Public Humanities Workshop 4:
Preparing a Trade Book Proposal

Ed Simon, PhD

Carnegie Mellon University
English

Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Presentation
3. Participant Projects
4. Discussion

Preparing a Trade Book Proposal

Part One: The Industry



The Big Five


Penguin
Random
House


hachette
BOOKS


HarperCollinsPublishers


macmillan
Publishers


SIMON &
SCHUSTER

Penguin Random House





MODERN
LIBRARY



BANTAM



ARROW
PRESS

Hachette



LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY

BASIC BOOKS





HarperCollins









Macmillan





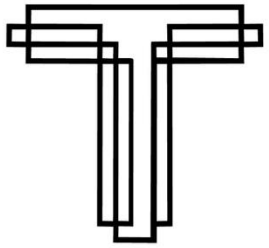




Simon and Schuster







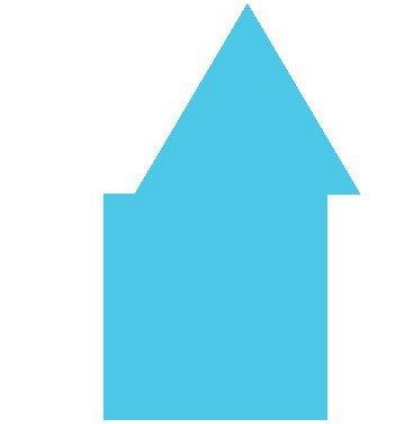
TOUCHSTONE



Independent Publishers



GRAYWOLF
PRESS



Europa
editions

Academic Publishers





Harvard University Press



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

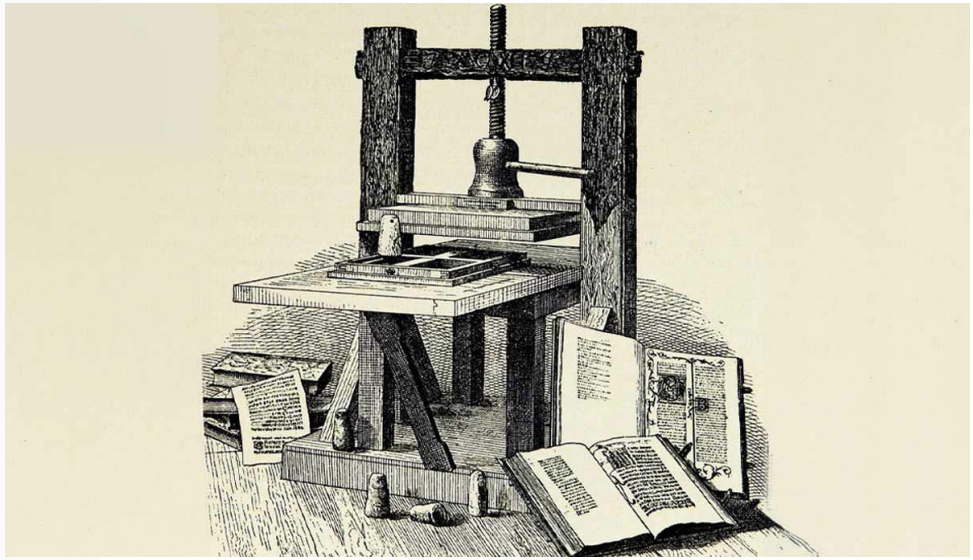
Important Elements

Editing



Important Elements

Printing



Important Elements

Distribution



Important Elements

Marketing



Important Elements

Publicity



Preparing a Trade Book Proposal

Part 2:
The Big Five



The Big Five

For an acquisitions editor the most important question becomes not “Does this book offer a legitimate contribution to the world of ideas?” but “Is this book marketable?”

The Big Five

For the editor that requires a delicate dance between signing a book that’s categorizable but also novel.



The Big Five

For the writer that requires a delicate dance between making a pitch for a book that will pass muster but which will still be the book that you want to write.



The Big Five

Agents



The Big Five

Agents

InkWell

Writers House
A LITERARY AGENCY

Waxman Literary
AGENCY

·T·B·G·

The Big Five

Advances



The Big Five

Royalties



Preparing a Trade Book Proposal

Part 3: Independent and Academic Presses



Independent/Academic Presses

There is some variation, but much of the actual querying and proposal process will be similar to the Big Five.



Independent Presses

Many independent presses will require an agent – even the venerable nonprofits like Graywolf – but some do not.



