works to obscure and obfuscate any notion of an intratextual time-space or progression within the images, instead presenting the reader with a fractured collection of fragmented and broken moments that are able to transcend and explore multiple

temporal relationships simultaneously. This fluctuating and shifting sense of temporal disconnection, not dissimilar to that explored earlier in Slaughterhouse Five (1969), may be most clearly experienced by a reader as a consciousness of relationships. These may be intratextual relationships between Sancari and her father, or her subjects, or the reader to the text; or they may be extratextual, between the reader and the book, or the reader and Sancari.

These temporal relationships are explored with a fluidity that is made possible by Sancari's stripped back photographic approach, particularly through her use of the studio space; a non-space in her work that serves to further obscure any sense of movement or progression. The work is devoid of an intratextual temporality, the processes behind the image's creation rendered invisible through its apparent non-time.

The relation of Sancari to her father is both one of fact and posited fiction; we have the actuality of their past relationship enveloped within the images of her imaginary, contemporary relationship she shares with her surrogates. Any sense of familiarity or intimacy is falsified, rendered cold and disingenuous by both the author's aesthetic approach and detached presence within the images. Her presence serves purely to display a sense of distance and detachment; the only image in which physical contact is made, it is mediated through an object (a comb) and made when the author's face is obscured completely from view. A touchingly tender gesture, but one built upon
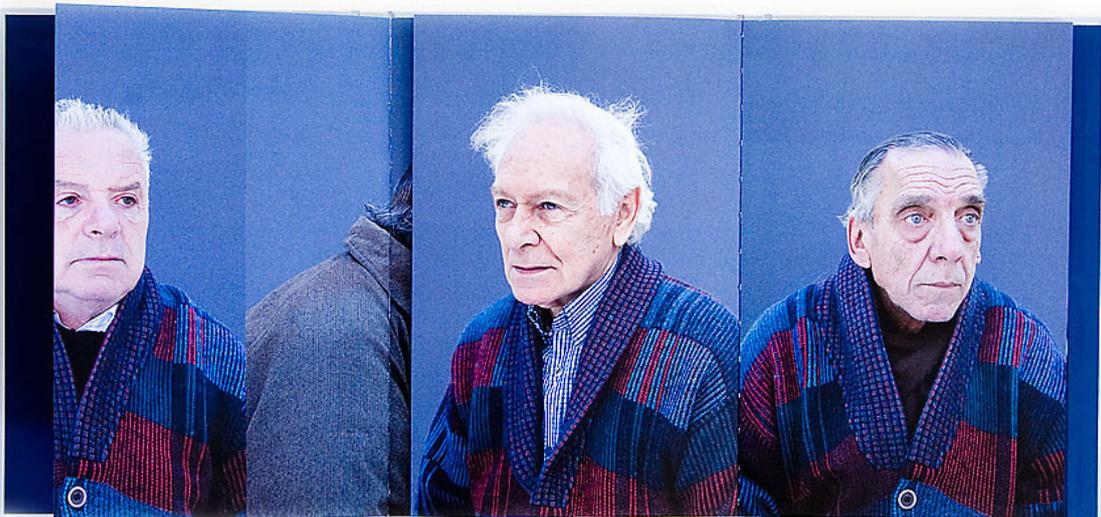
Figure 26. *Moises, 2015*

a relationship of fallacy and fantasy. Sancari's distant relationship with her actual, physical subjects is reinforced through the book's repetition and structure, which works to convey the sense of her "impossible search" (Sancari in Colberg, 2017:123), a search that is solely about experience and performance, and not end result. The mass seriality of her approach, and the effect of this in depersonalising each subject, works to remove sentimentality from the individual, and instead turns each into a data point, a case study in her futile search.

While overly simplistic in isolation, the point remains that the sheer *difference* of the book's physical structure is one of the first affecting aspects of the book. The term "difference" is key here, for the book form is such a ubiquitous and widely recognisable form that any deviation from its culturally engrained and accepted norm may trigger a marked consciousness of the physicality of the work, and the physical relationship between the reader and the book-object. The physical form of the bookwork is, after all, "the first, elementary space one deals with" (Fajfer in Bazarnik, 2010:27), and through altering this initial experience, the reader must constantly re-evaluate their proceeding relationship with the work. Pragmatically, the interaction between the two codex forms allows for the presence of triptychs; experientially, the structure it imposes allows for the idea of the search to translate into reader experience; but consciously, the reader is awoken to the possibility for the form to speak, to *mean* something to the work. In considering consciousness, it's interesting to consider Daniel Dennett's delineation of consciousness into three "stances": Physicalist, Design, and Intentional (Rothman, 2018). Where the physicalist stance assumes an object as an assemblage of atoms merely (the book's size, weight and constituent materials, for example), the design stance recognises purposes and functions (to organise information, to be portable, etc), and the intentional stance beliefs and desires. Where we may refer to more traditional codex form by the project alone - "Cartier-Bresson's *Decisive Moment* is a milestone body of work for street photographers" - where the book's physical makeup is challenged, the semantics change also: "Moises ends before you feel that what little narrative there is has resolved itself" (Bush, 2018). The book, in language at least, is treated as an intentional being; a beholder of consciousness. Clearly, this is not the same as an experiencing of consciousness-proper (we do not

necessarily believe the book to be alive), instead this reveals a kind of synthesised proximity with the consciousness that created it, a proximity, with the author and the work, that underpins a core structure for establishing intimacy with the book form.

2.5 Application

There are a number of aspects of my research that I have taken forward into my practical outcome, the photobook *Ever Forward, Back* (2021), or into the tests and experiments made in its development, but there are also a number of significant ones I have not engaged with practically. For example, the semiotic manipulation of formal reading schemata, as discussed in section 2.2a, was deemed inappropriate for this particular body of work, notably for the ever-present risk of trivialising the diaristic nature of the images and text through some kind of 'facsimile' form. I felt a much greater sense of intimacy, vulnerability and volatility came through when the text was divorced from its creationary form (handwriting in a notebook). This is not to devalue this particular approach, but simply part of the point made earlier on: my practice, in the context of my research, is not a kind of 'demo' piece made as a kind of reference swatch for the themes discussed, it is a piece that has fed off my research. The aspect of this chapter I have taken forward most fully into my practice has been that of stability and finitude. The case of Amazon remotely deleting copies of *1984* from kindle devices gave me the idea to experiment with ways to challenge the material stability and potential temporality of the print-object in order to test the potential for this new instability to evoke sensations of intimate exchange.

The notion of fading is one quite neatly tied to both photographic and book practices in a wider technical and historical sense, and to the illness facing my father. 'Fixing the shadows' was the final hurdle in the invention of photography in the 19th century; photosensitivity was not an issue, anything from silver salts to potatoes to banana skins were shown to possess light-sensitive pigmentation, the real issue lay in controlling this reaction – in stopping and fixing it. Many early experiments with photographic mediums are described with pathos by their creators as they rapidly
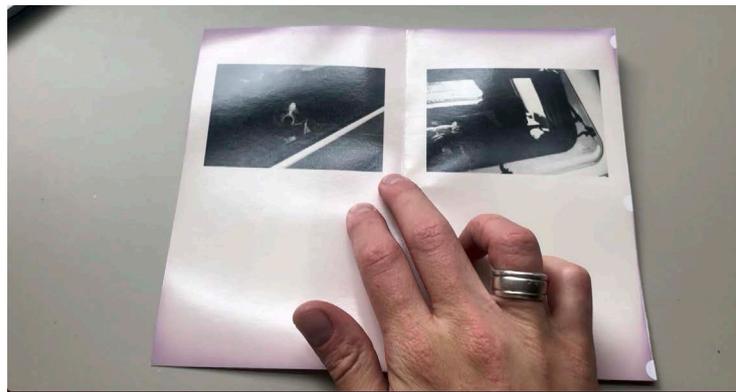
Figure 27. *Darkroom Tests, 2021*

shift from blank material to image and then back again as the reaction that created the image continued to destroy it. Keith Houston's history of the book places almost equal importance on the development of practices within publishing and print. From acidic paper which would deteriorate over time, to the ink itself becoming brittle and faded, early book production was vitiated with self-destructive and self-effacing materials (Houston, 2016).

I began researching methods I may employ within a print run to jeopardise the longevity of a book, initially planning to produce a book whose pages would fade with exposure to light. My initial idea here was to use light-sensitive darkroom paper in an unfixed state to produce a book which would fade into non-existence as it was viewed. The page designs were printed onto transparent inkjet media specifically designed for making digital negatives, allowing the spreads to better integrate the images and text closely together. These negatives were then used to make silver-gelatin prints on fibre-based paper (selected for its flexibility and lower GSM than resin coated papers), which were developed and stopped as normal, but skipped the fixing bath completely, simply being rinsed and dried. These prints were then flattened and bound in the darkroom into a simple stack-bind, which was then moved out of the darkroom and documented on video (see fig. 27 & video "darkroom fading test").

The book's fading rate diminished considerably within the first hour, when it was the most remarkable. During this stage the turning of pages alone would impart shadows of the fingers that touched the page, which would then quickly disappear. The work's density and clarity also changed very noticeably within minutes, while subsequent re-readings introduced only subtle changes. It is unknown as to how long the work would last before disappearing completely (if, indeed, this would happen). One of the most touching aspects of this experiment was the mark left by a reader's fingers in this first reading, the touch and tactility of the object and its relationship with our body heightened to completely new levels. To replicate this on a larger scale one could viably engage with thermochromic inks, which react to heat (usually around 30ºC, body heat), disappearing and reappearing to the touch. Such inks are available

Figure 28.   *Spreads from In The Shadow of the Pyramids, 2015*

commercially and may be formulated for lithographic processes without significant modification. I chose not to move forward with this idea as the nature of the processes involved (custom lithographic printing on large print run, bespoke screen printing on a smaller one) simply did not fit with my desire to produce work demonstrative of the book's capabilities as a mass-producible form. In some way this kind of material intervention feels like a half-step away from the boundaries of the codex that define the parameters of this research.

The materials imposed some design constraints on this layout, perhaps none more prominent than the single-sided nature of the paper, influencing the spread designs and stack-binding employed to bring them all together. Such a design and

bind demand that individual pages hold their own, the creation of a 'spread' made impossible by the nature of the design.

A major issue with this experiment was the laborious nature of its production and subsequent handmade nature. The auratic quality of a handmade item is, in this case, a potential distraction from the fading, and it is very difficult to discern the intimate connection made with an audience caused by either. Was the reader connecting with the subject *and* the book object, or were they connecting to the author *through* the book-object? The other side of this issue was the practicality of producing a book in such a manner, and the efficacy of presenting this in the context of research aiming to develop photobook practices in a wider sense. It is perhaps less useful for a publisher to see the communicative affects of the handmade object in relation to intimacy, when so many practical concerns of publishing are simply ignored. Indeed, this is why I had always planned to produce any publication for this research in an edition of 100+, to ensure its applicability to the wider publishing sector. Research and discussion with others in the field led me to a number of books which use different design techniques to evoke a similar sense of fading; worth noting in particular are *In the Shadow of the Pyramids* (2015) by Laura El-Tantawy and *Telling Time* (2015) by Erin K. Schmidt. El-Tantawy's book (see fig. 28) uses images made over 9 years to create a sequence that appears to have transpired over the course of a single night:

> Juxtaposing the innocence of the past with the obscurity of the present, the book is an experience, edited to look like a one night's encounter. A peaceful and tranquil day suddenly turns violent and chaotic, it's claustrophobic, until a new dawn rises and there is hope again. (El-Tantawy, 2015)

This edit is pulled together by a number of aspects; compositional style and colour palette, sequence and pagination, but is perhaps united most effectively by the shrinking scale of the images as the pages progress. Images grow and shrink with the intensity of the violence and passion within the images, until they simply cease; the madness of a night of turmoil seemingly nullified by the sun's rise and inherent progression of time. Through engaging the scale of the images as a communicative device in its own right, El-Tantawy and designer SYB create an implied narrative
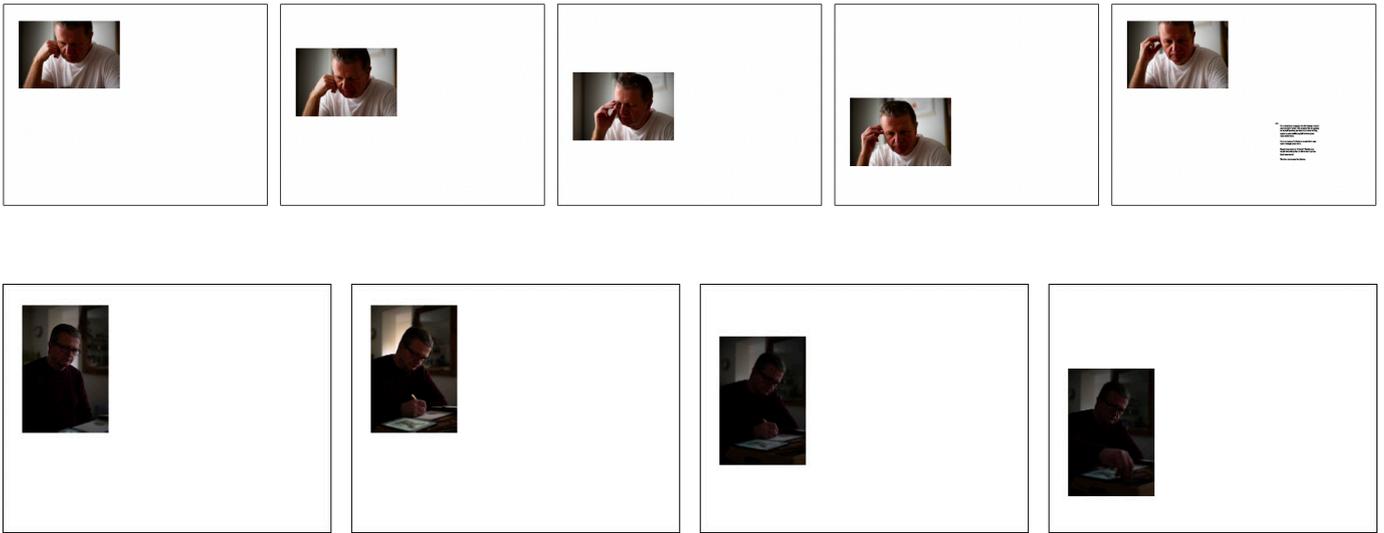
Figure 29.   *Ever Forward, Back, 2021*

that seeks to offer some comprehension to the tumultuous sense of identity within Egyptians living through the 21ˢᵗ century.

In *Ever Forward, Back* (2021), I experimented with a spatial form of image sequence and layout in an effort to better marry the spatiality of the book with that of the image. To do this I created two separate sequences of my dad, each set over multiple pages, laying each image incrementally lower than the one on the page preceeding it (see fig. 29) The images are from what I have come to term "micro clusters", which are groups of images taken in quick succession, featuring very subtle differences in gesture, pose, camera position, focus, exposure or a mixture thereof. The repetition inherent in these clusters can contribute to the creation of a kind of temporal crisis for my reader, who is left flipping pages forward and back to compare, assessing similarities and differences; the presence of the camera (and, thus, photographer) as mediating agent in the space of the referent slowly building in their conscious perception. Placing these two elements apart, one near the beginning and one toward the end of the book, serves to both space out the perceptual affect these layouts have on the reader, while also creating a cyclical relationship within the book, giving the sequence a sense of self-referential closure.

Telling Time (2015) (see fig. 30) is a book whose relevance to my desired notion of fading is perhaps more direct, as is its use in relation to the subject matter. Also

exploring wider themes of identity and memory, Schmidt's work focuses on a family history of Alzheimer's disease.

