NOSTALGIA AND THE PHYSICAL BOOK

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ABSTRACT

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We are used to seeing books, handling them, reading them, but we are not so used to analyzing our relationship to the form of the object, yet in this thesis, I argue that the very shape and composition of books has an impact on our interactions and relationships with them. By looking at the material book, we must confront the cultural, social, and individual significance that these material objects are imbued with. The physical attributes of books, from the smell of ink and paper to the distinct feel of a hefty hardback or flexible paperback, contribute specific things to culture and an individual's experience as physical books carry commercial, aesthetic, and emotional value. By looking at material culture studies, memory and commemoration, as well as theory behind nostalgia, I argue that the physical book can be both a powerful object and carrier of social meaning by utilizing Grant McCracken's notion of displaced meaning, academic studies of nostalgia, the science of book scent, bookshop curation, and book collecting, along with essay compilations by booklovers. From the affective power of the sensory aspects of books to book collecting and book spaces, the materiality of the book is revealed not as a mere vessel for texts but as essential to the physical book's ability to anchor memory, emotion, and identity.

For my grandmother Elaine White who never doubted I would finish this project even when I did

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INTRODUCTION

Books have been a major part of my life for as long as I can remember, with teetering stacks piled haphazardly around the house a constant presence. Library books, Scholastic book orders, used book sales: any time I have had the opportunity to get my hands on books, I do. Once I was old enough to start acquiring books for myself (sparing my parents' wallet the burden), I took to it with what has been at times considered too much zeal. My passion for books is not focused solely on the stories or information they contain, though. There are times I buy books purely for the aesthetic value of the object: old, outdated science books with somewhat grainy pictures in them, a classic literature work with pages worn soft by age, an edition with an attractive binding. For several years now, I have been buying nearly every copy of illustrated Peterson Field Guides I find because the art style of the illustrations combined with the overall heft and design of the books speaks to me. Some books I value because they have a particular aesthetic with yellowed pages or certain fonts, while some carry the special "old book smell" that triggers memories from previous encounters with books and the spaces they fill. Regardless of how much I enjoy reading, the mere act of handling a physical book has an appeal all its own. Ownership is not the only allure either, as library books to me are just as satisfying to behold, while libraries and bookstores (especially the best of them) have an atmosphere that cannot be matched by any other retailer or shop.

Books in the popular imagination hold a place of endearment. People are book lovers, collectors, and readers. Bibliophiles and bibliomania loom large within book culture. With the position of the book in our cultural imagination, strong feelings are bound to arise. In what follows, the interplay of nostalgia and the physical book is explored. I will be researching the nostalgia that is evoked by physical books and the memories associated or carried within them. It

could be said that people have a "book fetish" that lends the material object a certain power in the cultural landscape. This reveals the need to investigate the power and influence of the book as a physical object, shaped by and interacting with nostalgia. The role of the material book in culture is part of why it is not nearly as endangered by digital technologies as one might think. Many people go through life not contemplating books as objects except when there is a perceived threat to their continued existence, such as that of digital technologies replacing or phasing out the material. Otherwise, people mostly tend to be aware of the sensory aspect of books only as background noise to their lives, not fully considering the role of these objects. Overlooking the book as object is a common behavior, but by doing so, we miss out on just how important the materiality of the book is. Looking at material culture studies, memory and commemoration, as well as the theory behind nostalgia, I argue that the physical book can be both a powerful object and a carrier of social meaning.

As other scholars have noted, "Books, despite their ubiquity and cultural endurance, are rarely considered objects whose significance extends beyond their capacity as content providers" (Lenaghan 3). This work seeks to bridge the gap between the love for books as reading material and the evocative power of the physical book by showing how the material form of the book interacts with the emotional landscapes of individuals. I also consider bookstores as physical book spaces that have a similar affective dimension as individual books, as it is essential to pay "simultaneous attention to the multiple dimensions of the material, the social, and the aesthetic" as Frederic Jameson reminds us (Jameson 67).

Much has already been written about nostalgia and the book in popular culture, although frequently the works that most prioritize the aspect of nostalgia and the physical book are not academic but rather from self-proclaimed booklovers or book collectors, such as *The Man Who*

Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession by Allison Hoover Bartlett (2010), *I'd Rather Be Reading: The Delights and Dilemmas of the Reading Life* by Anne Bogel (2018), *The Yellow-Lighted Bookshop* by Lewis Buzbee (2006), *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader* by Anne Fadiman (1998), and *The Diary of a Bookseller* by Shaun Bythell (2017). Even analysis of antiquarian book collecting (everyday book collecting is usually accounted for in the same works that espouse the love of books and literature) tends to devote some attention to the text of the books—as seen in works by Margot Rosenberg, Jean Peters, Henry Petroski, Seumas Stewart, Allen Ahearn, and Robert A. Wilson—rather than fully focusing on the physical attributes which determine the value of the object in the book market. This is in spite of the fact that antiquarian books, unlike records or other collectibles that carry texts, are often experienced only as physical artifacts rather than being read for their contents. In fact, the idea of reading the rare volumes so coveted by antiquarian book collectors is, at times, scandalous, as doing so could decrease their value through wear and damage imposed by the very action the books were originally printed for.

My research explores the interaction of the physical book with wider cultural and emotional responses, allowing for a more interdisciplinary analysis of the widespread connection between nostalgia and the physical book. There are many writers who have analyzed books as cultural icons along with the more expected literary analysis that accompanies book research—such as Leah Price, Peter Mendelsund, Stephen Greenblatt, Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, and Margaret Leslie Davis—but few studies fully devote themselves to the material culture aspect of books. While some works may contemplate the impact of the physical book and its impression upon buyers or readers (or even within the cultural imagination, such as with the proverb "don't judge a book by its cover"), when one brings up books as a topic of study, the

next question is generally “what genre(s)?”. This shows the somewhat limited availability of studies on the material aspect of books. It is important that scholars approach this topic with as much dedication as is given to the content of a book (literature) or the classification awarded to its information (genre). By researching the interplay of nostalgia and the physical book, I expect to find insight into why the physical book has continued as long and as well as it has even in the face of technological advancement—or perhaps even because of such changes.

Books are all around us. They pervade the world in various ways and forms. The book in the physical shape that we know it today is the codex—a block of pages bound between two covers or boards. Previous iterations of the book throughout history that served similar purposes but that we are less familiar with include scrolls and tablets. Tom Mole, director of the Centre for the History of the Book at the University of Edinburgh, explains that “The codex form emerged long before print, in the first centuries of the Common Era. It consists of a series of leaves stacked on top of one another and gathered together along one edge. In other words, it's the book as we know it now” (15). While early codices could be made using vellum or rags for pages and may have been manuscripts (hand-written rather than printed), the modern codex today can also be referred to as the paper book.

Even though most people share a common mental picture of what a book is, few realize how the technology of the codex has pervaded many parts of our everyday lives. From audiobooks to e-books, digital texts are named after the physical book and the English language abounds with “books”: booking an appointment, a central object being book-ended, even influencing the development of technology such as the MacBook or Facebook. The book as object is ubiquitous in the cultural imagination and personal emotional landscapes. As Mole explains,

> Once I started to pay attention to books as objects in private and in public, I soon began to notice how many other objects we use alongside books. Books sit at the centre of a constellation of other objects, which orbit around the book like planets around the sun. Before long, I had a whole list of other items that are more or less related to books and reading: bookmarks, bookplates, book bags, reading spectacles, reading lights, reading chairs, and many more. Many of these things exist only because of books: they've been specially designed and manufactured to be used alongside books…Thinking about the book as an object opens the door to a wider material culture of bookishness. (38-9)

Bjørnar Olsen, a Norwegian archeologist who studies material culture, advises us to "Think how the routines, movements, and social arrangements of our daily lives are increasingly prescribed, defined and disciplined, as well as helped or encouraged, by networks of material agents" (97). By looking at the material aspect of books and the role they play in our everyday lives, the cultural and social significance of these objects becomes strikingly clear.

It is important to note here, that the topic of this research does not concern books as reading content but rather focuses centrally on their materiality and the experience it provides for people in their interactions with them. Separating reading from books as objects is often a struggle, as the two things are so heavily connected in our minds. Mole explains this is a culturally learned connection, as once we learn to read: "The book itself starts to vanish, to seem as though it's hardly a thing at all. As we gain the ability to lose ourselves in a book, the book as an object begins to get lost" (7). Even scholars who focus on material culture in their studies tend to use the book as an example not for its physical materiality but for its textual contents. For instance, Olsen quotes philosopher Michel Serres, who wrote, "You can't find anything in books that recounts the primitive experience during which the object as such constituted the human

subject, because books are written to entomb this very experience, to block all access to it, and because the noise of discourse drowns out what happened in that utter silence" (qtd. in Olsen 100). While perhaps the point of Serres is that the written language of books is incapable of addressing the topic of objects constituting subjects, he too fails to acknowledge that books are objects that can interact with people beyond their textual content, arguably even constituting subjects. In this way, the materiality of books is somewhat unique because it is so often lost in the content printed within.

Modern life is dominated by material objects and our relationships to them. Material culture is increasingly coming under scrutiny due to the seemingly unprecedented challenges and changes brought about by digital technologies. While technology is definitely causing major changes to our everyday lives, materiality still holds a significant sway over individuals. Olsen points to phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty's idea of

> "the pact" between us and the things, the intertwining, the chiasm (the intersection or cross-over). As beings of a tactile world, belonging to "their family", we are intimately connected to things, our kinship welds us together; and "things themselves", Merleau-Ponty now says, are "not flat beings but beings in depth, inaccessible to a subject that would survey them from above, open to him alone that…would coexist with them in the same world." (Olsen 98)

People do not live on a separate plane from the objects they use, consume, and purchase, so the binary notion of there being an "us" of people and a "them" of objects isn't necessarily reflective of how we actually interact with the world. Olsen notes that the typical story is of the subject creating the object and that everything is "language, action, mind and human bodies," but he

counters that attention should also be paid to the other side of the story: “how objects construct the subject” (100).

In this particular work, I look to do precisely that by analyzing how the physical object of the book shapes our emotional and social lives as well as our identities. Olsen notes that “People establish ‘quasi-social’ relationships with objects in order to live out in a ‘real’ material form their abstract social relationships” (94). He goes on to cite Emile Durkheim’s *The Suicide* (1897): “it is not true that society is made up only of individuals; it also includes material things, which play an essential role in common life…Social life, which is thus crystallised, as it were, and fixed on material supports, is by just so much externalised, and acts upon us from without” (qtd. in Olsen 97). In other words, “books don't just *mean* things to us. They also *do* things to us” (original emphasis) (Mole 12).

Tim Dant advocates for renewed attention to studying material objects in *Materiality and Society* (2005): “To be human is to live in a material world in which our experience is always grounded in the actions of our bodies in relation to other material entities within our world” (136). Objects are incorporated into our lives and allow people to extend some notion of their selves out into the world (both the material world and the social/cultural world) (Dant 60). Dant argues that there is a need to explore the often overlooked “more intimate and embodied relationships with objects that communicate the culture through practices that are meaningful to those who participate in them” (136). He emphasizes the process of “material interaction”—the mundane interactions we have with things through which material culture helps constitute social worlds (Dant x). Dant further notes two ways that we engage with the material world: “first, by the direct impact of objects on our perceptions channelled via the bodily sensations of sight, touch, smell, taste and sound; and second, the meanings and significance of these bodily

sensations are shaped through the embodied processes of mind and memory by our cultural experience" (x-xi). With this in mind, our relationship with books can be seen not just through our physical interactions with the objects but through the meanings the books are imbued with.

Similarly, Sherry Turkle in *Evocative Objects: Things We Think With* writes that "Objects help us make our minds, reaching out to us to form active partnerships" (308). They "have life roles that are multiple and fluid. We live our lives in the middle of things. Material culture carries emotions and ideas of startling intensity. Yet only recently have objects begun to receive the attention they deserve" (Turkle 6). Olsen explains this disparity in academic attention, writing "One reason frequently given [for why the material world is not studied more often] is that things do not call attention to themselves — they are so integrated in our lives, being at the same time the 'most obvious and the best hidden'" (94). Precisely because our lives are so intertwined with physical objects, we struggle to see their significance, much as Serres managed to forget the book is an object and not only a printed text.

Olsen further writes that "These things are so close to us, our being-in-the-world is so enmeshed in networks of things, that we do not see them unless they call attention to themselves by breaking down, are in the wrong places or are missing. Heidegger's concept of 'care' relates to all beings we engage with, our being is a 'dwelling alongside' (and a 'being towards') other beings" (96). Mole writes of how he only confronted the materiality of a book when reading a copy of *Middlemarch* and realizing that the book was missing a chunk of the story, moving from page 140 directly to page 109 and repeating what came previously (23-4). In this way, Mole describes how disruption to the normal or typical experience of an object is often what makes us realize its materiality. As Olsen speculates, sometimes we are simply too close to what's in front of us to consciously realize how important it is. Even so, people who love books talk about the

object of the book being kind to them, sharing space with them, and even being "something very much like breathing creatures that share my bed and board" (Manguel 50). Likewise, interior designer Nina Freudenberger writes of the role of the paper book in homes in *Bibliostyle: How We Live at Home with Books* (2019), positing "What are the elements that move a house beyond its physical structure and provide the warmth that we all crave? In my fifteen years as a designer, I've come to understand that the answer is simple: It is about surrounding ourselves with things we love" (11). For many, surrounding themselves with books creates not only a home but also a sense of self. At the end of the day, "To encounter books is always to encounter a physical object that is burdened with meanings" (Mole 212).

Mole gives an example of the significance of the physical book in *The Secret Life of Books: Why They Mean More Than Words* (2019), explaining that "The US House of Representatives allows newly elected members to choose the book used to swear them in. It doesn't have to be a religious text. But there has to be a book: you can't be sworn in without one. The power of the book to signify the seriousness of the oath is more important than the contents of the book chosen" (35). In the discussion of evocative objects, material culture can be said to carry "emotions and ideas of startling intensity" even if we have only recently started to seriously give such objects much attention (Turkle 6). Turkle notes that it's easy to consider objects "as useful or aesthetic, as necessities or vain indulgences" but we often struggle "when we consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought" (5). However, the study of evocative objects is important as it "underscore[es] the inseparability of thought and feeling in our relationship to things. We think with the objects we love; we love the objects we think with" (Turkle 5). When it comes to books as objects, they are highly effective at

evoking emotional responses from individuals and one of the predominant emotions tied to their form is that of nostalgia.

While most people have personal experience with nostalgia, there are also a variety of ways nostalgia is discussed in wider culture. The Oxford English Dictionary defines nostalgia as an "acute longing for familiar surroundings, esp. regarded as a medical condition; homesickness" or "a sentimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp. one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past" or "something which causes nostalgia for the past; frequently as a collective term for things which evoke a former (remembered) era. Cf. memorabilia, n." (original emphasis) ("nostalgia, n."). Nostalgia as it exists in the emotional landscape is a heavily romanticized concept. It is an emotion of memory, but often of constructed memory. Frequently triggered by physical stimuli (scent, sight, or other sensory experiences), nostalgia ties us to our pasts, whether as it was or perhaps constructed retroactively. Nostalgia can be seen as a "universal groping for the transcendent" (Daniels 373) as well as "a special moment in remembering—one in which there is a commingling of past become present, even future manifesting itself in the present as already past'" (Daniels 379). Nostalgia can be "a constitution of the world characterized by a yearning for the hidden, a time always was, is, and will be hidden. A moment of reaching out, the moment itself reaches out toward the infinite horizons of past and future; an immanent moment always yearning to transcend itself…Nostalgia is a suffering of illusion, a search for what cannot be found" (Daniels 379). In this way, nostalgia can be a bittersweet emotion. It is often tied to social aspects of life as well: "Nostalgia is...the yearning to return to an experience of community we imagine hidden in home…all the homes, where, like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, we think we will find our lost home: the home of our everyday-life world, our world-as-community,

and the community of our world-as-home" (Daniels 381-2). In other words, "humans are prone to seeking and maintaining meaningfulness…They do so, in part, via nostalgizing" (Sedikides and Wildschut 57). Regardless of which definition one finds most appealing, nostalgia is integrally tied to abstract notions of memory and desire.

Through nostalgia, books serve as reservoirs of displaced meaning, often tied to inaccessible pasts or perhaps even self-construction for the present and future. Grant McCracken explains displaced meaning, writing, "Confronted with the recognition that reality is impervious to cultural ideals, a community may displace these ideals. It will remove them from daily life and transport them to another cultural universe, there to be kept within reach but out of danger" (106). Then, "Consumer goods are bridges to these hopes and ideals. We use them to recover this displaced cultural meaning, to cultivate what is otherwise beyond our grasp" (McCracken 104) as inanimate objects aid in the recovery of cultural meaning and "come to concretize a much larger set of attitudes, relationships, and circumstances, all of which are summoned to memory and rehearsed in fantasy when the individual calls the object to mind" (McCracken 110). McCracken says that the way goods give people access to displaced meaning is through the "physical, economic, and structural characteristics of goods and the contribution these characteristics make to nonlinguistic communication…Goods serve so well in this capacity because they succeed in making abstract and disembodied meaning extant, plausible, possessable, and, above all, concrete" (113-5). As such, books can be seen as retainers of meanings—both cultural and personal—through their role as consumer goods, as objects we can possess.

In chapter one, I will show that not only do books have an appeal for being physical objects, but that their materiality allows abstract ideas to be anchored to our environments and

into our lives. Books are especially good at evoking ideal moments in our pasts through nostalgia, frequently built on memories of loved ones or self-defining moments. As such, their materiality is not going to be fully replaced by digital technologies. In chapter one, I will explore the sensory aspects of books, such as the smell, the art, the construction materials, and how this all builds into the nostalgia people have for books. By exploring the affective influence of physical books, the way in which materiality is tied to our relationship with abstract, non-concrete concepts and emotions can be understood. Using both theory and popular culture coverage (from news articles and non-academic works on the book), this chapter will show which aspects of the physical book are valued by individuals and what impact those aspects have on individuals' interactions with the book as object and on the larger cultural role of the book.

Turkle notes that "objects remind us of people we have lost" (8). Books can act as connections to people from the past, whether an individual we personally know or someone removed from us in time and place (such as historical figures or a particular author). Meanwhile, translator and writer Alberto Manguel notes the memory-evoking abilities of books in the process of unpacking his private library: "The unpacking also conjures up images of my own younger self at different times: carefree, brave, ambitious, solitary, arrogant, all-knowing; disappointed, bewildered, somewhat afraid, alone and aware of my ignorance. Here were the magic talismans" (28-9). This magic contained within books as comfort objects comes not only from the meaning that these objects can hold but their role as containers of memory, including memories of past selves or identities. Indeed, books are often discussed as icons for childhood memories and nostalgia. Perhaps Mole expresses it most poetically when he writes, "Books are sandbags stacked against the floodwaters of forgetting" (80). More plainly, books anchor the abstract to the concrete in our everyday lives.

Physical interactions with books also tie into the affective power of the book. Haptics (having to do with the sense of touch), smell, aesthetics, and more all influence the power of books as carriers of displaced meaning. For example, people's sense of smell is a strong memory trigger and is often the most volatile sense for triggering memories (Bogel). Sensory input is a significant factor in nostalgia and can often exert a substantial influence on what people report as their favorite aspect of books. Many people write about the power of the physical book, noting the import of sensory appeals such as scent or haptics. In research on the fate of reading in an increasingly digital world, professor of linguistics Naomi Baron quotes one of her undergraduate students who spoke of a digital text as "'not a book. It doesn't have a smell, you don't touch it'" (133). Baron further quotes author Will Schwalbe, who explains "'printed books have body, presence'" while Michael Dirda is quoted as writing "'Books are home—real physical things you can love and cherish'" (qtd. in Baron 133). For many, the materiality of the book is essential to its book-ness.

From analyzing the physical nature of paper books and the specific components of people's interactions with them, the role of books in memory and emotions—such as nostalgia—can be explored as a factor in the significance of material books to culture and the everyday lives of individuals. In chapter one, I will be utilizing Grant McCracken's concepts of displaced meaning and possession rituals as well as Tim Dant's analysis of everyday interactions with the material world and Sherry Turkle's discussion of evocative objects to discuss the material culture aspect. Research done by psychologists Chelsea Reid, Jeffrey Green, Tim Wildschut, and Constantine Sedikides contributes to my analysis of the psychological and cultural role of nostalgia. This section will also include a look into the scientific studies done on scent and memory with a particular focus on "old book smell," utilizing Cecilia Bembibre and Matija

Strlič's research into the science of scent and its value to cultural heritage. I will also be pulling from popular accounts of book lovers including works by Nina Freudenberger, Ann Bogel, Anne Fadiman, Alberto Manguel, and Allison Hoover Bartlett.

While chapter one looks at the interaction between physical and abstract as a concept broadly applied to most individuals and their relationships with books, chapter two looks specifically at book collecting and the various ways collectors interact with books. Here I will explore how the act of collecting physical books not only affects space and memory but also influences the construction of identity. Turkle describes how this works, writing "we often feel at one with our objects" (9) and "Some objects are experienced as part of the self" (7). Paper books indeed play a huge role in how book lovers shape their identity. They can create social connections as well, granting groups a communal identity construction. As Mole writes, "Book buying, owning and collecting can create and sustain social bonds" (96). Looking at book collecting to understand the motivations that make an individual book-obsessed (from nostalgia to financial investment and more), the materiality of books comes to the forefront. For collectors, digital is no replacement for the physical object. Avoiding the issues of digital ownership by possessing a hardcopy book, collectors are individuals who are more closely attuned to the power of the book as object. From antiquarian collecting to popular collecting—assembling whole series, buying different art edition covers, re-purchasing childhood favorites—the practice provides a space to explore the integral aspect of materiality to the appeal of the book to collectors. Here, the import of the book's materiality reflects not only the way books are used to shape identity but also how books are used to make social groups and to send messages about one's identity through public display. From this, we see that the physical book is not merely a

container for text but is an object worthy of study itself (as well as an object of admiration and affection for collectors of all sorts).

Olsen's argument that more attention should be paid to material culture is emphasized by the power of objects in shaping individual and cultural identity. He writes that consumer goods "are actively used in social and individual self-creation in which they are directly constitutive of our understanding of ourselves and others...people appropriate objects from the manipulative forces of production and commerce and turn them into potentially inalienable and creative cultural products vital to their own identity formation" (Olsen 91). Olsen goes on to defend the validity of culturally influential materiality as not mere fetishism, noting that

> no suspicion arises when we establish intimate relations with a human subject, fall in love with a girl, or honour our parents. No misplaced emotions, no conspiracies here. So we have one set of relations that are taken for granted as real, authentic and honest; another set that a priori are false. The falseness seems to arise when we transgress a certain border, between the "us" and the "it", projecting relations prescribed for one realm onto another. (95)

In this way, Olsen lays the groundwork for arguing that objects—in the case of this work, books—deserve to be studied without a bias for their textual contents or a dismissal of their importance as mundane objects.

Chapter two utilizes theories about collecting from Kevin M. Moist and David Banash, as well as continuing to build on the work of McCracken and Dant. In this chapter, I will also be referencing Elizabeth Lenaghan's dissertation on *Print Matters: Collecting Physical Books in a Digital Age* (2012) and Eugene Daniels' notion of nostalgia as described in "Nostalgia and Hidden Meaning." My analysis in this section will also pull from accounts of common collectors

and writers of non-academic analyses of book collecting such as Alberto Manguel and John Dunning.

From collecting, I will move on to explore the role of the bookstore as a space not only of commerce but of culture in chapter three. This chapter will cover the emotional connections people forge with bookstores through their sensory experiences with the physical space as well as the communities that develop around them. This will also be where I explore the lengths that people go to in order to protect their relationship with physical books and the nostalgia found therein. Examples such as how communities rally around independent bookstores to protect them from competition or even save them from having to close, as well as the emphasis that bookstore frequenters place on the act of browsing as a sort of communion with the physical book that cannot be obtained through online shopping, will be explored.

Tate Shaw, referencing the work of N. Katherine Hayles in *Writing Machines*, notes that there is "a feedback loop from materiality to mind. Obviously, artifacts spring from thought, but thought also emerges from interactions with artifacts" (qtd. in Shaw 52). As such, the places where people interact with books (i.e., bookstores), influence thought and therefore culture in the local community. Part of the way the cultural import of books and bookstores as physical entities can be seen is through the visceral reaction individuals have to perceived threats to the continued presence of books and bookstores. As Bill Brown writes, "the study of objects in books clearly shares with the new study of books as objects an interest in determining how subjects are formed and transformed by the material world. Both have coincided with the much circulated claims about the effect of digital media on that world, what I've come to think of as the melodrama of besieged materiality" (26). Brown's notion of besieged materiality is increasingly obvious in the public reaction to digital technology affecting the brick-and-mortar bookstore. Beyond the uproar

that potential bookstore closings cause, though, people rarely investigate where those strong emotions come from. Turkle points out that "We forget that objects have a history. They shape us in particular ways. We forget why or how they came to be" (311). Indeed, physical books are forgotten all the time, until they are seen to be under threat. Then the story printed on the pages is no longer the main focus; the story of the physical book leaps to the forefront of individuals' minds as modern technology challenges the primacy of the codex as ubiquitous medium.

