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**A Sense of Things The Object Matter of American Literature** [University of Chicago Press](#) In May 1906, the Atlantic Monthly commented that Americans live not merely in an age of things, but under the tyranny of them, and that in our relentless effort to sell, purchase, and accumulate things, we do not possess them as much as they possess us. For Bill Brown, the tale of that possession is something stranger than the history of a culture of consumption. It is the story of Americans using things to think about themselves. Brown's captivating new study explores the roots of modern America's fascination with things and the problem that objects posed for American literature at the turn of the century. This was an era when the invention, production, distribution, and consumption of things suddenly came to define a national culture. Brown shows how crucial novels of the time made things not a solution to problems, but problems in their own right. Writers such as Mark Twain, Frank Norris, Sarah Orne Jewett, and Henry James ask why and how we use objects to make meaning, to make or remake ourselves, to organize our anxieties and affections, to sublimate our fears, and to shape our wildest dreams. Offering a remarkably new way to think about materialism, **A Sense of Things** will be essential reading for anyone interested in American literature and culture. **A Sense of Things The Object Matter of American Literature** [University of Chicago Press](#) In May 1906, the Atlantic Monthly commented that Americans live not merely in an age of things, but under the tyranny of them, and that in our relentless effort to sell, purchase, and accumulate things, we do not possess them as much as they possess us. For Bill Brown, the tale of that possession is something stranger than the history of a culture of consumption. It is the story of Americans using things to think about themselves. 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Offering a remarkably new way to think about materialism, **A Sense of Things** will be essential reading for anyone interested in American literature and culture. **Other Things** [University of Chicago Press](#) From the pencil to the puppet to the drone—the humanities and the social sciences continue to ride a wave of interest in material culture and the world of things. How should we understand the force and figure of that wave as it shapes different disciplines? **Other Things** explores this question by considering a wide assortment of objects—from beach glass to cell phones, sneakers to skyscrapers—that have fascinated a range of writers and artists, including Virginia Woolf, Man Ray, Spike Lee, and Don DeLillo. The book ranges across the literary, visual, and plastic arts to depict the curious lives of things. Beginning with Achilles's Shield, then tracking the object/thing distinction as it appears in the work of Martin Heidegger and Jacques Lacan, Bill Brown ultimately focuses on the thingness disclosed by specific literary and artistic works. Combining history and literature, criticism and theory, **Other Things** provides a new way of understanding the inanimate object world and the place of the human within it, encouraging us to think anew about what we mean by materiality itself. **Site Reading Fiction, Art, Social Form** [Princeton University Press](#) **Site Reading** offers a new method of literary and cultural interpretation and a new theory of narrative setting by examining five sites—supermarkets, dumps, roads, ruins, and asylums—that have been crucial to American literature and visual art since the mid-twentieth century. Against the traditional understanding of setting as a static background for narrative action and character development, David Alworth argues that sites figure in novels as social agents. Engaging a wide range of social and cultural theorists, especially Bruno Latour and Erving Goffman, **Site Reading** examines how the literary figuration of real, material environments reorients our sense of social relations. To read the sites of fiction, Alworth demonstrates, is to reveal literature as a profound sociological resource, one that simultaneously models and theorizes collective life. Each chapter identifies a particular site as a point of contact for writers and artists—the supermarket for Don DeLillo and Andy Warhol; the dump for William Burroughs and Mierle Laderman Ukeles; the road for Jack Kerouac, Joan Didion, and John Chamberlain; the ruin for Thomas Pynchon and Robert Smithson; and the asylum for Ralph Ellison, Gordon Parks, and Jeff Wall—and shows how this site mediates complex interactions among humans and nonhumans. The result is an interdisciplinary study of American culture that brings together literature, visual art, and social theory to develop a new sociology of literature that emphasizes the sociology in literature. **Frederic Church The Art and Science of Detail** [Yale University Press](#) A reconsideration of Church's works offering a sustained examination of the aesthetics of