> The loss of memory is evidenced as the repeated single image, a childhood photograph of the artist's mother, the artist's uncle, and their mother who had suffered from the disease for many years, slowly vanishes to white. The three are sitting in a boat on the beach at their summer home where the artist's mother and her family spent summers while she was growing up. With the turn of each page, this special memory printed on sheer silk organza begins to fade from top to bottom. As it does so, the faces disappear first, one after another, taking with them the identities of the three figures. (The MCBA Prize, 2015)

Translucent media here are used to mimic in a way the type of fading I want to create with my work, substituting the chemical reaction of light on paper with the progression through the pages of the reader; the act of reading becomes surrogate for time itself in this fading and deteriorating image-memory.

Environmental sensitivity, such as photosensitivity, however, is difficult to fully replicate with design gestures or print media alterations (such as printing on silk). Part of the intimacy of the darkroom book stems from its mortality and the reader/possessor's instinct of preservation. Knowing the book is sensitive to light may cause a reader to be more selective of their reading time, they may imbue each reading with greater reverence, for there is no guarantee they will be able to experience it again; like collecting and drinking wine, the consumption of the object is made into an event to be present in and to savour. Alternatively, they may seek to replicate the conditions of a darkroom for reading the book, using a red light exclusively when opening the work,

Figure 30. *Spreads from Telling Time, 2015*

placing themselves in the warm, womb-like environment of the darkroom, drawing them closer to the book's production than they otherwise would be. Care, preservation, and a sense of mortality – how better to produce intimate affect with an inanimate object?

However, the pursuit of doing just this has resulted in a variety of experimental dummies that each test a different aspect of fading within the design. First I tested a technique within InDesign that creates a true opacity gradient throughout the progression of page spreads (see fig. 31), resulting in images, texts or other design elements that would progressively fade (or appear). While certainly a functional way of achieving literal fading, the tests conducted with this method yielded very little in the way of affective communication. The work felt insincere and, once the "puzzle" of this technique solved, it felt repetitive and clumsy. The notion of fading within this body of work required a sensitivity and delicacy that such a rigid and formulaic approach could not contain.

As my layout progressed and the notion of a fractured and fragmented chronology became clearer, I experimented with the fading occurring chronologically (intratextually). This worked really well in highlighting the fragmented chronology of the book, almost confirming what would otherwise be suspicion only; the fading ebbs in and out like a tired and confused memory, or a mind trying to reconcile what it holds (or does not) with lived experience. In beginning to work with designer Ken Borg however, the idea was conceived for the text alone to fade, and to do so not in opacity as I had been testing, but in relative weight. This pushes the subtlety of this layer of communication even further, to the point that one could viably read the work and not notice. This level of subtlety is an important aspect to my practice, my photographic work marked by a quiet sensitivity that demands a lot from the reader in terms of interpretation and contextual empathy. Such a photographic style, I feel, requires a level of focus from page to page that can very easily become confused or skewed by additional design elements and thus really benefits from subtle cues that may indeed be missed or ignored in an initial reading (in a similar way to Thom and

Beth Atkinson's *Missing Buildings* (2015), discussed in Chapter 1, whose subtlety and unassuming style forces a re-read once the rebus has been delivered in the final essay).

The use of fading in *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) has been developed further, as a means to both communicate on a literal level (the fading of my dad), and to reinforce the fractured chronology of the images and text; what might seed as a suspicion in reading the texts and looking over the images in detail, can be confirmed in the shifting weights of the typeface, which transitions from relatively heavy to very fine as the intratextual chronology progresses and my dad's condition deteriorates. This parallels with the images' fragmentary temporality, alleviating them of the expectation that they will present a linear narrative illustrative of the textual components; instead image and text are given permission and space to exist and interact in the immediate context of the book's pages, communicating through sheer form and in the interspace of images, text, page and binding. Temporality, when fractured like this, presents the audience with a dilemma – a crisis of logical progression and rationale. The reader can no longer rely on an assumed structure underpinning the work, and must instead shift conscious thought and perception onto authorial intention, semiotic language, and linkages outside of the internal time-space of the images. Shattering the temporality of the *individual images* gives new focus, new profound gravity to the temporality of the *book-object*.
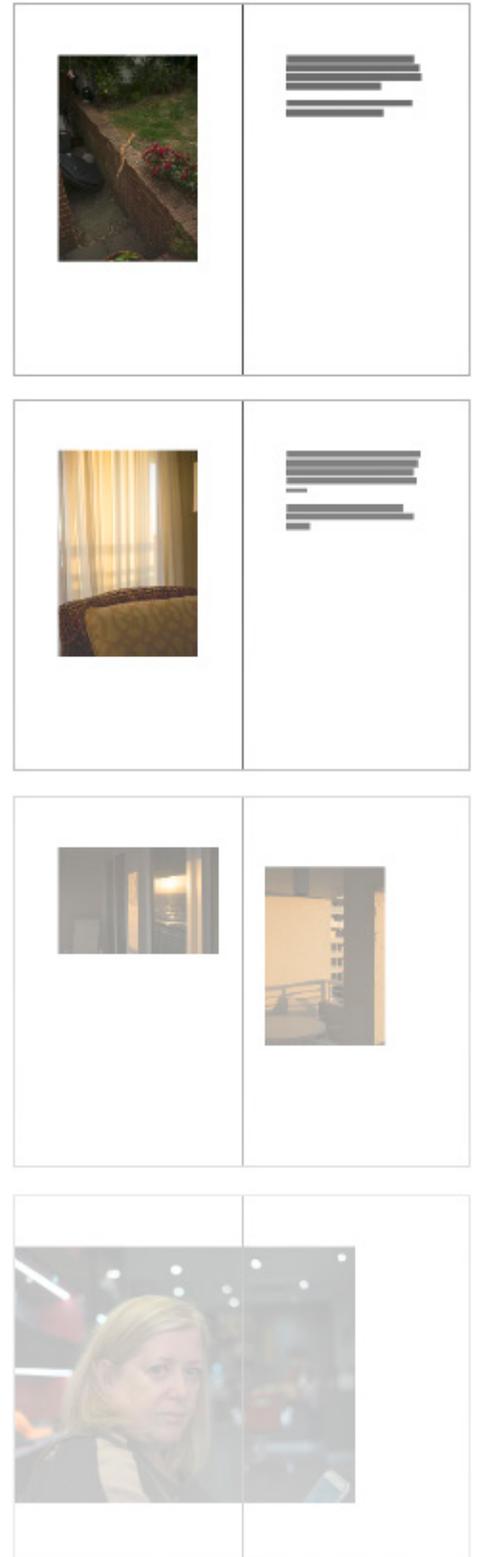
Figure 31. *InDesign fading tests, 2021*

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Photobook Potentialities

3.1 Introduction

For this chapter I will categorise according to two concepts whose relevance have continually revealed themselves throughout chapters one and two: materiality and interaction.

This decision stems from an organic and reactive response to the research and writing process. In chapter two, while providing an excellent starting point, many of the more abstract and complex ideas that began to germinate started to become somewhat unruly to contain within the parameters of 'time' and 'space', thus necessitating a move onto terms with a different (but not entirely disconnected) dynamic. **Interruption**, **Materiality**, and **Possession & Ownership** are the three headings this chapter will build its arguments upon, terms arising naturally alongside the categorisation of chapter two. Phenomenology's links to interruption, possession and ownership are almost elemental; these are the kinds of relationships and phenomena the entire discourse is coined to explore and develop. Materiality may have less immediately obvious connections to phenomenology's structures of study and formalisation but is in fact fertile ground in terms of academic research and discussion.

In section 3.2 we will explore interaction and phenomenological experience via interruption; a particular aspect of our interaction with- and experience of- media objects. The interruption is considered here in terms of its relational effect on

our being with objects. What is the role of interruption in the communication of intimacy? What formal structures exist in the creation of interruptive affect, and how might these be used to heighten or create feelings of intimacy? How have other mediums used interruptive strategies to these ends, and how might these be adapted to the photobook? Some key theory for shaping these arguments comes from what may collectively be referred to as studies around 'making strange'; exploring in particular **verfremdungseffekt** in the work of Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin, Viktor Shklovsky's **ostraneniye –** or defamiliarisation, and **erschütterung** by Theodor Adorno. These theories, brought together in the context of other experiential phenomena, are hoped to build an understanding of the book's particular potentialities as a communication device, via a kind of dissective analysis.

Material concerns will inevitably come up over the course of section 3.2, which will lead neatly on to 3.3's more concentrated analysis of a few aspects of materiality central to this thesis's arguments. Continuing to show her influence over this research, Susan Stewart's reflections on scale will be explored in relation to the sublime and the work of John James Audubon. From here, the focus will move to the notion of detail and the fetish object, before focusing on the significance of object-ness overall. This section rounds off by looking at spatial particularity and the materiality of experience in the work of Bryan Schutmaat, Lynne Ramsay and Toni Morrison.

In section 3.4 the significance of possession and ownership will explore our relationships with the book and its new-media offspring in an attempt to highlight some deficiencies in the remediation efforts around the codex form. This will start with an analysis and critique of some early hyperbole surrounding the release of the Amazon Kindle, in relation to Marshall McLuhan's so called 'Laws of Media' (Eric [and Marshall] McLuhan, 1988). This will lead onto an exploration of the paper that inspired the section: Rebecca Watkins' excellent *Digital Possessions: Theorising Relations between Consumers and Digital Consumption Objects* (2015). This paper not only explores the significance of possession as distinct from ownership, but also explores the transitional routes we take in moving from one relationship to another

(ie transforming the owned object into a possession), the significance of the public and private meanings ascribed to an object, and how we use possessions as expressive extensions of ourselves. In terms of affect, the notion of grand scale is an interesting area for consideration here, for its links with grandeur, exteriority, the overtly natural, the sublime. What then does sublimity in relation to intimacy look like? How does this seemingly dichotomous relationship ever become reconciled in practice?

3.2 The Role of Interruption

While on holiday in America with my parents recently, we were making our way towards a bus stop when suddenly the skies opened, drenching us and all those around us within seconds. The rain, what Forest Gump may have described as "fat rain", went on for some hours at this rate, but it had only been present for 5 minutes by the time we reached the shelter of our bus stop with, as luck would have it, our bus awaiting us. As an introvert, the thing that struck me about the experience was the new openness I had coming out of the excitement of this downpour; I found myself scanning the faces of others for similar levels of disbelief at the weather, only to be met with a camaraderie some inert part of me half expected. We spoke and laughed and compared incredulity (to this day I still mispronounce "deluge" as "duhlooge" in the style of our American comrades on the bus, as a means of recalling the memory shorthand with my mum) and for those few moments between the shocking interruption of the downpour and acclimatising ourselves to this new normal, we were all present together. It was reflecting on this moment that I perceived first-hand the profound potential for interruption to alter conscious perception and structures of experience; and subsequently its significance in the communication circuit of art became clear.

One of my earliest lectures on the photobook took as a starting point an excerpt from a review of Eamonn Doyle's book *I* by Daniel Jewesbury in Source Magazine where he states how:

> I've never really understood the attraction of these printerly eccentricities,
> except that they make part of the book a bit different to the rest; is this
> somehow a good thing, in and of itself? So many photobooks now feature some
> kind of peculiarity in the binding, the folding or the printing that it would seem
> almost churlish to publish a book with all the pages the same size, published on
> the same paper stock, and all bound in the same way. (Jewesbury, 2014:79)

My initial reaction to this was somewhat double-edged; while I disagreed with the apparent disdain for such artefacts, I appreciated the formalisation of an idea I had unconsciously found profound resonance with. These eccentricities were, for me, my first cognisant experience of conscious form - they were the first examples of a reflexive object I had come to truly understand and perceive as such, and unlocking this understanding led to a far greater appreciation of other reflexive media: cinema, literature, poetry, and design, which posed meta-questionings of their forms or very existence while also carrying the representational weight of their referent.

Perhaps the key area where Jewesbury and I differ in our reception of these artefacts is in our perceived idea of what they are to the book. Where Jewesbury sees these as *additional* to the book's standard form, as though all published works are carved from the same raw material, my perception of these "eccentricities" is as *interruptions* to the otherwise standardised flow of the book. More than mere distraction, the interruption relies upon- and subsequently creates some very interesting structures of reading and consciousness, possessing massive potential for the photobook, particularly I might posit in relation to the elicitation of intimate affect.

The term "interruption" is treated here as an umbrella term for multiple underlying phenomena, the primary being **Verfremdungseffekt** by Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin, **ostraneniye** (otherwise known as alienation/defamiliarisation) by Victor Shklovsky, and **erschütterung** by Theodor Adorno. **Verfremdungseffekt** stems from theatrical practices and theory, its structure predicating on the notion of "making strange" in order to uncover conditions of being and experience (Benjamin, 1998:18). Walter Benjamin, in his book *Understanding Brecht* (1966, here cited as

Parade – Hoboken, New Jersey
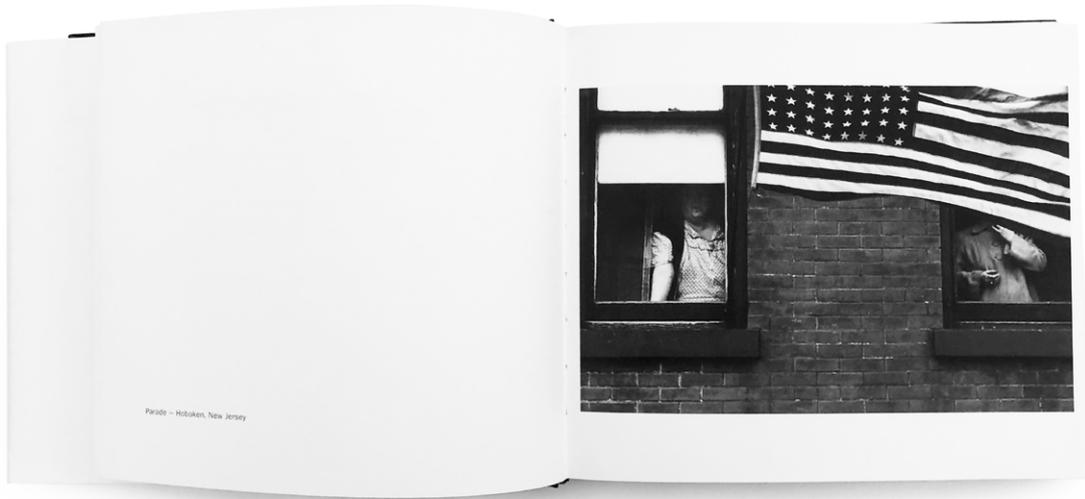
Figure 32.   *Parade –Hoboken, New Jersey, 1955*

City fathers – Hoboken, New Jersey

Figure 33.   *City Fathers – Hoboken, New Jersey, 1955*

Political rally – Chicago

Figure 34.   *Political Rally – Chicago, 1955*

Figure 35.   *Funeral – St Helena, South Carolina, 1955*

Figure 36.   *Rodeo – Detroit, 1955*

its 1998 translation) explores Bertolt Brecht's work in this respect specifically in relation to the interruption, showing us how such 'uncovering' is achieved through interrupting processes, reminding us that "interruption is one of the fundamental methods of all form-giving." (Ibid, 1998:19). An important aspect of this idea is that which is interrupted, in the case of Brecht, according to Benjamin, this is "processes" – established rituals of action with predictable and assumable stages of progression and development. Inherent within our cognitive perception of these processes are expectation and anticipation; two states of forward thinking, predicting and planning that act as fodder for the interruption to make use of.