As a result of the materiality of the book being ignored by individuals, the role of the book as a commodity in the market is also dismissed. In relation to the bookstore, books are still rarely discussed as commodities by book lovers. Instead, books are written about in terms of literary value, romantic notions of identity and place—whether present or past—nostalgic memories, and emotions of things removed from the here-and-now. To investigate the economic and commodity aspects of books, I will employ anthropologist Greg Urban's analysis in *Metaculture: How Culture Moves through the World* (2001) of how culture is spread by dissemination through material culture and its interactions with capitalism. In chapter three, I will also draw on the work of Ann Steiner (professor of publishing studies at Lund University in Sweden) on curation in Swedish bookshops, Jim Collins' analysis of popular book culture in *Bring on the Books for Everybody: How Literary Culture Became Popular Culture* (2010), and Chantal Harding's research on U.K. bookselling practices from 1997-2014. I also utilize accounts by industry insiders, such as booksellers Lewis Buzbee and Shaun Bythell, as well as the American Booksellers Association and British publishing magazine *The Bookseller* to explain the context of the bookselling scene and the perspectives of industry insiders. I also refer to articles from *Forbes*, *Quartz*, *Slate*, *The Irish Times*, and *Design Week* to survey the general discussion of bookstores going on in everyday life. Throughout this thesis, McCracken and Dant

provide a theoretical backing to the argument, while Mole reveals the power of mundane interactions with books.

Breaking down the chapters in this manner allows me to, first of all, assert that the nostalgia of books affects more than just our perceptions of the books themselves (i.e., the way we conceptualize bookstores is also influenced by this romanticized notion of the book as a physical object), secondly to showcase how nostalgia impacts interactions with books (such as through collecting), and thirdly to demonstrate how book spaces, such as bookstores, are shaped by the physical attributes of the book itself as well as our emotional responses to them. The role of the book as an object of import becomes clear by showing how sensory experiences of the paper book evoke memories through scent and tactile sensation, connecting individuals to childhood or ideal times as well as an idealized notion of self. The manner in which the materiality of books interacts with the public's emotional landscape through nostalgia in the cultural scene can be seen to show the subconscious impact of the physical book as well as its reality as a commodity. The book is a cultural carrier for both individuals and groups.

Part of the import of looking at the materiality of the physical book and how it affects the emotional lives of individuals comes from the tensions that many currently feel are threatening what they hold dear. Online sales and e-books are discussed as threats to the book and the book industry as we know it. Yet, even now, the average person struggles to explain their strong defensive emotions about books and bookstores beyond a love for the material object. While the question of how "transformations in the way knowledge is organized, stored, and transmitted…may impact on our sense of individual identity" (such as the role of books in identity construction) has been studied before, today we need to look at what it is about the physical book that makes it so powerfully evocative (Rhodes & Sawday 184). By looking at the

paper book, we must confront the cultural, social, and individual significance that these material objects are imbued with. The physical attributes of books, from the smell of ink and paper to the distinct feel of a hefty hardback or flexible paperback, contribute specific things to culture and an individual's experience, even if people are not consciously aware of the importance of these details—book lover and book scholar alike. Perhaps it is time for people not to judge books by their covers but to analyze them for what they say about the culture that produces and consumes them.

As Lenaghan writes, "Even though the relatively fixed physical properties of the codex form have helped make books recognizable as such since their earliest incarnations, the meanings and uses of books have never been uniform. While one person may consider a book sacred, worthy of long hours of study and contemplation, another might use the same book to prop up an uneven table" (8). Regardless of the differences in how books are used, it can be seen that there is a widespread connection between books and emotions, especially nostalgia as a function of romanticized displaced meaning that allows consumers and collectors to stake a claim on an ideal time, space, or identity through memory. The passion displayed for the physical book—from book lovers protective of independent bookstores to those against e-books, audiobooks, and other alternative forms—shows the power of the physical book in culture to evoke strong emotional responses. These emotional responses can help reveal the values of the culture that produces them, drawing attention to the things we cherish most in our everyday lives. Books are beloved objects and this is an exploration of what makes the object so widely adored.

CHAPTER I. THE SENSORY AFFECT OF BOOKS: NOSTALGIA, IDENTITY, AND EMOTION

To recognize the power of the book, we first must acknowledge that books are indeed held dear by many individuals. Loving books is seen as such an integral part of so many people's identities that merchandise is sold just to proclaim this love of books—from tote bags and T-shirts proclaiming "Book Lover" to neckties printed to resemble library cards. Yet, while people love books, little attention is given to precisely why the physical form of the book is so alluring to so many people. While literature or accessibility is often discussed, little is said about the book as object. However, this is an oversight on the part of those who value books or seek to understand their cultural import. The sensory aspects of books are integral to our relationship to them. From childhood memories of encounters with books to the "quiet sensuality" of the printed book (Buzbee 202), people are drawn to paper books by their materiality. In an age where people are often concerned by the encroachment of digital technology on the role of the paper book, the materiality of a book is increasingly at the forefront of people's enjoyment of it. Linguist Naomi S. Baron, in *Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World* (2015) asks, "What counts as a book? For more than 1,500 years, the answer was simple: a collection of pages with writing (or pictures) on them, bound together. A book was always physical. You could smell its binding. Admire it on a shelf. Lend it to a friend. Lose it. Burn it" (131). Today, the relationship we have with books is increasingly intensified by the arrival of new technologies that provide the same texts as books. Digital technologies now make up a share of individuals' reading lives, yet this is not necessarily the death knell of paper books. Indeed, the materiality of paper books is increasingly important to their role in the everyday lives of individuals.

As explained by Christopher de Hamel from Corpus Cristi College at Cambridge University, the appreciation of the book as object is what creates a bibliophile:

> "when you take the momentous decision that books are not necessarily or only for reading, you are crossing a magic barrier from mere student into bibliophile. Books are for admiring, stroking, owning, touching, turning, coveting, chasing, buying, enjoying, contemplating, shelving, exhibiting, sharing, teaching, comparing, patting, smelling, investigating, upgrading, and generally luxuriating in." (Lenaghan 141)

Anthropologist Grant McCracken in *Culture and Consumption: New Approaches to the Symbolic Character of Consumer Goods and Activities* (1988) describes possession rituals that allow for meaning transfer from goods to consumers which sound very similar to de Hamel's description of bibliophiles' relationship to books: "Consumers spend a good deal of time cleaning, discussing, comparing, reflecting, showing off, and even photographing many of their new possessions" (85). While our relationship with books may be one of fond emotions and personal memories, they still remain commodity objects that can be purchased and collected for a variety of reasons.

This is part of what specifically makes books as physical objects significant in our lives; books are integrally linked to our emotional landscapes. They are meaning-making tools. Tim Dant in *Materiality and Society* writes that objects fundamentally are extensions of our minds (65). As bookstore owner Lewis Buzbee explains, "Find an old book from your childhood, take a good whiff, and suddenly you're living Proust" (36-7). Here Buzbee refers to Marcel Proust who wrote so notoriously of how sensory input can jolt a person into an involuntary memory that the phenomenon was named after him: "Proust's object is the small cookie called a madeleine. When dipped in tea, the taste of the madeleine brings Proust's character back to his youth, to a

country home in Combray, and to his aunt Albertine. Finally, the madeleine opens him to 'the vast structure of recollection'" (Turkle 318). From this account, "The power of scents to provoke vivid and emotionally charged autobiographical memories has been labelled the Proust phenomenon" (Reid et al. 158). The scent of books is particularly evocative not only because of its power to bring about memories but also because of its connection to the affective role of books in our everyday lives. Even in the background of mundane existence, books anchor memories and emotions to the physical realm. As such, books and their scents are heavily tied to nostalgia in our everyday experience of them.

In research done to determine the role of nostalgia and how it plays out in everyday life, scientists Sedikides and Wildschut found that

> Nostalgia—defined as sentimental longing for one's past—is a self-relevant, albeit deeply social, and an ambivalent, albeit more positive than negative, emotion. As nostalgia brings the past into present focus, it has existential implications. Nostalgia helps people find meaning in their lives, and it does so primarily by increasing social connectedness (a sense of belongingness and acceptance), and secondarily by augmenting self-continuity (a sense of connection between one's past and one's present). Also, nostalgia-elicited meaning facilitates the pursuit of one's important goals. Moreover, nostalgia acts as a buffer against existential threats. In particular, it shields against meaning threat, and buffers the impact of mortality salience on meaning, collective identity, accessibility of mortality-related thoughts, and death anxiety. Finally, nostalgia confers psychological benefits to individuals with chronic or momentary meaning deficits. These benefits are higher subjective vitality, lower stress, and regulation of meaning-seeking in response to

> boredom. Taken together, nostalgia helps people attain a more meaningful life, protects from existential threat, and contributes to psychological equanimity. (48)

The role of nostalgia and the power of that emotion helps explain why books are such coveted objects. Allison Hoover Bartlett in *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession* describes her first foray to a book fair, writing, "a steady stream of book-hungry people marching through the doors, eager to be among the first to see and touch the objects of their desire" (24). The enjoyment of books is linked to what Bartlett calls "sensory enticement": "the feel of thick, rough-edged pages, the sharp beauty of type, the tightness of linen or pigskin covers, the papery smell" (43). This passion for books is integrally linked to the materiality of the object: "they [the collectors interviewed] merged in my mind into a collection of their own, the larger story of which is a testament to the passion for books—their content and histories, their leathery, papery, smooth, musty, warped, foxed, torn, engraved, and inscribed bodies. This passion I share with them all" (Bartlett 365).

Books create a sort of shared legacy, an inheritance of history and human stories: "Consider the books we inherit…If we pass them down to future generations, we are transmitting not just boards, binding, and pages but a memory of who we were, especially if we have written—even our names—in the volumes. That physicality of transmission, and the emotions potentially associated with it" grant books a great deal of power (Baron 148). Lewis Buzbee describes the happenstance of coming upon a previous book owner's name inside the cover of a used book as "curious… even more so if that reader has added marginalia" (145). The connection that such a find makes between you as the current owner and another person who you likely will never meet is in part so jarring because of how personal paper books seem. People write their thoughts in the margins, store memorabilia between the pages as forgotten

bookmarks, and leave inscriptions to loved ones on an object that may well outlive them. Out of context, these snippets of life are not necessarily relevant to the new owner, but they are glimpses at the shared relationship people possess with books. As Dant writes, “The significance of cultural objects is that I experience the presence of others within the object, even if I do not know that person – I may not even be familiar with their culture” (104).

Books create not only a history through generations and owners, but also a continued sense of identity for individuals. Bartlett at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair of April 2005 noted that

> The booth [Aleph-Bet Books booth with children’s books] was packed with hungry collectors…co-owner Marc Younger…explained to me why so many fairgoers had crowded his booth. People have an emotional attachment to books they remember reading as children, he said, and very often it’s the first type of book a collector seeks. Some move on to other books, but many spend a lifetime collecting their favorite childhood stories. (32-3)

For librarian, author, and book collector Lawrence Clark Powell, “books’ importance in his life is less-content driven than it is based upon their remarkable physical qualities that evoke, for him, memories and nostalgia for the times and spaces that have filled his life” (Lenaghan 226). Bartlett sees that aspect of paper books as a boon for their future: "they root us in something larger than ourselves, something real. For this reason, I am sure that hardbound books will survive, even long after e-books have become popular” (313). As Jane Guthrie observed in *Good Housekeeping* in 1925, “Their very bindings hint repose, the welcome quiet hour in this rushing world of ours. Moreover, books are full of suggestion…the hint mystery, the alluring unknown” (qtd. in Radway 147). Books are full of potential while still being reassuringly familiar through

their emotional connection. Such a dichotomy permits books as physical objects to be powerful emotionally, socially, and culturally. As Dant writes,

> The way that material objects provide a bridge between the inner psychic life of the individual and the outer social life of the world around is not fixed but varies and may involve contradictory or reversible meanings. In writing about everyday domestic objects, Tisseron argues that meanings are not fixed or stable but are managed by the individual to meet both the demands of the situation and their emotional state…Nonetheless, objects can carry emotional and personal meanings…making links between the inheritance of emotional and practical ways of being and the building of present relationships…Each piece of domestic equipment is associated with memories – some banal, some of deep significance – and is tied up with the personal history of those who use them…They are vehicles for carrying the individual's past and for enabling him or her to realize emotional as well as practical relationships, with the self and with others. (63)

From such a perspective, it's easy to see why books as objects become integral to personal self-construction in book-fond individuals.

Interior designer Nina Freudenberger in *Bibliostyle: How We Live at Home with Books* comments about the power of books to move people, not just as reading material or art, but as part of a home: "surrounding yourself with books you love tells the story of your life, your interests, your passions, your values. Your past and your future. Books allow us to escape, and our personal libraries allow us to invent the story of ourselves—and the legacy that we will leave behind" (13). Freudenberger explains that the relationship people have with books in their homes is dynamic. We live with books which require maintenance: dusting, arrangement, re-arrangement, and so on (recall McCracken's possession rituals mentioned previously). Yet books

are never just material objects; their very materiality plays an emotional role in the lives of people: “the libraries were the heart of the home, meaningful to the collectors' lives…we tried to capture what they brought to the home—the life and spirit books added. …When we visited the homes, many people could find favorite books almost by osmosis, using systems known only to themselves” (Freudenberger 11-2). Interviewing artists, writers, illustrators, publishers, editors, architects and more about their private libraries, Freudenberger found that each had a unique relationship with their particular library; some found seemingly ordinary books beautiful while others loved their books for the aesthetic shine they brought to the space. All the same, each of them cared deeply about the role of the book as a material object.

To some people, the book is nearly sacred. In certain cases, this may be because books were scarce at one point in the individual’s life, granting them an elevated status. Hardeep Singh Kohli gives such an example, writing “My mum grew up with very few books around her. This inculcated her with a sense of reverence towards them, a reverence she passed on to her kids. So being around books made me feel almost spiritual at times” (32). But even for those who grew up surrounded by an abundance of books, there still is often a sanctity bestowed up the paper book. To some extent, this contributes to why people can find the destruction or unconventional use of books sacrilegious: “‘For me, books are material,’ says the artist Fernanda Fragateiro, whose sculptures and installations have frequently employed books. ‘People are shocked sometimes that I’ll cut up a book. I wouldn’t do it with a rare first edition.’ She indicates a sculpture in which a book has been deconstructed and covered in metal” (Freudenberger 290). People often have very visceral reactions to the destruction of books, or even the perceived damaging of books. Some are content to write in books while others are overly hesitant to leave any mark or sign of use upon the book. Is it because they see the book as holy or because they

appreciate the object as it is—without their own intervention in it? Anne Fadiman describes the conflict between differing approaches to books as objects:

> just as there is more than one way to love a person, so is there more than one way to love a book. The chambermaid [who scolded Fadiman's brother for leaving a book opened face-down on a table] believed in courtly love. A book's physical self was sacrosanct to her, its form inseparable from its content; her duty as a lover was Platonic adoration, a noble but doomed attempt to conserve forever the state of perfect chastity in which it had left the bookseller. The Fadiman family believed in carnal love. To us, a book's *words* were holy, but the paper, cloth, cardboard, glue, thread, and ink that contain them were a mere vessel, and it was no sacrilege to treat them as wantonly as desire and pragmatism dictated. Hard use was a sign not of disrespect but of intimacy. (38)

With such emotional responses connected to the paper book, it becomes clear that at least some of the power of books culturally lies in their physical existence. Fadiman further describes her family's library growing up as "a quarter mile of shelves…They were works of art themselves, floor-to-ceiling mosaics whose vividly pigmented tiles were all tall skinny rectangles, pleasant to the touch and even, if one liked the dusty fragrance of old paper, to the sniff" (125). Designer Phillip Lim also notes that appreciating books as decorative objects is another way to honor them (Freudenberger 116). No matter how people use books as objects—as gateways for reading, as props for crooked table legs, as material for art works, as keepsakes and memories, as financial investments—the relationship between object and individual is deeply personal and often emotionally charged. Dant writes that "The material relation between the human being and the objects around him or her enables feelings and emotions to be pushed from inside to out, from the psyche to the surface of the body and then beyond through things" (65).

Books and the nostalgia they evoke allow people to store, revisit, and enjoy memories of people, places, and times removed from the immediate here-and-now. Furthermore, "Tisseron reminds us that the interactions between individuals and objects are not simply practical but are the way that the emotional core of our beings is connected to the culture beyond us" (Dant 82).

This ability of books to transport people to past times and into mindsets removed from their immediate surroundings is not so different from the discussion of books as doorways to other worlds created by their textual contents. For instance, The Bookshop, an aptly named bookstore in Wigtown, Scotland, received an anonymous postcard that described the store as follows: "'The Bookshop has a thousand books, all colours, hues and tinges, and every cover is a door that turns on magic hinges'" (Bythell 445). Beyond the stories told through the written word, the materiality of books as objects also functions to bridge the gap between reality and desires. Even those who are surrounded by books everyday are not immune to the power of the paper book to seemingly bewitch individuals: "After seventeen years of working in bookstores, and even more, before and since, as a victim of book lust, I've gazed at millions of feet of shelf space, and I should be quite over the allure, the slight magic that's entranced me, but I'm not" (Buzbee 11).

The materiality of books often takes people to the past: to idealized periods during childhood, reminders of a simpler era, times when being an "intellectual" meant a life of prestige and academic pursuits, or even the fantasy of a world without technological distractions and obligations. As Bartlett writes, "In addition to being objects of beauty, …[books] provide a physical link to the past. This is one of their most powerful, enduring effects" (156). Walter Benjamin, upon unpacking his library and being surrounded by his books, explains how the presence of paper books shaped his experience in a way beyond conscious thought or effort:

"Other thoughts fill me than the ones I am talking about now—not thoughts but images, memories" (67). Ann Bogel in *I'd Rather Be Reading: The Delights and Dilemmas of the Reading Life* expands on this experience, writing,

> I've noticed how the books themselves serve as portals to my past, conjuring similarly powerful memories. There's something about glimpsing, and especially handling, a book from long ago that takes me right back to where I was when I first read it. The book triggers memories of why I picked it up, how it made me feel, what was going on in my life at the time, transporting me so thoroughly that, for a moment, I feel like I'm there once again. (131)

Even the appearance of familiar works can bring about nostalgia for past moments. As Bartlett writes of the book as keepsake,

> It's a personal record of one chapter of my life, just as other chapters have other books I associate with them. The pattern continues; my daughter returned from camp last summer with her copy of *Motherless Brooklyn* in a state approaching ruin. She told me she'd dropped it into a creek, but couldn't bear to leave it behind, even after she'd finished it. This book's body is inextricably linked to her experience of reading it. I hope that she continues to hold on to it, because as long as she does, its wavy, expanded pages will remind her of the hot day she read it with her feet in the water—and of the fourteen-year-old she was at the time. A book is much more than a delivery vehicle for its contents. (40)

In other words, "The books of our childhood offer a vivid door to our own pasts, and not necessarily for the stories we read there, but for the memories of where we were and who we were when we were reading them; to remember a book is to remember the child who read that book" (Buzbee 36-7).

Sometimes we seek out books specifically for the power of the object rather than the text it contains. We construct ourselves through our relationships with material books. One does not have to be a collector to use books as a marker of identity either. As McCracken notes, the meaning in goods can be used "to construct concepts of the self and world" (xiv). People curate the books they purchase by appearance, by topic, by publisher, by era, by different parameters in order to fulfill a fantasy of their own identity. Books become a way to express who one is and to send a message to others or to reaffirm it to oneself. This can be seen in the struggle of designers to make artificial yet believable collections of books for fictional characters. As Alan Bennett describes in *The Library Book* (2012)*:*

> Books and bookcases cropping up in stuff that I've written means that they have to be reproduced on stage or on film. This isn't as straightforward as it might seem. A designer will either present you with shelves lined with gilt-tooled library sets, the sort of clubland books one can rent by the yard as décor, or he or she will send out for some junk books from the nearest second-hand bookshop and think that those will do. Another short cut is to order in a cargo of remaindered books so that you end up with a shelf so garish and lacking in character it bears about as much of a relationship to literature as a caravan site does to architecture. A bookshelf is as particular to its owner as are his or her clothes; a personality is stamped on a library just as a shoe is shaped by the foot. (63-4)

Bennett goes on to explain that designers often seem to struggle to understand the nuanced ways that bookshelves vary based upon who they belong to: "designers…don't have much knowledge of Inca civilization either or the Puritan settlement of New England and yet they seem to cope perfectly well reproducing them. An agglomeration of books as illustrating the character of their owner seems to defeat them" (65). While Bennett rather vehemently takes issue with designers

failing to recognize the role of books and personal bookshelves as representative of personality, one could argue that most individuals, even the most book obsessed, struggle to fully account for the power of the book as object in society.

The power of books as markers of identity carries over into social interactions as well: "As an adult, my bookshelves defined me…I was disdainful of acquaintances who didn't fill their apartments with books. I dated men based on their bookshelves," writes Guinevere de la Mare (27). Writer and translator Alberto Manguel explains that "My libraries are each a sort of multi-layered autobiography, every book holding the moment in which I read it for the first time. The scribbles in the margins, the occasional date on the flyleaf, the faded bus ticket marking a page for a reason today mysterious—all attempt to remind me of who I was then" (10). Even though many people who accumulate books don't actually read them, their relationship with the book as object still connects them to memories: "much of the fondness avid readers, and certainly collectors, have for their books is related to the books' physical bodies…books are historical artifacts and repositories for memories—we like to recall who gave books to us, where we were when we read them, how old we were, and so on" (Bartlett 38-9). Personal libraries are reflections of the identity of individuals, compiled and constructed consciously or by happenstance overtime.

> Manguel rather poetically explains that since libraries are a place of memory:
>
> the unpacking of one's books quickly becomes a mnemonic ritual…Memories of the cities in which he found his treasures, memories of the auction rooms in which he bought several of them, memories of the past rooms in which his books were kept. The book I take out of the box to which it was consigned, in the brief moment before I give it its

> rightful place turns suddenly in my hands into a token, a keepsake, a relic, a piece of DNA from which an entire body can be rebuilt. (22)

Books are not just containers of words, then. They also carry their own significance, in part, because of how they interact with the lived everyday experience of individuals:

> Books are part of how we understand ourselves. They shape our identities, even before we can read them. They accompany us through our lives…They get tangled up in our relationships with parents, siblings, classmates, teachers, friends, lovers and children. They are part of how groups of people, and even whole nations, imagine and represent themselves. Books become meaningful objects in all sorts of ways: treasured possessions, talismans, bearers of significance. (Mole 4-5)

As McCracken describes it, "Material cultur[e] makes culture material. It makes it palpable, present, and ubiquitous" (132). With books playing such a significant role in the construction of individual identity and signifying social status in wider culture, it is no wonder that the loss of a library can be a devastating blow to some. Manguel references Don Quixote's library and how its subsequent loss affects the life of Don Quixote: "Having lost his books as objects, Don Quixote rebuilds his library in his mind and finds in the remembered pages the source for renewed strength…Loss helps you remember, and loss of a library helps you remember who you truly are" (52-3). Similarly, Sherry Turkle, discussing evocative objects (objects we love and think with), writes that "When objects are lost, subjects are found…The psychodynamic tradition—in its narrative of how we make objects part of ourselves—offers a language for interpreting the intensity of our connections to the world of things…In each case, we confront the other and shape the self" (10). Dant writes of how "transitional objects" can provide a sense of emotional security even for adults, with "the intimate relationship with the feel of a material, its smell,

familiarity and the sense of protection from the world beyond the self it brings" (62-3). Objects allow us to exert control over our identities, or at least feel as though we do. When those items are gone, we must find a way to redeem our self-conception without the material proof. Thus, the subject must stand for itself. In this way, the role of books as identity construction tools is highlighted by the moves one must make to fill their place when they are lost or absent.

Part of the paper book's power to impact self-identity lies in displaced meaning and its link to consumer desires. McCracken describes displaced meaning as a process through which goods become bridges for displaced cultural ideals: "When goods become the 'objective correlative' of certain cultural meanings, they give the individual a kind of access to displaced meaning that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. They allow the individual to participate in this meaning, even in a sense to take possession of it" (110). This is important because people select different eras of time or place to situate their displaced meaning in, impacting which goods function as bridges for them and how they do so:

> [Individuals] seek out locations on the continua of time and place for their ideals. They "discover" a personal "golden age" in which life conformed to their fondest expectations or noblest ideals: the happy years of childhood or perhaps merely a single summer holiday. With ideals displaced to this largely fictional location, present difficulties and disappointments are rendered inert and hope allowed to sustain itself. (McCracken 108)

According to Janice Radway, books have a particular emotional resonance, which allows for people to be individuals not by doing something, but by being and feeling in relationship to their possessions: "Because those commodities were not inert objects only but things shimmering with an aureole of significance in a kind of emotional weather, they could permit the realization of a form of individuality measured not by its achievements or its actions but by its emotional

style, its disposition, and its manner of being" (149). Thus, the most valuable book to an individual may not have much commercial or financial value at all. People often cling most ardently to the books that have personal connections. For instance, in Freudenberger's interviews, one informant speaks of how he treasures two books above all others because a friend gifted them to him shortly before she died, leaving him with only the books as physical reminders of the huge impact she had on his life (122-3). For such reasons, cherished books gifted from loved ones or maintained from childhood can be just as important as ancient books with great historical and financial value, especially when considering their ability to carry memory and meaning.