detail that fundamentally shaped 19th-century American landscape painting. **Why Does Literature Matter?** [Cornell University Press](#) "Literature matters because... it allows for experiences important to the living out of a sophisticated and satisfying human life; because other arenas of culture cannot provide them to the same degree; and because a relatively small number of texts carry out these functions in so exceptional a manner that we owe it to past and future members of the species to keep such texts alive in our cultural traditions."—from Chapter One Frank B. Farrell defends a rich conception of the space of literature that retains its links to issues of self-formation and metaphysics and does not let that space collapse into just another reflection of social space. He maintains that recent literary theory has badly misread findings in the philosophy of language and the theory of subjectivity. That misreading, Farrell says, has tended to endorse ways of understanding literature that make one question why it matters at all. Farrell here opposes some recent theoretical trends and, through a mix of philosophical and literary studies, tells us why in his view literature does truly matter. Among the writers Farrell discusses are John Ashbery, Samuel Beckett, Amit Chaudhuri, Cormac McCarthy, James Merrill, Marcel Proust, Thomas Pynchon, Salman Rushdie, W. G. Sebald, and John Updike. The philosophers important to his arguments include Donald Davidson, Daniel Dennett, and Bernard Williams; G. W. F. Hegel, Martin Heidegger, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Ludwig Wittgenstein play roles as well. Among the literary theorists addressed are Stephen Greenblatt, Paul de Man, and Marjorie Perloff. In addition to his close readings of literary, philosophical, and critical texts, Farrell considers cultural studies and postcolonial studies more generally and speculates on the possible contributions of object-relations theory in psychology to the study of literature. **A Handbook of Modernism Studies** [John Wiley & Sons](#) Featuring the latest research findings and exploring the fascinating interplay of modernist authors and intellectual luminaries, from Beckett and Kafka to Derrida and Adorno, this bold new collection of essays gives students a deeper grasp of key texts in modernist literature. Provides a wealth of fresh perspectives on canonical modernist texts, featuring the latest research data Adopts an original and creative thematic approach to the subject, with concepts such as race, law, gender, class, time, and ideology forming the structure of the collection Explores current and ongoing debates on the links between the aesthetics and praxis of authors and modernist theoreticians Reveals the profound ways in which modernist authors have influenced key thinkers, and vice versa **Portable Prose The Novel and the Everyday** [Rowman & Littlefield](#) Portable Prose: The Novel and the Everyday explores issues related to objecthood, the everyday, and portability within the novel. The scope of this wide-ranging collection includes nineteenth- and twentieth-century fiction, contemporary postmodern literature and science fiction, as well as broader theories of the novel and the nature of reading. **Epitome of English literature; or, A concentration of the matter of standard English authors**, ed. under the superintendence of A. J. Valpy **Idol Anxiety** [Stanford University Press](#) This interdisciplinary collection of essays addresses idolatry, a contested issue that has given rise to both religious accusations and heated scholarly disputes. Idol Anxiety brings together insightful new statements from scholars in religious studies, art history, philosophy, and musicology to show that idolatry is a concept that can be helpful in articulating the ways in which human beings interact with and conceive of the things around them. It includes both case studies that provide examples of how the concept of idolatry can be used to study material objects and more theoretical interventions. Among the book's highlights are a foundational treatment of the second commandment by Jan Assmann; an essay by W.J.T. Mitchell on Nicolas Poussin that will be a model for future discussions of art objects; a groundbreaking consideration of the Islamic ban on images by Mika Natif; and a lucid description by Jean-Luc Marion of his cutting-edge phenomenology of the visible. **American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853** [University of Pennsylvania Press](#) The antebellum period has long been identified with the belated emergence of a truly national literature. And yet, as Meredith L. McGill argues, a mass market for books in this period was built and sustained through what we would call rampant literary piracy: a national literature developed not despite but because of the systematic copying of foreign works. Restoring a political dimension to accounts of the economic grounds of antebellum literature, McGill unfolds the legal arguments and political struggles that produced an American "culture of reprinting" and held it in place for two crucial decades. In this culture of reprinting, the circulation of print outstripped authorial and editorial control. McGill examines the workings of literary culture within this market, shifting her gaze from first and authorized editions to reprints and piracies, from the form of the book to the intersection of book and periodical publishing, and from a national literature to an