The opening sequences to Robert Frank's *The Americans* (1958) is an extraordinary example of sequencing used to defamiliarise the photographic. Moving between

the first three images of the book is a relatively unremarkable affair (that is not to undermine the power of these images as individual pieces); from the decorated domestic window of parade onlookers who stand in the shadowed comfort of their homes to watch (fig. 32), to a collection of "City Fathers" observed from below, their attire and the decorated stand they occupy signalling attendance of a similarly celebratory event, one pouting as if to send a kiss to an adoring onlooker (fig. 33), to an even lower angled image of a man in pure celebration at a political rally, who stands on the marble window ledge of an apparently large building to exalt his joy (fig. 34). The images are tied together neatly in their sense of reverie and celebration, images of all classes sharing in the spoils of their country. *Funeral – St Helena, South Carolina* (fig. 35), however, disrupts the flow of this rapture with a starkly quiet, considerate, and deliberate image of a group of black men mourning (a fact that, if not clear enough in the face and body language of the main subject, is alluded to in the title). In a sequence that proceeds on the rhythm of a celebration, *Funeral* hits with a silence and introspection quite unlike anything. The proceeding image, of a young white cowboy smoking and gazing outward from the book, steely, masculine and controlling (fig. 36), creates a 'white buffer' for the black experience to exist between: The pedestalled ignorance of the man at the rally, the patronising smugness of the man blowing a kiss, the voyeuristic gaze of the family watching from the distant safety of their shadowed home. A tightly controlled space of pain and suffering packaged between layers of white success and dominance. The record sleeve to Miles Davis' 1957 album *'Round About Midnight* features a write-up by George Avakian in which he describes Davis's playing as characterised "by both the nervous, jagged lines of the bop school and the pensive relaxation of the cool period which followed" going on to describe this as a "paradox of tension produced by an outwardly relaxed style" (Avakian in Davis, 1957). This is precisely the sensation one feels upon turning the page to see *Funeral*, where an outwardly melancholic, slow and deliberate image punctures and resonates against the reader's complicity up to this point. What we have is the first instance in this book of the edit alienating itself – introducing a foreign object into its own narrative flow in order to make strange the subject matter within. Once our quickly habitual and ritualised manner of looking at the work is challenged – made strange – all that

Figure 37. *Image of War Porn's fore edges (2014)* **Figure 38.** *Image of War Porn's fore edges (2014)*

proceeds is received with a kind of hesitant curiosity, constantly questioning rather than merely accepting and receiving.

Previously, Christoph Bangert's 2014 book *War Porn* was discussed in relation to the author's use of connected but perforated fore-edges on the pages of the book in order to conceal images, while simultaneously inviting readers to peek through or cut the pages, thus confronting more openly our relationship to censorship and voyeurism (see fig. 37 & 38). We may consider this intrusion on the book an affront to our habitual approach to the process of reading (particularly photobooks where page turning may happen far more rapidly). The content of the book certainly deserves far more conscious consideration than the absent minded 'leafing' developed and honed on more palatable subject matter, and to do this the process of reading itself must be interrupted so as to not exist as pre-conceived any longer. To read *War Porn* is, essentially, not to read but to perceive the constituent parts of the act of reading, along with some deformations, as totally new and confrontational.

Ostraneniye or 'defamiliarisation' is a term perhaps more often mistaken as an artistic device, when it is in fact better understood as a result obtained through the usage of any number of devices (Lemon & Reis, 1965:4). It is Shkolvky's argument that the habitual way of perceiving is designed to make the unfamiliar as easily understandable and digestible as possible (Shklovsky, 2015:161), with minimum conscious effort, and that the purpose of art is to push back in the opposite direction; to make unfamiliar the habitual and automatic and thus transform our experience with it in conscious-heightening ways (ibid, 2015:162). By 'defamiliarising' a subject

an audience is forced to experience it anew, to perceive consciously – perhaps for the first time – the essential aspects of its existence freed from the assimilating language of automatic perception and unconscious processing. Bill Brown's *Thing Theory* (2001) may be viewed in a similar light, the broken object or interrupted component foregrounding the thingness of the previously transparent object; the phone screen instantly transformed to a black mirror as its battery dies, the window pane brought into focus by its dirt or damage, the broken zipper on a pair of jeans; where they differ is essentially in their relation to intentionality: Thing Theory examines and explores the affect of consciousness in relation to materiality, ostraneniye is the intentional affect of consciousness-heightening devices. Linking back to *War Porn*, perforated fore-edges shatter the act of reading into individual parts that are individually incomprehensible – holding, turning, poking, cutting, looking, touching, covering, revealing, shutting. The process, ritual, habit, of reading is broken, leaving the audience with the "thingness" (Brown, 2001:4) of it all, along with some truly horrifying images of a war we have grown far too complacent with.

In a similar thread, **erschütterung** is Theodore Adorno's term of choice in discussing the notion of a "shudder" in relation to the artwork;

> Shudder, radically opposed to the conventional idea of experience [Erlebnis], provides no particular satisfaction for the I; it bears no similarity to desire. Rather, it is a memento of the liquidation of the I, which, shaken, perceives its own limitedness and finitude. This experience [Eifahrung] is contrary to the weakening of the I that the culture industry manipulates. For the culture industry the idea of the shudder is idle nonsense; this is probably the innermost motivation for the deaestheticization of art (Adorno, 2002:255)

We may then take Adorno's account of the shudder as the resultant <u>effect</u> of verfremdungseffekt or ostraneniye; these two processes or states of consciousness altering lead to the shudder, the erschütterung. The term's resonance with Shklovky's theories around habitualisation is perhaps best revealed in its earlier use by Nietzsche who contrasts the term with "happiness and comfort" (Maharaj, 2013:194) – this comfort, it may be posited, relating directly to Shklovsky's proposition of automated and habitual modes of perception. Shklovsky goes further still, following Tolstoy in

Figure 39. *Spreads from Windows, Mirros, Tabletops, 2013*
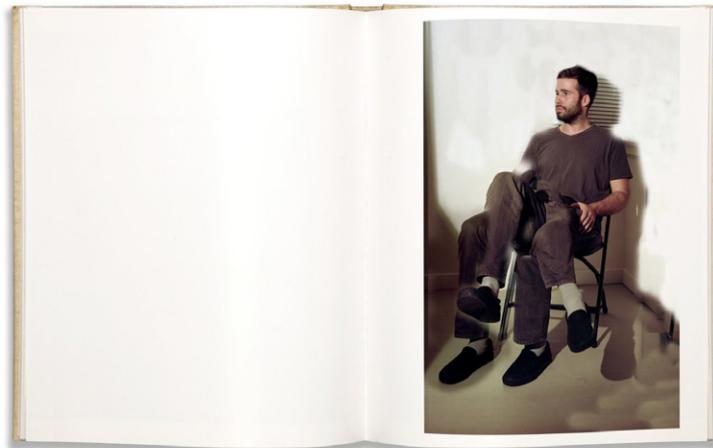
Figure 40. *Spreads from Windows, Mirros, Tabletops, 2013*

equating this consciousness of thought, perception and being not with experience, but with *existence*: "If the whole life of many people is lived unconsciously, it is as if this life had never been" (Tolstoy in Shklovsky, 2015:162). Thus, the importance of phenomenology is made abundantly clear – the various types, structures and approaches to 'making strange' are all working to the effect of altering and enhancing phenomenological affect and experience. These "constructed representation[s] exist in opposition to the smooth, consumable forms of representation associated with the spectacle. It is rough; it produces friction." (Wiley, 2012:32). This quote is from a review of the work of Lucas Blalock, an artist who uses the mechanism of a photographic image as a means to cause alienation between it and its audience. In his book *Windows, Mirrors, Tabletops* (Mörel Books, 2013) (see fig. 39 & 40) Blalock blends his deliberately ham-fisted photoshop work with photographic and compositional collages to generate an oscillating sense of relationship and revelation between the pages. As the reader navigates the book, it is hard not to be tempted to flick back-

and-forth to previous pages with newly gleaned knowledge as more of the work's structures reveal themselves. The oddness of the work is also what ultimately pushes the work further away; as each page reveals new possibilities for unpicking and 'understanding' the incongruity of the images that came before, the work actually manages to become stranger, more odd, more foreign.

The book's cultural baggage is quite unlike any other form within creative practices, and our expectations are cultivated accordingly:

> Books declare themselves through their titles, their authors, their places in a catalogue or on a bookshelf, the illustrations on their jackets; books also declare themselves through their size. At different times and in different places I have come to expect certain books to look a certain way, and, as in all fashions, these changing features fix a precise quality onto a book's definition. I judge a book by its cover; I judge a book by its shape (Manguel, 1997:125)

From an extremely young age we come to understand how a book works, the kinds of things it may contain, and how we should expect to interact with it; once this is learnt the book widely becomes a transparent vehicle for the various types of content it may be tasked with conveying. Such is its cultural engraining that it would seem like questioning the design of soil to consider the evolution of the book's design and form, as though proposing such a question assumes the book has not simply always 'just been' (and always will be). Karin Littau describes how "without such common 'prejudgment' or 'foreknowledge' […] the understanding of literary texts would 'degenerate into a free-floating production of differences'" asserting any understanding of a text as dependent on the "historical situatedness" of the reader (Littau, 2006:110). This 'situatedness' relies on what HR Jauss calls the "horizon of expectation". Jauss, a literary theorist developed his 'Reception Theory' as a theory to bridge the gap between marxist historical aesthetic formalist approaches to literature. For him, the literary work is not a monological object, but rather *dialogical*:

> it exists only in the form of a dialogue between text and reader, a dialogue whose terms and assumptions are ever being modified as we pass from one generation of readers to the next. As such, literature is not an object or a thing but an event and it can exert a continued effect only if readers continue to respond to it. (Mambrol, 2018)

This theory of reading and reception, considered in relation to the "horizon of expectation" may thus also be applied to the dialogue between the physical form of the text to the reader's cultural context. In contrast to Husserl's notion of fulfillment or frustration in response to expectation, Jauss asserts a text may satisfy, disappoint, or refute its audiences prepositions (Littau, 2006:111), going on to assert the importance of a text never fully satisfying for risk of creating work "that neither challenges nor expands an audience's horizons." (Littau,
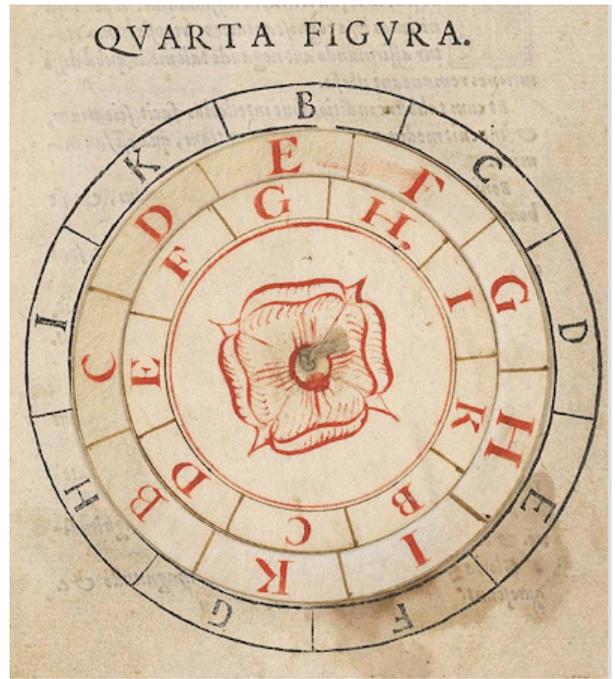
Figure 41.   *Ars brevis XVIII Century.*

2006:111). We may consider the pop-up book as an early example of the codex's physicality challenging and expanding our expectations of the book-form; suddenly the book is made to occupy three-dimensional space (as though it hadn't always), and its pages' propensity to hide and reveal through folding are brought into new, stark light. One of the first known examples of this is Roman Llull's *Lullian Circle* (see fig. 41) which used concentric rotating discs to allow for different associations of "words, knowledge and categories" to be made, ultimately and through reader exploration, revealing what he thought to be the finite truths of all knowledge (Corba, 2014). A later and perhaps more widely known example of this "turn-up" style is Andreas Vesalius's 1543 *Humani Corporis Fabrica* (see fig. 42), a medical textbook which used foldouts of the human body in order to aid its readers learning of the anatomy through uniquely engaged and intimate exploration of the illustrations (Corba, 2014). These initial footsteps out of the codex's familiar ground were to push the boundaries of communicative efficiency/efficacy within the book form; they opened up the possibility for the book's materiality to be an intrinsic carrier of meaning.

An interruption's largest reliance is on expectation and anticipation; these two perceptive states water and fertilise the ground in which the interruption lies dormant, waiting for the correct confluence of conditions to make possible its brief but profound germination.
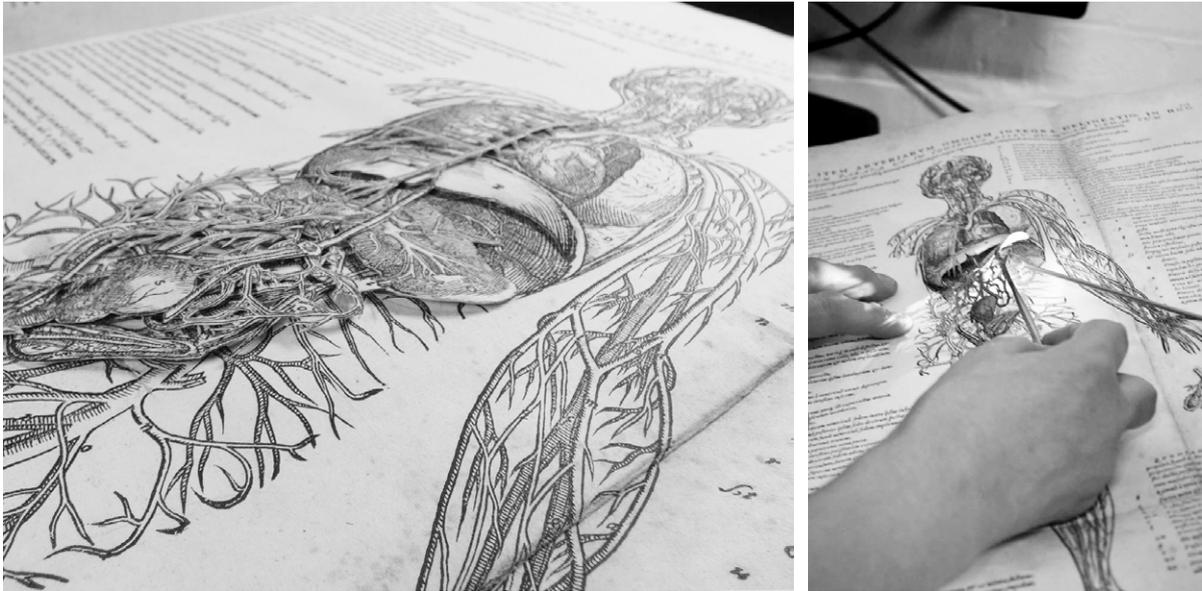
Figure 42.   *Spread from De humani corporis fabrica (1555)*

Expectation, according to Husserl, is born not out of "empty possibilities, but rather possibilities intentionally predelineated in respect of content" (Skorin-Kapov, 2007:143) meaning that subconscious, habitual, or automatic forms of expectation and anticipation are shaped to fit contextual parameters based upon past experiences, thus memory must penetrate expectation in order to provide the building blocks for its creation (ibid, 2007:145) – "Husserl's approach asks for symmetry between retentions and protentions as the two opposing directions of the "constant infinite horizon" of temporality" (ibid, 2007:144).