Bartlett compares touring a personal library with going through a family album as each volume has a story behind it. One of Freudenberger's interviewees says his books are "like old friends" who he misses when he doesn't visit them (124). In the office space of a book-happy professor, "The books formed a complex ecosystem that [the professor], too, inhabited" and thus his books "were also doing things to him"—one of those things being nearly pushing him out of his office (Mole 3). Books do things to us to the point that we sometimes think of them as living things. Manguel describes the people associated with his books as ghosts who "kindly haunted my shelves" and provide a companionship from his library that means he never felt alone there (9). Louisa May Alcott's father, A. Bronson Alcott, explained his relationship to books in 1868 "in strikingly intimate terms: 'Like living friends they too have their voice and physiognomies, and their company is prized as old acquaintances'" (Lenaghan 227). In another account from history, "George Hamlin Fitch (1852-1925) wrote in his *Comfort Found in Good Old Books* (1911) that, in the absence of his youthful encounters, 'I come back to my library shelves, to urge upon you who are wrapped up in warm domestic life and love to provide against the time when

you may be cut off in a day from the companionship that makes life precious'" (Lenaghan 227). Here Fitch describes books as providing a more lasting companionship than perhaps even human relationships. Psychoanalyst Serge Tisseron writes of this process occurring in wider material culture:

> "Objects are for us, often without our recognizing it, the companions of our actions, our emotions and our thoughts. They not only accompany us from the cradle to the grave. They precede us in the one and survive us in the other. Tomorrow they will speak our language. But are they not already speaking to us, and sometimes much better than with words?" (qtd. in Dant 108)

The idea of an object providing companionship is not so shocking. Yet books seem to carry especially evocative powers when it comes to human emotions. Book dealer and collector A.S.W. Rosenbach called books "something akin to the friendship of a charming and secretive woman" (qtd. in Lenaghan 227). Perhaps, in part, this is why Radway writes, "[books] were endowed with a halo of meaning and attendant affect, and as such they could, like women, imbue a home with the sentiment and feeling so needed by modern individuals" (148); in the standard gender roles of society, the domestic companionship provided by books is similar to the traditional role of a housewife. As questionable as the equation of gendered domesticity may be, it can fairly easily be declared that books do provide some sense of comfort and companionship for those who share their space.

Paper books have a unique relationship to space. This, too, is something anchored in the memories associated with the objects. Manguel, after having to pack up his library while moving abroad, writes about the physical space that his books once occupied but never shall again: "My memory retains the order in classification of my remembered library and performs the rituals as

if the physical place still existed. I still keep the key to a door that I will never open again" (21). The combination of book as object and rituals around the book lead to a remembrance of the space so strong that Manguel describes it as possessing a key to the space. The memory is not as insubstantial as many are but instead is solidified as a concrete object in his metaphor. Manguel similarly explains how the memories books retain are related to the physical space they occupy and the rituals that people perform in relation to them (seeking, finding, buying, as well as organizing and reading them): "the gesture [of flipping through a book's pages] has become part of a conscious ritual, enacted every time I come across the same book with the same remembered cover, now layered with clusters of experience" (81-2). For this reason, designer Mark Lee says, "'there's something about the physical book, the art of turning the page, that's inherently comforting, and I'm an architect, so I value the physical'" (Freudenberger 195-6).

Memory and physical space mingle in the paper book. As Manguel notes, the movement between sections of the book, the act of turning pages and navigating the tangible space of the book, is a physical anchor for incorporeal memories. Book designer Coralie Bickford Smith explains that she has to have a physical book, not only for the map it provides in a reading journey (letting her know how much story is left), but also because she "'love[s] physical books, because you find all these memories—bookmarks, turned-down pages, notes. It's like having a little document of that moment in time. A bit of autobiography'" (Freudenberger 337-8). Here Bickford Smith echoes the statements of Manguel concerning how books and what is stored within them (concrete objects or ephemeral memories) are tied to a person's history and sense of self.

Similarly, Fadiman, in the process of "marrying" her library with her husband's describes the process: "We physically handled—fondled, really—every book we owned. Some had

inscriptions from old lovers. Some had inscriptions from each other. Some were like time capsules: my *Major British Writers* contained a list of poets required for my 1970 twelfth-grade English final; a postcard with a ten-cent stamp dropped out of George's copy of *On the Road*" (7). Because a book is "a uniquely durable object, one that can be fully enjoyed without being damaged," it is particularly suited to functioning as an anchor for memories and a sense of self (Buzbee 8). The way that space (materiality) and time (memory) commingle in books is, in essence, what brings about a nostalgic effect. In some ways, it can be said that, through books, experiences are spatialized. In "Nostalgia and Hidden Meaning," Eugene B. Daniels describes nostalgia as "an evanescent moment where time past and time present appear to cross and commingle…between the immanent and the transcendent" (376-7). The overlap of such seemingly disparate aspects of lived experience (past and present, physical and abstract, concretized and remembered) brings about powerful responses from individuals.

Thus, the materiality of books is integral to the nostalgia that they evoke. Baron explains that print has advantages over the ephemeral access of digital e-books for several reasons: by allowing us to serendipitously encounter things and trigger memories, giving a tangible sense of ownership, offering a sensory experience (smell, sight, touch), and generating emotional engagement (153). Design factors such as bindings, font styles, deckled page edges, water marbled end pages, paper weight and texture all contribute to the relationship people have with physical books. Bindings of leather or cloth carry a sense of importance and prestige; the expense to manufacture them brings a particular financial value, while the tactile feel of cloth or leather under the handler's fingertips is also a drawing point for consumers. Fonts have histories from their designers to their affiliation with certain publications or publishing houses, as well as being aesthetically appealing for various reasons. Deckled edges originate from a time when

book pages came uncut (multiple pages being created from one folded sheet) and the reader/purchaser had to take a book-knife and separate the pages to read through the work, creating unevenly sliced page edges. Now a fully aesthetic design element, deckled edges carry not only a pleasant feel, but a hint of the history of the paper book.

The technique that creates the marbling pattern on water-marbled paper was once a closely guarded secret (Wolfe). To create the results one is used to seeing, a specific recipe is needed to properly suspend the pigments on the surface of the water using a thickening agent. In addition, each page made by water-marbling is so unique, it once functioned to discern forgeries from authentic pieces. As such a historically important and rare technique, water marbling carries significant prestige and indications of high-end craftsmanship. Today, the technique is not as mysterious or rare, as many mass-produced books bear marbled end pages (whether printed or truly marbled is another matter entirely). The marbling now functions not only as an aesthetic quality but also to represent a historic gravitas carried into the present day. Most people may be unaware of why marbling is so commonly associated with old or valuable books other than its aesthetic appeal, yet they do understand the sense of gravity carried by such designs.

Another historical design related to paper books has to do with the fore-edge of the pages (the end of the page you see when the book is closed; the place where gilt is placed on page ends). Bartlett explains an encounter with fore-edge paintings at a book fair, writing,

> One of the most astonishing books I ever encountered was at a book fair. I can't remember the title or any other detail, except one. The dealer picked up the gilt-edged book and, holding it in front of me, slowly bent the block of pages as though he was about to fan through it in search of something. As he bent the pages, the gilt edge disappeared, revealing, along the long side, an intricate painting of a nautical scene, men

> navigating a stormy sea. “It's a fore-edge painting,” he said. I gawked, then asked him to do it again. I learned that for centuries, artisans have been adorning books with fore-edge paintings for clients. They are delicately executed images, usually thematically related to the text: elaborate battle scenes, presidential portraits, Art Deco beauties, even erotic renderings, which given the paintings’ clandestine quality, is no surprise. As if one hidden treasure were not enough, books are sometimes painted with two fore-edge images, so that when you bend the block of pages one way, one picture emerges, but when you bend it the other way, another appears. They're not usually applied to highly valuable books (doing so would be regarded as a form of vandalism) but the books that are of special interest or sentimental value to their owners. Emerging unexpectedly, these paintings seem like magical apparitions, as though bending a book’s pages can make the inert black type within metamorphose into sumptuous color images. When the pages, no longer swayed, are back in place, no one would guess what lies just a hair’s distance beyond the gilt. (359-60)

Other artworks, such as illustrations and images also draw people to material books. As previously mentioned in the introduction, I personally find myself drawn to the artwork in the Peterson Field Guides. Published by the Houghton Mifflin Company, many editions of these books feature illustrations that optimize the portrayal of identifying “field marks” of the creatures depicted. While some editions feature photographs, it is specifically the warmth and intricacy of the paintings printed within the illustrated editions that draw me to them. To be honest, I have rarely actually needed the books to identify birds from all over the country or frogs or even butterflies, yet I find half a shelf filled with various Peterson Field Guides. Flipping through them, the weighty yet compact books carry a special aura that evokes a particular

emotion in me. What, precisely that emotion is, I struggle to say. Perhaps it is joy. Perhaps it is covetousness. I surely have duplicates of guides for birds from specific regions, gathered at book sales without hesitation or thought of how many I already possess at home. How many copies of field guides does one person need (especially when said person is more likely to spend their time in indoor pursuits than encountering wildlife in the great outdoors)?

I am not alone in this emotional response to particular illustrations or images found in paper books. Buzbee describes revisiting childhood favorites: "Despite the limited appeal of these [children's] books over the ages, I'm nonetheless captured by their hastily drawn landscapes—the snowy farm road, the clover-dense meadow—and I fall into these worlds again, not as much for the enchantment, but for the familiarity" (35). Perhaps, like Buzbee, I have a love for Peterson Field Guide illustrations for their familiarity—their evocation of vintage, or even Victorian, nature art belonging to a supposedly simpler or more romantic time—or perhaps my love comes from encountering them as a wonder-filled child, awed by the notion of possessing a summary of the knowledge of birds of all of North America or the reptiles and amphibians of eastern and central North America.

The glossy pages of Peterson Field Guides also have a special role in my love of these books. Touching the pages, looking upon those illustrations creates a unique experience that evokes that specific emotion I get when encountering Peterson Field Guides (beyond the covetousness). Nicholas Basbanes, known for his writing about books and the people who love them, describes the sensory aspects of paper: "Seeing paper made by hand for the first time, I began to appreciate just how luxurious a sheet of this material could be. When [Timothy D.] Barrett [adjunct professor of papermaking at the University of Iowa] talked about Japanese paper, he used such words as 'warmth' and 'character' to describe its qualities, and he enthused

about how it always feels ‘so alive’ in his hands” (110). Here, paper brings another factor into play: haptics, or the sense of touch. Tate Shaw, in an analysis of art books, writes about the role of touch: “‘The haptic legibility or manual readability of a book is evaluated by touch, force and dwell. Some book surfaces adhere to the skin and feel warm, producing an immediate pre-reading. Some books expel air on closing, others will not expel air between the leaves. Such responses can be subtle’” (44). Subtle or not, as Baron notes, “Touch can also have emotional consequences” (146).

Baron goes on to quote Kathleen Parker, “Part of the pleasure of a real, snail-mail letter isn’t only the effort involved…but also the fact of the letter writer having touched the same piece of paper” (qtd. in Baron 146). The sense of connection between two people at two separate times and places is conveyed through a shared touching of the same material object. Bookstore owner Shaun Bythell recounts an encounter with a customer who had the opposite opinion on the touch-connection of books compared to most book lovers:

> In the afternoon a customer spent about an hour wandering around the shop. He finally came to the counter and said, “I never buy second-hand books. You don’t know who else has touched them, or where they’ve been.” Apart from being an irritating thing to say to a second-hand bookseller, who knows whose hands have touched the books in the shop? Doubtless everyone from ministers to murderers. For many that secret history of provenance is a source of excitement which fires their imagination. A friend and I once discussed annotations and marginalia in books. Again, they are a divisive issue. We occasionally have Amazon orders returned because the recipient has discovered notes in a book, scribbled by previous readers, which we had not spotted. To me these things do not

> detract but are captivating additions—a glimpse into the mind of another person who has read the same book. (563-4)

Later on, Bythell acknowledges that all books have histories and have been handled by someone else: “Like the Walter Scott signature and the Florence Nightingale inscribed book, there is something that makes you feel connected to those people when you handle material like this. Perhaps the more interesting mystery is that you never know who has handled all the unsigned, uninscribed books that come into the shop, and what their secret history has been” (528).

Such aspects cannot be replicated with e-books; people report missing the paper when turning pages, the feel of paper while reading, and feeling the progress made while holding the book (Baron 147). The physicality of the book affects us emotionally: “Seth Godin, who writes about technology and change, made a telling observation. While prophesying that ‘it’s inconceivable to me that five years from now [2015 or prior], paper is going to be the dominant form for books,’ he also admitted that ‘I get more pleasure knowing I sold a hardcover book than knowing I sold a Kindle book. There shouldn’t be a difference, but there is’” (Baron 147). Here it can be seen that even salespeople find a difference between a paper book and a digital book, even if both sales benefit their company. In 2018, bookstore owner Liz Prouty said, “I’ve noticed in the last couple of years, so many people come in waxing rhapsodic about the smell of books, the feel of books. And they say it more now because the alternatives exist. People are deeply attached to the old-fashioned books” (Hullinger). Dant investigates the daily and mundane interactions between people and objects in *Materiality and Society*, asking whether there is a possibility of intrinsic pleasure derived from being in contact with objects (26). Based on the above accounts, it could fairly clearly be said that books do carry some intrinsic pleasure in their material form.

Psychologist Philip Zimbardo at the 2007 London Book Fair described the physical book, as "'something you hold, near to your heart'" (Baron 147). Baron expands on that, writing,

> Librarians and lovers of rare books understand the emotions that holding a precious volume in your hands can generate. Alice Schreyer, a librarian at the University of Chicago's Special Collections Research Center, speaks of the "emotional rapport you get with an era by holding a relic that is hundreds of years old.…part of the history of a book is—who were the people who touched this book at every stage of its life." Or, in the words of Julia Keller, a writer for the *Chicago Tribune,* "Google can't provide the goose bumps that go along with being in the presence of a 14th century book." (148)

Here again, the love we have for books is about the physical representation of something abstract—history—something that has been touched and handled and carried through the ages by other humans to rest before us. Goods can act as an instrument of continuity, as "The dimension of temporality gives context and meaning to our experience of the world and the beings in it. Rather than being distinct, each perception merges into the next and so our world is continuous and uninterrupted" (Dant 107). Memory, history, time and place all tangle together to make the physical aspects of the paper book emotionally powerful. Dant describes this process, writing, "We can become deeply attached to heirlooms or personal objects that we imbue with something of the character of a person, or a place or an experience. Such objects transcend the status of 'mere' objects as we seem to love or hate them, expressing emotions of tenderness or loathing through words or gestures that we normally reserve for animate beings" (62). Books definitely fall in line with this description, as our strong relationship with them is often centered around emotions of love and affection.

Perhaps the most powerful sensory aspect concerning memory and emotion is scent. Bogel explains the power of scent, writing, "Scientists say that when it comes to nostalgia, scent trumps all other senses because of its uncanny ability to tap straight into our emotional memories" (129). Thus, the Proust phenomenon has received scientific validation. Books' scents come from VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds) that are released from the materials that construct the book, as well as smells that the book itself may absorb and release later on. The paper, the glue, the boards and all the materials that make up the physical book—the very book-ness itself—is responsible for the iconic "book smell" that so many people love. As Bogel describes it, "Book lovers have strong feelings about bookish scents; some of us get poetic about the distinctive smell of freshly inked paper, or old cloth-covered hardcovers, or a used bookstore" (131). Whatever specific aspect of the smell of books someone finds appealing, it is part of a wider trend and relationship with books. Baron writes about the uniqueness of smell as a sensory interaction with paper books:

> Smell is different. Physical books have a smell to them, and with a surprising degree of frequency, readers comment on it. There's the musty smell of old books; the paper, glue, and binding smell of freshly minted ones. Kathleen Parker writes in the *Washington Post* that "I belong to that subgroup of individuals who smell a book before reading. (If you are not a book-smeller, we have nothing to discuss.)" …The importance of smelling books has not been lost on at least one entrepreneur. DuroSport Electronics offers an aerosol eBook enhancer called Smell of Books that can add "classic musty smell" or "new book smell" to your tablet or smartphone." (140-1)

Even medieval bibliophile Richard de Bury made note of the "delicate fragrant book-shelves" of Paris when describing France's admirable book culture around 1345 (qtd. in Petroski 477).

People find scent's relationship to books so important because of its power to involuntarily evoke memories: "Today, one sniff of that book's cheap pulpy paper takes me back to that class…That was more than thirty years ago" (Buzbee 38).

People seek out books specifically for the memories the material object can evoke, possessing a familiarity with the power of paper books to allow them to revisit old memories in a more organic (if involuntary) way. The sense memories of turning pages, tracing illustrations on a page, smelling the unique combination of ink-glue-paper that constitutes that specific copy are powerful. Artist Fernanda Fragateiro is familiar with the way the material construction of a book affects the specific smell: "'I think German books smell the best…Their construction and binding are very good'" (Freudenberger 292). Cecilia Bembibre and Matija Strlič, in their work on scent's role as an aspect of cultural heritage at University College London, focused on the smell of books and old libraries. According to this research, "There is tremendous variety [in scent], depending on bindings and shelving. 'Older books are less acid,' [Bembibre] explains…the vial of laboratory-distilled book dust she uncorks is just that: the pure essence of paper and vellum, leather and ink, and time. 'People think of the smell of books as the smell of language,' Bembibre says. 'Wisdom that you can inhale'" (Freudenberger 139-40).

For some, the scent experience is a general desire for a time removed from the present: "Despite the many wonders of the internet, you might suddenly long for the smell of old books" (Smith 201). Bembibre and Strlič describe that scent has an explicit communal value but also becomes "culturally significant by its association with a heritage space," further evidence of which can be found in "the number of scented products themed on books and libraries (over 30 candles, perfumes and oils) available from a single London store in 2015" (5). In this way, they point out that "As convenient as e-readers may be, many readers long for the nostalgia that the

smell of a book can evoke" (Bembibre and Strlič 5). Due to the nostalgia evoked by such scents, the smell of books is directly tied to specific memories of places, people, and activities for some individuals: "I still can't open a book without smelling chlorine and tomato soup. It was a ritual for us throughout our childhood" (Anand 18). Here Anand recounts a family ritual in which her mother took her and her siblings to the pool, where they enjoyed instant soup from machines in the lobby before heading to the library. Those memories aren't searched for, but automatically pushed to the forefront of Anand's mind—an involuntary remembrance of childhood.

In an exploration of scent-evoked nostalgia, psychologist researchers found that "Scents have a special link to autobiographical memories, especially emotional ones…As such, olfactory cues may readily evoke nostalgia, which is tethered to emotional memories" (Reid et al. 158). This greater emotional power of scent-evoked nostalgia is thought to be at least in part because "Scent-cued memories are more distant in time relative to memories cued by verbal labels, peaking at ages 6-10 versus ages 11-25…thus perhaps having the potential to spark greater nostalgia…Also, scent-cued memories are relatively emotional, vivid and detailed" (Reid et al. 158). So is this why we love the smell of books so much? Studies have been conducted on what exactly creates the smell that is conjured by the mind when we think of "old book smell" or even just "book smell." As a byproduct of VOCs, the scent of books is a particular combination of how the components of the book interact with their environment and break down. The type of paper used, the humidity of the environment, the glue that binds the pages, the board construction, the ink formula: all of these aspects create scent components that combine to make "book smell." This is why books from certain publishers or time-periods may have specifically identifiable smells. Glossy pages of science or nature books may have a different smell than an old novel (in my experience, the science books of a certain age have a sharper smell than the

softer scent of literature books), while books that have not yet had time to develop a fully rounded scent may smell only of a specific type of ink.

As described in the *Smithsonian Magazine*,

> Smell is chemistry, and the chemistry of old books gives your cherished tomes their scent. As a book ages, the chemical compounds used—the glue, the paper, the ink—begin to break down. And as they do, they release volatile compounds—the source of the smell. A common smell of old books, says the International League for Antiquarian Booksellers, is a hint of vanilla: "Lignin, which is present in all wood-based paper, is closely related to vanillin. As it breaks down, the lignin grants old books that faint vanilla scent." (Shultz)

Going on to describe a study conducted in 2009 that researched the smell of old books, Colin Schultz quotes the lead scientist of the study, Matija Strlič, who described the smell of old books as follows: "'A combination of grassy notes with a tang of acids and a hint of vanilla over an underlying mustiness, this unmistakable smell is as much a part of the book as its contents'" (Schultz).

Bembibre and Strlič, in research on the role of odor in cultural heritage, explain the smell of historic books as a "complex mixture of compounds" (5). Explaining that "The degradation reactions are either hydrolytic or oxidative and lead to the production of VOCs in varying proportions, depending on the composition of paper and its rate of degradation," Bembibre and Strlič note that research revealed "those compounds that (1) had been previously observed in naturally aged paper, and correspond to cellulose and lignin degradation products, (2) corresponded to volatiles with a smell known to be perceivable by the human nose" (5).

Scent is more than just a trigger for personal memory as well: “odours play an important role in our daily lives; they affect us emotionally, psychologically and physically, and influence the way we engage with history” (Bembibre and Strlič 1) as well as playing a fundamental role “in shaping who we are, where we belong and how we experience encounters with different cultures” (Bembibre and Strlič 2). Bembibre and Strlič also explain that scent is so powerful emotionally because of the way our brains work: “Odours are powerful triggers for emotions via the limbic system of the brain, which deals with emotions and memory. They are an effective way to evoke recollections” (2).

Because of the way we experience smell and emotion as linked, smells can affect our experience of places and objects too. This in turn means that smells play a role in public memory and collective imagination of places; it is part of cultural heritage according to Bembibre and Strlič. In 2001 the Ministry for the Environment in Japan assembled a list of the “100 most fragrant” which focused on “protecting ‘scents to be handed down to our children,’” receiving candidate scents for consideration from local groups. One of the candidate scents was “a street lined with bookshops;” the smell of books was considered a scent worthy of generational preservation (Bembibre and Strlič 3).

Because scents are about perception and tied to emotional responses, Bembibre and Strlič note that “Smells can be treated…as an attribute of the object, independent of the nose which smells it, a perception completely dependent on the smeller, or a communication between source and receptor, where meaning is created. The perception of a smell as authentic is, then, the result of an interpretation process” (4). Dant builds off of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the “phenomenal field” in which “Things and other beings are related to each other and to the perceiving being, through their associations and connections both in the present and in the past” (93) and describes

the role of perception in the material world: “Perception is not, for example, separate from the body’s motor system; what the eyes see is not simply what is put in front of them but is connected to the way that the eyes, head and body move. It is in turn linked to what is stored in memory and what the person’s intentions are” (94) and “Merleau-Ponty explains to us how the embodied responses of the human being do not depend on the mechanical properties of the organs, such as the eyes, but on the previous experience of that being” (Dant 106). This plays out in Bembibre and Strlič’s analysis of the smell of historic libraries. Describing the scent as “well-known and appreciated,” they note that the smell of books often intrigues and inspires people (Bembibre and Strlič 5). In the study, researchers took note of what visitors to St. Paul’s Cathedral Dean and Chapter Library (an 18th-century space) wrote in the visitor’s book. Comments included “I can inhale the knowledge” and “We can smell the history, the fragrance of heritage and our communion with souls of the past” (Bembibre and Strlič 5).

When interpreting smells, people often take a smell they don’t know how to classify and associate it with something they are more familiar with. For example, when visitors to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery were presented with the unlabeled historic library and book smell samples (among other scents) collected by researchers and asked to select descriptors from an array of scent terminology, people described the book smells with terms such as chocolate, cocoa, Cadbury, chocolatey, coffee, old, wood, and burnt (Bembibre and Strlič 6). Bembibre and Strlič explain how these familiar scents end up being associated with books:

> From the analytical perspective, and given that coffee and chocolate come from fermented/roasted natural lignin and cellulose-containing products, they share many VOCs with decaying paper. Cocoa as well as coffee are known to contain significant amounts of furfural and furanoid compounds, acetic acid, higher aldehydes (heptanal,

> hexanal, octanal), vanillin and benzoic and many other compounds identical to those in decaying paper. It would therefore appear to be reasonable to expect for museum visitors to associate the aromas of chocolate and coffee with that of historic paper, considering that many identical volatiles in the aroma profiles of the three substances are identical and that in addition, the same visitors were primed to think of chocolate and coffee while visiting the exhibition prior to responding to the questionnaire [as chocolate and coffee were other sample scents]. (6-7)

Museum visitors also "tended to spontaneously comment on hedonic tone and intensity" of the book-related scents (Bembibre and Strlič 7). Bembibre and Strlič's analysis of the scent of old libraries found that, from a prepared list of terms, those selected by participating volunteers to describe the library include woody (100%), smokey (86%), Earthy (71%), vanilla (41%), musty, sweet, almond, and pungent (29%), medicinal, floral, fruity, green, rancid, bread, citrus, sour, and creamy (14%), with 70% of participants describing the smell as pleasant, 14% mildly pleasant and 14% neutral (Bembibre and Strlič 7). Bembibre and Strlič note that specific organic compounds are directly related to the scent people perceive, as cellulose degradation creates furfural while lignin can create benzaldehyde and vanillin (8). The aroma descriptors for these terms explain why people describe books with so many food terms; furfural is described as bread, almond, and sweet while benzaldehyde is described as almond and burnt sugar with vanillin evoking vanilla descriptions (Bembibre and Strlič 6). In this way, scent is linked directly to the composition of book components. As a result of this research, Bembibre and Strlič present "the historic book odour wheel" as a tool that combines the chemical and sensory aspects of scent experience, not only as a way to describe scent, but also as a potential tool for book and paper conservators (9).

