

TWC521

Principles of Writing in Technology

Graduate Assignment

**The Silent Art of Book
Design: An Introduction
for Technical
Communicators**

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How many times have you picked up a book – a book composed primarily of text and not images -- and said “wow, this book is really quite beautiful”? How often have you had trouble reading a book given the design or layout’s glaring ability to detract your attention? Book design is typically invisible to the reader. The majority of readers will likely never consciously notice a book’s design, unless they find something wrong with it. As stated by Richard Hendel in his book, *On Book Design*, “until the look of something becomes radically different from what we expect, we rarely think about its appearance.”¹ Book design is easy to ignore, and in some sense it should be. The designer of a book is invisible, and their name is rarely even attached to their work. However the job of the designer is significant toward the book’s reception and success.

Each designer takes an individual approach to the books they work on, however for any book there are “rules” that many designers adhere to. Robert Bringhurst terms these rules “typographic etiquette”² saying that they are always there to fall back on, particularly when a designer is in doubt about how to approach a piece. Readers expect books about the English Interregnum to look very different from books on the history of the Internet. Font styles and design concepts that may be beautiful will not work in one, but would fit perfectly in the other. This is true for cover art, to the way in which layout is approached, to the typeface chosen to handle the text, headers, footers, titles, and subtitles.

¹ Hendel, Richard. *On Book Design*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998, pg. 9.

² *Ibid.*, 10.

Typography is perhaps the most overlooked aspect of design, taken for granted until the typeface seems wrong to the reader. Earliest books were hand written by scribes, and many of the examples still in extent are glorious pieces of art in and of themselves. Today, we have type. Today we can be bombarded by Times Roman (though it clearly has its time and place and works well in it). But, typography as an art should be considered “idealized writing”³ as the vast majority of people could never even begin to replicate a page from an illuminated manuscript or even have the sweeping scrolls of early books and manuscripts. “The typography of books is steeped (some might say mired) in tradition and convention. Designers must understand the history and conventions of book typography because there are good reasons for their existence.”⁴

According to Bringhurst, “like oratory, music, dance, calligraphy – like anything that lends its grace to language – typography is an art that can be deliberately misused. It is a craft by which the meanings of a text (or its absence of meaning) can be clarified, honored and shared, or knowingly disguised.”⁵

Ultimately, a topic such as the typeface used in a book may seem minimal and insignificant. However, despite the cliché that you should never judge a book by its cover, it is a natural inclination to do so. Information’s value increases a thousand fold when it reaches people, and information that is not accessible is painfully reduced in value. Design, good design, contributes to the accessibility of the information. The

³ Bringhurst, Robert. *The Elements of Typographic Style*, version 3.0. Vancouver: Hartley & Marks Publishers, 2004. pg. 19.

⁴ Hendel, *On Book Design*, 9.

⁵ Bringhurst *The Elements of typographic Style*, 17.

appropriate presentation of material can contribute to the amount of people who will receive and absorb it, and the amount of time it requires for them to do so. Design, in the broader sense, is important in the case of any marketable product, books included, where the presentation, aesthetics, and ease with which information can be absorbed are all important in order to attract and maintain customers.

While typography, for example, may seem insignificant, its very subtlety can be a powerful tool in suggesting certain things, placing focus on one topic and not another, and it can virtually scream to a reader. All without the reader being aware of the messages that it sent. Readers expect books to do certain things and appear certain ways. We all carry certain expectations to the table when we approach a means of information dissemination. Understanding this, and knowing how to work within those expectations is important for people in the communication field. Doing what you can to maximize the communication quality is clearly a primary goal, and design is a significant piece of this puzzle.

Having now quoted from two experienced designers, and the work of both I admire, I am now going to make myself slightly uncomfortable by presenting a couple designs of my own. Part of being a designer is to be familiar with the material you are designing, again, not wanting to make a book on sixteenth century England look like a technology textbook. While I could have chosen from many items I felt it would be simplest to just chose work of my own, if for no other reason than not needing to ask permission or recreate someone else's work from a book already published. However, I found designing my own research was difficult; it seems I am somewhat impossible to please and probably a designer's nightmare.

My first sample is titled *Superstitions and Lore of Scotland*. The topic is fairly straightforward, and while it was a great deal of fun to research and write it's not the most scholarly bit of work I have. This was partly why I chose it, it's not about taking yourself serious (hard to take yourself serious when you are telling centuries old ghost stories and handling the Loch Ness Monster). But it is rich in culture, history, and mystery, all things I am admittedly drawn to. For this reason I thought it would be simple to design, but it was easy to find myself falling into a pattern of cliché.