internally divided and transatlantic literary marketplace. Through readings of the work of Dickens, Poe, and Hawthorne, McGill seeks both to analyze how changes in the conditions of publication influenced literary form and to measure what was lost as literary markets became centralized and literary culture became stratified in the early 1850s. **American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853** delineates a distinctive literary culture that was regional in articulation and transnational in scope, while questioning the grounds of the startlingly recent but nonetheless powerful equation of the national interest with the extension of authors' rights. **How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain** [Princeton University Press](#) **How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain** asks how our culture came to frown on using books for any purpose other than reading. When did the coffee-table book become an object of scorn? Why did law courts forbid witnesses to kiss the Bible? What made Victorian cartoonists mock commuters who hid behind the newspaper, ladies who matched their books' binding to their dress, and servants who reduced newspapers to fish 'n' chips wrap? Shedding new light on novels by Thackeray, Dickens, the Brontës, Trollope, and Collins, as well as the urban sociology of Henry Mayhew, Leah Price also uncovers the lives and afterlives of anonymous religious tracts and household manuals. From knickknacks to wastepaper, books mattered to the Victorians in ways that cannot be explained by their printed content alone. And whether displayed, defaced, exchanged, or discarded, printed matter participated, and still participates, in a range of transactions that stretches far beyond reading. Supplementing close readings with a sensitive reconstruction of how Victorians thought and felt about books, Price offers a new model for integrating literary theory with cultural history. **How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain** reshapes our understanding of the interplay between words and objects in the nineteenth century and beyond. **The Death of Things Ephemera and the American Novel** [U of Minnesota Press](#) **A**

comprehensive study of ephemera in twentieth-century literature—and its relevance to the twenty-first century “Nothing ever really disappears from the internet” has become a common warning of the digital age. But the twentieth century was filled with ephemera—items that were designed to disappear forever—and these objects played crucial roles in some of that century’s greatest works of literature. In *The Death of Things*, author Sarah Wasserman delivers the first comprehensive study addressing the role ephemera played in twentieth-century fiction and its relevance to contemporary digital culture. Representing the experience of perpetual change and loss, ephemera was central to great works by major novelists like Don DeLillo, Ralph Ellison, and Marilynne Robinson. Following the lives and deaths of objects, Wasserman imagines new uses of urban space, new forms of visibility for marginalized groups, and new conceptions of the marginal itself. She also inquires into present-day conundrums: our fascination with the durable, our concerns with the digital, and our curiosity about what new fictional narratives have to say about deletion and preservation. *The Death of Things* offers readers fascinating, original angles on how objects shape our world. Creating an alternate literary history of the twentieth century, Wasserman delivers an insightful and idiosyncratic journey through objects that were once vital but are now forgotten. *Material Cultures in Canada* [Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press](#) *Material Cultures in Canada* presents the vibrant and diverse field of material culture studies in Canadian literary, artistic, and political contexts today. The first of its kind, this collection features sixteen essays by leading scholars in Canada, each of whom examines a different object of study, including the beaver, geraniums, comics, water, a musical playlist, and the human body. The book’s three sections focus, in turn, on objects that are persistently material, on things whose materiality blends into the immaterial, and on the materials of spaces. Contributors highlight some of the most exciting new developments in the field, such as the emergence of “new materialism,” affect theory, globalization studies, and environmental criticism. Although the book has a Canadian centre, the majority of its contributors consider objects that cross borders or otherwise resist national affiliation. This collection will be valuable to readers within and outside of Canada who are interested in material culture studies and, in addition, will appeal to anyone interested in the central debates taking place in Canadian political and cultural life today, such as climate change, citizenship, shifts in urban and small-town life, and the persistence of imperialism. *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature, and British and American Authors, Living and Deceased, from the Earliest Accounts to the Middle of the Nineteenth Century Containing Thirty Thousand Biographies and Literary Notices, with Forty Indexes of