In case a reader or book-handler is concerned about looking like an oddball sniffing books in public, the olfactory off-put of a book can have a practical purpose. Mildew—nemesis of those who love, invest in, or even just keep paper materials in any quantity—gives off a particular scent. As Allison Hoover Bartlett observes, "At a fair like [the New York Antiquarian Book Fair], it's obvious that the allure of any book is in large part sensual. I watched collectors feast their eyes, their hands, their noses…later I learned that sniffing is also a practical precaution: mildew can ravage a book, and a good whiff can tell you if there's any danger of its encroachment" (43). For those in the book trade, mildew gives professional justification for sniffing books to your heart's content. And for those who just love books, scent, along with all the other physical attributes of the book, allows for a wide array of meaning-making experiences to be made, preserved, and remembered, all easily at hand in a paper book.

When we look at books, we should see not just reading texts but objects that carry power that is inextricably linked to their materiality. Nostalgia is an emotion that is not merely about memory; it is also about self-construction and social networks. It's about being part of a larger picture that we often struggle to find a place in. Through our material interactions with objects, such as books, we can concretely interact with the world, perhaps even engaging with the world as we wish it were or as we wish to be seen in it. The materiality of the book is not merely the bounding of imaginative wonders held within its text but the very aspect that provides books such an ability to act as anchors and retainers not only of memory but emotion and identity. Moving to book collecting in chapter two, we can further see the way in which the physicality of the book plays a role in its importance in individuals' lives, as well as creating groups centralized around the book as object.

CHAPTER II. BOOK COLLECTING AND THE AFFECTIVE BOND

As discussed in chapter one, materiality matters when it comes to books. One of the ways in which this can be seen is in how books are used to shape identity. While the average reader or book lover may use what they read, buy, and like to signal aspects of their personality or self-identity, in the case of book collectors, this process of self-construction utilizing physical books takes on new dimensions. There are many different types of book collecting—focusing on acquiring antiquarian books, hypermoderns (books declared collectible contemporaneously to their release), full-runs, favorite authors, and so on—but each book collector has a slightly different outlook on the practices that reflect their concept of identity. In this chapter, I will explore the power of book collecting as a meaning-making tool for individuals and groups as well as the importance of the physical book to the affective bond between collector and collection.

Translator Alberto Manguel writes, “the books themselves, I felt, belonged to me, were part of who I was” (4) and “I've often felt that my library explained who I was, gave me a shifting self that transformed itself constantly throughout the years” (5). Collecting isn’t just an act of possession but an act of self-creation. Some collectors are readers in addition to collecting while others never read a word of what they collect. Some insist upon mint condition editions, readers or not, while others simply love to be surrounded by books that bear the marks of being loved. Regardless, “They [consumers] use the meaning of consumer goods to express cultural categories and principles, cultivate ideals, create and sustain lifestyles, construct notions of the self, and create (and survive) social change. Consumption is thoroughly cultural in character” (McCracken xi). As such, the book collector can be seen to be demonstrating the power of the

book as an object to convey cultural meaning for individual collectors as well as the extended social circle of participants in the book world.

John Dunning describes the book collector as someone who "collects books for all the right reasons. He buys what he loves and he loves seeing those fine first editions on his shelves. He's enough of a capitalist to pick up bargains, but price is seldom his main motivation" (21-2). That definition describes the standard antiquarian book collector specifically, but the second half concerning price and motivation aptly describes most variations of book collecting, from antiquarian to the common accumulator. An accumulator is an individual who gathers a large number of books but does not consider themselves a serious collector for whatever reason. For the purposes of this chapter, though, accumulators are regarded as collectors of books because they acquire a collection even if they don't self-identify as serious collectors. This reluctance to identify by certain labels often plays out due to stereotypical notions of what makes a true book collector versus a person who merely loves books. As I have argued previously in this work, though, loving books is not a mere thing; it is integrally tied to human relationships with the paper book. As such, although accumulators tend to draw lines between themselves and collectors, I consider them similar with differing priorities as, regardless of the financial value of collected books, a great deal of the value assigned to collectible books comes from their role as identity-shaping objects for collectors.

As explained by Bartlett, books are often proudly presented as representative of their owners: "If I am honest with myself, I must admit that to some degree my books are badges" (97). Fadiman rather poetically describes personal libraries' relevance to individuals, writing, "Their selves were on their shelves" (124). In this way, it becomes clear that collecting is highly individual and personal. Walter Benjamin notes that this connection to the collector is why

collections are more powerfully evocative when they are held by the compiler: “one thing should be noted: the phenomenon of collecting loses its meaning as it loses its personal owner. Even though public collections may be less objectionable socially and more useful academically than private collections, the objects get their due only in the latter” (67). As McCracken explains, “That goods possess cultural meaning is sometimes evident to the consumer and sometimes hidden. Certain kinds of this information, especially status, are a matter of self-conscious concern and manipulation. Just as often, however, individual consumers come to see the cultural meaning carried by their consumer goods only in exceptional circumstances” (83). McCracken points to exceptional circumstances, such as loss or a breakdown in the function of the object, to illustrate precisely how powerful material goods can be in a cultural sense. As discussed in chapter one in reference to Don Quixote’s library and its loss, absent the objects containing the displaced meaning or cultural messages, a subject must take up the act of meaning making themselves. As such, the loss of personal libraries leaves the subject momentarily bereft, needing to supplement their meaning-making abilities to recover what was lost with the material objects.

Yet the inverse is true as well; when the subject is gone and the objects are released into the wider world without their subject-context, the objects cease to convey the same powerful messages about identity and individuality. Collections of books and their collectors are deeply and personally linked, as noted by Benjamin previously. This is also illustrated by Fadiman’s recounting of a story told by a friend who worked at a bookshop and took part in clearing out Harvard historian John Clive’s personal library after his death:

> “We took the books back to the store and divided them up by topic…and somehow, all of a sudden, they weren't John Clive anymore. Dispersing his library was like cremating a body and scattering it to the winds. I felt very sad. And I realized that books get their

> value from the way they coexist with the other books a person owns, and that when they lose their context, they lose their meaning." (153)

Identity is solidified in a representative form on our private bookshelves. Why else are so many bibliophiles hesitant to share their guilty-pleasure selections? Why else would we spend so much time in arranging and re-arranging books, debating whether we truly need this particular edition or not, asking "is it true to me?" We curate our shelves to reflect who we wish to be.

In recounting the struggle to organize her and her husband's newly merged (or as she describes it, "marrying") libraries, Fadiman describes the impact the process had on her resolute notion of self: "If I agreed to present myself to the world as an acolyte of A.J. Liebling [an American journalist] rather than of Walter Pater [an English essayist, fiction writer, and literary critic], I would be admitting that the academic I had once thought I'd be had forever been replaced by the journalist I had become" (7). Fadiman also references the "Odd Shelf" phenomenon that she has observed in which people have a shelf of books that seemingly doesn't fit with the rest of their library. For Fadiman, her odd shelf is about arctic expeditions—a marked contrast to her carefully curated and displayed selection of English literature. According to Fadiman, the odd shelf is something that the individual cannot bring themselves to get rid of, no matter how glaringly at odds it is with the rest of the collection. Perhaps the topic doesn't fit the individual's idealized notion of self, but it does represent something true about the individual. Whatever allure that odd shelf and its contents carry, it is something that is not purposefully or willfully constructed, but rather is an honest, organic outgrowth of the individual's interests. Through such occurrences, the link between library and a constructed and displayed identity becomes clearer.

As such, book collecting is not just about the physical objects; the abstract concepts tied to the objects play a significant role in people's relationships with books. Often academic works focus on the immaterial experience of reading and how that influences the reader, so it's hard to find a study of the book as object in which reading is not integral to the analysis. For collectors, especially of rare books, but even the layperson or popular book collector, there is a slightly higher chance that reading doesn't enter into the equation: "Book collectors reveal how such beliefs [about the value of books] depend less on reading than on the purchase, cultivation, and display of material books, as well as on the private and social practices that surround them" (Lenaghan 11). Mole describes his encounter with one collector who was so disinterested in the text of the books she collected that language was not a limiting factor:

> I once met a rich New Yorker who collected books with fore-edge paintings—decorations along the front edges of the pages, visible only when the book is closed. She didn't even open her expensive books, let alone read them. She was quite happy to spend huge sums of money on books written in languages she couldn't understand, or on subjects she had no interest in. For her, the text on the pages was neither here nor there; the object of the book was everything. (33)

Another collector explains in an interviewer with Freudenberger, "'I've always sort of dreaded knowing the exact number,' says Michael Silverblatt of his library. 'I couldn't even begin to guess; it's in the tens of thousands. Those of us who are readers, I find, are rarely counters'" (322). While Silverblatt aligns himself more firmly with "readers" rather than "counters" (who would likely be considered the typical serious collector), he is not wholly separate from the collecting community. Indeed, Silverblatt professes that he loves owning multiple copies of particular favorite books. When one comes across a book that sparks genuine joy for whatever

reason (content or aesthetic), very rarely does the book-obsessed individual take the time to logically consider whether they already possess a copy (or several) at home. Instead, upon arriving at home and seeing the duplicates, one is inclined to feel rather self-satisfied about the new acquisition—that is to say, if they haven't already made the active decision to accumulate any favorite copy they happen across anyway.

As discussed previously, whether people take up the title of collector or not, people who accumulate large numbers of books tend to share much in common. The accumulation of books is one thing that every collector has in common and while the priorities of one collector may differentiate from another, they all interact with the emotional, evocative power of the paper book as object—what Lenaghan calls the affective bond between object and subject. Those who write about book collecting describe it with phrases such as book lust, book fever, a hunger for books, an obsession, an addiction, a craving, a madness, an insatiable habit, and a compulsion, yet no one seems to be able to precisely explain why there is such a desire for these objects. For some collectors, throwing a book away is seen as sacrilegious. Many write of a passion for books, but few explore what it is specifically about books as physical objects that grants them such a powerful sway over so many individuals. How can such mundane objects carry such a sacred aura for so many individuals?

Indeed, people often focus on the fervor of collecting as a pursuit without fully exploring that the book may be a meaning-making object precisely because of its very materiality. For example, Graham Green attributes the value of a collection to "'the excitement of the hunt, and the strange places to which the hunt sometimes leads'… in his introduction to *With All Faults* by David Low" (Baxter 11). Similarly, book dealer A.S.W. Rosenbach makes the bold claim that "After love, book collecting is the most exhilarating sport of all" (qtd. in Baxter 380). Bartlett, in

her investigation into prodigious book thief John Charles Gilkey, writes of "the people I met who become increasingly rabid and determined as they draw near to completing their book collections" (19). While Bartlett also describes her work as "story [that] is not only about a collection of crimes but also about people's intimate and complex and sometimes dangerous relationship to books," she too is focusing on the antiquarian book trade primarily—what tends to be the stereotypical idea of book collection that lingers at the forefront of the cultural imagination (19).

Yet, collectors need not be acquiring only the rarest, most pristine antiquarian books to take up the label. Elizabeth Lenaghan, in her exploration of the Caxton Club and its membership, notes that, even as Chicago's oldest extant book-collecting society, the club includes members who "collect old textbooks, children's books, cookbooks, and even Nancy Drew" (17). Accumulator, antiquarian book collector, or simply book-obsessed, the lines between the casual collector and the stereotypical idea of the high-class, high-prestige collector are increasingly blurred. At the end of the day, what binds collectors (and accumulators who refuse such labels) together is a drive to gather physical books for the meanings they can bring to the life of individuals.

In organizations such as the Caxton Club, the social role of book collecting also comes into play. Thinking back to McCracken's notions of possession rituals (discussed in chapter one), goods come to carry meaning when they are interacted with in specific ritualistic ways. Owning a book—being able to hold it, open it, move it from shelf to shelf—all of this contributes to the attachment of the owner to the object. Lenaghan describes such rituals in book collecting communities, taking note of the importance of the sensual appeal of the paper book:

> From reading, displaying, holding, lending, and arranging to touching, gazing upon, sitting amidst, smelling, and gifting, the uses book collectors make of their books are frequent and varied. While it is rare for one collector to engage in all such uses, their variety as well as the many sensual pleasures they imply indicate the affective bond that most collectors hold with their books. (242)

The possession rituals that collectors create around their collections are tied to the affective bonds they have with paper books. Taking care of their possessions puts them in direct contact with the sensory pleasures discussed in chapter one. Meanwhile, in a work written by former British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, the importance of caring for one's books is described as a pleasant labor: "'The book must of necessity be put into a bookcase,' he wrote. 'And the bookcase must be housed. And the house must be kept. And the library must be dusted, must be arranged, must be catalogued. What a vista of toil, yet not unhappy toil!'" (Fadiman 146).

If—paraphrasing Fadiman—our selves are on our shelves, then how we arrange and present our books is of great import. As Mole describes it, "Your books reveal who you are. To display them where other people can see them is to exhibit a particular version of your self" (55). As such, display functions not only as a part of possession rituals but also as an outward presentation of identity. Ann Bogel, in explaining how to organize your bookshelves, instructs:

> Cull duplicates. If you have two copies of a book, keep the prettier one…If you can't bring yourself to get rid of your duplicates, buy a third copy. When it comes to books, two is the loneliest number. Multiple copies of a single title are acceptable. Many, many multiples are preferable to two or three; excess makes you look interesting. Your friends may use the word *obsessed,* but they can't deny your obsession is interesting…Start a

> collection. Signed copies or first editions are popular choices, but not the only ones. Find all the copies you can of your favorite novel—including reprints and foreign translations—or all the works of your favorite author. Collect by "list," gathering together all the winners of the Pulitzer Prize, or the Hugo Award, or Newbery. Accumulate all the copies you can on a topic of interest, be it cottage gardening or personality typing or the National Park System. Or purchase books of the same collection, because they look well together on the shelf: sophisticated clothbound volumes or cheerful Harper Perennial Olive Edition paperbacks, colorful illustrated classics for children or gorgeous leather-bound classics for grown-ups. Group your collection together on the shelf. If you organize by alphabetical order or color, this will destroy your system. (70-2)

Bogel, even as more of a professed reader than a collector, notes that reducing the size of a personal library is a struggle because "You lovingly handle each book, determining if it brings you joy. It does. They all do. You are full of bookish joy, but still woefully short on shelf space" (90). Indeed, her description is reminiscent of organizing consultant Marie Kondo's instructions for tidying books in her KonMari method: "Books are one of three things that people find hardest to let go. Many people say that books are one thing they just can't part with regardless of whether they are avid readers or not" (134). Kondo's advice is to keep only what "sparks joy" and Bogel's lament for shelf space echoes this sentiment. Kondo would be hard-pressed to find fault with Bogel's approach as Kondo's instructions are that "**The criterion is, of course, whether or not it gives you a thrill of pleasure when you touch it.** Remember, I said when you *touch* it. Make sure you don't start reading it. Reading clouds your judgement. Instead of asking yourself what you feel, you'll start asking whether you need that book or not" (original emphasis) (137-8).

Kondo, like Bogel, recognizes that much of the emotional response we have to books is based on the affective power of the material object. This bookish joy is essential to collecting as it is tied to the individual's preferences and emotional landscape and, as such, shapes the collection's development. As Bartlett explains,

> Having touched the pages of a Flaubert manuscript at the New York book fair, I could appreciate why someone might want an original manuscript. Yet, I had to admit, I could not fully grasp the ardor for printed first editions. So much of collecting is driven by emotions, probably most of it, and although I understood the attraction of first editions intellectually, I didn't *feel* it. The strongest attachments I have to books are those with which I have a personal history [such as her mother's childhood copy of *Anne of Green Gables* that was given to her when she was young]. (191)

And as Tim Dant writes, "Our culture is fascinated by the old as well as the new so we hoard mementoes of the past lives of our families and acquire antique or merely old objects to furnish and decorate our homes" (143). Indeed, as Benjamin writes, "To renew the old world—that is the collector's deepest desire when he is driven to acquire new things" (61). Whether that new world is related to family legacy, individual memories, or merely a golden age for displaced meaning, the ability to construct a desired identity or "old world" through the act of collecting shows the significance we culturally imbue objects with.

In *Contemporary Collecting: Objects, Practices, and the Fate of Things* (2013), the social and cultural significance of collecting is emphasized as "Practices of collecting have always played a central role in human culture, at the heart of our meaningful relations with objects" (Moist and Banash ix). Scholars have approached the practice of collecting time and again with different theoretical focuses, revealing the cultural significance of collecting in

various ways. For instance, Susan Stewart analyzes the pursuit of complete series as a way to overcome some fundamental lack, with collections only really mattering when complete. John Elsner and Richard Cardinal analyze collecting as classification where it is not about completing a whole set but rather about making groups of things, while Walter Benjamin writes about collecting as distinguished from consumption (Banash 55). All of these theories about collecting are caught up in aspects of the affective lives of humans while also noting specific impacts of collecting on individuals. Studies of collection often reveal how meaning is made in life through emotional connections and interactions with material objects. The depth of the connection between collection and collector is also apparent from the extremes to which some individuals will go to obtain their desires. In a story written by Robert Bloch and recounted by John Baxter in *A Pound of Paper: Confessions of a Book Addict* (2002), a fan of Edgar Allan Poe's works reveals to a fellow collector that he's raised Poe from the dead and has him writing new works in his cellar, having "literally collected Poe" (Baxter 13). Baxter goes on to acknowledge that

> There is a germ of truth in Bloch's conceit. Collecting a writer's work is a way of owning the artist you admire, and each step in the collection of a title takes you closer to the author. First a copy of the book, perhaps a paperback, just to read. Then, once you decide you like it, a more durable edition. After that, the first edition, followed by a first with the author's signature. Then the proof copy, which precedes the first printing. Then the manuscript. (13)

Others too have described the link between a paper book and its author as a means to connect to another being through an object: "Walt Whitman echoed that sentiment: 'Camerado! this is no book, / Who touches this touches a man'" (Bartlett 189).

Outside the fantastical idea of truly collecting an author as imagined by Bloch, collectors don't tend to start out intending to become obsessive about their pursuits, whether amateur or professional. Instead, the urge tends to grow on them gradually, almost sneaking up on them after a few purchases. Perhaps some have concerns about succumbing to incurable bibliomania, but Ken Sanders—rare book dealer, amateur detective, and volunteer security chair of the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America—says, "'If you collect what you love and enjoy, and always buy the best you can afford, and buy copies in the best condition available, your books will always prove to be a good investment'" (Bartlett 175). Even so, Sanders also acknowledges that books shouldn't be collected merely as financial investments: "'Books should always be acquired for the sheer love and joy of it. Thinking of them as investment objects first turns them into mere widgets and commodities. It reduces their cultural heritage and diminishes not only the books, but their authors and readers as well. Let's leave the pork belly future to Wall Street'" (Bartlett 174). Here Sanders participates in the trend of describing the cultural importance of books yet only vaguely references their affective power on individuals. The emotional response individuals have to material books is integral to their overall cultural significance and, for collectors, this is especially true. Supporting this outlook on collecting, Bartlett's interview with book collector Celia Sack resulted in her observation that "Not all Sack's books were very valuable, monetarily, but all had special meaning to her. Intermingled among inscribed first editions were some that are simply appealing to her" (166). Similarly, another collector whose niche was works written by "vagabonds and other outsiders" "doesn't spend a lot of time worrying about who will buy his books. Amassing a collection like this seems to be a personal quest" (Bartlett 173). Collecting for many isn't about racking up a profitable

investment; it's about pursuing an interest that brings meaning to life. For many, the emotional value of a book is more essential than its financial or market value.

Because of the significant role of books in collectors' lives, one thing is true for all collectors: collections need to be defined in wide enough terms to make sure they are sustainable. "'After all,' Sanders said, 'from a collecting point of view, the finding and the acquiring are what fuel the collector and the collection. Often, collectors burn out or let go of collections when they have been so narrowly defined as to preclude the acquisition of any new material. The collection reaches a level of stasis and the collector becomes burned out'" (Bartlett 173). Here Sanders mentions collector's burnout—when a collector is no longer satisfied or gratified by his collection or the act of hunting down new acquisitions. A collector who runs out of objects to obtain may run into an identity crisis due to the fact that one of their ways of making meaning in life is suddenly exhausted. If the acquisition of books contributes to their sense of self and identity, sitting amidst their possessions may not provide the same thrill and gratification that hunting and searching for them do. Even those who collect full-runs of series will soon be in pursuit of a new series to completely possess. As Bartlett sums up, "To a collector, one is never enough, and when a collection is complete, another is imminent, if not already begun. The accumulating never ends" (291). McCracken explains that "the task of self-completion through consumption is not an easy one, nor is it always successful" (88). Collectors are, in part, at least, constantly on a quest to reach self-completion, yet the completion of their collection fails to grant this, as the process of collecting is in itself part of their notion of self. To this end, collectors are only collectors if they continue to accumulate books and perform possession rituals. Thus, the compulsion to continue is tied to the emotional power of the paper book and the role it has in identity construction.

The at-times obsessive nature of book collectors is not an oblivious affliction: there is a self-awareness in the community that is often expressed through humor. Bartlett writes, "Collectors can't get enough of [first editions]. But according to a riddle I came across, this predilection can be problematic: which man is happier, 'he that hath a library with well nigh unto all the world's classics, or he that hath thirteen daughters? The happier man is the one with thirteen daughters, because he knoweth that he hath enough'" (189-90). Describing books with terms such as "ravishing" and the experience of encountering them as "intoxicating" and "an important, memorable high," book lovers and the truly obsessed are almost seized by desire (Bartlett 102): "'It's like an addiction,' says Michael Fuchs of his book habit. 'You have to maintain it; you're constantly in a state of struggle. You build another space for books, and suddenly that's full, too, and you're back in the same place'" (Freudenberger 365). Sigmund Freud described collecting antiquities as "'second only in intensity to his nicotine addiction'" with "the drive and pleasure in any kind of collecting com[ing] from a sense of conquest. 'I am by nature nothing but a conquistador,' he wrote, 'an adventurer, if you wish to translate the term, with all the inquisitiveness, daring and tenacity capable of such a man'" (Bartlett 99-100).

While terms such as book-hunter echo Freud's sentiment of conquest or adventuring and many book collectors may agree with Freud's description of their hobby as an addiction, there is a portion of the community that collects not from a desire to conquer but out of love and a seemingly altruistic sense of duty to books. The love for books sometimes translates into a sort of savior mindset for owners as well, as books purchased are not just acquired but saved from obscurity or an unappreciative owner: "one of the finest memories of a collector is the moment when he rescued a book to which he might never have given a thought, much less a wishful look, because he found it lonely and abandoned on the market place and bought it to give it its

freedom…To a book collector, you see, the true freedom of all books is somewhere on his shelves" (Benjamin 64). Books then are not only objects, but things imbued with the ability to be "lonely and abandoned," reflective of their affective power. Lenaghan writes that "Collectors describe their book use in ways that indicate the feelings of affection they develop for them" through "the various ways that collectors read, hold, arrange, organize, gaze upon, smell, touch, or just sit amid their books" (33). Such passion for books has been expressed through book collecting over a long history, as well:

> this fondness not only for rare books but also for endlessly acquiring them has been alive for twenty-five centuries. Around 400 B.C., Euripides was mocked for his appetite for books. A few hundred years later, Cicero noted that he was "saving up all my little income" to develop his collection. In the "golden age of collecting," roughly 1870 to 1930, the world was teeming with fevered collectors. They were and are a determined breed, and their desire can swell from an innocent love of books, or bibliophilia, to an affliction far more rabid, bibliomania, a term coined by the Reverend Frognall Dibdin in 1809. An English bibliographer and avid collector, Dibdin noted that "what renders it particularly formidable is that it rages in all seasons of the year, and at all periods of human existence." When the books, like those at the [2005] New York [antiquarian book] fair, have pasts—secret, scandalous, or sweet—the attraction is that much more robust. That they also hold history, poetry, science, and stories on their pages can seem almost secondary. The fair was abuzz with people fully in the grip of the spell they cast. (Bartlett 44)

Bartlett in her research among book collectors and book thieves notes that "It is not uncommon to read pronouncements from besotted collectors that make the 'mania' in

'bibliomania' seem an understatement. 'Too few people seem to realize that books have feelings,' wrote collector Eugene Field, who wrote *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac* in 1896" (136). People with such a passion for books often struggle to explicate the import of books as material possessions. For those with treasured collections, the relationship between owner and object is often charged with emotions of love: "Ricci knows these books by heart, pulling the massive leather-bound folios down, flipping easily to pages he loves, touching the precious volumes with a combination of professional respect and almost familial affection" (Freudenberger 261). This near "familial affection" is such a personal connection to the paper book as object that many book lovers struggle to understand people who don't experience the same affection for their books. As book collector Emmanuel de Bayser puts it, "'I don't want to sound pretentious…but I don't understand people who don't have books'" (Freudenberger 95).