Fulfilment needn't be the precise apprehension of an expectation in actuality, but rather the actualising of that which is perceived via protention as within the realm of possibility; fulfilment's flexibility perhaps, as Husserl asserts, better likened to *recognition.* Expectations may also manifest as composites, with layers of expectation placed upon one-another; we may expect a book to open in a certain direction, and then for the pages to all be uniform in colour, size and shape. A disruption in this flow of expectation and fulfilment, however, does not necessarily correspond to an interruption of experience;

> This seems to disrupt to some extent the flow of experience in which the future
>   via protention becomes the present via primal impressions, becoming the past
>   via retention. But this is not a problem so long as the perception related to
>   expectation – even if not conforming to expectation and, hence, not fulfilling it –
>   does not overstep the boundary of my possible experience. (Ibid, 2007:147-148)

Take for example here the humble and fairly ubiquitous gate-fold; a standard enough method of interjecting some break-point in the flow of a book so as to not remove an audience entirely from the assumptive act of reading, but perhaps not something within the immediate and specific expectation of the reading audience. While unexpected in the immediacy of the moment, it is an interjection that lies on our 'horizon of expectation' the moment any book is touched, and thus its interruptive affect and potential is minimal.

In overstepping this boundary, we experience the true opposition to the fulfilment of expectation, which is not non-fulfilment (which Husserl asserts as being a type of fulfilment), but rather *frustration*. Frustration (also disillusion, disappointment and enttäuschung), here a term not intended to convey emotional elements "but rather to the cognitive sense of one's assumption being dissipated" (Moran & Cohen, 2012:85), is then perhaps the point at which newly conscious and open reading of a situation, object or interaction occurs. Where the apprehended relationship, made pregnant with protentions and retentions, "belong to passive experience" (ibid, 2012:343), the frustration of these points is what triggers new experience and active, conscious perception.

Melinda Gibson's book *VI*, made as part of Self Publish Be Happy's *SPBH Editions*, explores the artists' reaction to the traumatic loss of her South London studio to a fire. The book goes beyond the realms of the expectational horizon by overtly manipulating (and, thus, arguably *introducing*) another sensorial element to the book form – smell (see fig. 43). Olfactory stimulation, in relation the book is not usually associated with authorial intention, but through a ritualistic smoking of the books, the scent of smoke and fire is introduced to the pages, pungently retained by the folds of

Figure 43.   *SPBH IV live smoking event, 2014*

the book and revealed in stark clarity as each page is turned; the impact is immediate and visceral. The book's folds, shape, and our manner of interaction is given new significance via newly complexified relationship with the object in our hands. Beyond mere metaphorical link with the subject matter, awareness anew is invested in the reader's physical presence, the aroma transferred to whichever fingers come in contact with the pages, the closed book's subtle fragrance marking each territory it is stored in – bags, shelves, proximate books – the book, beyond being the indexical mark of its author, leaves indexical evidence of its own behind.

Victor Shklovsky's habitual and thus automatic mode of perceiving the world is not innocent, he warned that "to live life in its entirety at this level of engagement, to participate in one's existence only unconsciously, is tantamount to never having lived at all." (Koenig, 2004:33). Henry David Thoreau's seminal work *Walden* (1854), a work whose subject is the author's own lifestyle interruption, wherein he opted to live in self-sufficient solitude for over two years, is perhaps best known for a quote whose similarities with Shklovsky's above is not hard to ascertain;

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the
> essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what they had to teach, and
> not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (ibid, 1962[1854]:78)

The interruption for Thoreau was not in relation to media but the habitual lifestyle of his time, however this desire to "live deliberately" is justifiably identical to that posited by Shklovsky, Brecht, Adorno, and others – to heighten conscious, active perception where subconscious and passive modes of reception have previously been prevalent. To 'read deliberately' however, is perhaps a term whose implied constant belies the temporary lapse into consciousness that the work herein discussed creates; the purpose of the interruption within the photobook is not to create a new perceptive constant, but to draw momentary attention to the unconscious and automatic mode of interaction and reception assumed when performing habitualised acts, like reading a book.

The interruption may serve to create "both a space and a moment for reflection, and opportunity for the self to escape its own limitedness and the mind-numbing

force of mere distraction", while simultaneously challenging the objective status of meaning in a piece (Koenig, 2004:4). The locus of meaning moves from the cold object, and onto the active, dynamic *relationship* between reader, author and (in the context of this research) photobook; focus taken from the superficial or referential 'series' (de Duve, 1978:114) of the photo-object placed onto the relational, subjective, and reader dependent context of reading.
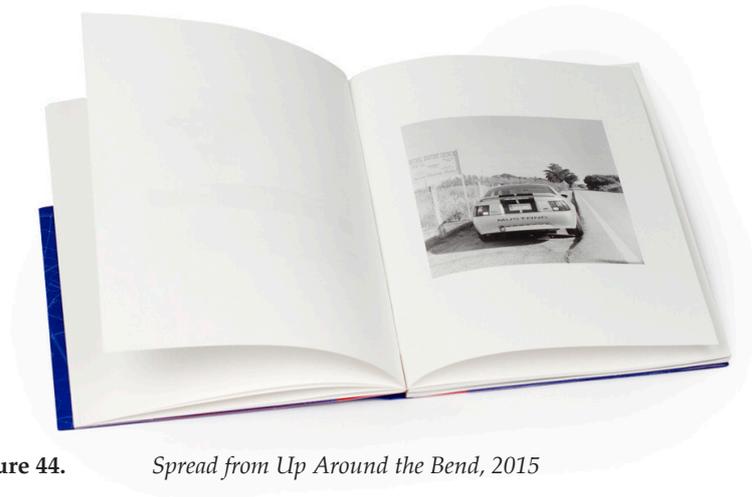

Figure 44.   *Spread from Up Around the Bend, 2015*

Hito Steyerl wrote of the propensity for the "poor image" to work in shifting focus away from the content or subject of an image or series of images, and onto the conditions behind their emplacement (Edwards, 2006:68); their "violent dislocation, transferrals, and displacement of images - their acceleration and circulation within the vicious cycles of audio-visual capitalism." (Steyerl, 2009) veiling the photographic illusion with a sudden opacity that is difficult to reconcile. Christian Lagata's 2015 photobook *Up Around the Bend*, which explores the influence of the presence of an American military base on a small Spanish community, makes use of this to shift audience consciousness into a mode of distrust and meta-questioning of the photographic object's value as an objective communication tool. While the vast majority of the book's pages are filled with calm, balanced, methodical and technically refined black and white images printed on an uncoated, warm tone paper stock (see fig. 44), a signature of thin, glossy magazine-like paper is bound into the middle of the book containing full-bleed, low resolution colour images taken inside the base by those with access (see fig. 45). The images' inclusion is left with a kind of Sebaldian auratic mystery around them (WG Sebald was well known for using photographs of

loosely linked subjects to the fictional elements of his writing in order to reinforce his audience's credulity; often placed incongruously on a page but never directly acknowledged within the text); while it is assumed that these PR-friendly images of family fun days, Iwo Jima style flag raisings and training exercises are from the base at the centre of the book, there is no written account of their creation, cultivation or curation – they simply are. Clues to the means behind their cultivation are left only by the digital scars they wear so proudly, suggesting their roots to be theft and appropriation. In place of the warm, ground-level personal intimacy Lagata shares with the subjects of his black and white images is a cold, cynical scepticism; the resultant juxtaposition equally enhances the privileged intimacy we share with the black and white images, as it distances any sense of candour or honesty from the appropriated colour images.

Figure 45. *Spread from Up Around the Bend, 2015*

Our assumption-dependent relationship with the book form thus makes any interruption of experience so significantly effective at drawing out heightened conscious perception and proprioception with its audience. Like a great deluge of rain punctuating a walk to the bus, the potential for these interruptions to ground and heighten our conscious perception holds potential for unexpected and profound experiential change.

3.3a Materiality

> The thesis that the book's materiality has an impact on the contents of our readings is very much the grounding insight of textual criticism, a discipline concerned with how the physical forms of a text (page layout, typeface, book design, even punctuation) affect not just a given text's meaning but therefore also the way in which it can be interpreted… (Littau, 2006:24)

Up to this point, the selected structure of this thesis has presented materiality as a kind of resultant aberration of spatiality, temporality, or the myriad of debates and

discussions around the photo/art book form; one that must be discussed but never fully fits in. The material properties of a book are not necessarily the same as its spatial impact, nor does it directly relate to the temporal aspects of readings, yet it is one of the central areas in just about any expanded body of work within this area of research (due in no small part to artists' general eagerness to work with the book form *consciously* in creating such works). How then do we begin to understand the links between intimacy in its widest possible sense, and the materiality of the book-object? What are some of the key material considerations we need to examine in order to begin fostering an understanding of the potentialities for this aspect of book design and creation?

In looking at some integral qualities that qualify a book form as a codex, one of the primary aspects are the anthropologically defined boundaries for its size; better known shorthand as *scale*. Irreducibly bound to the body, "scale is a measurement that finds its dimensions within us; proportion is an interior, subjective experience" (Plumly, 2004:318), the body acting as our "mode of perceiving scale [...] taking the place of origin for exaggeration" (Stewart, 1993:xii). Susan Stewart describes how straying either way in with the relative dimensions of the book to the body materially affects the reader's conscious perception of it (as both object and concept). The miniature book calls conscious attention to both its existence as a physical object, and its existence within the physical world (Stewart, 1993:44-45), causing the disproportionality of our hand and body to the book/world to cause "our bodies [to] erupt into a confusion of before-unrealised surfaces" (Stewart, 1993:70). The gigantic book, however, assumes a similar yet opposing relationship between reader and worldly perception; it is through a kind of sublime relationship with the body that its affect is achieved, enveloping the body in its folds, rather than being enveloped by it. Where the miniature may be moved by and around our bodies, the gigantic must be moved through by the body; it is closer to being a location than it is an object. Let's take John James Audubon's masterwork *Birds of America* (Audubon & Havell, 1827-1838) as an example of the extreme transformative potential of scale on the book work. While originally sold as individual plates on a subscription basis, the intention

Figure 46.   *Viewing of Birds of America, 2016*

was always for these loose sheets to be collected and bound together into a book – the reason for this unusual dissemination method (other than time and cost) was to avoid having to furnish the British Legal Deposit Libraries with free copies. The extreme "double elephant folio" (1003mm x 723.9mm) size of the works facilitated Audubon's naturalist desires to depict the included birds at true life-size, moving away from a reliance on relative scale inferred by included foliage and other staffage's and placing the reader in a position to experience the physical presence of the represented birds in a far more anthropometrically direct and affecting manner (see fig. 46). The body, the hand and depth perception are called upon all at once for the reader to begin making sense of the inescapable sense of awe such a work inspires. The works' incredible size translates the immediate lived experience of nature as it surrounds the human body (Stewart, 1993:71) into a newly liveable experience. This experience, however, comes at a cost: the grand tome the body of work inhabits is so large that not only does it not lend itself to individual reading (often, a number of individuals may gaze upon the same page simultaneously), but its pages are so large that one person alone cannot turn a page without significant risk of damage to the works.

The fewer than 200 resulting books are rarely even called as such; far more commonly are they referred to as "collections" as the work's reliance on existing

together is more akin to a collection of books' requirements to be together, rather than a collection of pages. The work's pagination, sequence, interrelation and sense of narrative flow and pace are unimportant - what matters is the individual prints existing together. Experientially, these works function as closer to a movie poster display stand ubiquitous to so many music and film shops than they do singular cohesive bookworks; their physical form designed only to facilitate an orderly perusal of the individual objects enclosed, as opposed to the communication of connecting narrative threads. This would suggest that there is something in the experience of reading, influenced almost entirely by the material conditions of reading, that decided the books' status as such; In the case of *Birds of America* the scale inhibits an individual's ability to turn the page on whim, thus disrupting the temporality of the experienced book-object; similar to the vitrined book, whose representative page has been carefully selected and (semi)permanently exposed to all. In a promising yet ultimately cruel nod to Schrödinger's cat, the other pages of the book are simultaneously there and not, fully printed and totally blank - rendered such by their ultimate experiential muteness. Their grand size also impacts on the one-to-one nature of the books' relationship with the reader, their sheer scale bleeding out of the perceptive singularity of the codex and opening the reading space out to an uncontrollable and fluctuating audience.

Without expanding the physical size of the book-form then, *subjects* of sublime scale are translated into something other: objects of infinitesimal, sublime, fetish-like detail. Take the postcard publications of Ansel Adams' estate (Little, Brown and Company, 1994) for example; these postcard-sized booklets of Adams' works are quick to foreground their provenance in the opening page:

> An authorized edition of the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. Only books,
> calendars, and posters published by Little, Brown and Company are authorized
> by The Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust as authentic representations of
> the genius of Ansel Adams. (Adams, 1994, colophon)

This immediate declaration determines the hierarchy of significance for the publication; it is first and foremost a material object. In fact, it is a collection of objects,

temporarily held in a convenient (book)form for browsing, storage, organisation and collection, the temporality of this attested to by the perforated binding edges, irreverence for orientation within the work, and reduced (via single page printing) pagination. Individually, these postcards are masterpieces of print publishing, with their warm tone glossy card stock perfectly emulating the silver-gelatin paper of Adams' original prints, the infinitesimal detail in each image far finer than the naked human eye can render, and the tonality controlled perfectly, allowing for smooth gradients that still attest to the granular structure of the original negatives (see fig. 47). The book calls itself 'A Postcard Folio Book' on its cover, which feels about right; it is indeed materially a book, but in its contents, as a conceptual object, it is an accretion of individual fetish-objects, a folio. As a collector of books and photographic objects like this, it has struck me as somewhat odd the sheer amount of clearly previously owned (as opposed to new-old-stock) copies of these postcard collections that exist fully intact; as though the perforated binding existed for little more reason than to aid in turning the pages; a dare set by the publisher, never to be undertaken (see fig. 48).

While books like this one shy away from the communicative potentialities of the book form, opting instead to use its contours for other, more pragmatic reasons, this is
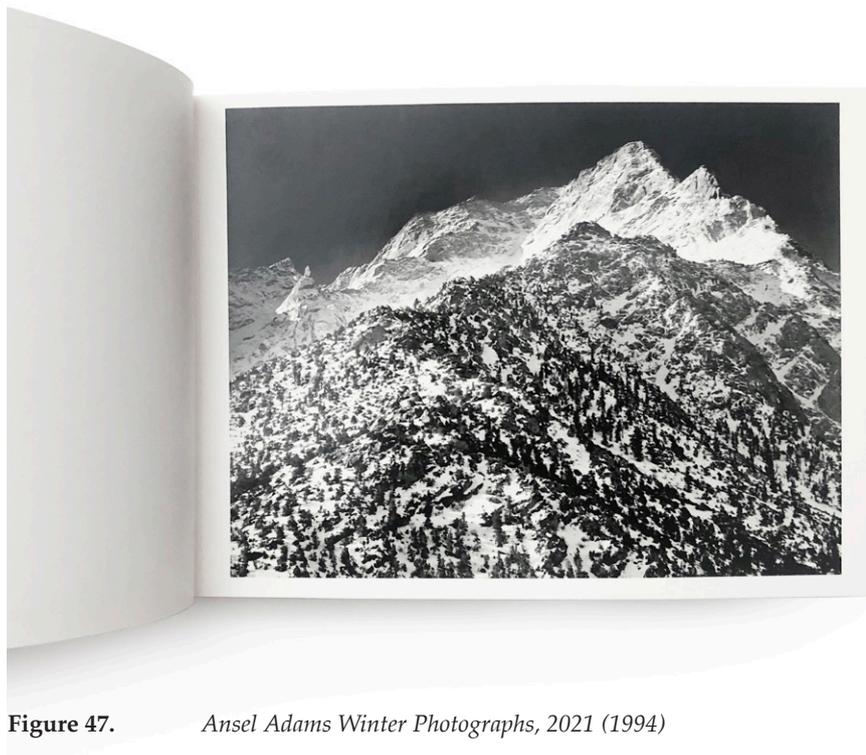
Figure 47. *Ansel Adams Winter Photographs, 2021 (1994)*

not to say that they eschew any form of intimate connection with their audience. The focus on the intricate and individual materiality of the books' pages does something other - it heightens intimate connection by playing off of the possession/ownership relationship. The document is heightened into becoming a fine object of our possession that bestows an ownership of not just the total book, but of each constitutive part individually too (particularly with single-side printed publications)

This was something of great consideration for *Rights of Passage* (2015), a collaborative publishing project involving 23 artists from across the globe. The project sought to bring together works by artists spread across the globe that each addressed the question of the boundary. The resulting book, led by Jean Wainwright and Steffi Klenz, was designed to create a book-object of heightened physical presence by producing a book to the standards of fine art prints. As production manager for the publication, I worked closely with Wainwright and Klenz to ensure the final book-object would be viewed as both a collection of prints and book-object. The first consideration was decided upon almost purely on the logistics of the project, which involved us printing each page individually, before shipping the printed pages out to each respective artist for signing and returning back to us in time for the binding event we were holding at the 2015 Venice Biennale (the theme for which was "All The World's Futures"); signature printing (printing two-sided pamphlets to be bound

Figure 48.   *Perforated edge in Ansel Adams Winter Photographs, 2021 (1994)*

Figure 49.   *Rights of Passage binding event, 2015*

together later) was not logistically viable for the complications introduced to this signing stage. Thus, stacked binding methods were tested, resulting in the decision to run with the Japanese stab bind, a highly decorative bind which could be performed in person (each bind taking around two-and-a-half minutes) and non-destructively unbound by the reader and rebound at any time. This material relationship, hinted at by the overt presence of a bow on the cover of the book – a kind of passive invitation to unbind the book and release the pages, worked to at once present the work as a uniform publication, and to openly store the promise of the pages' alternative potentials as individual prints.