Subjects Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* [Fewer, Better Things](#) *The Hidden Wisdom of Objects* [Bloomsbury Publishing USA](#) *From the former director of the Museum of Arts and Design in New York, a timely and passionate case for the role of the well-designed object in the digital age. Curator and scholar Glenn Adamson opens Fewer, Better Things by contrasting his beloved childhood teddy bear to the smartphones and digital tablets children have today. He laments that many children and adults are losing touch with the material objects that have nurtured human development for thousands of years. The objects are still here, but we seem to care less and know less about them. In his presentations to groups, he often asks an audience member what he or she knows about the chair the person is sitting in. Few people know much more than whether it's made of wood, plastic, or metal. If we know little about how things are made, it's hard to remain connected to the world around us. Fewer, Better Things explores the history of craft in its many forms, explaining how raw materials, tools, design, and technique come together to produce beauty and utility in handmade or manufactured items. Whether describing the implements used in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony, the use of woodworking tools, or the use of new fabrication technologies, Adamson writes expertly and lovingly about the aesthetics of objects, and the care and attention that goes into producing them. Reading this wise and elegant book is a truly transformative experience. Toy Stories* *The Toy as Hero in Literature, Comics and Film* [McFarland](#) *Toys—those celebrated childhood cohorts and lead actors in children’s imaginative play—have a fantastic history of heroism in fiction. From teddy bears that guard sleeping babies to plastic soldiers and cowboys who lay siege to wooden block castles, toys are often the heroes of the stories children inspire authors to tell. In this collection of new essays, scholars from a great range of disciplines examine fictional toys as protectors of the children they love, as heroes of their own stories, and as champions for the greater good in the writings of A.A. Milne, Hans Christian Andersen, William Joyce, John Lasseter and many others. Vibrant Matter* *A Political Ecology of Things* [Duke University Press](#) *In Vibrant Matter the political theorist Jane Bennett, renowned for her work on nature, ethics, and affect, shifts her focus from the human experience of things to things themselves. Bennett argues that political theory needs to do a better job of recognizing the active participation of nonhuman forces in events. Toward that end, she theorizes a “vital materiality” that runs through and across bodies, both human and nonhuman. Bennett explores how political analyses of public events might change were we to acknowledge that agency always emerges as the effect of ad hoc configurations of human and nonhuman forces. She suggests that recognizing that agency is distributed this way, and is not solely the province of humans, might spur the cultivation of a more responsible, ecologically sound politics: a politics less devoted to blaming and condemning individuals than to discerning the web of forces affecting situations and events. Bennett examines the political and theoretical implications of vital materialism through extended discussions of commonplace things and physical phenomena including stem cells, fish oils, electricity, metal, and trash. She reflects on the vital power of material formations such as landfills, which generate lively streams of chemicals, and omega-3 fatty acids, which can transform brain chemistry and mood. Along the way, she engages with the concepts and claims of Spinoza, Nietzsche, Thoreau, Darwin, Adorno, and Deleuze, disclosing a long history of thinking about vibrant matter in Western philosophy, including attempts by Kant, Bergson, and the embryologist Hans Driesch to name the “vital force” inherent in material forms. Bennett concludes by sketching the contours of a “green materialist” ecophilosophy. The Tears of Things* *Melancholy and Physical Objects* [U of Minnesota Press](#) *We surround ourselves with material things that are invested with memories but can only stand for what we have lost. Physical objects—such as one’s own body—situate and define us; yet at the same time they are fundamentally indifferent to us. The melancholy of this rift is a rich source of inspiration for artists. Peter Schwenger deftly weaves together*