One of Lenaghan's main conclusions is that collecting books alone never satisfies the obsession of collectors: "talking about [books], congregating around them, and drinking—sometimes in alarming proximity—to them are essential" (18). The fervor to be around books and bookish people leads to book lovers seeking out book spaces, including not only antiquarian and fine press book fairs but also book auctions, library book sales, used bookstores, and exclusive clubs to engage with others who love paper books. The traditional modes of acquiring books through in-person sales and book fairs "help books retain an aura of rarity and uniqueness" (Lenaghan 30-1). Lenaghan notes that the combination of objects, people, and ideas involved in collecting unites the mix of collectors into a unified group; their shared focus is the significance of the book. She writes, "Situated at the center of such interactions [between object, person, and idea], books do not bear fixed meanings, but acquire their significances in the collective and ritual ways collectors circulate around and combine them" (27).

At the end of the day, book collectors and owners seem to have a unique relationship between object and subject as the book bridges between human and emotion, self and other. Books not only bring to mind memories; they also function as externalized bits of life or people (as Whitman's description of the book as stand-in for its author) that people may project their own emotions or thoughts onto. While Bartlett encountered the world of avid collectors as a complete novice, worried that she'd be sucked into the obsession of bibliomania, she instead found how collecting carries power to construct narratives: "Hunting down treasures for a collection brings its own rewards, but, ultimately even more satisfying, building it as a way of creating a narrative. When books are joined with others that have traits in common, they form a larger story that can reveal something wholly new about the history of democracy, or Renaissance cooking, or Hells Angels who pen novels" (363). While Bartlett does acknowledge the power of books as texts to create narratives about their textual contents and the authors who write them, she neglects to consider that books in a collection craft a narrative about their collector. By removing the textual contents from the equation and focusing on the materiality of the objects in question, the emotionally charged manner in which books craft personal narratives becomes clear: "So collecting is both deeply enmeshed in the basic processes of cultural meaning and found in the roots of almost every personal history" (Moist and Banash ix). While there are likely a great number of factors involved in such a widespread fascination with acquiring books, the role of emotion, specifically the nostalgia so heavily tied to paper books as objects and thus the displaced meaning they are imbued with, may be one of the most prominent yet least discussed contributing factors in the collection of books.

As Mole writes, "Books don't just signal our identities, though; they also help to constitute them. Books are a powerful mnemonic technology" (72). For instance, books are

signals of class and taste; having the money to buy rare editions and the know-how of which books are worth what prices distinguishes collectors as possessing refined tastes and an elevated class status. As Dant explains,

> In pecuniary societies, wealth…is expended on conspicuous waste, that is consumption that is visible to others and in its excess serves to demonstrate social standing. Members of society follow a standard of living that is equivalent to those who share their class or community; through habit and convention they feel obliged to be seen as members of a particular stratum…The standard of living extends from habits of consumption to habits of thought, including those that apply to aesthetic standards. Taking possession of that which is beautiful and expensive, whether for adornment, display or merely ownership, is to demonstrate pecuniary status." (23)

As such, books become symbols of who collectors are or want to be: "Collections have long been studied as reflections of the individuals who assemble them. Professor of business Russell W. Belk, paraphrasing the art and literature scholar Susan Stewart, notes that 'the collection is especially implicated in the extended self because it often visibly and undeniably represents the collector's judgements and taste'" (Vechinski 13). Bartlett describes the actions of collectors and dealers at the New York Antiquarian Book Fair as "building identities through their collections, acquiring books as talismans of taste, knowledge, and affluence" (76-7).

Bartlett provides examples of ads for wealth management companies and women's clothing brands that use old books as a background for what is thought of as "the good life, the wealthy life, one rich with country estates and long vacations in foreign countries" in which there is "a seductive fantasy that if you acquire the books, you might just end up with the life itself, or at least make other people think you have it" (77-8). While Bartlett notes that there are other

motivations for collecting, she zeroes in on the power of collecting to create a desired lifestyle, in appearance if not in reality: “Some collectors (of cereal boxes, farm machinery, anything) describe their obsession as a way to create order and to fill a hole in their lives. But don’t most people crave at least some order?” (77-8).

Bartlett also interviewed infamous book thief Gilkey about what drove him to steal books and found “That people would admire Gilkey because of his book collection seemed to be at the crux of his desire. It wasn’t merely a love of books that compelled him, but also what owning them would say about him. It’s a normal ambition—that our choice of music or cars or shoes reflects well on us—taken to the extreme” (76-7). Bartlett describes Gilkey as “a man completely enthralled by books and how they might express his ideal self” (85). In this way, Bartlett parallels the obsession of collectors with thieves, asking, “one who steals out of a desire for books. How different would such a person be from the typical book collector?” (64).

The materiality of the book is integral to the passion people hold for it: “Powell justifies his love for books over and above other sensually evocative objects, echoing sentiments of other collectors who explain why their hobby focuses on books in lieu of other collectible items, but also expanding them such that they rest on sensual claims more so than taste or class-based accounts” (Lenaghan 226). As Dant points out that, “While social status may always be an issue in consuming for use and enjoyment, emotional, practical and other cultural factors both inform and shape our choices” (26). As such, books are more than just class symbols; they can be argued to have a unique status among collectibles. While other mediums can carry texts along with their materiality (for instance, CDs, vinyl records, sheet music, etc.), books often are labelled beautiful even beyond the content they carry. They are aesthetic objects or objects of personal fondness without a word ever being read of their texts. However, the material aspect of

books is also sometimes why we fail to appreciate their cultural significance. As Jim Collins explains in *Bring on the Books for Everybody: How Literary Culture Became Popular Culture*:

> This balance between cultural and consumer experience was complicated by the increasing tendency to associate genuine cultivation with *inner virtue* and to set this new pairing in direct opposition to materialism. This uncoupling of wealth and cultivation led to profound suspicions about the rampant materialism generated by the Industrial Revolution. Once uncoupled from inherited wealth, the acquisition of culture had to be monitored according to a moral economy that could allow for consumerism but only by recasting it within the terms of a self-cultivation project grounded in the pursuit of "character" untainted by the demands of the marketplace. (48)

As such, books are often judged for their literary merit, as worthy reading material, and thus as a matter of learning and cultivation that push the materiality of the paper book into an unconsidered and dismissed realm as commodity only. At the same time, the publishing industry has understood the role of books as identity markers and utilized that knowledge in book-of-the-month and mail-order book clubs:

> They began to see that the very idea of the book and the cultural value attributed to it could confer status on its owners, who, in the publishers' unprecedented view, need not necessarily be readers. Potentially, then, every book sale could generate two forms of profit. On one hand it could generate cash for its publisher. On the other hand it could also produce perceived changes in the status of the individual who bought it because the more traditional discourse about the book had managed his social procedure of learning with a particular technology for producing that learning in the first place, that is, with the leather- or cloth-covered book itself. (Radway 145)

So while the commodity of the book has previously been discussed as a shaper of cultural identity, it is often through the suitability or taste judgement of the text contained within the codex.

Regardless of how culture and commerce blend in paper books (something that will be explored more thoroughly in chapter three), from literary taste and virtue signaling to market estimates of investment values, there is rarely discussion of how the material object influences perception of the book in the everyday lives of people. As there is some amount of magic imbued in books as commodities, commodity fetishism does occur with paper books. This then lends to some of the fervor with which book people engage with books as objects. Lenaghan, a self-professed book lover, writes of how reading can be secondary to possessing the object itself:

> I wanted to read them [books], but not as much as I wanted to hold them, to possess them, and to bring them back to my personal library in New Hampshire. To this day, I prefer to own books than borrow them; I have difficulty parting with books after I've read them; and I'm inclined, fairly or not, to judge friends and strangers alike by the numbers and types of books they display in their homes and offices. (14)

Other times, the acquisition process itself is the goal, as it is for avid book-hunters:

> Collectors talking about the books they have just acquired, or the ones they haven't been able to get their hands on, or those snatched away by another collector, sound a lot like lotharios reminiscing about lovers… [Peter Stern] said he doesn't collect anymore, but occasionally a book will catch his eye. When this happens, "I ache to buy it. I want it desperately." But acquiring the object of his affection changes everything. "The moment I own it, even if it's for a few seconds, that's enough. I could sell it the next minute, and I don't even remember it sometimes. I'm looking forward to the next book." (Bartlett 115)

In such a way, possession of the material object and the process of acquiring it become integral to one's relationship with books. In the end, it is the material aspect of the book that is essential to this process rather than the plot or story contained within: "their self-conscious investment in books hinges on the possession of the material object itself" (Lenaghan 12).

In a section of Jean Paul Sartre's autobiography, Sartre discusses "the sacred power of books" in his youth, "comparing them with monuments and their handler to a priest" (Lenaghan 12). Even so, Sartre was also drawn to their physical form:

> He could not help but touch them. He describes their physical opening as akin to that of an oyster and their smell to those of mushrooms. So at the same time that Sartre's description provides a quintessential example of an early encounter with books that infuses them with a type of sacred power, his simultaneous comparison of books with natural, earthbound objects (oysters, mushrooms, bricks, stones) suggests his corollary understanding of their organic nature. (Lenaghan 12-3)

For Sartre, books were both sacred and mundane—a combination that was not a disparity, but an integral and enhancing facet of their form. The contents were not what held the magic in this situation; the materiality was the thing itself: "books offer solace and spur inspiration…The comforts they provide, the memories they inspire, and the comparisons they suggest all derive from aspects of their material presence" (Lenaghan 13). The physical sensations of interacting with books mix with the more abstract emotional notions: touch and smell mingle with recollections about the owner's "expert and reverential possession" so even as Sartre "conjures this sensual evocation of books' materiality, he also relies on such a redolent description of books' physical properties to accentuate the book's symbolic power. Therefore, the significance of books hinges on their material instantiation" (Lenaghan 13). As Bartlett recounts of an

interview with prolific book thief John Charles Gilkey, a coveted book is "like a fine wine. It feels good to hold it and, especially, to add it to his collection—but not to read, almost never to read. Like most book collectors, his attachment is not so much to the story as to all that the book represents" (161).

As such, the material object is of great concern to the collector. As Benjamin writes, "The acquisition of books is by no means a matter of money or expert knowledge alone. Not even both factors together suffice for the establishment of a real library, which is always somewhat impenetrable and at the same time uniquely itself" (63). Book collectors must understand the details that make a book valuable: "Dates, place names, formats, previous owners, bindings, and the like: all these details must tell him something—not as dry, isolated facts, but as a harmonious whole; from the quality and the intensity of this harmony he must be able to recognize whether a book is for him or not" (Benjamin 64). Collectors need to be able to feel if a book is right for them. Mole also explains that book ownership is defined by socioeconomic factors as social and financial limits come into play:

> "Bookishness"—in the sense of buying, reading, keeping and displaying books—is partly a matter of temperament, as well as one of wealth or class. Books, in fact, function as badges of identity precisely because not everyone has the same kind of access to them or the same level of interest in them. Spending time with books, and spending money on books, is a choice that signals to others that you are a certain kind of person. (57)

One doesn't just need to have the money to collect; they need to want to be seen as a certain sort of person—a bookish person, with all the implications that carries. So while knowledge and skill do play a role in a collector's success (especially in the traditional sense of antiquarian collecting), a collector needs to understand what it is they are truly seeking for their collections.

What image are they wanting to present to people? Part of the power of books to send messages about the purchaser or owner has to do with displaced meaning:

> goods help the individual contemplate the possession of an emotional condition, a social circumstance, even an entire style of life, by somehow concretizing these things in themselves. They become a bridge to displaced meaning and an idealized version of life as it should be lived. When called to mind, these objects allow the individual to rehearse a much larger set of possessions, attitudes, circumstances, and opportunities. (McCracken 110)

For this reason, Dant asserts that there is a need to study "the mundane, routine ways in which material objects are taken up in everyday lives" (32). Dant explains that "if we ever stop to think about them [objects], we regard them as 'mere' objects that do not in anyway compete with humans for status as beings. Objects are there for us to use and dispose of in whatever way we wish; we may treat them well or badly without any concern for their rights or feelings because they have none" (62). While Dant's point about people tending to ignore the significance of the objects rings true, book collectors seem to counter his latter point about how people treat objects. Many people see books as objects of affection, sometimes even sacred. Why is this? Dant argues that

> Material objects act as a conduit that extends the agency of the body and the person into the world while also providing a channel from the world back into the person. Things are agents of the self but also of the society towards the individual so that he refers to them as "reversible" in the sense that they carry memories, signs, social relationships to the person but can then be used by the person to express and manage personality and an emotional life. (64)

Books definitely contribute to the emotional lives of collectors. Dant builds off of the work of Serge Tisseron and Anthony Giddens who, respectively, suggest that “the psychic life of the person is transferred to objects through which emotions are expressed and made manifest” (64) and that “modernity has come to be characterized by increased emphasis on the construction of our own individual futures through a ‘reflexive project of the self’” (68).

As mentioned previously, some collectors refuse the title of collector altogether due to pre-existing conceptions about what makes a real book collector. Mole provides some explanation for why different individuals take up different labels within the world of book lovers, noting that there are distinct and different pleasures to be gained from buying books, reading them, and organizing them. He explains that “I'm not a collector so much as an accumulator of books. I have a few modest antiquarian volumes but most of my books are paperbacks I bought new and then hung on to. I doubt I would have kept so many books if they hadn't served some ulterior purposes that aren't apparent even to me” (Mole 21). Here Mole acknowledges that the physical presence of the books has some value that he struggles to identify. While Mole says he’s not a collector as much as an accumulator, the difference lies mostly in connotation; collection and accumulation are synonyms so, while the priorities of a collector and an accumulator may differ, the cultural significance is often the same. Whether one purposefully acquires a collection according to specific parameters or coincidentally accumulates a collection through gradually adding a volume here and there, the end result is still a collection of books that performs a role in identity construction and meaning making.

Some individuals even find milder labels such as “bibliophile” so entrenched in specific conceptions of identity—such as that of stuffy collectors only valuing books for their market value—that they refuse them as well:

> "I don't call myself a bibliophile," says the illustrator Pierre Le-Tan, gesturing to the twelve-foot-high bookshelves that line the salon of his Left Bank apartment. "Those people like original editions with certain paper or watermarks…That doesn't interest me at all. Bibliophiles prefer the pages uncut, some of them; the edition might be wonderful, but what is the point of a book you can't read? I just like to read my books." Le-Tan is, by his own admission, a lover of beautiful things—but it's obvious he lives *with* his hundreds of volumes rather than *among* them. (Freudenberger 75)

Arguably, Le-Tan is also a bibliophile; just because he appreciates books both as object and as text does not mean that he is disqualified from the label. Le-Tan is far from the only book lover who shies from typical titles in the book community. Fadiman, too, recounts her own experiences accumulating in ways that likely clash with the standard conception of a serious book collector:

> After paperbacks lost their allure, I converted to second-hand books partly because I couldn't afford new hardbacks and partly because I developed a taste for bindings assembled with thread rather than glue, type set in hot metal rather than by computer, and frontispieces protected by little sheets of tissue paper. I also began to enjoy the sensation of being a small link in a long chain of owners. Immaculate first editions cherished by rare-book collectors—no notes, no signatures, no bookplates—now leave me cold. (149)

All the same, Fadiman acknowledges, "Not everyone likes used books. The smears, smudges, underlinings, and ossified toast scintillae left by their previous owners may strike dainty readers as a little icky, like secondhand underwear" (148). There is a great array of priorities and motivations amongst book collectors. Whatever drives people to accumulate material books,

though—whatever type of books they are drawn to—the books function as an extension of a person's identity and a tool for meaning-making.

In some ways, one could argue that books have more sway over their owners than their owners do over them: "As Patricia Hampl wrote in a book about beauty's bewitching qualities: 'Collecting is not a simple matter of possessing. It's a way of looking: a looking that is itself a kind of craving. To look this way is to be possessed, lost'" (Bartlett 115). Even beyond the use of books to craft identity, books seem to seize some part of people emotionally, oftentimes described in terms of the involuntary or even almost violent. As far back as the Renaissance, collectors faced this sense of being seized hold of by their obsession with books:

> Petrarch doesn't possess his library as much as his library possesses him. "I'm haunted by an inexhaustible passion that up to now I have not managed or wanted to quench. I feel that I have never enough books," he says. "Books delight one in depth, run through our veins, advise us and bind with us in a kind of active and keen familiarity; and an individual book does not insinuate itself alone into our spirit, but leads the way for many more, and thus provokes in us a longing for others." (Manguel 15)

While the emotions evoked by books are often thought of in idealized and romanticized mindsets, they can also be somewhat bittersweet. After all, nostalgia is not a wholly positive emotion. Nostalgia has been described "as a suffering, a…desire to return to the things themselves, to become part of the community of the everyday-life world" (Daniels 382-3). Indeed, owning books is as temporary as life itself as the durability of the material object extends beyond the longevity of a human lifespan. Baron mentions this in reference to nameplates in books, somewhat ominously writing, "*Ex libris:* from the library of. If it's in your library, you own it, at least for now" (139). Mole describes the traces of previous owners as "a lane to the

land of the dead" (105). Books are something passed from hand to hand, owner to owner. Inheriting book collections, buying them at estate sales—however it goes, sometimes the hesitancy to say we own a book may stem from the fact that it will outlast us.

Or perhaps the hesitancy stems in part from the struggle to grasp precisely why books are such emotionally evocative objects for so many people. Collectors, from the most romantic reader to the most pragmatic accumulator, are not immune to the nostalgia evoked by books. Walter Benjamin, in an essay recounting his process of unpacking his personal library, recalls "the spring tide of memories which surges toward any collector as he contemplates his possessions. Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories" (60). Ownership is tied to the act of remembering for book collectors—a chaotic emotional process. Benjamin writes "that for a collector—and I mean a real collector, a collector as he ought to be—ownership is the most intimate relationship that one can have to objects. Not that they come alive in him; it is he who lives in them. So I have erected one of his dwellings, with books as the building stones, before you, and now he is going to disappear inside, as is only fitting" (67).

Manguel writes of the loneliness that can be exposed by our interactions with the world: "perhaps all intercourse—with pictures, with books, with people, with the virtual inhabitants of cyberspace—breeds sadness because it reminds us that, in the end, we are alone" (17). Taking the way that the materiality of the book interacts with emotion, this too can be contextualized: "Nostalgia as a suffering, a longing, an attempted journey to a hidden time, a hidden home, reveals our unconscious awareness of our desire to return to the things themselves, to become part of the community of the everyday-life world" (Daniels 382-3). People hunger for things as they hunger for connections. In this way, collecting becomes not just a solitary claim about

identity, but a social way to send messages to others about who you are and where you fit in the bigger picture of culture and the everyday world. Manguel writes that "the individual is obsessed with finding others who will tell him or her who they are. As if we were Heisenberg's electrons, we feel as though we don't always exist: we exist only when we interact with someone else, when someone else deigns to see us. Perhaps, as quantum physics teaches us, what we call reality—what we think we are and what we think the world is—is nothing but interaction" (16). Perhaps, too, this is why some collectors are drawn to rescue the book that is found "lonely and abandoned" on the marketplace table; the book creates a means to contextualize one's place in the world and exert some control through material interactions. As such, book lovers congregate with other book lovers and seek out book spaces to increase their interactions with the world.

This emotional affect may also be why people hang onto not only books of financial or practical value but also books that we simply feel tied to in some manner. Collecting is not just about things—it is about emotion and connection, love and loss. Our most valuable volumes may not be old or rare, but they are always special: "'I really don't edit [her personal library] at this point—part of the joy of the collection is its ranginess, its breadth, its depth, its eccentricity…If the house were burning, I'd probably rush to save *The New World Encyclopedia of Cooking*, purely because Nana pressed fresh flowers into its pages, and I would be heartbroken if I failed to preserve them'" (Freudenberger 394). Manguel paints a picture of his library not as a living, breathing entity but as a mass of the dead:

> "Collecting: to assert control over what's unbearable," says Ruth Padel. I think this has always been the unrealized wish in my relationship to books. Present, as solid objects, we imagine books to be inert and passive, and so devoid of intellect that we allow ourselves to invest them with meanings of our own making. To the Samarian question "Can these

> stones live?" we answer "Yes" and proceed to make books into familiars, transforming them into the presences among which we dwell. In my library, I felt surrounded by this "silent majority" (as Homer called the dead), a vast flock of pages that held the keys to my past and instructions for my present, and also useful charms for my daily ritual. (60)

Manguel abruptly follows this with a story of loss and his grandmother who "had a gift for losing things" (61). A Russian Jewish immigrant to Argentina, Manguel's grandmother would say "'Losing things is not so bad because you learn to enjoy not what you have but what you remember'" (61-2). Having lost her home in Russia, her friends, her parents, her husband, and her language, Manguel's grandmother asserted "You should grow accustomed to loss" (Manguel 62). To this, Manguel says, "Even though history has taught us that nothing lasts for long, the impulse to create in the face of impending destruction…to build new libraries is a powerful and unquenchable impulse" (62). In this way, books become tools for commemoration, representing things lost or irretrievable through their concrete materiality.

Regardless of how thoroughly books are connected to our emotional lives, there remains a responsibility to care for the physical object, especially for collectors of treasured volumes (whether antiquarian or personal). While some collectors are obsessed with rare and financially valuable editions, others are horrified by the idea of such a burden of responsibility. Although Lenaghan mentions Caxton Club collectors who let rare books get sun faded or who enjoy social libations a little too close to rare volumes for her personal comfort, most collectors do feel an obligation to preserve the value and integrity of the books in their possession. As more of a gradual accumulator of books than a dedicated collector, I shy away from the idea of being charged with caring for books of significant historical or market value—even if I were inclined to pursue such objects for my own. The responsibility of caring for the book as an object reflects

not only the market value a book may carry, but also the sense of importance (emotional, financial, or historical) and uniqueness of the volume to the individual. Fadiman writes, “Some of my friends do not intend to leave their books to their children, believing that they would be a burden: a never-ending homework assignment, boxed and unboxed with every move, that would reproach the legatees from on high.” (128). Yet Benjamin describes this responsibility in a more positive light, writing that “inheritance is the soundest way of acquiring a collection. For a collector’s attitude toward his possessions stems from an owner’s feeling of responsibility toward his property” (66). The fervor one feels for their library could thus be due in part to responsibility, but that possessiveness also ties into the emotional link to inherited goods. Knowing that one received a collection from a loved one who left it specifically for them contributes to a sentimentality toward those objects as a legacy.

For anyone who doesn’t think they are part of the somewhat cultish world of book ownership, Lenaghan notes that books occupy “myriad spaces—real and imagined” and “All book owners participate in rituals pertaining to the consumption and display of books to varying degrees: giving them as gifts, artfully arranging them on bookshelves, surmising the tastes and knowledge of others based on the book they carry in their back pocket” (11). Here, Lenaghan points out that one performs possession rituals in the most mundane of interactions with books. Even though we may often think of book collectors as wealthy individuals who spend their evenings in a study or library, sipping port and reading a leather-bound tome, Lenaghan notes that this is an anachronism for modern collectors and that while class prestige has always been associated with book ownership and reading, “the history of books and reading since the rise of mass production has close affiliations with popular culture. Indeed, as Benedict Anderson reminds us, books were the first mass-produced commodities” (12). Any book lover, regardless

of their income level or personal library, has equal stake in the socially constructed "cultural and symbolic value" of books "as objects worthy of veneration" (Lenaghan 12).

Indeed, Walter Benjamin describes the "dialectical tension between the poles of disorder and order" in the life of the collector, writing:

> Naturally, [the collector's] existence is tied to many other things as well: to a very mysterious relationship to ownership, something about which we shall have more to say later; also, to a relationship to objects which does not emphasize their functional, utilitarian value—that is, their usefulness—but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate. The most profound enchantment for the collector is the locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them. Everything remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property. (60)

Benjamin mentions not only that collectors have a relationship to objects not centered on the use-value of the object but that there is a "thrill of acquisition" that is tied to memory. Lenaghan, in her study of book collecting in the digital age, expands on this notion of memory and personal history tied to collected objects, writing,

> Thus, book collections become a site where the material instantiations of a collection mingle alongside the representative and symbolic meanings they hold. In these instances, the physical book is integral to the formation of those stories, memories, and past times they represent. However, it also serves as a proxy for history—the personal history of its owner(s) and the longer literary history of which it is a part. (28)

In a time where people are increasingly concerned about the supposed death of the book (along with the concurrent death of the bookstore, death of reading, and so on), the role of the

book not only as a medium but also as a technology is something that is cast into sharp relief by the actions of collectors. Collectors increasingly point to the beauty of the book as a reason for its continued survival. Additionally, the significance (culturally, socially, and personally) that books convey is integrally linked to the materiality of the book as object. Lenaghan describes the various ways that collectors differentiate between the use of other technologies and books that "enable them to exist in concert rather than conflict with each other" (33). Book collectors in Chicago's Caxton Club have been driven to expand their ideas of which books are worthy of collection and who classifies as a collector due to the pressures of a newly accessible market that involves online cataloging and instantaneous, comparative price checking. By doing so, these collectors "are able to maintain a commitment to their belief in books as valued material and symbolic objects" helping "to preserve books as bastions of social ties and cultural significance" (Lenaghan 31).