The printing itself was carried out by myself using inkjet (sometimes referred to as *giclée*) printing, an extremely high quality printing method usually reserved for print making. The three thousand resulting prints were each hand made, colour-calibrated and pre-drilled for binding before being sent off to each respective artist for signing. Once received back, the pages were transported to Venice for the live binding event; where stacks of prints could be viewed on a production line, custom sequenced to whatever order visitors desired and then bound in front of them.

Of note from fig. 49 is that the initial contact anyone had with the works was as individual prints; they are foremost artefacts of individual value and coveting. It is only as visitors progressed down the production line of the book that the individual prints are brought together into the final book form – though perhaps "final" is the wrong word. Much as the perforated pages of Christoph Bangert's *War Porn* (2014) suggest an interactive possibility with the book object, the cardinal-red bow presented on the cover of the book quietly invites the reader to unbind the work; tempting them to release the pages back into being individual prints once again.

Bryan Schutmaat's *Grays the Mountain Sends* (2013) utilises a similar binding style, substituting the red thread tied with a bow for a cold-rolled carbon steel spine which holds its pages in place using (equally inviting) screws (fig. 50). *Grays the Mountain Sends,* however, brings together aspects obfuscatory to the experience of

reading a singular narrative – large scale, a focus on individual pages, meticulously fine detailed printing; and manages to weave a cohesive, engaging book-narrative. The images, a documentary style exploration of rural, post-industrial decline in communities in the northern United States, brings quiet, melancholic portraits of residents together

Figure 50.   *Spine of Grays the Mountain Sends, 2013*

with elegiac landscapes and other environmental images to create a kind of survey of the atmosphere – the essence of what it means to live in these forgotten and abandoned communities. Through careful and methodical pagination, and the employment of blank sheets of different coloured papers interleaving what can only be thought of as 'chapters' within the work, the book composes its own song of longing and mourning. Rather than grappling with what could be seen as a restrictive element of such a construction; absolute material and formal repetition; the work grasps it and uses it in its weaving of narrative and atmosphere.

I attempted to use similar techniques in a very different manner in my exhibition piece *Radius of Action* which involved some 2,700 prints being nailed to a wall in packs of 10-20 prints, arranged in a random order (see fig. 51). The work could then be plucked from the wall and discarded to change the overall arrangement, or leafed through like a wall-mounted book, or taken away. The work was presented on a wall two metres high and four metres long, meaning that from a proximity of two metres or less the work was all-encompassing and completely immersive. There were moments of sheer corporeal enjoyment when people took pleasure simply in the act of ripping and dropping, mixed with touchingly tender moments of careful deliberation and shy plucking before delicately placing the print in a backpack. This kind of material invite for interaction and reader contribution helped the work foster a connection – not necessarily intimate – but certainly unfamiliar for the audience. The lack of any formal feedback mechanism for my audience makes it difficult to assert with any objective certainty that the result of this unfamiliar experience was a

Figure 51. *Radius of Action, Freerange Photography Festival, 2016*

heightened sense of intimate connection, but I would propose that, for those who took prints home, the significance of turning an object into a possession is considerable, and for those who sought some release in the act of tearing and discarding, this momentary lapse into the purely physical experience of paper and individual power is surely heightening in some way.

Juxtaposition is a term heavily associated with cinematic practices, it being a technique to offer heightened emotional response through the simple and expedient use of sensorial contrast. Often, this contrast is used to incite shock or tension (think Kubricks *The Shining* (1980)), or humour (the intertextuality of *Airplane!* (1980), for example), but less so to create more nuanced emotional responses such as intimacy. A notable exception here is Lynne Ramsay's *You Were Never Really Here* (2017), which features a scene where the protagonist, Joe, confronts two assailants in his mother's home, after discovering her body upstairs. The scene's fraught tension, created in no small part by its incredibly sparse, completely diegetic soundtrack is only briefly punctuated by flashes of extreme violence (presented as both flashbacks from Joe's memories of the home, and the anti-climactic moment he shoots the two assailants. What this tension and violence builds to, however, is a moment of extraordinary intimacy, when Joe takes to lying next to one of the now fatally injured men as he gasps through his final moments of life. Of note in this sequence are both the actions of the two characters on screen, who softly sing along to a radio playing quietly in

Figure 52.   *Stills from You Were Never Really Here (2018)*

the background before holding hands in a moment of truly touching tenderness; but also the cinematography which seems to place almost equal focus on the dying man as it does his oddly specific final resting place: pressed awkwardly against the kicker of an old, worn kitchen cabinet with its tarnished and dated hinges and peeling and stained linoleum floor (see fig. 52). Moments like this (sans mortal injury, of course) are often moments of real-world, defamiliarising consciousness heightening; when lying on the kitchen floor trying to access the plumbing under the sink, or taking a break from some other DIY, these are moments of sensorial interruption. The cold floor pressing back against our bodies, the inverted world view – all contribute to a moment of truly shocking and profound intimate consciousness; a material presence in space and time hard to capture elsewhere. Simply put, what Ramsay has done in this sequence is capture and communicate the phenomenological sensation of lying on the ground; lending an odd specificity to the material world in a moment where one of the characters on screen is transcending it.

It is partly this kind of experiential sensitivity and tenderness that Ramsay displays in her direction of *You Were Never Really Here* (2017) that I have brough into my practice with my father, particularly the later stages working with the sense of resonance with my subject matter. On an individual level, each subject is composed and shot in a way to focus on the physical experience of being present in space with it – to try and capture and communicate some sense of the physical presence of a chain-link fence, a pool of water on a boat cover, my father's impromptu foot stall arrangement on a balcony, shaving my father's face, or walking in the woods. What was important in these images on an individual level was the communication of the minutiae of life for us at the moment, as when something as defamiliarising as what has been happening to my father's mind the past few years enters your life, that's all you really have.

While this chapter's remit is to focus on using examples strictly from within the photobook world, it's still important not to limit the research to that which already exists from within the parameters of photobook practice. An outline of phenomenology has already been tentatively made earlier in this thesis, and it is here that we begin to see the resultant affect of this in practice; we begin to see and feel what conscious phenomenological affect actually looks and feels like. From Audubon's *Birds of America (*Audubon & Havell, 1827-1838) with its shocking scale, to Lynne Ramsay's extraordinary sensitivity in *You Were Never Really Here* (2017), what draws the experience of these works together is their ability to agitate our proprioception (an acute awareness of the position of the body in space), consciousness of physicality, and relationship with the works themselves.

While ideologically opposed to the writings of Liberatic theory (see chapter two), Toni Morrison's creation of space is such that it is not entirely removed from the materiality of the book-form. Known for her writing's links with oral traditions (Remnick and Als, 2019), Morrison's particular use of language, pace and form are used to create and establish settings of true, subjective intimate connection with the individuals within the narrative and the reader:

> There is an abandoned store on the southeast corner of Broadway and Thirty-
>   fifth Street in Lorain, Ohio [...] It does not recede into its background of
> leaden sky, nor harmonize with the gray frame houses and black telephone poles
>   around it. Rather, it foists itself on the eye of the passerby in a manner that
> is both irritating and melancholy. Visitors who drive to this tiny town wonder
>   why it has not been torn down, while pedestrians, who are residents of the
> neighbourhood, simply look away when they pass it. (Morrison, (1994)2019:31)

Such an establishing of place not only uses the individual experiences and 'schema' of its reader but is built entirely from it; devoid of almost all references to its physical contours, Morrison constructs a mental image of the place in question entirely from the lived experiences of her reading audience. It is not through language alone that the impact of such descriptions, so reliant on individual, subjective perception, possess the power to transform the sublime and powerful into the intimate; the relative form of the book in relation to the body, the necessary one-to-one relationship it fosters, and the possessive relationship it shares with the reader are the confluence of forces that enable this highly sensitive language to communicate as it does.

Bill Henson's *1985* (2014) takes the notion of geographic spatiality and strips it of its formal hierarchy in the understanding of an image sequence (see fig. 53). The book assembles images taken in the suburbs of Australia and the ruins of ancient Egypt and fuses them together in a manner irreverent to their location of capture; drawing attention away from the superficial or referential series (deDuve, 1978:114) of the photograph, and towards the in-between space of photographic reception and interpretation central to an audience's understanding of such a narrative. The work oscillates in between the medium's inescapable specificity and the book's overall fluid and dreamlike structure - drawing the reader in and out of this state of consciousness that at once embraces the photographs indexicality and at the same time refutes it.
    That is to say, that the language itself is as material as the paper it is printed on.

> In writing, description must serve the function of context. The locus of speech
>   and action must be "filled in" for the reader, who suffers from the exteriority
>   of print; the distance between the situation of reading and the distuation of
>   depiction is bridged by description, the use of a field of familiar signs. What
> disappears in writing is the body and what the body knows - the visual, tactile,
>   and aural knowledge of lived experience. (Stewart, 1993:44)

Figure 53.　　　*Pages from 1985, 2014*
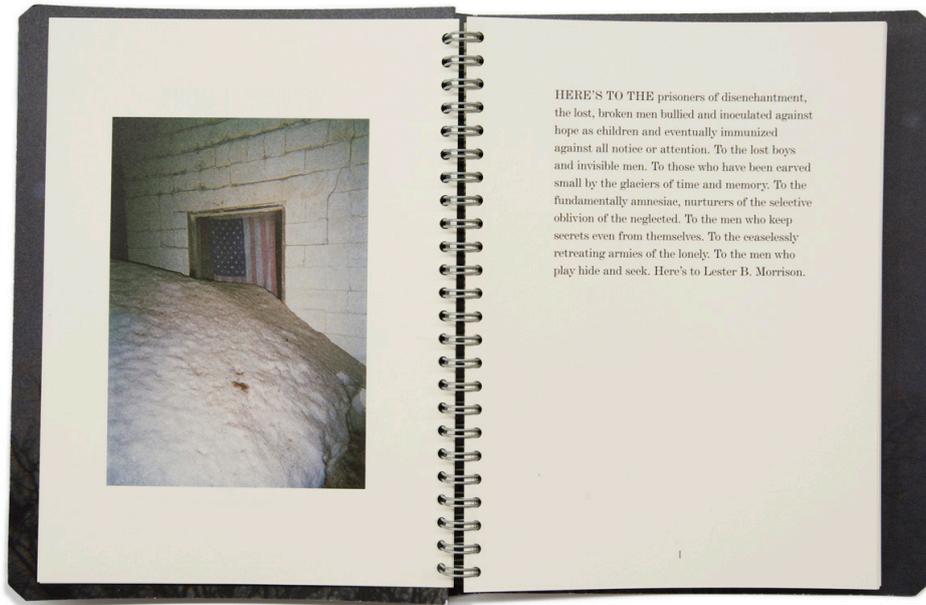
Figure 54.   *House of Coates, 2012*

In photographic contexts the description may be likened to the vernacular imagery of details within a space; in lieu of grand establishing landscapes which, at the scale of the typical codex would constantly call attention to the physical totality of the book object (Stewart, 1993:44, 70), the photographic artist employs images of the constituent details which are more apparent to the lived experience of a body moving through space, and to the eye as it moves over new spaces to make sense of them.

House of Coates (2012) (see fig. 54), discussed earlier in section 1.2, is interesting to consider here too. The book makes no concrete assertions of place or environment for the fictional recluse's life, and yet the images, devoid of direct human presence, all seem to work towards some elusory description of type' of place. This loose and transcendent environment is indeed a gestalt that Soth has attempted to piece together from a myriad of disconnected and dissonate images of minor, fleeting moments of conscious perception more closely related to natural real-world perception of space.

Within my own practice, the notion of resonance has been of great significance in my approach to identifying subject matter; many of the scenes in *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) share little to no referential links to the subject of the work itself. The book brings these individual scenes together in a way made possible by the relatively limited field of vision of each composition; rarely do we see subjects from more than 10 feet

At first his symptoms are subtle and
infrequent, slowly building in you a
dreadful suspicion of what is to come.
This feels like hypersensitivity, paranoia,
over-thinking. At this point you yearn
for certainty one way or the other - until
you get it.

As things become more certain you
realise how foolish you were letting the
vague hope of uncertainty slip by so
unappreciated.

Certainty is hell.

Figure 55.   *Spread from 'Ever Forward, Back', 2021*

from the camera, thus rendering locale impossible to establish with any certainty.

By focusing on smaller scale scenes, and by shifting attention away from geo-specific

place, the reader is shifted into attempting to perceive the conceptual significance of

each image in the micro-context of the book. When showing the work as a dummy

to The Photographer's Gallery curator Karen Mcquaid in 2021, her response to a

spread (see fig. 55) attested to the intimate potential for this approach: her reading of

a passage on the steady transition from suspicion to certainty surrounding my father's

illness, accompanied by a pair of misty images of twisted, moss covered tree limbs

moved her to tears; a kind of poetic, melancholic Kuleshov effect drawing a sinuous

thread between the form and content of the text and image. Just as the notion of

certainty is described as hell in my text, the images themselves seem hellish, entangled

with trauma and grief.

In relation to the theory discussed within this thesis, I may best align the affect

of this sense of resonance with Adorno's *erschütterung,* or shudder in response to the

work of art. To take the propositions of this thesis forward then, my images must

be utilising some kind of defamiliarisation technique, be that verfremdungseffekt or

ostraneniye, to alienate the subject matter from its literal, referential 'series' (de Duve,

1978:114), castrating them of prior, culturally attained knowledge and understanding,

and placing them in a new perceptive context. The readings possible in this approach are manifold, and it is precisely this openness of interpretive possibility that draws the reader closer to the narrative of the work. The book is, thanks to its intimate, one-to-one communication, shaped and formed to the individual experiences of the readership. One does not have to have lived through watching the decline of their father to MS or dementia to feel some kind of connection with the work; the specifics of the work, thanks to the malleability of the images, give way to more transcendent readings of pathos, loss, fading, and love.

3.3b Possession and Ownership

It would be clear to even the casual scholar of print media that a discussion of the materiality of the book-object would be remiss if it didn't attempt to address the issues of possession and ownership, particularly in relation to newer forms of access media, such as the eBook. [1]

Practically speaking, the virtues of the eBook (in most of its various forms) are hard to match with physical media; distribution, cost, access, portability, etc. all contribute to making the world of digital publishing seem, on paper, a formidable threat to that of print-publishing. Indeed, this was the assumption and fear perpetuated by many media outlets in the months and years following the release of the Kindle: *Publishing Death Watch* (The New Yorker, 2008), *Fear the Kindle: Amazon's amazing e-book reader is bad news for the publishing industry.* (Slate, 2009), *Will Amazon Kill Publishing?* (The Atlantic, 2012) are just a few headlines proclaiming the Kindle as the death knell for the print book.