The second example is one of the more scholarly pieces of work in my repertoire. Titled *Silent Endurance: the Centrality of Women in the Perpetuation and Survival of Crypto-Judaism*, this material is tragic, dark, and also has a tremendously rich cultural heritage. Summing the topic up in a couple sentences: In 1492 the Jews were expelled from Spain, and therefore forced to leave the country or convert; some of those who remained in Spain converted genuinely, but some converted only nominally and developed a religion of secrecy that could be practiced primarily in the home – therefore women were the ones who were responsible for its survival. There is a great deal of focus on dietary practices, thus the cover image. With limited technology, and limited resources it was difficult to capture the feeling and the culture that would best suit a book of this topic. However, if I am being picky anyway, the books on this topic that I have encountered were not all designed very well anyway.

I have chosen to present this project in Microsoft Word, a decision that was as practical as it was frustrating. Word has numerous options, but it also has its limits. Each of the following pages has two boxes on it. Each design has four boxes of examples. The first page of each design contains a cover page (left) and a contents page (right). Clearly, despite

their current orientation, a fact necessary in this presentation, these pages would not be facing each other as seen here. The second page would be shown as is presented here. I chose a chapter opener and created the opening page, viewed on the left or *verso* “page,” and then a full text page to accompany it on the right hand, *recto*, side. I chose the cover page, contents page, and a chapter opener because I felt that these four pages were easy to provide a general grasp of the idea I had.

Given the complications of using Word I am unable to supply the information regarding formatting decisions on the same page as the samples in order to make the samples large enough to view appropriately. The following is a list of the font style, point, leading, color, and justification chosen for each piece of text.

Superstitions and Lore of Scotland

Cover Page:

Title – Imprint MT Shadow, 34 pt bold; right justified

Author – Book Antiqua, 18 pt; right justified

Contents Page:

Text – Book Antiqua, 10 pt; centered

Chapter Opener Page:

Chapter Title, Level One – Benguiat Bk BT, 14pt; centered

Chapter Title, Level Two – Times New Roman , pt, small caps; centered

Drop Cap – Castellar, 48.5 pt; left justified

Text – Book Antiqua, 10 pt; left justified/ragged right; leading at 14 pt

Page Number – Sylfaen, 9 pt; text box centered (only way to center it appropriately)

Text Page:

Header – Sylfaen, 9 pt, small caps; text box right justified

Text – Book Antiqua, 10 pt; left justified/ragged right

Page Number – Sylfaen, 9 pt; text box centered (only way to center it appropriately)

Silent Endurance

Cover Page:

Title – Papyrus, 16 pt bold; right justified; tan

Subtitle – Garamond, 12 pt; centered; light yellow

Author -- Papyrus, 12 pt bold; right justified; tan

Contents Page:

Title – Papyrus, 16 pt bold; right justified

Text – Bell MT, 10 pt; left justified; leading at 14 pt

Chapter Opener Page:

Chapter Title – Papyrus, 12 pt bold; right justified; 80% grey

First Three Words of Text – Bell MT, 9.5 pt small caps; left justified/ right ragged

Text – Bell MT, 9.5 pt; left justified/ right ragged; leading at 13 pt

Footnotes – Tunga, 7 pt; left justified

Footer – Garamond, 9 pt; text box right justified

Text Page:

Text – Bell MT, 9.5 pt; left justified/ right ragged; leading at 13 pt

Footnotes – Tunga, 7 pt; left justified

Footer – Garamond, 9 pt; text box right justified



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☞ Banshees ☞ THE WAILING WASHER WOMEN

Setting Fairies aside momentarily, one of the most misunderstood creatures of Scot Lore, often confused for something else and taking on numerous forms and roles, is the banshee. Tales of banshees are complicated, as the roles ascribed to them change regionally through out Scotland.

Ultimately, banshees are one of many warnings that can be sent from the world of the dead into the living. Her presence warns of someone's impending doom. One of the most common tales of a banshee's foretelling of death comes from a night in 1692. The Massacre at Glencoe, as it is now called, witnessed the slaughter of dozens of innocent men, women, and children, many of whom still in their beds when they died. It is said that the wailing of a banshee could be heard in Glencoe the evening before and some suggest that the number of MacDonald deaths would have been higher, had not many of them taken the wails as a sign and fled.

What then, you ask, is a Banshee? Fundamentally, she is a ghost. But banshees bear many significant differences from the "normal" ghost. Banshee stories all require a river, for the banshee is always seen near a burn and usually she is seen washing clothes. But banshees are ghosts more typically heard than seen. The wailing of a banshee is said to be a painfully distinct sound that may be a desperate lament that will make all who hear it feel her misery, or a sound so painfully harsh that it
24 d kill you by merely hearing it.