While technology, in this way, can be seen to be strengthening the connection between book and individual, there is still anxiety about digital books and the future longevity of the paper book. Manguel describes his discomfort with digital books, writing, "Perhaps that is why I'm not comfortable in a virtual library: you cannot truly possess a ghost (though the ghost can possess you). I want the materiality of verbal things, the solid presence of the book, the shape, the size, the texture" (12). Similarly, book dealer Daniel Weinberg explains his relationship to the paper book and his concerns about generational changes:

> "There's a gestalt to [the book], I suppose. And a tactileness that you don't get from plastic. Of course, that's all I grew up with for heaven's sakes, and I don't know what a baby, born today, in twenty years is going to think about that plastic. I don't know what they'll feel about that. Maybe that's what's going to happen in twenty years with the

> iPad. I don't know. But tactileness, the enjoyment of knowing that lithographs are made for [books] or someone can sign it and personalize it. That it can be a thing of beauty besides information that you enjoy having. And as art as well. And all of that is part of a book, a part and parcel of it. And everyone who enjoys books feels the same way. The tactileness and the smell and all of that." (qtd. in Lenaghan 262)

Lenaghan describes Weinberg's beliefs as familiar, pointing to the frequency with which those who love books have expressed concerns and opinions about "books as art and books as sensual objects," while noting that Weinberg's statement "is qualified by his understanding that such beliefs may not be shared twenty years out" (262).

In the introduction to mystery novel *Booked to Die,* author and bookstore owner John Dunning writes of the shifts that have come to the world of book collecting:

> Suddenly, I realize how different this new world is. The computer has shown us that even some classic titles of the thirties are not rare, they're just expensive, and hypermoderns are salable only as long as the heat is on the book. The collector value of a new author is always one bad book from eclipse, and a brilliant start will only ensure that his subsequent works are going to be scrutinized as he'd never have believed possible. Surely some of the hypermoderns will stick and become classics of the future. But many more, perhaps most, will fade slowly and disappear. Eventually the authors will die. And what will happen to those books when they reach a new generation of collectors who will not buy a dead author? (25-6)

Weinberg and Dunning's statements reflect the widespread shifts that have ranged throughout the world of books and book collecting. However, technology is not the bogeyman that many may think it to be. Lenaghan uses the practice of book collecting and the changes it has

undergone in the last few decades as a case study that helps us "better understand the seemingly paradoxical existence of books in our digital age" (11). After all, Dunning's immediate follow up to his seemingly dread-filled question about the fate of books in the hands of future generations is that

> I suspect that the best of them [books] will survive despite the odds. They will transcend human silliness, touching future generations with their magic. With all its recent annoyances this is still the greatest game. The thrill of the hunt, the lure that drew Janeway [the detective in the novel] into the book world, remains as rich and strong today as it was when I first felt it more than twenty years ago. I know that even in the worst of times the trade is too vast to be harmed much by silliness, or to be harnessed by millionaires with Wal-Mart ambitions. (25-6)

Dunning mentions Wal-Mart ambitions, referring to what he calls "a consortium of multimillionaires making a mighty effort to corral the trade, buying up estates and books by the hundred-thousands, hoping to create a brand name of used books reminiscent of Wal-Mart" (19). While Dunning predicts the book trade outlasting human silliness, I would argue that the book trade may be impacted by big players buying up large swathes of the market, but it could never be harnessed by them. As Bartlett points out, technology is not the only thing that presents a challenge to book collectors:

> Before the fair, I had learned that there are probably as many definitions of "rare" as there are book dealers…Burt Auerback, a Manhattan appraiser, is quoted as having said, "It is a book that is worth more money now than when it was published." The late American collector Robert H. Taylor said that a rare book is "a book I want badly and can't find." …they all agree that "rare" is a highly subjective moniker. The earliest use of

> the term has been traced to an English book-sale catalog in November 1692…A book's degree of rarity remains subjective, and the only qualities of "rare" that collectors and dealers seem to agree on is some combination of scarcity, importance, and condition. Taste and trends play roles as well, however. (36-7)

The rare book market is hard to corner if there isn't even a consensus on what "rare" means. In the end, though, book collecting is more than just rare books. It is an amalgam of individuals who collect books based on immensely varied tastes and preferences. As discussed throughout this chapter, the materiality of books in a collector's possession are tied to their affect and role in meaning-making. Books carry emotional resonance for individuals related to memory and nostalgia, create concrete connections to historical events or people, and unite a social world of book lovers. Regardless of the challenges perceived by the book community, the materiality of the paper book is essential to its continued import in the lives of individuals.

Chapter three will discuss how bookstores impact the emotional landscape of individuals and contribute to identity construction for local communities and individuals alike. Bookshops, too, reflect the paper book's resilience against technological challenges as their physical space provides a unique experience to consumers, allowing for serendipitous encounters with books and encouraging the growth of community connections alongside the commercial purpose of the stores.

CHAPTER III. BOOKSTORES: CURATION, BROWSING, AND IDENTITY

While books can be integrally linked to an individual's sense of self as shown in the previous chapter, they are also commodities circulating in the market. Although commerce may seem to clash with the idealized or romanticized emotions connected to books as personal identity shapers, the reality is that books carry a unique blend of commercial, aesthetic, and cultural meanings and power. The purchase and sale of books are integral to people's relationships with them in wider culture and one of the most common ways that people interact with books in this manner is in the space of bookstores. People who love books tend to also be fond of book spaces, which Tom Mole defines as places where books are "Gathered together in large numbers" (141). This chapter will focus primarily on the overlap of culture and commerce concerning bookstores and the emotional connections people forge with them. I will also argue that the lengths that people go to in order to protect their relationship with physical books and the nostalgia found therein reveal the power and value of materiality in books and book spaces. In this way, bookstores, and especially independent bookstores, can be seen as spaces where affection for books, the cultural significance of books, and the cultural impact of the economy mingle. As technology increasingly plays a role in the consumption of goods by individuals, the challenges facing brick-and-mortar shops are increasingly at the forefront of people's minds. When it comes to books and bookshops and the threats they face through digital developments, people are fervently defensive of the traditional ways—because of the affective bond people have with physical books and book spaces.

As mentioned previously, Grant McCracken discusses how consumer goods create cultural meaning through consumption, allowing consumers to interact with displaced meanings. This can be seen both in the act of purchasing physical books as well as in interactions with

commercial book spaces. Indeed, Bartlett notes the blend of culture and commerce in book spaces when she describes the 2005 New York Antiquarian Book Fair as "A hybrid of museum and marketplace" (25). Frederic Jameson writes that "the interrelationship of culture and the economic here is not a one-way street but a continuous reciprocal interaction and feedback loop" (xiv-xv). Books' cultural import makes them economically valuable as commodities while the commercial availability of books increases their cultural impact. As Greg Urban writes, "The movement of culture through the world is possible only because it becomes lodged, however fleetingly or enduringly, in material, perceptible things" as "The thing is a vehicle for the *dissemination* of culture" (42). In this way, books are part of a feedback loop in which culture and commerce cycle around each other in the background of our daily lives.

Ann Steiner, in an exploration of curation practices in Swedish bookshops, notes that "An important feature of bookshops is their juxtaposition of commercial and cultural priorities. A bookshop is a commercial venture—and rarely a public one, since almost all are run by privately owned companies" (20) and that "It is the balance between culture and commerce that defines bookshops and the practices that can be termed curation" (18). Steiner builds off the work of other scholars who increasingly are paying attention to curation as a way to draw attention to that which is truly important or relevant: "Value, writes Michael Bhaskar in *Curation* (2016), no longer resides in access but in curation—in selecting and arranging. No bookshop can ever offer every book available; rather it is in its selection that each bookshop is unique" (19). As Steiner explains,

> Curation is the adding of value by excluding and refining. The results in this study point to the bookshop being a place where more than books are sold: also being sold is the experience and sensation of being in a bookshop. Curation here involves selection and

> genre classification, as well as producing personalized notes recommending specific books. Not every bookshop gives the impression of being curated, and some bookshops are badly curated. Curation per se does not result in a good or bad shop, but it does provide a perspective on bookshop practices. Many parts of a bookshop's every day activities can be seen as curation, such as recommending a title or displaying books in shop windows and on podiums. (19)

This is important as Dant explains that "The pragmatics of material interaction are concerned with those practices by which human beings derive cultural meaning and value from things. These practices are an expression of the culture and link the individual to their society. They may also be construed as a discontinuous dialogue between designer and consumer" (17).

Curation isn't just about making better sales; it sets up the environment through which consumers will engage with cultural values and meaning. The interactions of consumers with such settings play a role in shaping culture and perpetuating certain values and practices. As Dant writes, "Consumers communicate through sight, touch and sometimes other senses, using their whole body to both make sense of and to make use of the things around them. This is not achieved through instinctual behaviour or even simple learnt behaviour but through the complex cultural acquisition of the meanings of objects that is characteristic of a particular formation of material civilization" (15). Similarly, Urban writes, "As I have argued, for culture—as abstract form or accumulated social learning—to move through the world, it must be located in sensorily accessible evidence" such as physical objects (65). As discussed in chapter one, the sensory aspects of physical books are integral to our relationship with them and therefore also to their cultural significance.

The curation of bookstores, by determining what we are able to interact with and how, shapes our sensory experience of books and the bookstore space. As Mole writes, walking into a bookstore means "find[ing] yourself in the middle of an argument about the shape of knowledge itself" (145). He goes on to explain that the argument is "about who's in and who's out, about what kinds of things belong together, about what's more important and what's less so. The books that we choose to keep, the ones that we display most prominently, and the ones that we shelve together make an implicit claim about what we value and how we perceive the world" (Mole 142). Similarly, Steiner explains the bookshop as a place in which "the consumer can enact identity politics and political ideas simultaneously. A bookshop's curating practice is thus constantly negotiated with the customers it impacts on. And they in return influence the bookshop and its practices" (29). Bookstores are places where booksellers make predictions about what will interest the public and what sort of material will suit the particular individuals in a community. Mole explains bookshops as reflecting a

> set of decisions—influenced by a range of commercial factors and interests—to stock certain titles, to order more copies of one book and fewer of another, to offer discounts or multi-buy offers, to put these books on the tables at the front of the shop and those books on the shelves at the back, and to return unsold stock to the publisher or keep it on display. (144-5)

The curation of the bookstore impacts the user experience significantly, even if the public isn't consciously aware of the work that shapes what they perceive. Many writers describe book spaces as places of wonderment and potential for serendipitous encounters. Mole writes, "the wonder of the open shelves is that they allow you to find things you didn't know you were looking for. Serendipitous discoveries are actually made possible by clever classifications, which

put the books where you can stumble across them. The arrangement of a library or a book shop is also a tacit argument about the organisation of knowledge" (138). The customer may not be aware of the process that grants them a serendipitous encounter, but at the end of the day, the bookshop is a place designed with sales in mind and strategies implemented to secure them. In this way, "The bookshop as a space is not a neutral area, but is linked to the image of and value of the books it contains. It is a standard assumption in retail space design that an inspiring setting will encourage customers to spend more—and to return" (Steiner 23).

While the atmosphere of bookshops may be carefully crafted to encourage sales, commerce is not the sole motive for most bookshops. Buzbee describes bookstores in which "books were not treated as mere commodity, and there was a palpable sense of reverence for books and the time it took to read them" (14). As bookstore owner Shaun Bythell writes, "In a more real sense, books are the commodity in which I trade, and the enormous numbers of them out there in the world excite a different part of my mind. When I go to a house to buy books, there is an anticipation unlike anything else. It is like casting a net and never knowing what you will find when you gather it in" (81-2). The book manages to retain some of its magic for book lovers even in a retail setting. However, bookselling (especially for independent shopkeepers) is not merely an intellectual pursuit. As Buzbee writes,

> A bookseller is, first and last, the custodian of a wonderful space, a groundskeeper concerned with the order and care and stock of that space. The bookseller both maintains and presents the space to the public, while at the same time protecting that space and its contents from the same public. Day-to-day bookselling is more about the physical world than the loftier realms. Retail—bookstores in particular—can be harder on your knees and back than on your mind. (105)

Even so, books are not mere commodities, to be dismissed for their commercial value or mass-produced origins. Buzbee notes that people don't primarily go into bookselling for the profit margin (which is quite slim): "You love books so much that you believe a book, any book, is an important object, nearly sacred. You also believe that the free trade of those books is key to a society's democratic nature" (147). Although some book snobs may decry the mass-market setup of publishing and book sales through chain or online stores, Buzbee defends these traits, writing,

> There is a fundamental democracy in the mass-produced book. For example, *Don Quixote,* one of the great achievements of Western literature, is roughly the same price as the most tawdry celebrity biography, maybe even a little cheaper since the nuisance of paying the author has expired. And location has little effect on the price: *Don Quixote* costs the same at the swankest New York City carriage-trade shop as in the most windswept Kansas City strip mall. Mass production in other commodities not only affects price, but also affects quality. (7)

Books carry an interesting appeal that is a blend of commercial value, aesthetic value, and emotional value. Bartlett in her exploration of how the passion for books can lead to theft found that book theft is more common than one might expect: "there was one sentence in particular that caught my eye: an Interpol agent, Vivianna Padilla, revealed that according to the global police agency's statistics, book theft is more widespread than fine art theft" (63). Bythell also takes note of book theft as something peculiar: "There seems to be something somehow less morally culpable about stealing a book than stealing, say, a watch. Perhaps it is that books are generally perceived as being edifying, and so acquiring the knowledge contained within them is of a greater social and personal value than the impact of the crime. Or, at least if it doesn't

outweigh the crime, then it certainly mitigates it" (84). Bythell acknowledges the literary merit of a book as potentially negating the criminality of stealing the physical object, but this also illustrates the unique place books hold in culture as objects that we often dismiss the materiality of in order to focus on the abstract. We frequently interact with books without ever consciously realizing the affective power of the object itself.

If books are valued for their special cultural merit, why does there seem to be a looming cloud in public opinion about the fate of the bookstore and the paper book? Through the 1980s and 1990s, the publishing industry underwent significant changes that created what Buzbee calls "corporate conglomerations that have made many publishers only one segment of a global media empire" (127). Many people find the increasingly obvious corporate nature of book production and sales to be an encroachment upon the romance of books, challenging their idyllic notions of the book world. As Buzbee explains it, "The story of bookselling in the twentieth century echoes the changing shape of capitalism" (127).

Buzbee recounts the general experience of bookselling during the 1990s into the 2000s, writing,

> The larger bookstore chains expanded with vigor in these years [the 1990s], but independent stores seemed to be evaporating. Nearly two-thirds of American independents closed during a decade in which Internet commerce seemed nearly capable of destroying its brick-and-mortar competition. There have been other recent challenges to our sense of books and where we might buy them, notably the e-book, print-on-demand books, and mass-merchandisers. (199)

Even with such insider experience with the struggles of bookselling in a digital age, Buzbee is not pessimistic about the future of the bookstore:

> When we look at these misfortunes, especially the divisive argument of chains versus independents, I think it's important to remember the long history of the bookstore and its adaptability, the slow evolution of its form, and the quiet resistance it has shown to being replaced.
>
> Is the bookstore dying? Will we all be forced to become computer geeks to get a glimpse of the new Stephen King? With nearly two billion books sold in 2004, trade publishing is perhaps healthier than ever. (199)

Buzbee points out that "many of the bookstores that folded during the 1990s were small shops whose owners were simply unprepared for the vagaries of business competition," acknowledging that "The chains are not evil corporate ogres (at least not yet). Chain bookstores, along with the changes they've made in their selections, making them more true to the bookstore spirit than to the department store's, have brought a greater selection of books to more people than the independents could have" (211). He emphasizes that bookstores are businesses; even though they are often treated differently than other commercial retailers, they still function by providing services and wares that there is a demand for. Buzbee does acknowledge that recent history has resulted in the loss of certain traits in the bookselling industry as eccentric personalities are replaced by cut-and-dried business practices:

> Perhaps the biggest change in bookselling since the advent of big business is the loss of "characters." With increased speed and efficiency, the regulation of the industry, and most importantly, the separation of publishing from bookselling, the bookseller is no longer the rogue he once was and is rarely described as "unscrupulous." Those flamboyant personages of the golden age of English bookselling have all but disappeared

from the more recent biographies and histories of the trade. Now we're talking business. (127)

Indeed, the business of bookstores has been closely analyzed by interested parties to investigate the impact of Amazon and chain stores on independent shops. According to the American Booksellers Association (ABA), many independent bookstores went out of business between 1995 (when Amazon emerged on the scene) and 2000, with the overall number decreasing by 43%. (*American Booksellers Association*). *Forbes* reports that this decline continued from 2000 to 2009, with chain stores continuing to struggle past 2009, as Borders folded in 2011 and Barnes and Noble dropped from 681 locations in 2005 to 627 in 2019 (Danziger). The reality reflected by such numbers is that independent bookstores are more resilient than chain bookstores. Between 2009 and 2018, the American Booksellers Association reported a 49% growth in independent booksellers from 1,651 in 2009 to 2,470 in 2018 (*American Booksellers Association*).

While recent developments in 2020 concerning the COVID-19 virus have had an impact on bookstores (as the virus has impacted most aspects of life), the American Booksellers Association website presents a clear picture of just how resilient independent bookstores are. In a webpage titled “Independent Bookstores Are Thriving,” the ABA has a list of recent stories and profiles detailing just how successfully independent bookstores have managed in the age of online shopping. The ABA itself is a nationwide non-profit trade organization that helps independent bookstores by providing information and resources to help these businesses succeed. As the ABA emphasizes that independent bookstore owners are important participants not only in the local economy but local culture as well, the connection between cultural relevancy and economic survival, or even success, is clear (“About ABA”). The ABA reported an increase in

sales across independent bookstores of 2.6% from 2016 to 2017 and 5% from 2017 to 2018 (“ABA and Indie Bookstore Stats").

As cultural relevance is essential to the success of independent bookstores, one of the key aspects of that relevance is the curation of store inventory. Independent shops are better at refining their selection to suit the needs and wants of the local culture and community members who will be engaging with it. Independent shops succeed in their niche by paying attention to the desires and particular needs of their customer base. This is one significant advantage independent bookstores have over chain bookstores. Chains frequently fit themselves into a standardized form, a one-size-fits-all approach to a bookstore based on what appeals to the largest number of people. In chain stores, publishers often pay for the best placement of their products and these decisions often come from headquarters located far from the brick-and-mortar stores whose displays they dictate. John Mutter, editor in chief of Shelf Awareness, a newsletter for readers and book industry insiders, explains how impersonal bookstores can lead to company problems: “Unfortunately in cost-cutting moves, buying has been centralized and made less personal, and most display ‘ideas’ come from headquarters. It’s one of the many reasons that the company [Barnes &Noble] has had problems” (Todd).

Because chains are public companies (and often high-growth companies), they focus on innovation and disruption, putting them in direct competition with Amazon and forcing them to pursue high sales volume at the cost of inventory. High-growth strategies include building more and bigger stores, developing technology to compete with Amazon (such as the Nook) which results in immense debt, and treating inventory as a burden rather than an asset. Because Amazon is able to provide a wider inventory than any individual chain—and often at lower prices—attempts to directly compete on a corporatized model is bound to be an uphill battle.

This has led many to encourage a reframing of notions of the book business by setting up chain bookstores as better-stocked versions of independent bookstores, focusing on the specific desires of consumers, rather than directly challenging Amazon. Again, success comes down to curation.

Another reason that chain bookstores struggle is related to staffing. Much of the experience of an independent bookstore is curated by knowledgeable staff members who are able and ready to give book suggestions and guide an individual's reading journey based upon the consumer's input. Yet chain bookstores, like many corporate entities, can fall victim to undervaluing their staff's expertise. High turnover rates among employees or a lack of opportunity for employee feedback in guiding the business can lead to fairly cookie-cutter encounters with the chain bookstore. A lack of adequate staffing and budgetary issues (coming from the pursuit of high growth strategies) also means that chains struggle to build connections with their local communities with the same depth that independents do. Chain stores become identical; the Barnes & Noble in Wichita, Kansas is not so different from the Barnes & Noble in the Mall of America, in Bloomington, Minnesota. While chains suffer from Amazon's competition, independent bookstores survive, because they focus on curation and finding their niche. Increasingly, insiders in bookselling see the benefits of independent bookstores' approaches to sales, suggesting that chains need to act more in-line with the plans of independents rather than independents trying to become chains.

Indeed, the secret to succeeding in the age of Amazon is "'offering something Amazon can't, the lovely, serendipitous experience of being in a really good, big bookshop'" according to former Waterstones book retailer managing director Tim Coates (Harding 51). It's estimated that when a bookshop closes, one third of its sales transfer to another bookshop and the remaining two thirds disappear (Page and Stone 4). Some of the lost sales shift to online booksellers, but

the rest disappear completely. What is it about the bookstore as a physical location that so heavily influences sales? According to many people, it is the experience and serendipity provided by such locations.

Book spaces, like books, carry a special sense of space intertwined with their materiality. They have a somewhat magical connection to people through the emotional resonance they carry, which can be seen in how often people write about books spaces. Indeed, websites such as Book Riot, Goodreads, and Penguin Random House Library Marketing compile lists of books to read that are set in libraries and bookstores, often with over 100 entries per list. Even in our reading time, we wish to enter the realm of a book space. The love we have for these places is often explained as experiential: "'with books, there's still an element of serendipity; you see new elements from day to day…With the Internet, it's like a road map,' says [writer Kathleen] Hackett. 'You know exactly what you're looking for and you go there. Whereas with books…they're alive'" (Freudenberger 37). Buzbee notes that the allure of the bookstore is often in the unplanned encounter—the serendipity that bring them into his life: "I love the bookstores I do because I stumbled upon them. One of the pleasures of the bookstore is that there are so many and they are so varied" (177). Buzbee further claims that he is

> promiscuous when it comes to bookstores. Every bookstore, from the most opulent Parisian emporium to the anonymous strip-mall shop in Tucson, offers its own surprises. Since the bookstore first beckoned me thirty years ago, I have been in thousands, as a customer, employee, sales rep, tourist. Each one has freely divulged its delights. (175)

The physical space of a bookstore is integral to the consumer's relationship with it as a book space:

> A bookshop is a place for customers to experience books and culture and it can be a place to meet others. Particularly in small communities, bookshops can be a cultural centre… The bookshop space has particular sensory qualities, relating to an emotional as well as a physical state. The sensory and existential qualities of bookshops are part of the dream of the ideal cultured place. (Steiner 27)

Steiner notes that bookshops are more than just places where books are sold: “there is also selling the experience and sensation of being in a bookshop. In the borderlands of culture and commerce, bookshops are important curators of books” (18). In an analysis of how bookstore design affects the shopping experience, design and architecture journalist Clare Dowdy writes of the steps taken by specific shops to adapt to modern challenges in bookselling:

> Plantage Books & More's recent redesign has seen its stores divided into an impulse zone (for browsing), a destination zone (for more in-depth visits), and a zone of kiosks where customers can get access to the on-line shop. As GDR Creative Intelligence editor Lucy Johnston puts it, “it's really smart in that it incorporates on-line shopping into the store format so that customers get the best service - the emotional engagement of physical browsing and the convenience of on-line shopping and delivery.” (22)

Dowdy further writes that “From China to the Netherlands, bookshop owners are creating a memorable and user-friendly customer experience. At this end of this market, it's all about theatricality, says Echochamber creative director Howard Saunders, citing as an example the 'sense of place' created in Borders' coffee shops” (21). The experience of bookstores is integral to their import to individuals and communities alike. Buzbee, recounting his work at Upstart Crow in San Jose, California during the 1980s, writes, “Decades ahead of other book retailers, Upstart

Crow's owners had created something of a theme park, where the atmosphere (I'm sure they thought of it as 'ambience') was as much a draw as the merchandise" (15).

Mole takes note of the fairly ubiquitous experience of calm felt by book lovers in book spaces:

> I've always found something rather soothing about book shops and libraries. The larger the better, as far as I'm concerned. Sometimes I go to them with no intention of buying or borrowing books and just browse the shelves. Apparently, I'm not alone in this. University libraries report that more and more students are coming to the library, even though they are borrowing fewer and fewer books. Students want to work alongside those endless shelves, even if they can access the text they need on their laptops. Walking down the aisles, scanning the shelfmarks on the spines, they navigate through corridors built of books, like bricks in a wall. But books, unlike bricks, are not exactly identical. It's the variety of books, as well as their similarity, that produce the effect. I experience libraries and bookshops as spaces of enormous potential, which invite me to imagine new avenues of intellectual exploration, new pathways of reading pleasure. (131-2)

Steiner, in her analysis of bookshops as curated spaces, builds off Henri Lefebvre's "spatiology—a theory of space and place— that argues that a space is produced by society and its agents," noting the three different modes of space: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space (23). According to Steiner,

> In a bookshop, the perceived space is the place that people experience with their bodies and senses; it is the physical space that can be touched and described in tangible terms. The conceived space, meanwhile, is the mental image of a place—the bookshop as a concept. Lived space is a combination of experience and conception. Lived space is

> where people live and work, but it is simultaneously our experiences and ideas of this kind of place. (23)

As such, the sensory and mental experience combine to create the space that individuals associate with the bookshop.