As is often the case with technology analysis, the focus of the vast majority of such articles, with a few exceptions, focused on market reaction and potential for the Kindle in comparison with print-publishing: an analytical style wholly inadequate

[1] : Due to the economically anomalous data of 2020 resulting from the impact of COVID-19, statistics and data used for illustrative purposes in this section are taken from data pools preceding 2020.

for something as nuanced and complex as reading and publishing. In fact, it may be posited that the perspective, the critical lens under which these articles and the many others like them place the publishing world is as pertaining to that of the commodity only, and not the possession; consideration is afforded to the economic impact in relation to convenience and cost-cutting within the sector. Thus, the hyperbole of these headlines has been, thankfully, unfounded in the long run; print publishing regained the lost ground as the initial spike in up-take with eBooks found its equilibrium within the marketplace. More recently, the print publishing sector has been making consistent gains on eBook publishing as media consumption takes its tactile turn towards physical objects; vinyl record sales in the United States in 2019, for example, are up 20-fold compared to 2006 (Richter, 2020). December of the same year in the United States saw a 7.6% decrease in eBook revenue, contributing to a 5.9% year-decrease, and a five-year decline of 30.8% from 2015 (Association of American Publishers, 2020). December 2019 saw an 11.4% increase for physical books, however, extending its market share to 75.9%.

An interesting phenomenon to note when looking through the AAP's plethora of statistics and industry analyses (which, it should be noted, do seem to be presented in a manner less forgiving to the eBook, and perhaps more massaging to the print industry) is the consistent and, to borrow an economics term, 'bullish' increase in market space the downloaded audiobook has been having. In the same five years eBooks saw their 30.8% decline, downloadable audiobooks saw an increase of 143.8% (Association of American Publishers, 2020). Why then, is the audiobook succeeding consistently where the eBook has failed to maintain its footing? One answer may be the proposition that the innovation of the eBook isn't really an innovation at all:

> All you're doing is replicating the narrative experience of page turning and linear reading in a digital form. Are you improving the experience for most users? Probably not — you're probably actually degrading the experience for most users in terms of the resolution, the convenience, and everything else.
> (Thompson in Chai, 2020)

When boiled down like this the convenience of the kindle is quite starkly mild;

it's a device slightly lighter and smaller than a typical paper back that can potentially hold or grant access to thousands of titles (which is less useful to the average user in daily use than the numbers and marketing suggest) and relies on a charged battery and Amazon account. The physical book allows for marginalia, customisation, loaning, collecting and selling, it possesses the ability to be heightened to something other too: it can become a **possession**.

This is a phenomenon not necessarily new to studies of media and media ecologies; Marshall Mcluhan's 'laws of media' – a tetrad of effects he proposes applies to "everything man[kind] makes and does, every procedure, every style, every artefact, every poem, song, painting, gimmick, gadget, theory, technology – every product of human effort…." (Eric [and Marshall] McLuhan, 1988: ix). These effects are named: Retrieval, Reversal, Obsolescence and Amplification, and are put forward as a set of questions:

• What does the artefact **enhance** or intensify or make possible or accelerate? This can be asked concerning a wastebasket, a painting, a steamroller, or a zipper, as well as about a proposition m Euclid or a law of physics. It can be asked about any word or phrase in any language.

• If some aspect of a situation is enlarged or enhanced, simultaneously the old condition or unenhanced situation is displaced thereby. What is pushed aside or **obsolesced** by the new 'organ'?

• What recurrence or **retrieval** of earlier actions and services is brought into play simultaneously by the new form? What older, previously obsolesced ground is brought back and inheres in the new form?

• When pushed to the limits of its potential (another complementary action), the new form will tend to **reverse** what had been its original characteristics. What is the reversal potential of the new form? (Ibid, 1988:98-99, my emphasis added)

These effects are not intended as sequential, but rather simultaneous processes, inherent in the media object from its creation; presenting us with a more dynamic, and active logos (ibid, 1988:99), helping with the positioning and study of new media

objects within a continuum of innovation and exchange. Where many journalists feared the eBook would obsolesce the printed book, they failed to recognise the eBook's more powerful effect of reversal to the intimate communication of the physical codex; a problem caused in no small part by the troublesome platforms of sale and distribution. The statistics around the vinyl record, however point to a wider cultural affirmation of the tactile and its significance on the media object; analogue photography, the cinema experience, zines, prints, the handmade, and so on all present themselves as containers of some quality lost to new media (quality, fidelity, emotion, experience, spectacle, etc.), while I may posit the real universal connector for these in their revival against the grain of new medias, is their sense of tactility borne from acute and nuanced relationships of possession. The cinema imposes a protected time-space on the viewer, orphaned by the theatre and its abstracting darkness from the day-to-day; the printed photograph (as the book) occupies space and thus holds an energy that the nervous digital image is destined to efface from itself with the swipe of a finger, or press of a button; the vinyl record imposes itself on the listener as a ritualised object to care for – a perishable object whose consumption need be measured, planned and actively participated with. As sensory objects then, the transmedial movement of one form into another is remarkably inadequate in any attempt to replace or truly obsolesce its source object(s), for they extract only a singular, two-dimensional attribute of the object and leave behind its essence – "essence [being] the tension between the real thing and its real qualities" (Harman, 2011:176). Harman, in his 2011 paper *The Road to Objects* highlights a key aspect of this inadequacy, which is not about the object in theory or praxis, but in our relations with them (ibid, 2011:174). Exploring the possession/ownership relationship we share with these two objects, even in isolation from any other material debate, should then highlight the similarities between book and eBook being no more pronounced than a pen and a bicycle.

The possession is distinct from the commodity – objects defined by use/exchange value – due to their becoming "'singularised' and thus separated (at least temporarily) from the commodity sphere" (Watkins, 2015:13). This is achieved in a number of ways, most notably sets of "decommoditisation rituals" enacted upon the commodity-object

in order to imbue material consumption's objects with personal meanings (Watkins, 2015:13) such as cleaning and removing associations with previous possessors, personalisation, and gradual singularisation through habitual use or aggregating shared history (Watkins, 2015:14). The dog-eared page, scribblings and marginalia representing consequent thoughts and reflections during various readings, stains and dents, rips and folds, pressed leaves and found pieces of paper used as placeholders, foxed fore-edges from a summer spent re-reading, a darkened patch of leather or burnished section of cloth, or missing piece of a dust cover, an ex libris stamp, a crumpled receipt of purchase or damming scrap of evidence as to the book's less virtuous provenance of acquisition; all of these indexical marks and scars and transmitters of its history are repugnantly missing from the eBook, the PDF, the audiobook. Print's downfall, its mortality and ultimate timeliness is also its greatest attribute to those engaged with the physicality of the page. The old, used, worn and tired book which this author would wager lives in the homes of all who end up reading this thesis is a soft, quiet reminder that no matter how transient and transcendent something seems – a book, an idea, an economic structure, a culture – all is destined to return to dust. Digital media presents itself behind a glass screen of intangibility and immortality; In exchange for impractical convenience and a slightly reduced cost, we lose connection with physical reality.

The sheer lack of material indexicality surrounding the digital consumption object is one factor which contributes to such abstract relationships; an abject lack of causality presents users/owners/consumers with a gap in the normal course of subject/object relation building. The eBook may be acquired with the gesture of a single finger and may be lost with the failure of a hard drive. The index of the object's past, and of its acquisition is skipped over in favour of accessibility and convenience. To spend time justifying the significance of this personal history with the media object in relation to intimacy seems rather like spending time explaining why fish live longest in water, but to give an anecdotal account consider this; what would the aforementioned essay by Walter Benjamin *Unpacking my Library* (1968) look like had each title been a digital download? The stories behind each book's acquisition would

be thin, less laden in suspense, travel, mystery and euphoria. The collection wouldn't have even needed unpacking (at the very most, the removal of a single device from its box); indeed, putting aside ready availability, material value-lessness, remote access and infinite storage, the collection would never have come to be if all purchases relied, as they invariably did for Benjamin, on the death of some previous possessor, for the digital library almost always dies with its holder. This is one of the greatest illusions of the eBook library which, while presenting a facade of immortality, is precisely as mortal as the individual user of it; kindles are password protected, discarded or reformatted; sold as empty shells to the individual desiring the electronic 'thing' and not the promise its contents may hold. Laptops are routinely wiped clean, internet accounts lost and, with time, wiped from existence. The collector of digital consumption objects cultivates a collection destined to almost certainly die with them.

The publication project *Rights of Passage* (2014) I worked on for the Venice Biennale is a useful example to discuss in relation to the performance and the book. From the outset the project was intended to exist as a heightened object; something with the auratic presence of an original piece, while still producible on an assembly line and in an edition of 100. We achieved this in a number of ways, starting with the customisation of each sequence and layout (singularisation via customisation), the signing of each page (decommoditisation through singularisation), and the bind-on-demand nature of our pop-up presence at the biennale. The last point was so significant to the work that it was decided that each book would be stamped on its cover with the date, time and place of binding, making each book a causally located and unique object, holding individual presence within the duration of the binding's performance (see fig. 56). The cardboard envelopes used to seal each book were also carefully selected for their inescapable causality to the act of looking; for the purchaser to see the book they had custom made, they had to rip and damage its decorated and time-stamped envelope. The cardboard envelope, made integral and individually linked to each individual book through its shared time-stamp, attests to the owner's relationship with it from the earliest moments; the reader's care, or carelessness conveyed through an either methodical tearing of a neat strip, or a haphazard

butchering of the envelope all together – before revealing itself, the publication insists on this first, inescapable moment of patina creation and indexicality – the reader must imprint themselves on the book in order to interact with it at all.
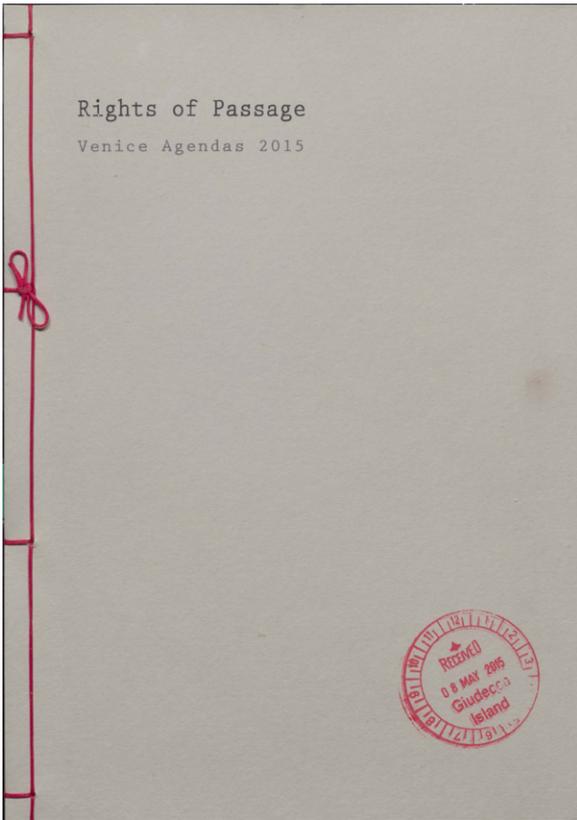
Figure 56.   *Rights of Passage, 2015*

Where *Rights of Passage* uses the performance as a space to bring its parts together, Lalu Delbracio's work *Hunger* (2016) (see fig. 57) goes one step further, using the performance as a space to create not only the binding, but also the constituent parts themselves. In this work, Delbracio created a large, black rectangle on the floor, made up of coloured card and inkjet printed photographs. The 40-minute piece saw her methodically tear, rearrange and discard pieces of paper and images as they were uncovered, creating a constantly evolving and unstable floor piece, while the discarded remnants were bound into 10 'chapters' which could be purchased during the performance. Intended to explore the "feeling of loving someone so much you want to eat them" (archipelago, 2016), this obsessive performance gradually culminates appropriately with the complete dissemination and thus dissolution of the floor piece entirely, as the constant attention and adjustment and fuss given is eventually the very thing that effaces it from existence. The indexicality of the work is not significant just in its creation, but in the acquisition; these chapters are available to purchase in person only, at a performance. The owner is immediately presented with an object thrusting itself into the status of possession through shared experience and singularity – no other "chapter" can or will ever look the same as the other, after all. If this isn't enough, having been made on the floor, each book brings with it artefacts of the performance in the form of dust, dirt and the marks of oily or sweaty palms and feet; the visceral physicality of being crawled over, walked on, knelt and lain on dusting the reader's hands each time they navigate its pages. This indexical strength may also

be interpreted as a reliance, however, as the books, individually and as a collection, fail to represent or convey any real sense of what the performances were, their creation an abstract fragment of their past only truly known by the first possessor who was present at the performance. Like the digital object, this kind of representation relies on the memory and thus mortality of the possessor. Delbracio's books acknowledge this pitfall in the very

Figure 57.   *Hunger, Lalu Delbracio, 2016*

construction of each book, neatly trimming them to a precise rectangle once bound together, the codex imposing itself on the wild and untamed edges of the paper in a bid to remind the reader that the codex is not transparent and imposes itself on any message.

While Watkins proposes possession to be possible independent of ownership, lack of ownership over the book-object can introduce complicating factors to the development of such a close relationship. Taking a look at *The Rockaways* (2013), a photobook by Gilles Peress, the role ownership plays in establishing a foundation upon which the more intimate structures of possession may be built may be more evidently appreciated.

> Published on the first anniversary of Hurricane Sandy, The Rockaways
> combines visceral photos by renowned photographer Gilles Peress (Telex Iran,
> Farewell to Bosnia) with the voices of residents in the communities hit hardest
> by the superstorm. (Concord Free Press, 2013)

Conceived as a fund-raising platform for victims of Hurricane Sandy, the book (a soft-back, full colour photobook, complete with accompanying essays) was published and distributed for free by Massachusetts-based publishing house Concord Free Press (CFP), an outfit dedicated to "connect[ing] reading and giving like never before". The premise for the books life cycle as a means to raise money lies in CFP's inclusion of a unique serial number that tallies with a database on their website; once a reader's

requested book is received and enjoyed, they make a donation to a cause of their choice and input that donation along with the book's serial number on CFP's website. Each title is thus linked to the donations made in its name, as it is passed on to the next person to consume and donate. While applaudable and clearly working (they have been operating for over a decade as of writing this thesis), the titles published under this framework are quite useful counterexamples of the importance of some aspects of ownership on the book-object (I do not intend to cast negative review against this particular publishing outfit or their works, but rather acknowledge some aspects of this unusual publishing structure as useful by-products of an otherwise successful publishing strategy).

The inclusion of a serial number in each book may seem to serve as a means of singularisation of the individual book-object within the title's wider sphere of communication. This is, however, not necessarily the same form of singularity we see Watkins discussing earlier as a means of moving the book-object away from the commodity sphere and into (or closer to) that of the possession (Watkins, 2015:13-15). This singularising structure belongs not to the reader, but to the publisher - it is they who possess the database to decode and understand the book's journey and successes as a fund-raising object, and, it will become apparent, it is to them the materiality of the book is implicitly owned.

Once comprehended, this serial number does more to the relationship we have with this title than is explicitly said - implicit in this code is the forward chain of ownership the book is destined to have. Our concrete guarantee of future enjoyment so central to the creation of possession is completely undermined from the outset. From the shallow object of leisurely perusal and consumption to the urgent object of necessity and forward motion. These books are not 'free' as advertised, they are never given away - they are permanently loaned, never owned.

