

The Full Stop Reviews Supplement #3

by Jesse Miller



This piece is the introduction to the Full Stop Reviews Supplement #3. The issue includes some of our favorite reviews from the second half of 2017, as well as a special feature on the pdf document, including a short essay from media theorist Lisa Gitelman on the history of the pdf that reads the publishing of the Clinton-era Starr Report as an important point in that history, and a standalone pdf chapbook by poet/archivist Danny Snelson on Adobe co-founder John Warnock. A pdf of the issue is available to download, for an optional donation, [here](#).

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But instead of treating the pdf as a site of loss, a dematerialization of the codex, this issue of the Full Stop Reviews Supplement posits the pdf as a material site of possibility. It asks: How is literature, authorship, and readership being reshaped by

the technologies that enable writing's production and distribution? In particular, how are writers and publishers using the pdf to create new work and forge new literary publics?

The meaning of texts is shaped by the material forms those texts take. These forms place a certain set of limits and affordances upon what it is possible to say, to think, to share. The emergence of movable type and the printing press made possible the modern author, the mass reproduction and distribution of ideas, the solitary silent reader who is nevertheless a member of a mass.

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In *The People's Platform*, Astra Taylor warned against a techno-utopian vision which sees the internet as a wholly democratizing force. In fact, she shows how the internet has largely perpetuated and accentuated the inequalities that it purportedly dismantles. Such a critique is usefully applied to the pdf and its effect on contemporary publishing as well. As Troll Thread editor Holly Melgard recently argued, "Free isn't equal." Considering, for example, the pay gap between white men and women, and people of color, and queer folks, and trans folks, and disabled folks, reveals the limits to the space of possibility evoked by the pdf. And this may be why we don't see folks who have been marginalized by mainstream publishing embracing the open access pdf press as an alternative platform.

In keeping with the Full Stop Literary Supplement's aims to both feature and reflect upon contemporary small press literature, in addition to collecting together nineteen reviews originally published on Full Stop's website, here we feature two potential genealogies of the pdf document format to limn its potentials and limits: an essay by

media theorist Lisa Gitelman on the Starr Report as exemplary pdf, and a pdf “mixtape” by editor, writer, and archivist Danny Snelson on John Warnock, founder of Adobe Systems, native Utahn, and one of the world’s leading collectors of Shakespeare.

And as an experiment in the possibilities of the pdf format for book reviewing, we’ve included a selection of scans from our reviewers’ books. Sean Dockray notes in his essay “The Scan and the Export,” that the scan encodes much more than just a digital representation of a physical object. It also captures “indexes of past readings and the act of scanning itself.”

In these scans you can glimpse a future book review website where the essays have fallen away and you the reader are left to read scanned books alongside the marginalia, coffee stains, and highlights of your favorite critic. As with the used book, the lended book, these collections of traces constitute terms of intimacy. But in the infinite reproducibility of those traces, we perhaps get a clearer sense of the paradoxically intimate publics that literature creates today.

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Print on Demand edition of Danny Snelson’s chapbook available [here](#).

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