Independent/Academic Presses

Advances will be smaller but sometimes royalties will be more generous.



Preparing a Trade Book Proposal

Part 4:
The Actual Proposal



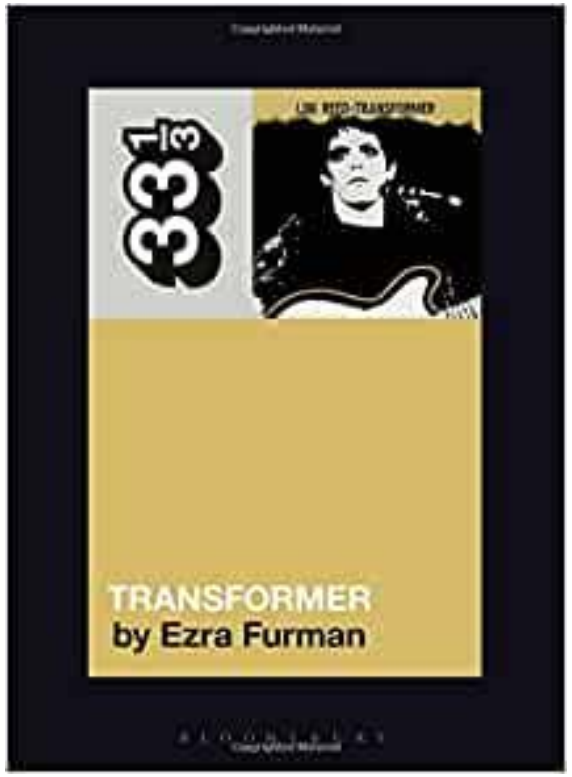
Preparing a Trade Book Proposal

Part 5: Academic Trade Book Series



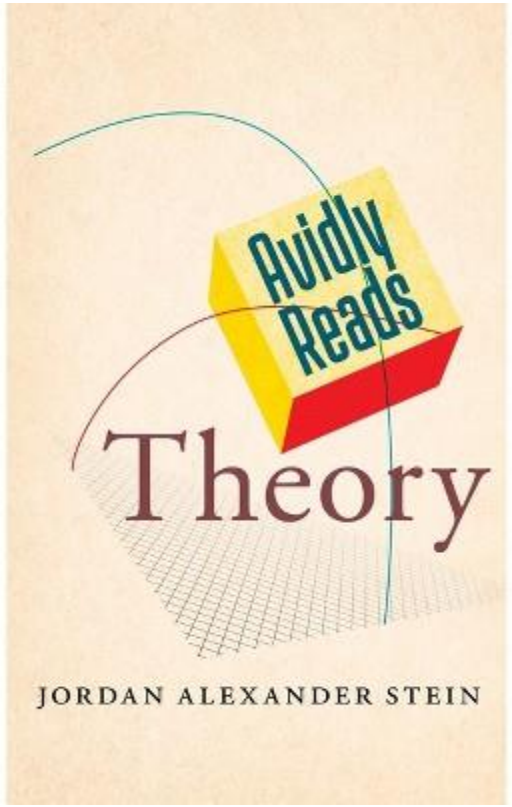
Bloomsbury Academic

The 33 1/3rd Series