Rebecca Watkins' research on possession and ownership goes on to explore the

notion of public and private meanings in relation to the 'material consumption object' (MCO), or in the context of this thesis, the print book. Public meanings are those culturally ascribed to an object through its literal and inherent practicalities and use-value, or through an external network of seemingly arbitrary, yet culturally agreed upon set of characteristics (think of the iconography of the cigarette in the 90's, for example). These meanings have no individual grounding in the specific object itself, but in the cultural *concept* of the object. Such ascribed meanings may be both positive and negative and may change and fluctuate depending on political alignment, social status and economic standing; owning a high-performance car may imply wealth and business savvy to some, and to others aggression and arrogance. (Belk, 1988:140, Watkins, 2015:19). Private meanings, however, are subjectively created and attributed to possessions based on causality, indexicality, and relationship. "Such meanings may include elements of the object's public meanings, but the owner's personal history in relation to the object also plays an important role" (Richins (1994) in Watkins, 2015:19). In this sense, while a watch and a hunting knife may each be viable birthday gifts and thus may each be allocated similar meaning and significance as such, they are also each weighed on by their wider public meanings: knife = weapon, watch = jewellery. Private meanings may also exist seemingly at odds with the public or functional meaning of the MCO, owing to the highly individualised causality of such meanings. An example pertinent to my practice could be posited as my father's extensive portfolio of artworks he created throughout his life (paintings of anthropomorphised teddy bears, scenes from classic Disney animations, and fantastical landscapes featuring dragons and goblins), which at one point were sweet reminders of certain moments in time – the smell of boiled linseed oil and turpentine in his shed as he painted and I played with hammer and nail at his bench – but now increasingly possesses a weight of melancholia and loss, as his abilities dwindle and his capability to reproduce even his own work act as stark reminders of the aggressive extent to which we have lost him in the last few years. What were once holders of sweet memories are now elegiac objects of torment that my mother and I struggle to look at.

The owned object is delivered to us by possession; without it an object is stunted,

permanently in limbo. Like a public display copy in a museum, bookshop or gallery, Concord Free Press's books somehow feel 'less' than the purchasable, ownable, possessable book. They cannot project outwardly any projection of ourselves, but must only point inwardly, towards themselves and the gratuitous content of their pages.

3.4 Application

In an earlier test I sought to explore the boundaries of codex production to see what kind of effect this could have on the intimate experience of a reader. My method for doing so involved interrupting the mode of production by switching two processes in the order they are performed: printing the page and making the paper. Inspired by video footage of Japanese hand planing competitions, where the goal for competitors is to produce the thinnest continuous shaving from a block of cedar, I set out researching methods for applying a printed page to a piece of wood before taking a handplane to it, cutting the fully printed page from the block. As a method of paper-like production, this is not a new idea; notebooks are readily available whose pages are sequential slices of wood (the process is known as Kyougi and is also popular as an ecological food wrap). The more disruptive aspect of this I was drawn to was in the printing of the page before the material page existed; the page as a concept and a physical entity would come into existence simultaneously. Reviewing video of this experiment taken in support of my Confirmation panel, it became clear just how significant the ritualistic nature of the book's production was to the reading audience. Through further refinement and testing the work came to be as a performative piece that revolved around this subversive manner of printing and production. The ceremonious application and transfer of page plates to the surface of the page block (using acetone transfer), sharpening and setting of the plane, planing and binding all come together to make a performance that isn't so much recorded by the artefact as it is crafted around it.

The act of purchasing and subsequently reading a book from a performance like this has the ability to influence the reader's relationship via schematic alteration (as in Schema Theory, discussed in section 2.2). While a book produced from wood shavings

in place of paper may do little more than introduce an aesthetic and sensory difference into the text, the active presence of a shift in the process of book production confuses the assumptions allowed in schematic modes of reading. The book isn't such in an innocent or transparent manner, it has been born out of a glitch, a defect in the temporal order of procedure that bares the publication of a new book-work. The page doesn't exist materially until it instantly does, fully printed, sized and ready to be bound.

The significance of this aspect of performance helped me to refine and fine-tune the piece into something intentionally ritualistic, incorporating a deliberate and methodical set of movements for each process. The steel western style hand plane was swapped for a hand-made, wooden bodied Japanese pull plane, sharpening done by hand using ceramic waterstones in a wet pond, and the work bench replaced by a handmade and custom sized work trestle, allowing for the audience to come up close to the action and move around more easily. The process of applying the page plate and soaking with acetone is carried out with a small cotton pouch of cotton rags that is stored in a glass jar; the entire process had to appear and feel essentially timeless, as though it existed in a temporal void in the timeline of artistic and technological innovation - this process is, after all, an aberration, an anomaly of production that theoretically shouldn't be possible.

Once the pages were cut and pressed flat, the book is carefully assembled, holes punched, and stitch gingerly tightened, the final book is presented on a small stand and offered for purchase. Experimenting with this process allowed me to experience the impact of disruption on the production of the book, and its subsequent impact on reading for an audience. It is, however, another aspect whose presence in raw form, I feel, would have been detrimental to my research's claims to applicability in the wider photobook publishing field. My images and text are also delicate things to present, and may easily become overwhelmed by loud, overtly disruptive techniques such as this. An interesting by-product of this approach was the slight absorption of the image into the surface of the wood block, leaving ghostly impressions of the previous page

that were carried forward to the next page; a kind of inter-page fading and spatial rupture that fractures the discreet spaces of page and spread. This was an approach I ultimately didn't move forward with however, as the nature of its production was ultimately antithetical to the production-focus of my research (non-bespoke, commercially viable).

Ever Forward, Back, while not interruptive of the process of the book's production, utilises a few other methods of defamiliarisation and interruption to heighten conscious perception, disrupt habitual modes of reading, and introduce new communicative layers to the work. The aforementioned (Chapter 2.5) use of varying font weight to introduce a sense of fading to the work is one of the methods used to layer the narrative of the work, which is about loss, fading and shifting relationship roles between father and son. The fractured chronology of the work is another aspect that should encourage conscious reflection and consideration from its audience, as to why it is happening and what impact it has on the reception of the work. I experimented eith the numbering of the text pieces, to more concretely locate them in a linear timeline, allowing my reader to piece together the order of events as they happened, if they so wished to. It was widely felt that this was an unnecessary element however, and that it did little more than contradict the defamiliarising nature of the typeface weight, and so was removed.

In 2021 *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) was selected to receive The Photographers' Gallery's *New Talent '21* award, making it one of six selected works to headline the opening of the *Soho Photography Quarter* just off Oxford Street. A selection of images from *Ever Forward, Back* have been presented on a large-scale outdoor frieze (see fig. 59-61) and on hanging banners around Ramillies place and Hills Street. Concurrent with this outdoor exhibition was the creation of an online space for the work (see fig. 58), developed with The Photographers' Gallery and web designers Endless Supply, an opportunity which, at this later stage in my Ph.D. research, allowed me to test a number of ideas in a way that offered insight into the book's particularity.

Working with the same text pieces, images and variable typeface as the final book,

this space gave me the opportunity to work with the notion of transmediation directly. Digital interactivity, while quashing any sense of possession, ownership, finitude or concreteness, brings with it a number of new possibilities; gestures, movements, animations and transitions can all be explored in relation to a sequence that suddenly exists across an abstract space, void of hard, physical edges. The ephemerality of the screen is something I was keen to embrace, and so fading was discussed and tested in relation to the notion of futility, interaction and interruption. We arrived at the idea of allowing some images to be enlarged by clicking, while others slowly fade away upon clicking – with no rationale, logic or pattern to how this occurred; a viewer may wish to view an image larger, only for their input to cause its total dissolution, and later may try to remove an image only to have it fill their screen. Compounding this sense of consciousness-heightening frustration is the constantly rearranging sequence presented, constantly shifting and changing as the viewer scrolls up and down, an algorithm refusing the ability for one to see the same arrangement twice. This algorithm maintained the image micro-clusters and worked to prioritise certain image-text relationships, but constantly shifts and adapts the mise-en-screen from ever being repeated. This embracing of the fluid temporality of the work serves not only to reinforce the sense of fading within my work, but also to reflexively question the materiality of the screen itself.
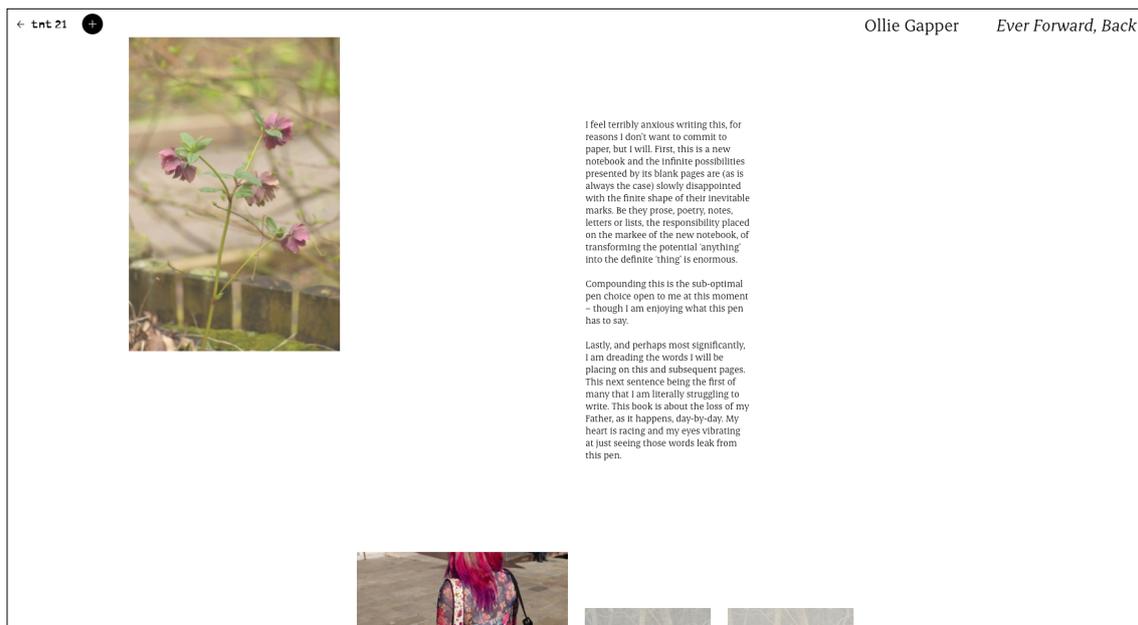
Figure 58.   *Screenshot of TPG New Talent web space, 2021*

Figure 59. *Street view of Frieze at The Photographers' Gallery, 2021*
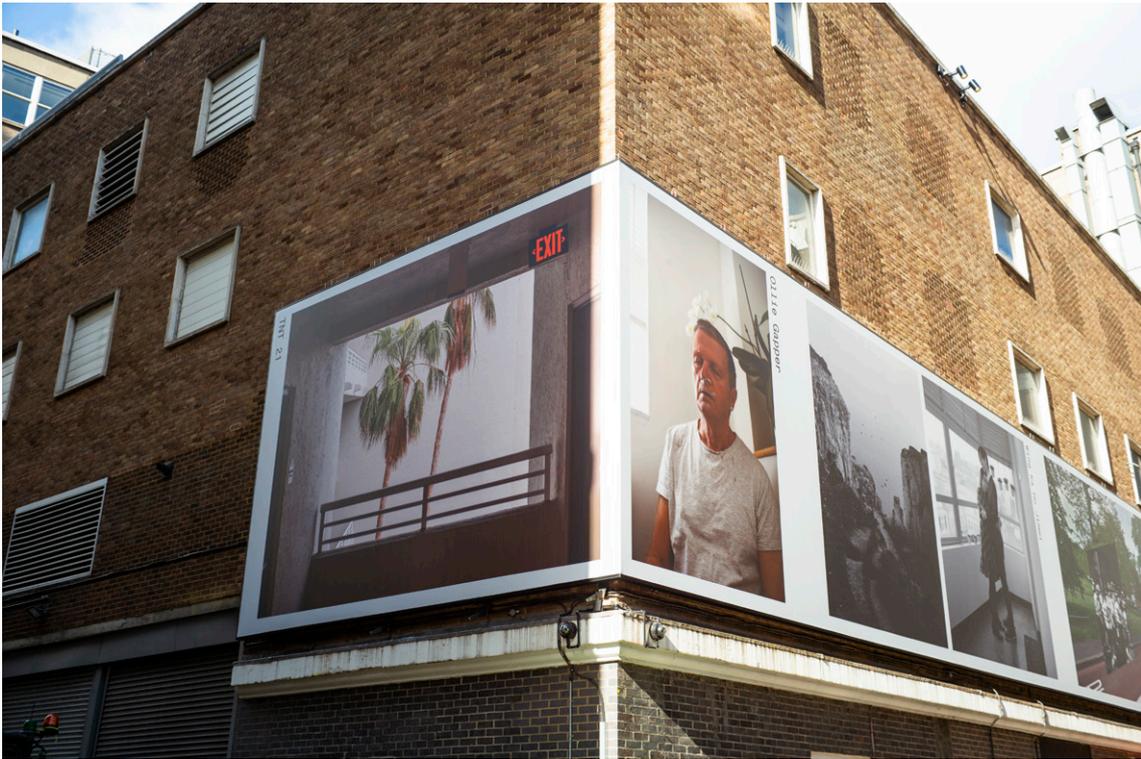
Figure 60.   *Street view of Frieze at The Photographers' Gallery, 2021*

Figure 61.   *Street view of Frieze at The Photographers' Gallery, 2021*

Conclusion I
visualising the research

It became clear in my Confirmation meeting just how important visualising my theory on the reader–object–author relationship was. While discussing a case study on Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), my gesticulation led the way in really expressing and encompassing how this theory worked. It was discussed that some form of diagram may work well to better translate these ideas, their connectivity and shape, than words can alone. Indeed, the simultaneity of a diagrammatic representation is apt for discussing such relationships, which may be present and absent at all times and at the same time.

Figure 1 shows my first attempt at conveying the majority of this theory in a single visual representation and yet, while generally good at containing the theory, it does little to simplify its structures to new readers. Multiple line colours, ten sections, and non-linear connections merge into a mess which possesses more chaos than the serendipitous indication of a yin-yang symbol held in its lines might indicate. Nevertheless, the efficacy of a diagram, I believe, is not held exclusively in its ability to "simplify" but in the clarity such a visualisation can give to complex ideas.

We can begin exploring this with the ten sections presented in a grid of 3x3x1. The central three categories: Author', 'Reader', and 'Text', each pertain to the different times/spaces present in any reader's interaction with just about any text. These categories were then delineated further (vertically) into 'Time', 'Consciousness/ Intent', and 'Space', allowing for more precise individual connections to be posited and

explored. The two line colours selected are designed to separate the connections made by authorial voice (red line) and reader intention (black line). Authorial voice can be thought of as any connection born from the overt will of the author through formal means within the text; reader intention is a less concrete but no less potent connector, present in moments of reader reflection and often occurring outside of the direct or overt influence of the author/text.

Beginning with the horizontal centre of the diagram, the notion of intention, consciousness and perception was really the starting point for this entire visualisation process. The lines here represent the path of conscious perception between subjects and essentially reveal three connections possible for each line: from author to reader, author to text, and reader to text.