philosophical and psychoanalytical theory with artistic practice. Concerned in part with the act of collecting, *The Tears of Things* is itself a collection of exemplary art objects—literary and cultural attempts to control and possess things—including paintings by Georgia O’Keeffe and René Magritte; sculpture by Louise Bourgeois and Marcel Duchamp; Joseph Cornell’s boxes; Edward Gorey’s graphic art; fiction by Virginia Woolf, Georges Perec, and Louise Erdrich; the hallucinatory encyclopedias of Jorge Luis Borges and Luigi Serafini; and the corpse photographs of Joel Peter Witkin. However, these representations of objects perpetually fall short of our aspirations. Schwenger examines what is left over—debris and waste—and asks what art can make of these. What emerges is not an art that reassembles but one that questions what it means to assemble in the first place. Contained in this catalog of waste is that ultimate still life, the cadaver, where the subject-object dichotomy receives its final ironic reconciliation. Peter Schwenger is professor of English at Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. He is the author of *Fantasm and Fiction: On Textual Envisioning*, *Letter Bomb: Nuclear Holocaust and the Exploding Word*, and *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature*. *Language and Power: Books VIII and IX Encyclopaedia Perthensis, Or, Universal Dictionary of the Arts, Sciences, Literature, Etc. : Intended to Supersede the Use of Other Books of Reference* *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* *The Objects and Textures of Everyday Life in Imperial Britain* [Routledge](#) Focusing on everyday life in nineteenth-century Britain and its imperial possessions”from preparing tea to cleaning the kitchen, from packing for imperial adventures to arranging home décor”the essays in this collection share a common focus on materiality, the nitty-gritty elements that helped give shape and meaning to British self-definition during the period. Each essay demonstrates how preoccupations with common household goods and habits fueled contemporary debates about cultural institutions ranging from personal matters of marriage and family to more overtly political issues of empire building. While existing scholarship on material culture in the nineteenth century has centered on artifacts in museums and galleries, this collection brings together disparate fields”history of design, landscape history, childhood studies, and feminist and postcolonial literary studies”to focus on ordinary objects and practices, with specific attention to how Britons of all classes established the tenets of domesticity as central to individual happiness, national security, and imperial hegemony. *Literature and Artifacts Charlottesville : Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia* The fifteen essays collected here form a series of variations on a theme, exploring the interconnections between verbal works and the physical objects--primarily manuscripts and printed books--that transmit them. Verbal works may be intangible, but they generally come to us tied to objects; and the study of such works therefore cannot be separated from the study of artifacts. The aim of this book is to examine the theory that underlies this observation and the practical implications that follow from it. *American Art to 1900 A Documentary History* [Univ of California Press](#) From the simple assertion that "words matter" in the study of visual art, this comprehensive but eminently readable volume gathers an extraordinary selection of words—painters and sculptors writing in their diaries, critics responding to a sensational exhibition, groups of artists issuing stylistic manifestos, and poets reflecting on particular works of art. Along with a broad array of canonical texts, Sarah Burns and John Davis have assembled an astonishing variety of unknown, little known, or undervalued documents to convey the story of American art through the many voices of its contemporary practitioners, consumers, and commentators. *American Art to 1900* highlights such critically important themes as women artists, African American representation and expression, regional and itinerant artists, Native Americans and the frontier, popular culture and vernacular imagery, institutional history, and more. With its hundreds of explanatory headnotes providing essential context and guidance to readers, this book reveals the documentary riches of American art and its many intersecting histories in unprecedented breadth, depth, and detail. *The Age of Silver The Rise of the Novel East and West* [Oxford University Press](#) *The Age of Silver* advances a "horizontal" method of comparative literature and applies this approach to analyze the multiple emergences of early realism and novelistic modernity in Eastern and Western cultural spheres from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Naming this era of economic globalization the Age of Silver, Ning Ma emphasizes the bullion flow from South America and Japan to China through international commerce, and argues that the resultant transcontinental monetary and commercial co-evolutions stimulated analogous socioeconomic shifts and emergent novelistic realisms. The main texts addressed within include *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (China), *Don Quixote* (Spain), *The Life of an Amorous Man* (Japan), and *Robinson Crusoe* (England). These Eastern and Western narratives indicate from their own geographical vantage points commercial expansions' stimulation of social mobility and larger processes of cultural destabilization. Their realist tendencies are underlain with politically critical functions and connote "heteroglossic" national imaginaries. This horizontal argument realigns novelistic modernity with a multipolar global context and reestablishes commensurabilities between Eastern and Western literary histories. *The Age of Silver* challenges the unilateral equation between globalization and modernity with