Steiner also notes that "The immediate experience of a shop is also influenced by each individual's preconceived ideas of a bookshop (conceived space). The idea of a classic bookshop with a strong atmosphere, inviting and cosy, and with a great selection of books is something still vivid in the minds of many" (23). While most bookstores (chain and independent alike) have aspects of atmosphere in common due to the presence of books in a dedicated book space, differences arise based on what type of inventory is stocked; part of the draw of independent bookstores and especially used bookstores is the controlled chaos found therewithin. According to Buzbee, this is because

> One thing is certain in the aesthetics of bookstore design: if there's too much space, there's not enough books, and pretty soon, customers will stop coming, and so the decline begins. Customers are seduced into a bookstore because it seems to thrive; we want to see lots of books. We are much more likely to be drawn to a messy bookstore than a neat one because the mess signifies vitality. We are not drawn to a bookstore because of tasteful, Finnish shelves in gun metal grey mesh, each one displaying three carefully chosen, color-coordinated covers. Clutter—orderly clutter, if possible—is what we expect. (70)

Buzbee further writes, ""slowly I began to appreciate, as I suppose I had to, the great continuity of the used bookstore, how it keeps alive and in motion those books that otherwise might have to be burned for an Egyptian's bathhouse fuel. Used bookstores represent recycling at its best, a powerful and useful endeavor that's important to both our cultural and material lives" (145).

While Dowdy points to well-designed bookstores as key to their renewed success, Buzbee argues that it is a matter of matching consumer expectations. People appreciate the vitality represented by a mass of books sharing the same space, but the difference between coldly lit, sparsely covered display tables and darkened corners with books piled on the floor meet different expectations for the individuals wishing to encounter books. As Fadiman writes, "When I visit a new bookstore, I demand cleanliness, computer monitors, and rigorous alphabetization. When I visit a secondhand bookstore, I prefer indifferent housekeeping, sleeping cats, insufficient organizational chaos to fuel my fantasies of stumbling on, say, a copy of Poe's *Tamerlane*" (151). The atmosphere of a space and our expectations of that space can create a fantastical experience that goes beyond merely buying an object. All the same, the materiality of the book and the bookstore are integral to the continued success of the bookselling industry.

Buzbee explains that we go to bookstores to interact with books, to physically engage with them: "The German word for bookstores is *buchhandlung,* a place where books are handled. I vote we change the English word for bookstore to book-handlery because it's so fitting. The common book is made to be handled, as if the ultimate purpose for our opposable thumbs" (136). For this reason, Buzbee dismisses the idea that the traditional bookstore experience could ever be fully replaced by print-on-demand services, asking "But what good is a bookstore that's uncluttered? What good is a bookstore if you can't browse?" (204). The role of bookstores as places to interact with books is central to their importance and our enjoyment of them. How many times have people entered a bookstore not with a specific end-goal or purchase in mind, but just to wander around? The numerous times that I have gone to a bookstore, wandered around picking up and flipping through volumes that catch my interest before putting them down and moving on to the next support Buzbee's claim. The aspect of browsing is essential to our

love for bookstores. Browsing and the serendipity of discovery that occurs through browsing is integral to our experience of bookstores as well as to the success of brick-and-mortar stores.

Of course, browsing isn't the only serendipitous encounter that can occur in a bookstore. As designer Mark Lee describes his process of encountering new books, he says, "'I do it the old-fashioned way: I go to bookstores. I count on the booksellers' curation to suggest new books'" (Freudenberger 197). Interaction with other book lovers is part of the experience being sold by bookstores. The allure of the bookstore as a space comes from the materiality of interactions available for consumers to experience. Indeed, Freudenberger describes the Librería Regia bookshop in Mexico City as "a labyrinth of wonders" where you can "Lose yourself in the winding stacks of rare and used books, browsing, finding unexpected treasure, or just appreciating the sheer beauty of this downtown institution" (288).

The power of the bookstore as a space has not been lost on businesspeople seeking ways to boost the success of their shops. According to Mintel's books report in 2005, "specialist chains and independents were estimated to account for less than 50 per cent of total book sales," leading to a prediction that specialist retailers will inevitably have to resort to discounting (Dowdy 21). However, this was qualified by noting that retailers had a chance to avoid this fate by "'convincing the consumer that they offer an added value proposition, in terms of relaxed environment, expertise, and range of titles,'" (Dowdy 21). After all, as Mole writes, "You can spend some time virtually browsing an online bookseller, but it's a very different experience from hanging out in a book shop where serendipitous discoveries lurk around every corner" (190). Booksellers have taken note of this aspect of their shops, too; the experience of a bookshop has now become integral to the success of the business: "the ebb and flow of a traditional bookseller's power is dependent upon societal expectations. Whereas in the 1990s and

early 2000s price was the main consideration the focus has since shifted to providing experiences" (Harding 27).

Why has consumer experience become the key to brick-and-mortar bookstore success and survival in desperate times? As Bythell explains, online bookselling was relatively underdeveloped in 2001 with AbeBooks the only real player in the online second-hand book market (Amazon sold new books only at that point). AbeBooks was run by booksellers as a way to sell books that were harder to move in the shops—books that had smaller audiences due to content or price. Back then, sellers could make a decent profit off of AbeBooks, according to Bythell. Later on, as Amazon gained momentum, strain began to show for smaller sellers. As Bythell describes it,

> Amazon is consuming everything in its path. It has even consumed AbeBooks, taking it over in 2008, and the online market-place is now saturated with books, both real and electronic. Yet we have no real alternative but to use Amazon and AbeBooks through which to sell our stock online, so reluctantly we do. Competition has driven prices to a point at which online bookselling is reduced to either a hobby or a big industry dominated by a few huge players with vast warehouses and heavily discounted postal contracts. The economies of scale make it impossible for the small or medium-sized business to compete. At the heart of it all is Amazon, and while it would be unfair to lay all the woes of the industry at Amazon's feet, there can be no doubt that it has changed things for everyone. Jeff Bezos did not register the domain name "relentless.com" without reason. (77-8)

Even so, all is not lost. Chantal Harding in a study of UK bookselling from 1997-2014 writes, "despite recent history, bookselling remains a product of both commerce and culture so it

is likely that there will always be a few fanatics to sell books via a lovely serendipitous experience" (53). Indeed, the experience and serendipity provided by the physical space of a bookstore are what ensures that the bookshops will stick around even in the face of technological advancement and commercial challenges. Consumers find pleasure in browsing among physical books—the tactile sensations, smells, and visual allure contribute to the experience of a bookshop; the curated atmosphere created by the layout of the store, displays, background music, interaction with staff and other customers which all can create an inviting space.

Likely the biggest difference between online bookselling methods and brick-and-mortar methods comes down to curation versus algorithms. As mentioned previously, chain bookstores sometimes fall victim to corporate curation in which head offices—sometimes far removed from certain locations—decide on display tables and which books to push, regardless of local variations in culture and preferences. This practice acts as a sort of a midpoint between curation and algorithm. Curation for bookstores means selecting and displaying books based on information about the specific customers and their desires. Algorithms on the other hand tend to be more clinical in predicting sales; if you buy X book, you should buy Y book. As such, the chain bookstore method of designing displays and inventory for whole regions based on general sales data (X book sold well in this region, so Y book likely will too—regardless of local variations in that trend) borrows a little from algorithms and a little from curation—one part targeted sales data and one part designing displays for serendipitous discoveries.

As powerful as online sales are, many in the book world firmly assert that algorithms will never be able to replace bookshops entirely: "In an independent bookshop, staff are familiar with every book on the shelves because they have ordered it, unpacked it, priced it and shelved it…No matter how sophisticated an algorithm is, it cannot compete with this level of knowledge and

service" (Behan). The importance of coincidental encounters isn't just about enjoyment, though; these encounters are essential to the business of the bookstore. In *The Bookseller,* a British publishing magazine, "Both McCabe and Henry [market analyst and Bowker Market Research director respectively] agreed on the crucial role of bookshop browsing. Discovery still does not work online, McCabe asserted. 'Consumers do not browse the internet as is often suggested,' he said. Enders Analysis estimates that serendipity and discovery generate as much as two-thirds of UK general book sales, much of this down to bookshops" (Page and Stone 4). Furthermore, "A total of 45% of purchases where the buyer hadn't yet decided what to buy were made through bricks-and-mortar shops, Henry said. By contrast 'relatively few' book purchases were discovered through social network sites, Books & Consumers found" (Page and Stone 5). Sellers cannot pinpoint exactly what an individual wants to buy every time, so presenting an array of options that a person can browse amongst provides not only a product but the experience of a more organic choice than going directly to a targeted search result online.

Some have argued that algorithms struggle to satisfy customers consistently because algorithms neglect to account for whether people are buying books for enjoyment (they agree with the content), for research (not necessarily in agreement), or because they came across it in the search for a similar title or topic (even if the recommended book is from a contradictory viewpoint). As mentioned above, chain bookstores don't always allow for regional variations which can stifle much of the potential for community connection through curation. In contrast, as Zachary Karabell wrote for *Slate* in 2014, "a well-curated selection—an inventory of old and new books—was their [independent bookstores'] primary and maybe only competitive advantage." As Oren Teicher, CEO of the ABA, explains "The indie bookselling amalgam of

knowledge, innovation, passion, and business sophistication has created a unique shopping experience" (Karabell).

The unique shopping experience of independent bookstores (and even chain bookstores) is not just a matter of choosing the right books, though. People are viscerally defensive of bookstores they love. The emotional power of books carries over to places that house and trade in them. As Urban writes,

> Cultural objects are successful in perpetuating themselves over time insofar as they engender loyalty, insofar as they kindle strong positive feelings. This persuasive or rhetorical power of objects propels them through space along existing pathways of dissemination. It also helps them to penetrate uncharted territory, where they must cut their own new paths, being, in this sense, world-making. Persuasive power also secures the persistence in time of the objects, which become venerated. (256)

Communities rally around bookstores to protect them from challenges or even save them from having to close. The prevalence of news articles and editorials about threats to the book and bookstores from online competition and general causes typically evokes powerful responses from the public (Mole).

For an example of the deeply personal relationship people have with bookstores I only have to look as far as my own experience. The Dusty Bookshelf, a bookstore in my undergraduate college town, was one I had frequented when I was younger. I can easily recall being a small child surrounded by dark wood shelves in the kid's section, paging through picture books until my parents retrieved me to check out with our new treasures. Visiting that bookstore as an adult was no less magical; it connected me to the wonder and potential that I had felt there as a child. In 2017, The Dusty Bookshelf was closed for renovations when a fire tore through the

building, leaving it a husk of its former glory. After several years of renovations, the store reopened in 2019 but it wasn't their former glory restored. The shop had undergone a makeover that I viscerally resented. The brightly lit open space—complete with reading loft and minimal shelving to make room for more display tables and a larger checkout counter—had replaced what once was a cluttered, shelf-darkened room. Worst of all, The Dusty Bookshelf was selling new books. I had grown used to grabbing whatever book caught my fancy with the assurance that it was a used copy, not more than ten dollars or perhaps fifteen dollars for an oversized book, but that version of The Dusty Bookshelf had gone up in flames. In its place was a store that sold $25 new editions and trendy publications. Sure, the used books were still there, but suddenly The Dusty Bookshelf was a whole new beast. I felt no connection to it even as I recognized that its update likely would grant it more security moving forward with the largely college-aged local demographic.

Why was I so upset by the re-opened bookstore? As Buzbee writes, "Books, I knew then and now, give body to our ideas and imaginations, make them flesh in the world; a bookstore is the city where our fleshed-out inner selves reside" (19). The Dusty Bookshelf had been a city in which a part of my childhood was retained. While I keep memories of the place as it was before the fire, the physical reality is now lost. As discussed in chapters one and two, books are tools for identity construction and a means for interacting with the material world. As such, bookstores are imbued with these attributes on a larger scale. Bookstores become local identity markers, community-reflective or -defining centers of social interaction as well as places to interact with objects and ideas and other people. They are book spaces and as such carry the emotional power of the book, meaning they are also subject to our sentimental attachments and nostalgic preferences. We treasure them for their material stability and as retainers of memories that we

cherish. As such, sudden changes in the atmosphere or our access to such spaces is sure to disrupt our peaceful enjoyment of them. We are defensive of bookstores—those we call "ours" and those of others—because we recognize an emotional resonance in their space and purpose. We forget the commerce in favor of the cultural and personal attachments.

Damien Horner, a market analyst specializing in the British book business, argues that playing up the emotional side of bookstore retail is becoming a solution to the ails of the book industry: "You're not selling books but an experience" (qtd. in Steiner 28). Steiner describes how to go about selling that experience:

> Tap into that romantic image of the bookshop and commercialize it, create a space for debate, opinions, and emotions; a place where people want to be, where you can meet authors and share reading experiences…Customers' interests along these lines are confirmed by a study of book buying in which one of the interviewed customers explains, "It is not just the books but the whole experience of sight, sound and smell of the shop and interacting with other browsers"…If bookshops can retool to meet these emotional and social needs, there will still be a central place for them in the literary system. (28)

Indeed, by making such adjustments to priorities (if these shops were not already prioritizing the experience of the space), bookshops stay relevant not only in the literary system that Steiner mentions, but in their local communities. For instance, Buzbee describes the role of a bookstore he worked at previously: "At Printers [an indie bookstore in Palo Alto, California] the cultural scene that exploded in and around it was not an anomaly. It was every day. The life of the village that grew up around Printers was based on books and the primacy of them in one's life, not on books as one more shopping outlet. If only for three short blocks, the center of the city was the bookstore" (77). Local bookshops become sites of cultural movement and development, as well

as places people care about deeply. Urban explains that "the cultural object does not, thereby, take on an absolute value. Its value is relative to contemporary local processes of cultural replication" (236). By giving context to the cultural object of the book, bookstores become social centers in a local community.

Steiner argues that the social function of brick-and-mortar stores gives them an edge over internet stores. She notes that "The bricks-and-mortar bookshop is important to the visibility and dissemination of books. Large internet sales have not replaced the traditional shop, which in many towns is still a cultural centre" (Steiner 29). This is reflected in bookshop owner Dawn Behan's account in *The Irish Times:*

> Most people are delighted when a bookshop opens in their locality and make a special effort to support it. They come to think of it as their bookshop, which of course it is because it gradually becomes moulded to their needs. In return for their support, you need to offer something special. People don't expect a bookshop in a small town to stock every book currently in print, but they appreciate it if you offer an ordering service and contact them when their order is in stock. While it is important to stock bestsellers and books currently being discussed in the media, I also try to stock more unusual books, including books by local authors. Customers like to unearth a hidden gem and having an eclectic range makes customers more likely to spend time rummaging. (Behan)

The adaptations that independent bookstores have made to survive include a high volume of community-centered events such as author readings, book signings, themed event days with activities, and many more events catered to local tastes. In this way, some argue that bookshops have become what is known as a third space. In Steiner's research, she found conflicting

accounts on whether a bookshop can be a third space or not, but she acknowledges that the concept of third spaces is influencing how bookstores do business:

> The two first spaces in most people's lives are home and work. A third space should be a public meeting place where people can pursue personal activities and at the same time enjoy free and open communication with others…In a British study, Audrey Laing and Jo Royle tested whether bookshops can be defined as a third space. Their conclusion is that this is not the case, since there is a lack of interaction between people. I would agree—the bookshop is generally rather quiet—but with a couple of riders. Bookshops may not always be a place for communication, but they…can be, and the author events are a prime example of such interaction. The trend is also towards more and more customer, staff, and author interaction. A third space, according to the theory, cannot be created from above, for example by the owner of a restaurant: it is the users of a locale or facility who give the space its meaning. In the Laing and Royle study, several of the bookshop owners and managers interviewed claimed that they strived for a third-space atmosphere, with comfortable armchairs for reading and an in-house coffee shop. The importance of these elements was also confirmed by customers, or at least those who had a positive experience of the shops and happily stayed on longer than necessary. (Steiner 28)

Regardless of whether bookstores are technically third spaces or not, they do play a role as spaces for people to gather, interact, and explore ideas and objects. As Bythell writes,

> It often strikes me that perhaps bookshops primarily play a recreational role for most people, being peaceful, quiet places from which to escape the relentless rigours and digital demands of modern life, so that my friends and family will quite happily turn up

> unannounced and uninvited to interrupt whatever I happen to be doing [at the bookshop he owns and runs] with little or no regard for the fact that it is my workplace. (105)

Likewise, Buzbee acknowledges that bookstores are quite different from many other commercial spaces:

> my excitement at being in a bookstore comes from the place itself, the understanding that I can stay here for as long as need be. The unspoken rules we've developed for the bookstore are quite different from the rules that govern other retail enterprises. While the bookstore is most often privately held, it honors a public claim on its time and space…A bookstore is for hanging out. (4)

Buzbee attributes the slower pace of bookstores to their history, how the bookstore evolved to be what we know today: "The scriptorium, an integral part of the bookstore from its inception, probably helped establish the leisurely pace of the bookstore. Take a seat and write a letter" (61). Buzbee goes on to write "Elias Canetti has described cafés as places we go to be 'alone among others,' and I've always felt this was true of the bookstore, too. It's a lovely combination, this solitude and gathering, almost as if the bookstore were the antidote for what it sold" and that "Perhaps the bookstore isn't as mindful of time and space as other retail shops because there isn't very much at stake. Most booksellers go into the business because they love books, and they have a natural leaning toward the mercantile life" (6). Thus, the slow pace and calm company of a bookstore is tied to its history as a book space and how people interact with such spaces. The expectation people have of bookstores is centered on this soothing notion of place, an often romanticized ideal.

Buzbee describes those who go into bookselling as people who both love books and have an interest in "the mercantile life." Yet most people who are not booksellers have a very different idea of what running a bookstore would be like. Ann Bogel writes,

> I've dreamed of working in a bookstore, or owning a bookstore, or at the very least, of spending enough dollars at a bookstore that its denizens cheer my arrival and greet me by name, since I was a kid. In my imagination my bookstore is a friendly yet irresistible destination, a temple to the written word, a community hub, a spot where readers gather around the common love of reading, discuss lofty literary and quotidian concerns, always find the books they're looking for—and the toilets clean themselves. (139-40)

Enthusiasm for working in a bookstore is not limited to Bogel. Shaun Bythell in *The Diary of a Bookseller* describes an email he received from an individual requesting to work at his bookstore who wrote, "what I believe qualifies me for a job at your book shop is a deep love and reverence of books in all shapes and sizes. I have always loved books and I always will. If it was legal then I probably would have married one…Kindest Regards, Bethan" (Bythell 379). Whether these book lovers' perception of the book business is accurate or not, their ardor for working in a bookstore comes not from the pay of the job, but the chance to be in these spaces, surrounded by books. This in turn highlights the personal and cultural power of the bookshop as a space. As Bogel writes,

> I was head over heels in love with my imaginary bookstore, and I'd long been dreaming of working in such a place *one day.* But then a bona fide bookstore-owning friend offered me a temporary—*very* temporary—gig in her shop for one day. I was worried that working in an actual bookstore would totally burst my illustrious, imaginary bubble.

> Spoiler alert: it did not. But it did change the way I imagined the bookstore of my dreams. It changed the way I see *all* bookstores. (140)

Bogel's "stint as a bookseller" showed her that "in addition to those glorious books, *the bookstore itself* is an unappreciated wonder" (original emphasis) (140-1). While the bookshop isn't a magical wonderland removed from the reality of commerce, custodial work, and manual labor (recall Buzbee's comment about the job being hard on the knees and back), it does still carry magic for book lovers. Why is a bookshop so powerful as a place? Bogel notes that her childhood bookstore in the 1990s wasn't "delightfully cramped or cozy" let alone "*intimate* or *charming"* but "what it lacked in ambience, it made up for in books. That store was *packed* with books and people who loved them. They came to browse towering, well-stocked shelves and settle into enormous comfy chairs to read for hours, undisturbed" (165-6). In such an example, bookstores are alluring for the pacing, the browsing, and the books themselves. Bogel also provides an explanation for what makes people so attached to specific bookstores:

> Bookstores, by their nature, share much in common. I know the common feature I love to see, which I seek out at every store I visit: a prominent new release table for fiction and nonfiction, a healthy "staff picks" selection, a rack of clever greeting cards, a children's section stocked full of colorful titles at the eye level of a four-year-old. These relative similarities make it even more striking in how they diverge, depending on each store's specific owner, approach, city, and culture. A whole section devoted to local authors and interests and attractions. A robust pen display, or a broad selection of local pottery or chocolates or coffee. An eclectic mix of books and gifts and stuff that makes you feel that store couldn't be anywhere other than St. Louis or Santa Cruz or Stockholm. The markers that tell you where you are, that say *You are here.* (144-5)

Book lovers may have a distaste for chain bookstores or stores that they see as mere warehouses for books, but in the face of the depersonalization of the shopping experience through online markets, people are increasingly coming to understand chains not just as competitors to independent bookstores but as allies who are helping hold the line against what they see as the threat of a fully digital future. As Buzbee explains it, "This is where I eventually draw the line, not between chain and independent, but between bookstores and the absence of them" (211-12). He goes on to explain,

> For the true lover of bookstores, there is no sense of right or wrong, cool or uncool. Although for many years I worked in independent bookstores and on their behalf as a sales rep and strongly believe they are an under-valued cultural institution, I cannot bring myself to draw a prohibition against chain stores. I live in an area that is piled to the rafters with world-class bookstores, which I visit on a regular basis and whose unread books clog my shelves, but I can't help from dropping into whatever airport shop I pass while changing planes in an anonymous city. I am fatally attracted to all bookstores. (Buzbee 175)

Indeed, supporting local, corporate bookstores helps preserve independent bookstores too. Professionals in the book world point to chains such as Barnes & Noble as necessary to keep brick-and-mortar bookstores around (Collins). The book industry is not just authors and booksellers but includes publishing houses and wholesalers who shape their work based on the number of brick-and-mortar stores they can sell to. Without the number of stores provided by chains such as Barnes & Noble, these publishers and wholesalers would have to make cuts in sales, marketing, distribution, warehouse storage, and more. Jim Collins supports this analysis as he says the survival of Barnes & Noble is making the book trade more successful:

> The debates about the effects of the superstore have been accompanied by a steady stream of articles that focused on the impact of the superstore phenomenon, most of which echo Nora Ephron's account of the bookstore wars by emphasizing only the destructive effects of Barnes & Noble and Borders. The controversy boils down to a collision between two opposing notions of how one acquires cultivation— "genuine culture requires specialized sites in the proper initiation process" (because it cannot simply be purchased if it is to have any beneficial value) versus "culture should be accessible to all" (and if commerce makes that possible, the benefits certainly justify the means). The former is exemplified by André Schiffrin's book *The Business of Books* (2000), which presents a thoroughgoing indictment of corporate publishing: the superstore is only a cog in the conglomerate machine, which, in its all-consuming obsession with profit "leaves little room for books with new controversial ideas or challenging literary voices." (56-7)

Here Collins points to arguments that corporate interests don't prioritize new or challenging ideas, which may be a valid consideration. Yet focusing only on the content of the texts being sold neglects the physical factor entirely and retains the dichotomy between culture and commerce that is so prevalently held in the minds of the public. Collins emphasizes that

> What has gone largely unexamined in the debates about the superstores is how these stores function as complex cultural sites within the popular landscape, commercial enterprises that become the location for a variety of literary scenes. Mixed-use sites, they evoke an ambience that's part Café Deux Magots, part Reading Room of the British Museum, where habitués can converse, with equal sense of appropriateness, about

> Gertrude Stein or Martha Stewart, right next door to, or across the parking lot from, literary hangouts like Outback Steakhouse, Old Navy, or Bed Bath & Beyond. (58)

Furthermore, he writes that

> The relationship between independent and superstore bookstores is not the simple dichotomy between genuine culture and mere commerce that it is often alleged to be, nor is it simply a matter of chainstore bookshops differentiating themselves from the rest of mall/strip culture by appropriating so many of the functions and rituals associated with real bookstores (public readings, coffee bars, etc.). (Collins 61)

Indeed, "The appearance of massive bookstores, located not just in mid-sized towns and suburbs but in strip malls surrounded by nothing but the worst excesses of consumer culture is a complicated development, because it confounds virtually all of the traditional distinctions between cultural and commercial space" (Collins 57-8). Furthermore, Collins writes that patrons "mark these places as somehow their own, regardless of who actually owns them" (66). While chain bookstores may not be as romantic as independent shops, they still serve a cultural purpose as book spaces that individuals invest with personal meaning.