Below this we have concerns of spatiality: the space of the author, that of the text, and the reader's space, below which we find the sub-category of reader space; the book-object. The rationale behind this placement relates to the book-object's existence within the space of reading, very rarely extending to the space of the author or the text in a material, indexical sense (especially in the context of publishing on a scale). The presence of the book-object, its physical attributes, and that of the environment of the reader are all felt to compound and react with one-another to impact and influence the relationships and connections possible. The space of the author is essentially that of the author as the work is being created; the photobook here possessing the potential for its highly particular claim to indexicality. This indexicality may also be brought in other ways, such as in the previously discussed excerpt from *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969) in which Vonnegut directly infuses his experience in the war with an intratextual moment within the narrative, and constituting the presence of both the reader intention and authorial voice connection between author and text (see chapter 1.2 & 2.3). There are four other connections linking the reader space, reader consciousness and the book-object, essentially welding the somatic experience of reading environment with the conspicuous perception of the book-object; consider here the reflexive writing in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller* (1979), a frame story about a reader trying to read the titular book. Alongside this is the link

between the time of reading and the space of reading, constituted by both authorial voice and reader intention. A key example of this can be found in a previously mentioned section in George Orwell's *1984* (1949):

> The blissful feeling of being alone with the forbidden book, in a room with no telescreen, had not worn off. Solitude and safety were physical sensations, mixed up somehow with the tiredness of his body, the softness of the chair, the touch of the faint breeze from the window that played upon his cheek. (Ibid, 1949:253)

The act of reading here morphing into a conscious experience of reader space and time, the tiredness of the body acting as metaphorical container for the temporal, while the spatial is held in the chair, the breeze, the window, the cheek.

Dividing the diagram further are two vertical dotted lines, which each mark the boundaries for what is knowable for each conscious perspective; once a connecting line crosses these perforated boundaries it is imagination and thus a schema mode of reading which must be relied upon, and this is thus where introspection and reflective ways of reading and interpreting the text/connections comes into play.

The other connections, their routes around and over sections and their respective colours could be expanded upon further, but perhaps more interesting to consider here is the centrality of the reader within this diagram, and the subsequent density of lines leading from and to them. When considering the communicative connections possible within a book it seems that the consciousness of the reader is *consciousness-principalis*; it is the foundational layer of conscious perception without which connection of any kind would be simply impossible. The book may never be read by another soul, and in doing so would lose any and all communicative capabilities – if a book is published in the woods and no one is around to read it, does it really exist? This centrality is not the same as primacy, however. While indeed the keystone to this structure of communication, subject and object are still mutually constituted and thus integral to each other's existence.

Any time we cross a dotted
boundary, we become reliant on
imagination and thus activate
a schema form of reading

- Assumptions based on cultural
background, personal experience,
etc. must be relied upon.

Temporal

Consciousness/
Perception

Spatial

Authorial

Reading

Intratextual

Author

Reader

Subject

Temporal
cognition

Spatial
cognition

Authorial

Reading

Intratextual

Book-object

Authorial voice:
Reader interaction:

Conclusion II
a summation of the journey

The journey my research has undergone over the past five years of study has been profound and incredibly enriching, with both my practice and academic research reaching into new areas I could not have foreseen at the outset of my Ph.D. Here I hope to draw together some of these new ideas, to contextualise and recontextualise them with one-another and within the wider scope of the research to perhaps generate some new ideas and ways of thinking around them, and to ultimately lay the groundwork for further scholarship. Important too will be a summative look at my research's application of phenomenology as a framework to explore the photobook, assessing and identifying areas of strength, diversity and weakness to better support future studies in both identifying and applying such a structure to their approach. The primary goals of this research were two-fold: in content-proper, the research aims to identify both *that* and *how* the photobook form has a particular claim to creating intimate affect with its audience. Structurally and existentially, this research project was intended to suggest the ground work for a more progressive approach to photobook scholarship, moving away from the ubiquitous, pervasive, often outdated and cyclically introspective studies focusing on historicisations, categorisations and ontological debates that seem to have colonised this otherwise incredibly rich and vibrant area of fine art practice and theoretical discourse.

The challenges I have faced throughout my research have been plentiful, though none insurmountable. Early on, a number of family health issues saw the focus of

my practice shift from a continued exploration of my father's and my relationship with our disabled bodies, and onto the changing relationship we have with each other as the sudden onset of many mental effects of MS and Parkinsons (exacerbated significantly by COVID-19 lockdowns and lack of access to medical help) began taking hold. My role as carer for my dad and confidante for my mum swelled exponentially in this time, forcing my practice to shift in approach, resulting in the proliferation of text within my practice, it being a way for me to continue my practice in the few, dwindling free moments available to me. My father and I are not the only members of our family to be impacted by illness and disability; my sister also suffers from serious ill health, which has been another area of significant impact on my family's life while researching, and it should be noted that a great swathe of this research was conducted and written from the waiting room of St Thomas's Hospital ICU, whose vending machine I single-handedly kept solvent through 2019 and early 2020. Less facetiously, the compounding trauma of a number of events around her health has indeed impacted me in ways I am unable to fully unpack here and now, though I feel no sense of my research adversely affected by these events; instead I highlight them here to contextualise and humanise my research.

A key point made in my introduction refers to my research's structural aim to move beyond the prevalent and, at times, pervasive presence of scholarship that does little more than rehash the same historical, categorical or ontological debates that have already long established the photobook as a valid form for academic exploration. It appears that I am not alone in this desire to move away from such practices: Matt Johnston's 2020 thesis offers an "ethnographic review of community and discourse; a historical and contemporary contextualisation; and an account of photobook reading" (Johnston, 2020), while Elizabeth Shannon (2012) explores how Paul Strand and Elizabeth McCausland "specifically conceptualised the photobook as a hybrid form capable of communicating a multifaceted political message through a narrative synthesis of text and image, utilising strategies drawn from documentary film, the photomural and mass media publications" (Shannon, 2012), for example. Of particular note though has been José Luis Neves' research *The many faces of the*

photobook: establishing the origins of photobookwork practice (2017) which seeks to apply new structures of examination to the photobook (notably Barthes' literature analysis model developed in *An Introduction to to the Structural Analysis of Narrative* (1977)), while offering an essential revision to the ontological definition of what is accepted as photobook practice (particularly in its defining years), where the overwhelmingly dominant and unhelpfully loose definitions offered by Martin Parr and Gerry Badger fall short. The very terminology used to define the pair's area of particular focus – "a specific kind of photobook" (Badger in Parr and Badger, 2004:6-7) – does little more than to assert the claim to primacy of these two authors as essential figureheads in the field, whom academics and artists must strive to understand before they are permitted any kind of understanding of the field their "unofficial revisionist history['s]" (Parr in Parr and Badger, 2014) have so colonised. Indeed, the cynical may look at the rampant misuse of their books *The Photobook: A History vol. I, II & III* (2004, 2006 & 2014 respectively), whose immediate and lasting legacy seems to be the exponential increase in value (and rarity) of most titles published, and may then subsequently see the 2017 sale of Parr's 12,000 photobook collection to the Tate ('Tate acquires outstanding collection of photobooks from Martin Parr', 2017) and be left with questions as to the validity of the selection process at play across the three tomes.

This is one reason my research sought new frameworks to explore the photobook, with structures like phenomenology being less dependent on / sensitive to the many micro-pressures of more topical explorations. This isn't to detract from the excellent work done over recent years in spotlighting photobooks from the historically underrepresented, such as women (*How We See: Photobooks by Women* (2019), *What They Saw: Historical Photobooks by Women, 1843–1999* (2021)), Latin American photographers (*CLAP! 10×10 Contemporary Latin American Photobooks: 2000-2016* (2017), *The Latin American photobook* (2011)), non-western creators (*10×10 Japanese Photobooks* (2014), *The Chinese Photobook, From the 1900s to the Present* (2016), *The Japanese photobook: 1912-1990* (2017)), and many other such engaged bodies of work. Instead, what I posit is that approaches that explore the field in a more philosophically holistic manner (phenomenologically, for example) possess a greater potential for

creating and identifying new, more universally applicable structures and forms of communication that are not dependent or potentially biased by external socio-political factors. This, I think is effectively demonstrated throughout my research.

The particular intimacy of the photobook

Throughout my research, it has been demonstrated how intimacy, rather than any other interchangeable phenomenon (such as shock, empathy, excitement, lust, etc.) is not only uniquely communicated by the photobook, but that the photobook and intimacy share a unique connection in the wider context of photographic reproduction and dissemination. This, while neatly underscoring the necessity for my body of work *Ever Forward, Back* (2021) to be presented as a photobook, is synchronously demonstrated by the work. A major challenge for any practice-led research that takes a theoretical approach such as mine, is avoiding the perceived need to demonstrate every point made in the research paper; while efforts to apply relevant techniques and approaches have been made throughout, to hold my practice responsible for demonstrating every point made would negatively impact the practice (which would become muddled and confused) and/or the research (where relevant and interesting ideas would be avoided or left out to avoid their implementation within my practice).

Within this approach I have developed what I believe to be the foundations for one of my more significant contributions to the field; a new structure of critical theory for the exploration of intimate affect: the spatial and corporeal planes. These two planes were originally conceived as "phases", but I felt that this term brought with it a temporality and indication of sequentiality and singularity that obfuscated the ability for the two experiences to be had in simultaneity or in a fluctuating manner. "Plane" possesses an abstract spatial quality that allows for simultaneous or individual experience without temporal location or sequentiality. The development of this system of analysis and exploration is felt to offer the most precise mode of theoretical analysis and exploration in relation to phenomenology and intimate affect, though not necessarily restricted to photobook or even fine art practices. Further revisions to this theory, challenges and refutations will now be crucial in transforming this fledgling

idea into a more robust and applicable structure of investigation.

Chapters One and Two contribute to an effort to formalise the link between intimacy, spatiality and temporality, a central aspect to my research's arguments on the particularity of the photobook's intimate affect. To further develop this, Chapter One's utilisation of the *unheimlich* as a means of defining and contextualising intimate phenomena helps to better situate it within the remit of wider visual studies; *unheimlich* is a term whose abstract nature neatly underpins my claims to intimacy existing across time/space planes of consciousness. Repetition is offered as a formal example of one way in which this may be explored within the photobook, a notion taken further in Chapter Three where the impact of repetition is explored in relation to interruption and consciousness – where repetition is used as a means to disrupt, make strange and thus refocus the reader's conscious attention onto *intentionality*.

In Chapter Two I have suggested the reading of a photograph as uniquely introspective, a claim that holds particularly well in the context of the photobook (leaning here particularly towards Alex Sweetman's definition of photobookwork, see section 0.5). Following on from this is the assertion of the significance different reading styles and environments can have on the photobook, a notion that is explored in relation to scale, design language and reading environment, but is perhaps particularly ripe for further, extended study. Here it may be fair to say my omission of discussions around different material factors (paper stocks, binding peculiarities, print technologies, etc.) open this area up to further, dedicated and sustained study, something that could not be achieved in research focusing on commercially published titles (decidedly not bespoke/handmade ones).

Within Chapter Three the notion of making strange and interruption formed the bulk of my research, a point I have identified as a particularly significant aspect in the creation of intimate affect within creative practices. Through such consciousness-heightening techniques, the reader's awareness is altered, shifted and refocused (be this onto the relationship they share with the book/author/narrative as explored in Chapter One, authorial intention as explored in Chapter Two, or to shifting awareness

of space/time as explored in Chapters Two and Three) making it perhaps one of the most important tools available to photobook creators. How this is achieved is also explored in Chapter Three, where a number of interruptive/de-habitualising techniques are outlined and explored, though not to an extent I would yet call exhaustive. Again, within the context of my research, I feel more sustained research here would yield a truly fertile field for further exploration.

The role of possession and ownership forms a relatively brief but no-less integral part of this research, it being one of the key defining characteristics of the photobook compared to many other forms of photographic dissemination. I do feel however, that this is an area that could viably have more dedicated studies based on it, to better understand and explore the implications of such relationships (particularly but not exclusively in relation to the photo-/artbook). In particular I feel my use of Rebecca Watkins' excellent research within this area, while well positioned within my research, could be developed in future work to really open up new discourse around the art-object/commodity.

Structures of approach: furthering scholarship on photo-book practices.

The diversity of references within my research is felt to be a real strength. I do however acknowledge a few intentional omissions that require explanation. Firstly, while cinematic references are made, they are notably and perhaps unusually contemporary in nature. Photography's links with the Avant-garde/Kino-Pravda/Cinema Verité eras have already been amply developed in academia (see Bate, 2009; Campany, 2015 & 2018; Cousins, 2017 for just a few good examples), and so further engagement here will contribute little in the way of new structures of knowledge or consideration. Hand-in-hand with the fecundity of these areas of research is the considerable baggage such existing theory brings with it, welcome or not. Working with phenomenology, while allowing a more holistic approach to experiential affect, can complicate approaches that fully encompass the socio-political/cultural contexts at play, thus potentially muddying the waters of my research. It is also felt that the

more contemporary titles utilised represent particularly well-developed examples of the phenomena they each attempt to demonstrate and that, regardless of theoretical standing or lineage within academic theory, stronger exemplar forms could not readily be identified. This is no major surprise if we consider the groundwork done in Chapter One, which clearly identifies the notion of intimacy as a distinctly modern development, arising from a need for a substitute for ever shrinking private space (Keltner in Keltner and Oliver, 2009:165). Earlier forms of cinema also negate first-person experience for artistic agency, over time and through chasms in cultural alignment, losing their inherent humanistic, empathetical nature and instead becoming fetish objects of observation and "reading" (as opposed to escapism and experience). It is this escapism that is essential to the creation of phenomenological affect, it being a phenomena born from connection, empathy and knowledge. I don't claim that intimacy is impossible with earlier works of experimental film, but that the nature of such a connection, particularly among younger audiences for whom such references may not possess such readily accessible interpretations, is comparatively muted.

The structure and approach of this research has been to move past many of the problematised issues raised by Neves (2017), Campany (2014) and others, and to engage the photobook as an existent artistic form, rather than some new, anomalous form on the fringes of photographic publishing, requiring formalisation in order to fully exist in academic scholarship. It may at first hint at the ironic that it is this very structure of exploration and research that has enabled the identification of the *particularity* of the photobook in relation to intimate communication; by taking the photobook as an assumed form – accepting many of the formalisations of what it is that have preceded this research – we have been able to identify the particular, the inalienable, and the untranslatable held within. While I feel my topic and structure of approach are indeed well suited, I don't claim them to be mutually reliant; intimacy may be approached in a number of ways, such as through a sustained exploration of photobook titles centred on the family as subject matter, for example. Equally, phenomenology's relevance to the study of any number of experiential components of photobook consumption cannot be downplayed; I can easily see the case being made

for phenomenological explorations of the photobook in relation to the abject, shock, trauma, melancholy, grief, pity, empathy, to name just a few immediately apparent examples.

The particular intimacy of the photobook has been a topic of introspection for me ever since I was first exposed to the form many years ago, it being the most profound form of affect for me in my then limited experience of photographic output. The opportunity to formalise and explore this came with equal parts apprehension and enthusiasm; apprehension born from the same dread I'm sure all Ph.D. candidates feel early on: that their research will lead them to disprove the very claim they are attempting to establish. Mercifully, and thanks in no small part to the structure of my approach, this fear was unfounded as my research continually pointed me to the conclusion that my feelings on the photobook's intimate communication are not unique to my experience of them.

> The book fascinated him, or more exactly it reassured him. In a sense it told him nothing that was new, but that was part of the attraction. It said what he would have said, if it had been possible for him to set his scattered thoughts in order. It was the product of a mind similar to his own, but […] more systematic, less fear-ridden. The best books, he perceived, are those that tell you what you know already. (ibid, 2018(1949):229)

And so we return to the extract from George Orwell's *1984* (1949) previously discussed in Chapter One, a fitting way to round off a phenomenological piece of research. While contributing to knowledge in a formal way, my hope is that nothing I have said here comes as any shock or revelation to my reader, and that instead it is received with the same reassuring sense of knowing that Winston Smith expresses in *1984*. My contribution isn't new ideas, but instead ideas we have all had at some point, Which I have systematically organised, So they are less fear-ridden and thus more powerful than they might be as scattered chunks. The best theory is that which formalises, rationalises, organises, what we know already.

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