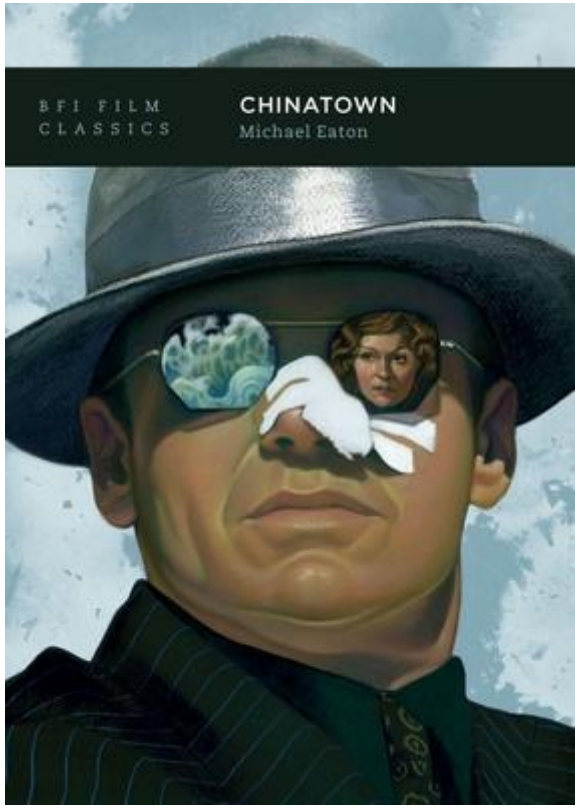
NYU Press

Avidly Reads



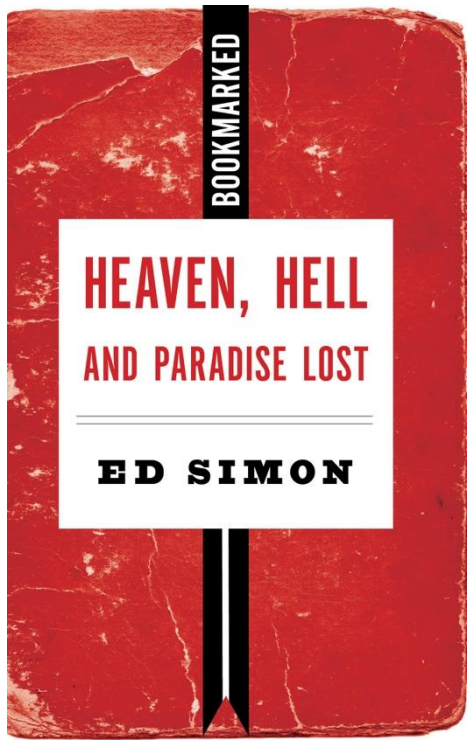
Bloomsbury Academic

BFI Film Classics



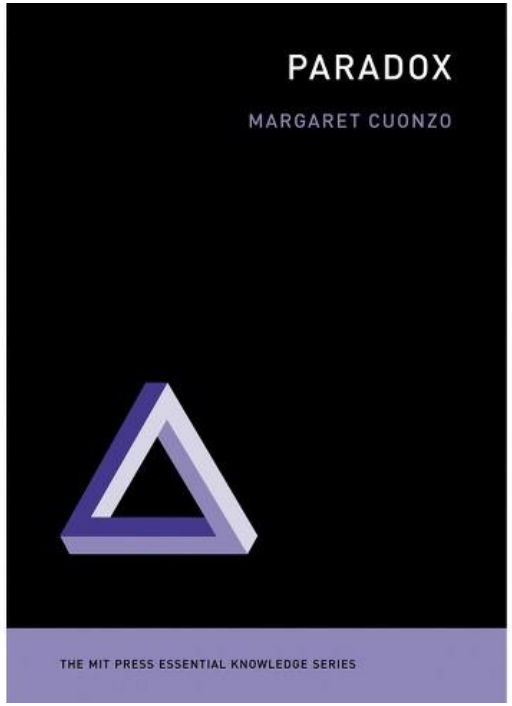
Ig Publishing

Bookmarked



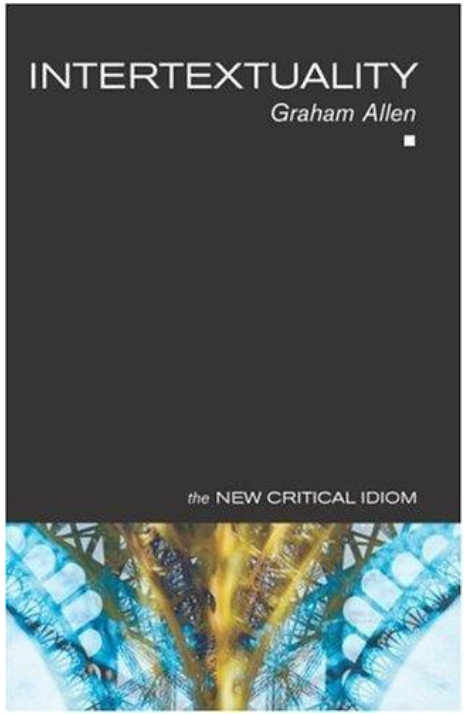
MIT Press

Essential Knowledge



Routledge

New Critical Idiom



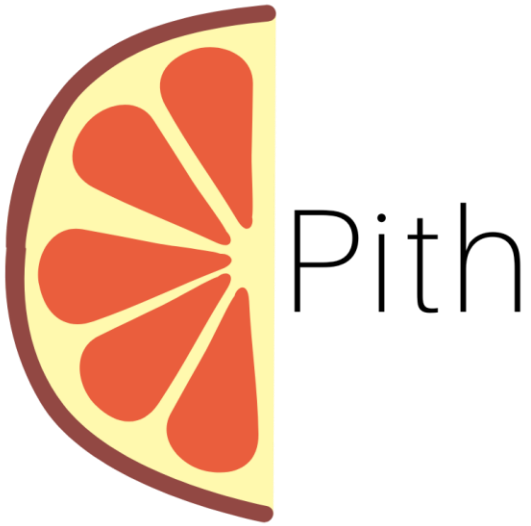