westernization, and foregrounds a polycentric mode of global early modernity for pluralizing the genealogy of world literature and historical transcultural relations. *Annual Reports of the War Department Book Presence in a Digital Age* [Bloomsbury Publishing USA](#) Contrary to the apocalyptic pronouncements of paper media's imminent demise in the digital age, there has been a veritable surge of creative reimaginings of books as bearers of the literary. From typographic experiments (Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*) to accordion books (Anne Carson's *Nox*), from cut ups (Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes*) to collages (Graham Rawle's *Woman's World*), from erasures (Mary Ruefle's *A Little White Shadow*) to mixups (Simon Morris's *The Interpretations of Dreams*), print literature has gone through anything but a slow, inevitable death. In fact, it has re-invented itself materially. Starting from this idea of media plurality, *Book Presence in a Digital Age* explores the resilience of print literatures, book art, and zines in the late age of print from a contemporary perspective, while incorporating longer-term views on media archeology and media change. Even as it focuses on the materiality of books and literary writing in the present, *Book Presence* also takes into consideration earlier 20th-century "moments" of media transition, developing the concepts of presence and materiality as analytical tools to perform literary criticism in a digital age. Bringing together leading scholars, artists, and publishers, *Book*

Presence in a Digital Age offers a variety of perspectives on the past, present, and future of the book as medium, the complex relationship of materiality to virtuality, and of the analog to the digital. *The Comfort of Things* [John Wiley & Sons](#)

What do we know about ordinary people in our towns and cities, about what really matters to them and how they organize their lives today? This book visits an ordinary street and looks into thirty households. It reveals the aspirations and frustrations, the tragedies and accomplishments that are played out behind the doors. It focuses on the things that matter to these people, which quite often turn out to be material things - their house, the dog, their music, the Christmas decorations. These are the means by which they express who they have become, and relationships to objects turn out to be central to their relationships with other people - children, lovers, brothers and friends. If this is a typical street in a modern city like London, then what kind of society is this? It's not a community, nor a neighbourhood, nor is it a collection of isolated individuals. It isn't dominated by the family. We assume that social life is corrupted by materialism, made superficial and individualistic by a surfeit of consumer goods, but this is misleading. If the street isn't any of these things, then what is it? This brilliant and revealing portrayal of a street in modern London, written by one of the most prominent anthropologists, shows how much is to be gained when we stop lamenting what we think we used to be and focus instead on what we are now becoming. It reveals the forms by which ordinary people make sense of their lives, and the ways in which objects become our companions in the daily struggle to make life meaningful. *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion ... Materiality in Modernist Short Fiction Lived Things* [Routledge](#)

Materiality in Modernist Short Fiction provides a fresh approach to reading material things in modern fiction, accounting for the interplay of the material and the cultural. This volume investigates how Djuna Barnes, Katherine Mansfield, and Jean Rhys use the short story form to evoke the material world as both living and lived, and how the spaces they create for challenging gendered social norms can also be nonanthropocentric spaces for encounters between the human and the nonhuman. Using the unique knowledge created by literary works to spark new conversations between phenomenology, cognitive studies, and new materialisms, complemented with a feminist perspective, this book explores how literature can touch the basic experience of being in, feeling and making sense of a material world that is itself alive and active. From a sensitive reading of how three women used the material world to make their readers see, feel, and question the norms shaping our experience, this volume draws a theory of reading affective materiality that illuminates modernism and the short story form but also reaches beyond them. *American Literature in Transition, 1910-1920* [Cambridge University Press](#)

*American Literature in Transition, 1910-1920* offers provocative new readings of authors whose innovations are recognized as inaugurating Modernism in US letters, including Robert Frost, Willa Cather, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein, H. D., and Marianne Moore. Gathering the voices of both new and established scholars, the volume also reflects the diversity and contradictions of US literature of the 1910s. 'Literature' itself is construed variously, leading to explorations of jazz, the movies, and political writing as well as little magazines, lantern slides, and sports reportage. One section of thematic essays cuts across genre boundaries. Another section oriented to formats drills deeply into the workings of specific media, genres, or forms. Essays on institutions conclude the collection, although a critical mass of contributors throughout explore long-term literary and cultural trends - where political repression, race prejudice, war, and counterrevolution are no less prominent than experimentation, progress, and egalitarianism. *Maximalism in Contemporary American Literature The Uses of Detail* [Routledge](#)