But perhaps the greatest difference between banshees and most of the other ghosts of lore is that the banshee is both tangible and her condition is not permanent. If one hears the wails of a banshee, and one wishes to be rather brave, you can try to find her. Any one who sneaks up on a banshee and is able to touch her before she disappears may be granted three wishes, or be told who's death she foretells. Moreover, the banshee is not thought to remain in permanent limbo, but will pass into the after life when her "due time" comes, and her natural life would be at its end had she not died young.

As ghosts, banshees were once part of the living world. It is commonly accepted that banshees are the souls of women who died in child birth. In an era where pregnancy was appropriately considered a woman's "confinement" as they remained somewhat cloistered and not as social as they normally would be, there were some negative associations with this stage in a woman's life. For example, a woman in "confinement" was not to enter a church, and in the event that she died in childbirth she died in a state seen as spiritually unclean.

Death rituals for a woman who died in childbirth dictated that the family of the woman must immediately remove all of her clothing from the house and wash them thoroughly. The belief was that in doing this they possibly purified the woman's soul and she could then enter into a peaceful afterlife. However, if this was not done it was believed that she would be fated to serve out the remainder of would have been her natural life – the length of time from her actual death to the point



..... Silent Endurance

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85	The Knowledge Gap: Post Expulsion Education
92	Superficial Assimilation
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Maintaining a Kosher Home and Kitchen

THE MOST COMMON Sabbath offense cited in Inquisition records centered on the *conversa's* kitchen. Variations of charges could include anything from a description or list of ingredients used to cook a meal, a list of the household members who ate the food, or a detailing of how the food was prepared.⁶ In terms of Sabbath meals, food was cooked on the Friday before. While cooking in the evening was not likely to raise eyebrows, routinely cooking on Friday prior to sundown, and not resuming cooking until the following sundown certainly when combined with any of the above mentioned customs would be an affective attention-getter. Cooking in advance to the Jewish Sabbath was therefore something prosecutors of the Inquisition watched for. The home with out a fire on Saturday was an “eyesore” and the occupants likely had a Judaizer among them.⁷



Leonor Alvarez was also charged with eating special, prior-cooked meals on a Saturday.⁸ A Sabbath stew itself was equivalent to a flashing beacon for Inquisitors. The *cazuelas* - a stew made of meat and vegetables that was set to simmer - was the most common, but *adafina* was another common meal and not far from the meals eaten in Ashkenaz.⁹ Meat was generally the main

⁶ Gitlitz, David M., and Linda Kay Davidson. *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews*. St. Martin Press: New York, 1999,pg. 73.

⁷ Ibid., 74

⁸ Ibid., 75

⁹ Ibid., 75

component in a Sabbath stew, though there are cases mentioned where fish or vegetables were the main ingredients instead.

Gitlitz and Kay Davidson reference the case of Beatriz Núñez a *conversa* arrested during the pre-Expulsion period. In the spring of 1485, a few years after she and her husband, Fernán González Escribano had converted, she was arrested by the Spanish Inquisition on the charge that she maintained a *kosher* home. One of the main problems faced by *converso* families is articulated by this case, in that one of their servants, a woman named Catalina Sánchez, was a witness for the prosecution. One of the practices that Catalina listed to the Tribunal was a recipe for a Sabbath stew “made of lamb and chickpeas and hard-boiled eggs.” “The Guadalupe Inquisition found Beatriz guilty of being an unrepentant heretic and burned her alive in 1485.”¹⁰

As striking as a case like this may sound, it was not terribly uncommon. In the research David Gitlitz and Linda Kay Davidson preformed to write their cookbook *A Drizzle of Honey: The Lives and Recipes of Spain's Secret Jews* they found that many women went to the pylons for cooking a particular stew:

Beatriz Núñez's Sabbath stew is one of approximately ninety detailed references to Jewish cooking in Iberia and in the Iberian colonies that David Gitlitz found during two decades of reading Inquisition testimony. These recipes bring to light a very important part of the daily routine of the *converso* ... They also vividly demonstrate how the Inquisition used cultural information to help build a case against those it was investigating for heresy.¹¹

In addition to a special stew, traditional Sabbath bread, the *hallah*, is mentioned in some of the charges as well. The cooking of *hallah* required knowledge of Jewish law, and the baker was expected to toss a section of the bread into the fire. There was a handful of *conversas* charged with this.

In general, a woman who maintained a *kosher* home ran some enormous risks in doing so. Adherence to dietary laws when there are limited resources

¹⁰ Ibid., nxiii

¹¹ Ibid., nxii