If we mark bookstores as our own, whether chain or independent, that explains why we react so viscerally when they come under threat. As Mole writes,

> For a long time, books and their users—whether those users are readers or writers, buyers or sellers, borrowers or lenders—have shared a bookish ecosystem that has proved to be extraordinarily robust, enduring times of turbulence such as wars, famines and plagues. Sometimes, in fact, the book thrives in these conditions…But now the printed codex is being displaced from the position of cultural centrality that has held in the West for the

> last five hundred years. Digital technologies are challenging the role of print as our default medium for text. (17)

Most discussions about threats to the codex blame Amazon for current struggles in the book industry. But is Amazon the bogeyman? Or is it providing people with a new opportunity? For many, the kneejerk response is that the changes wrought by Amazon are entirely bad. We are emotionally attached to our bookstores, our paper books, the memories and emotions tied to the materiality of these things, and therefore are resistant to any changes to them. We value their materiality because we imbue the physical with the emotional; place and object carry affect. Recall my reaction to the re-opened Dusty Bookshelf; I understand this reluctance to change all too well. Yet, as discussed in chapter two, the perceived threats to books and our mundane interactions with them make us more aware of our relationship with the physical book and book spaces. Technology makes book collectors more aware of the beauty of the book as a sensual object. This too carries across to the bookselling world. As Mole explains it,

> When buying a printed book becomes a choice, rather than simply a matter of accepting the default option, it takes on new meaning…Printed books aren't going away, but they are starting to take on new shades of meaning, and the choice to buy printed books instead of digital is gaining new kinds of significance…To choose a print format for books when a digital one is readily available is now to declare yourself to be still committed to the object of the printed codex. It is to join the fellowship of bookish folk whose early training and subsequent experiences have attuned their reading to the printed codex in ways that they cannot simply leave behind, even if they want to. To choose to buy a paper book, when there are other options on offer, is to value its thingness, to intentionally and voluntarily invest in the particular material form it takes, and

> consciously to prefer that form to others. Relatedly, some publishers and booksellers report increased use of high-end features of book production that had previously been on the decline, such as ribbon page-markers, deckle edges, or so-called "French flaps" on softcover books…While some readers are happy for their books to migrate into digital environments, others are becoming more concerned with their existence as material things. They want their books to be beautiful as well as functional. (Mole 197-8)

Indeed, as Urban notes, the material is integral to our relationship with abstract notions of culture: "If something is cultural—that is, if it is socially learned, socially transmitted—then it must get lodged in concrete, publicly accessible things at key points. This is a rock-bottom requirement (so to speak). For something cultural to get from A to B, it must be deposited by A in a physical form that B can grasp through the senses" (265). For book lovers, the physical book becomes a container for emotions such as nostalgia and affection, commemorating past times and people. As such, choosing a physical book reinforces the importance of these aspects to the individual's relationship with the book.

Some book lovers see Amazon's massive role in the book market as granting bookstores a new freedom; no longer does a bookshop have to stock every bestseller and all the basic standards. They are now free to curate their stock to suit the local community or create a certain aesthetic instead of stocking things that people need but may not really want (reference books, textbooks, etc.). Why waste space on something that doesn't contribute to the experience of the store, especially when it can already be bought online? Bookstore chain owner James Daunt says about Amazon, "They're allowing us not to have the boring books in our shops and just be places where you discover books and talk about books" (Todd).

Steiner notes that while physical bookstores are increasingly utilizing digital sales strategies, internet booksellers are also increasingly moving toward the physical store, indicating the advantages of both approaches. In 2015, Amazon and Swedish online bookseller Adlibris opened their first brick-and-mortar stores (Steiner 20). However, Steiner notes that the internet shop cannot replace physical bookstores because "A bookshop mediates between producers and consumers. Some of its undertakings are similar to those of a public library. If a community library is the publicly funded mediator, the bookshop is the commercial equivalent" (19). Buzbee seconds this notion, noting that "The bookstore lays claim to our affections in ways that computers and warehouses have yet to replace" and that ""There's still a ton of books out there, we're just buying them differently. The world, we know, has changed a good deal at the turn of the century, and there's not much point in lamenting what's been lost. However, it is provincial to focus only on what is rising, what is contemporary and new; we should not forget what endures" (200). And endure the bookstore does. Although the Internet is seemingly infinite compared to the bounded realm of the bookstore, "Reports of the death of the book are probably not just premature but also simplistic and overstated" (Mole 18). Bythell, after laying out his concerns as an independent bookstore owner in a newly digital market, concludes his book with an epilogue that notes that Waterstones stopped selling Kindles "following poor sales and a resurgence in print book sales" in 2015 (593-4).

This is not an isolated reason for hope about the future of the paper book and the independent bookstore, either. Freudenberger, from an interview with collector and designer Franco Maria Ricci, writes, "while no Luddite, he [Ricci] has an unwavering faith in the lure of print: He speaks not just of the tactile pleasures of paper, but also of the human love of possessing a physical object. 'Books win in the end'" (263-4). The love people have for books is

not just about the stories printed on their pages; it is tied to the very materiality of the books as objects. Indeed, Mole directs our attention to technology to show how thoroughly the paper book has pervaded our culture: "today, when new technologies threaten to displace a printed book from the position it has long occupied in our culture, the book leaves its mark on even our most modish innovations. As entrepreneurs invent new communications technologies, they pay homage to the book—the most durable and powerful communications technology of all" (178). Listing Facebook, along with MacBooks (previously called PowerBooks), as examples of the paper book's influence on technological innovation, Mole does not fear the end of the codex even in the face of e-books: "Despite these nostalgic reactions, it doesn't make sense to line up paper books and e-books simply as natural antagonists. Journalistic predictions about the death of the book are not just sensationalist and premature; they misunderstand how media change. New media don't simply replace old media. Printed books did not replace manuscript books" (196). The book is resilient and, as such, its pervasive influence on culture means that "Changing the book means changing the world," as it "signals a much more widespread realignment that has the potential to change our identities, relationships, education, institutions and societies—even our conception of the universe" (Mole 201).

The book as a resilient physical entity bolsters the strength of bookstores as well. Buzbee writes, "As solid and heavy as the bookstore seems, it's fluid, too, always in motion" (141). While the bookstore may not be exactly as it once was, it is persisting. Bythell notes that

> Our times, though, are not the first transitional period in the history of publishing and bookselling. As Jen Campbell points out in *The Bookshop Book,* following Gutenberg's invention of movable type and the first "mass market" books becoming available, "Vespasiano da Bisticci, a famous bookseller in Florence, was so outraged that books

> would no longer be written out by hand that he closed his shop in a fit of rage, and became the first person in history to prophesy the death of the book industry." (131)

The takeaway from this is that our bookstores are not as threatened as the media and the average person might lead you to believe. Buzbee emphasizes of the resilience of the bookshop—nearly unchanged in form from its earliest version:

> Today's bookstore is a quiet place, anonymous almost, homely, without glamour. At the same time I'm heartened to know that the bookstore can, and has, survived, and that has changed only very slowly over 3000 years. This is part of the pleasure in visiting a bookstore, the knowledge that the simplest things do endure. The bookstore, the most common bookstore, unhyped and overlooked in our dazzling and dangerous world, remains essentially the same: the window of books that catches your eye, the front door like a novel's cover opened with great anticipation, the rows and shelves of waiting books, and the front counter, where a meager exchange of money for goods might do its magic once again. It's a business, but it's all about books. (127-8)

A book is an object at the end of the day; it is possessable. Buzbee says that "The durability and flexibility of the book make it one of the most value-laden objects in the shopper's paradise we call America. This is surprising given that books are labor intensive to produce and expensive to ship and store" (133). The book is a commodity that is still highly popular despite its comparatively higher price tag to other commonly bought commodities. Mole writes that "As texts, my books bring news from the world: they are full of insights into the experiences of people in other times and places. But as objects, they also link me to the world: they create material connections between me and other readers" (210-1). As mentioned in previous chapters, Dant argues that the meaning of material culture and our mundane interactions with it are

essential to understanding the true import of objects in our everyday lives. He further notes that "The state of material civilization has become a topic of popular culture as we try to counterbalance the separation of intentionality in the manufacture of objects and our use of them" (Dant 141). In "The `Pragmatics` of Material Interaction," Dant takes issue with Marx's notion of use-value, writing that Marx fails to account for how use-value is actually realized in everyday life: "He [Marx] argues that commodities are 'merely congealed quantities of homogenous human labour'…but this is because, for theoretical purposes, he has abstracted the commodity form from use so that 'It is no longer a table, a house, a piece of yarn or any other useful thing. All its sensuous characteristics are extinguished'" (17). Dant argues instead that "It is the way that something is taken up in the various material activities of humans that determines its use-value and will have an impact on its exchange-value. As material civilization develops, so will use and exchange-values – they are not simply determined by the quantity of labour power congealed in them" (17). Taking Dant's approach that value is not merely a matter of labor content but is also influenced by the way people interact with that object, we can better understand why books are so treasured by so many people. Books are not just for reading or propping up an uneven table leg (for the less idolatrous book owner); books are cultural meaning makers for individuals and groups, through interaction with individual paper books and with the spaces of bookstores. We must take into consideration the sensuous qualities of books to understand the nostalgia and emotions that play a role in the popularity and longevity of the paper book. As Turkle notes, Igor Kopytoff "explores objects in terms of their life spans, a perspective that encourages us to look at the biography of an object alongside that of a person" (315). If we live with books, why shouldn't we explore their biographies as well (and not just the author's biography or the provenance of a collectible edition)?

People have strong emotions about books and bookstores, often because we have personal relationships with them. Like books, bookstores evoke strong emotions because they are connected with identity construction and meaning making in our everyday lives. Independent bookstores are even more beholden to this relationship as they are specifically aligned with their local communities and have more uniquely curated atmospheres. Independent bookstores succeed because they do not directly compete with Amazon's extensive inventory and algorithms, but instead curate an experience that allows for serendipitous discovery and an affective bond between book and individual. Chain bookstores, while struggling, are learning from independents—something that bodes well for the book market as a whole.

CONCLUSION

For me, books are an inescapable part of life. My collection seems to perpetually grow, constantly overrunning its allotted space. My books are treasures often purely for their material presence, frequently acquired yet rarely read. I am not alone in my passion for books. Anyone who seeks to learn more about books will find a plethora of published works by book lovers, whether hobbyists professing their love for the paper book or professionals involved in the book industry—from writers to sellers—explaining their place in the book world. This interaction between physical book and the wider cultural and emotional responses of individuals provides us with insight as to how nostalgia and the physical book are connected. It can be seen that physical books act as gateways to things we desire (community, status, etc.) as well as memories we cherish. Through displaced meaning, books stand in for ideal times and places in individuals' lives. In the end, the book's impact on American culture is heavily influenced by the nostalgia that many experience when interacting with the book as object.

This project grew out of my love for books and fascination with them as objects. I had never considered how powerful a bound set of pages could be beyond their text until I took a course about the history of the book as a material object at Kansas State University. Visiting the Hale Library Special Collections department to touch 200-year-old oversized choir hymnals and handle first printings of rare editions was awe-inspiring. From that moment on, I contemplated books with a new awareness of their materiality. In American culture, books are seen as keys to the American dream; books represent virtue or class or taste or learning, so they are symbols for something beyond the obvious. Yet that import is often assigned based on what is inked on their pages and has little to nothing to do with the form they take as objects. Most people fail to consciously recognize the materiality of the paper book. We are used to seeing them, handling

them, reading them, but we are not so used to analyzing our relationship to the form of the object. However, the very shape and composition of books has an impact on our interactions and relationships with them. With these thoughts newly circling my mind, I strived to find an understanding of how books as objects could be so pervasive in our everyday lives but given so little focus as being worthy of attention purely for their physicality. Taking English classes, the focus was usually entirely centered on how the text within a book influenced society or reflected various processes in life. Yet I still wondered, where was the attention for the objects that contained those texts? There was a whole world of influence and power that seemed to lay unscrutinized, as the commercial, personal, and cultural power of books as objects were obscured by the words they contained.

Even as technology seems to encroach into the realm of everyday material interactions, modern life is still dominated by material objects and our relationships to them. Books as physical objects are especially relevant for their ability to shape our emotional and social lives as well as our identities. From Dant's assertion that material culture studies are important because "our experience is always grounded in the actions of our bodies in relation to other material entities within our world" (136) to Turkle's idea that "Objects help us make our minds" (208), materiality is not just the concrete object; it also influences how we think, how we feel, and how we present ourselves to the world. Bjørnar Olsen writes of the need to "re-member" things, to give serious consideration to how material culture interacts with the social and cultural world, as we have strayed from that practice, frequently forgetting the import of mundane materiality.

Books are carriers of displaced meaning, frequently acting as connections to personal golden ages, allowing individuals to get in touch with otherwise inaccessible desires and fantasies. The nostalgia that is so heavily tied to the physical book is significant because, while it

is heavily romanticized in the emotional landscape of culture, it remains an emotion of memory. As such, nostalgia is often based on constructed memories or memories that are not necessarily 100% factual. Books anchor abstract ideas to our immediate concrete surroundings through their materiality. The sensory aspects that we interact with when we encounter paper books grant the objects much of their affective power. Smell, touch, aesthetic and more—all make paper books into efficient carriers of emotional affect and nostalgic power. McCracken's notion of possession rituals grants us a way by which to recognize our mundane interactions with objects as tied to cultural and personal meanings.

Books are integrally linked to our emotional landscapes and as such, with nostalgia being a particularly strong emotion, they are powerfully evocative objects. The physical book often creates a shared legacy. Books can outlive us and carry signs of our existence to later individuals who encounter our books. History and the emotions entwined with these narratives are retained by the book as material object. Its physicality roots the ephemeral in our lives. Two people at separate times and places can connect through a brief contact with the same book. A story of generations can be carried by a single tome, yet a single book can also represent an individual's whole notion of identity. The manner in which individuals construct a sense of self through their accumulation of books is a sign of the emotional and social power of the book as object. Books are understood as symbolic even if we usually don't consciously engage in critical analysis of what makes them so efficient at meaning making.

For some individuals, the book is a near sacred object. It connects people to times past—from childhood moments to the fantasy of a certain historical era—and functions as a signal of identity to those who see the books we display. Libraries in this way act as places of emotional memory (nostalgia) as well as a display of selfhood. From impacting identity construction to

acting as a vessel for displaced meaning, paper books are more than mere objects. They have an emotional resonance through which individuals shape their identities not by doing but by being and feeling in relation to their books. The spatial dimensions of books also help anchor memories within the objects; time and space mingle in books, memory and materiality. Most importantly, though, books are close to our hearts.

One of the most dearly beloved aspects of paper books is their scent; we cherish books for their scent—a smell that can involuntarily evoke memories and emotions. Scent is tied to autobiographical memories, especially emotional ones (Reid et al. 158). Our brains are wired to react to scent in certain ways that happen to be conducive to triggering memories. In general, scent can play a huge role in personal identity, emotion, and how we experience the world around us because of its relationship with memory in the human mind. Scent is not merely a quantitative response; it involves perception. People make sense of the world around them by comparing it to past experiences, to what is familiar. Scent, such as that of books, is the same as we interpret and interact with the world around us based on past experiences to which we have personal, emotional responses. In this way, the scent of books is not only part of a larger human pattern of reaction to scent; it is an integral aspect of our relationship with the book as object, contributing to the power of the physical book as a uniquely nostalgic memory evocator.

Perception and individuality play a large role in our relationships with books, as is easily seen with book collectors. Those who become deeply enthralled by the power of the book often use these objects to shape their identity and display it for other people. Indeed, the numerous approaches to book collecting reflect the individual nature of the practice, from antiquarian to casual. Whether people take up the label of collector or not, the practice of accumulating books can reveal a great deal about the individual who curates the collection. In cases of loss, books

can act as landmarks of the deceased or reservoirs for the memories related to what has been lost. When books themselves are lost—often a collector's deepest fear—the individual must make up that emotional labor on their own. We invest paper books with personal, abstract concepts in part because they are so receptive to such work.

Books are also part of social and community formations. From book collecting organizations like Chicago's Caxton Club to the people who gather casually in book spaces such as bookstores, the rituals around book ownership carry meaning not only for individuals but for groups and the interpersonal signaling that takes place in such groups. Books become another way to tell others about who we are. Thus, collecting reflects not only the affective power of books but also their power in social and cultural circles. Book collectors reveal the power of the book through their fervent pursuit of these coveted objects. As collectors accumulate books, the process can gradually get more and more obsessive or fanatical. Yet the act of collecting books is often not enough for the truly obsessed who seek out book spaces, gathering there with other bibliophiles to talk about books and interact with them. In this way, books act not only as a bridge between individual and memory but also self and other. Through books, individuals can communicate ideas of themselves as well as interact in a communal space that is shaped by books.

Our everyday interactions with books are worthy of study. Books are bewitching; they are emotionally evocative. Books can reveal our true desires, emotions, and fears—from commemoration to loneliness to hope for a better future. We keep books not only of financial or practical value but personal and sentimental value. Collecting books is about more than mere things; it is about emotion and connection, love and loss. We hear laments over the death of the book in the age of digital technology, yet collecting reveals that books are fairly stable and safe

compared to newer technologies. The resilience of the book as a medium indicates that the book is here to stay, as does our affective bond with the book as an object. The beauty of the material book and the cultural, social, and personal significance conveyed by books are how the book gets its staying power and those traits are integrally linked to the materiality of the object. The contrast provided by new digital technologies brings the appeal of the paper book's material aspects into sharper focus. Tom Mole describes our experience of e-books as "just somehow thinner than our experience of paper books—more weightless, not as satisfying, less substantial" (189). In this way, the manner in which the books' physical aspects impact the emotional landscape of individuals and communities shows its power in the wider cultural context.

Bookstores, like books, impact the emotional lives of individuals and contribute to identity construction for local communities and individuals alike. Regardless of how personally meaningful books are, they are still commodities. For this reason, bookstores are not only book spaces, but a unique blend of commercial and cultural priorities. Through browsing and interaction with the physical bookshop, customers engage not only with physical books but with the culture and atmosphere that is curated by the shop. The sensory experience of the bookshop is integral to our love for these establishments in the same way that the sensory aspects of books are essential to their longevity and adoration in society. Even so, most individuals struggle to consciously recognize the book as a commercial commodity and the bookshop as more than just an idyllic book space. The bookstore is often romanticized in the public imagination, yet the reality is that it remains a place of commerce. However, the commercial nature of the book business and the commodification of books does not negate their cultural and personal importance; it is simply another component to the power of the physical book in society. As such, books carry commercial, aesthetic, and emotional value.

People are especially defensive of books and bookstores because of the cultural power of the book and the book space. Online booksellers such as Amazon have sparked some of the most vocal outcries by dedicated book lovers who fear that the virtual shop will destroy the sanctity of the physical bookshop selling physical books. While the increasingly obvious corporate nature of book production and sales challenges the romantic notion many people hold of books, brick-and-mortar stores (and especially independent shops) are shown to be resilient specifically because of the unique experience they provide to consumers. By curating stock and crafting an atmosphere specific to the store as a book space, bookshops, especially independents, stay relevant. The serendipitous experience available in physical bookstores is unique to them as book spaces; no online store can replace that aspect.

Book spaces, such as the bookstore, carry a sense of place that is intertwined with materiality; the expectation of a certain ambience in a bookstore is what makes chains just as alluring as independents for many book lovers. We tend to want cluttered chaos in used bookstores and expect clean, bright, open spaces in chain stores. Either way, we want to be able to immerse ourselves in these spaces, browsing to our heart's content. By meeting the expectations of customers, bookstores succeed and even thrive in the face of online competition. In part, the social function of bookstores also helps give brick-and-mortar shops an advantage over online shops. Chain bookstores aren't the downfall of independents and even Amazon has given physical bookstores new advantages by highlighting the things that people miss when they shop online, providing specific ways for physical bookshops to adapt and improve. While there are pros and cons to both in-store and online shopping for books, the biggest advantage of physical bookstores lies with their concrete presence and the atmosphere shaped by curation and social interaction.

There is hope embedded the physical book and the bookstore; the book has lasted as a nearly unmodified object for over 500 years. The bookstore, likewise, has undergone few major changes, remaining a fairly steady space, shifting to adapt but overall stable. Books are commodities in a market, but people have much stronger and deeper emotions toward books and bookstores than we typically do for other commodities and commercial spaces. This is because books and book spaces are thoroughly tied to identity construction and meaning making in our everyday lives.

Books are more than just reading texts; they are objects with power that is inextricably tied to their materiality. Nostalgia is the most commonly associated emotion linked to the physical presence of the book. It is about self-construction and social networks as well as personal memories. The physicality of the material book allows us to access or find a way into the larger story of the world. By encountering the material book, we concretely interact with the world as it is or the world as we wish it could be. Therefore, the materiality of the physical book is not merely a vessel for the text contained within but is, in fact, an essential aspect of the book that grants it the ability to anchor memory, emotion, and identity.

At the end of the day, this is a love letter to books—the books I cannot stop myself from buying even when my shelves overflow and they are stacked 6 deep on the floor, the books I feel compelled to pick up and handle whenever I come across them, the books I can't bring myself to get rid of even though I have duplicates. I am not alone in my passion for books and that is what drew me to this topic. Many individuals make their love for books into a proud part of their identity. They tout the number of books read or bought or borrowed or amassed as a badge of honor: look at me and all my books. Yet each individual's relationship to books is slightly different. What we value and cherish varies. As Fadiman described with the clash between

courtly and carnal lovers of books, conflict can even arise between two self-professed book lovers. Likewise, Manguel gives an example of the difference between those for whom books are content and those for whom books are objects of comfort. Manguel refers to Jorge Luis Borges who valued books for the lines contained within rather than as objects. In contrast, for Manguel, "Comfort is of the essence. The comforting objects on my own night table are (have always been) books, and my library was itself a place of comfort and quiet reassurance. It may be that books have this reassuring quality because we don't really possess them: books possess us" (48-9).

In searching for answers as to why the love for books is so widespread even as each individual's explanation of their passion varied so wildly, the relationship between the physical book and an individual's emotional response became increasingly clear. Our love for books is not just love. It is remembrance of the past and desire for the future; it is a connection to history (both of places and people) as well as a gateway to an imagined future. We love books not just for their inked stories but for the physical attributes that make ephemeral emotions concrete. That volume of a book becomes a carrier, a container for memories and thoughts beyond what the author penned.

As Mole writes, "If it's true that books get woven into the texture of our lives, from early to late, it's also the case that they are one of the legacies we leave behind" (130). This is the lasting power of the book; it remains or is destroyed but it exists in a material way that is not replicated by digital media. Baron notes that "It used to be that if you owned something, you could physically touch it…We cannot put our own marks on books that are accessed rather than owned…I mean the ways in which we lay down our scent, saying, 'This is mine.' Some of us do this with physical books by writing our names in the front, perhaps with the date we acquired the

book or maybe the day we started reading it" (138). We love the material book because its materiality grants a sense of permanence, however fragile it truly may be. Humans are perpetually striving to make their mark on the world for better or worse; with paper books, we find a gratifying way to do so that also provides joys in our current existence. Although the book has remained mostly unchanged for centuries, Lenaghan explains, "Even though the relatively fixed physical properties of the codex form have helped make books recognizable as such since their earliest incarnations, the meanings and uses of books have never been uniform. While one person may consider a book sacred, worthy of long hours of study and contemplation, another might use the same book to prop up an uneven table" (8). One man's legacy may be another's coaster. However, we are all witness to the power of the book in our mundane lives.

By looking at the importance of everyday relationships with material books, this thesis strives to bring awareness to the need to devote attention to material books as a topic of study without slipping into the topic of reading. Reading has been studied a great deal and it is time for attention to be paid to the materiality of the book as significant wholly on its own rather than as a steppingstone to the literature contained within. There have been studies on the materiality of the book, but many are focused on the ancient book—the manuscript, the Gutenberg text, the switch from vellum to paper, and so on. But the mundane, day-to-day, average individual's relationship with the physical book is often dismissed. Little study is specifically given to the emotional relationship we have with books, whether that is due to a dismissal of the topic as trivial or a current academic lull in the popularity of material culture studies. Either way, that is the gap that I seek to fill with my research. How the book exerts power culturally and personally in modern times can tell us much about the values of individuals and communities as enacted around books and book spaces.

Moving forward, there is a need for more study of the mundane material. Literature has a lot to teach us, but there already exist many studies devoted to it. On the other hand, material culture, especially in reference to modern-day relationships with the physical book, is an area in which there is a dearth of research. The enjoyment of books is not just literary; individual tomes carry significance whether they are antiquarian volumes or contemporary publications, canonized works of literature or the latest bestseller. All books carry multiple stories from their texts to the relationship between book and owner to the publishing process itself. The relationship people have with books is individual, communal, and societal. By paying attention to this cultural process and the physical book as a cultural touchstone, we can learn a great deal about wide sections of the population as well as our individual selves—our current selves, our childhood selves, or even our ideal selves. So perhaps we shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but we should certainly pay closer attention to our interactions with such material traits of the book. Next time you pick up a book, re-member it—recognize its significance as an object and appreciate the power that it exerts in your life.

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