This book begins a new and foundational discussion of maximalism by investigating how the treatment of detail in contemporary literature impels readers to navigate, tolerate, and enrich the cultural landscape of postindustrial America. It studies the maximalist novels of David Foster Wallace, Nicholson Baker, Thomas Pynchon, and others, considering how overly-detailed writing serves the institutional, emotional, and intellectual needs of contemporary readers and writers. The book argues that maximalist novels not only exceed perceived limits of style, subject matter, and scope, but strive to remake the usefulness of books in contemporary culture, refreshing the act of reading. Levey shows that while these novels are preoccupied with detail and description, they are relatively unconcerned with the traditional goals of representation. Instead, they use detail to communicate particular values and fantasies of intelligence, enthusiasm, and ability attached to the management of complex and excessive information. Whether reinvigorating the banal and trivial in mainstream culture, or soothing anxieties of human insufficiency in the age of automation and the internet, these texts model significant abilities, rather than just objects of significance, and encourage readers to develop habits of reading that complement the demands of an increasingly detailed culture. Drawing upon a diverse range of theoretical schools and cultural texts, including Thing Theory, Marxism, New Formalism, playlists, blogs, and archival manuscripts, the book proposes a new understanding of maximalist writing and a new way of approaching the usefulness of literary objects in contemporary culture. *The Perfect Fence Untangling the Meanings of Barbed Wire* [Texas A&M University Press](#)

Barbed wire is made of two strands of galvanized steel wire twisted together for strength and to hold sharp barbs in place. As creative advertisers sought ways to make an inherently dangerous product attractive to customers concerned about the welfare of their livestock, and as barbed wire became commonplace on battlefields and in concentration camps, the fence accrued a fascinating and troubling range of meanings beyond the material facts of its construction. In *The Perfect Fence*, Lyn Ellen Bennett and Scott Abbott explore the multiple uses and meanings of barbed wire, a technological innovation that contributes to America's shift from a pastoral ideal to an industrial one. They survey the vigorous public debate over the benign or "infernal" fence, investigate legislative attempts to ban or regulate wire fences as a result of public outcry, and demonstrate how the industry responded to ameliorate the image of its barbed product. Because of the rich metaphorical possibilities suggested by a fence that controls through pain, barbed wire developed into an important motif in works of literature from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Early advertisements proclaimed that barbed wire was "the perfect fence," keeping "the ins from being outs, and the outs from being ins." Bennett and Abbott conclude that while barbed wire is not the perfect fence touted by manufacturers, it is indeed a meaningful thing that continues to influence American identities. *Writing Beyond Pen and*

**Parchment Inscribed Objects in Medieval European Literature** [Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG](#) **What can stories of magical engraved rings or prophetic inscriptions on walls tell us about how writing was perceived before print transformed the world? Writing beyond Pen and Parchment introduces readers to a Middle Ages where writing is not confined to manuscripts but is inscribed in the broader material world, in textiles and tombs, on weapons or human skin. Drawing on the work done at the Collaborative Research Centre "Material Text Cultures," (SFB 933) this volume presents a comparative overview of how and where text-bearing artefacts appear in medieval German, Old Norse, British, French, Italian and Iberian literary traditions, and also traces the paths inscribed objects chart across multiple linguistic and cultural traditions. The volume's focus on the raw materials and practices that shaped artefacts both mundane or fantastical in medieval narratives offers a fresh perspective on the medieval world that takes seriously the vibrancy of matter as a vital aspect of textual culture often overlooked. The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, Art, and Finance The Socialness of Things Essays on the Socio-Semiotics of Objects [Walter de Gruyter](#) **ECEL 2019 18th European Conference on e-Learning** [Academic Conferences and publishing limited](#) **American Literary Gazette and Publishers' Circular****