Bloomsbury Academic

Object Lessons



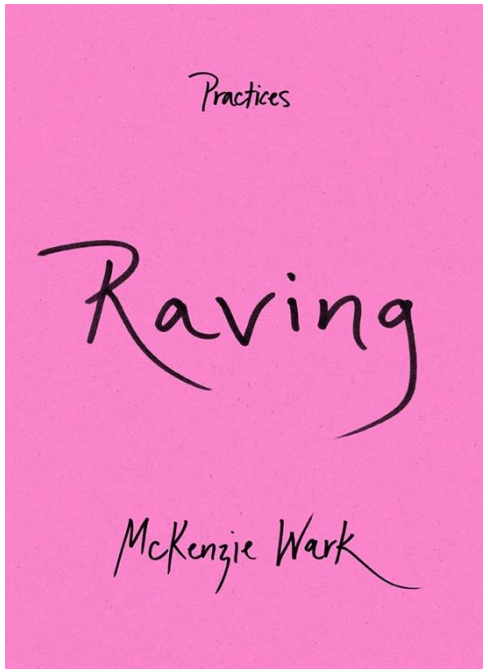
University of Tampa Press

Pith



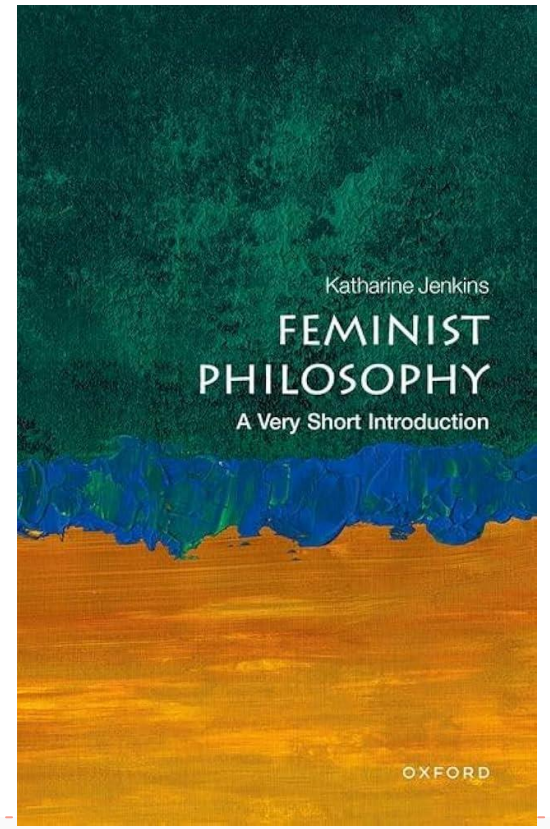
Duke University Press

Practices



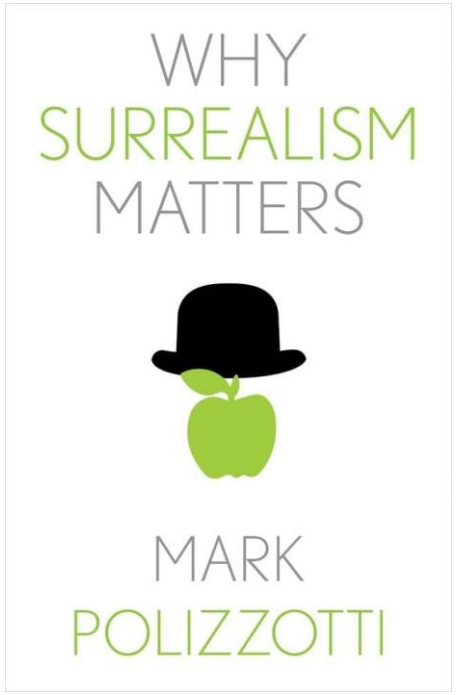
Oxford University Press

Very Short Introductions



Yale University Press

Why X Matters



Thank You

Ed Simon

esimon@andrew.cmu.edu