plative inquiries or the more competitive, heuristic games of science."

Shaw's exposition is wide-ranging and thought provoking. Ultimately, he is not sanguine about the future of liberal education, which he believes has been almost totally consumed by a vocational education model that simply feeds a consumer economy. He shares Alvin Kernan's sense that they have reached the end of a line, when an older generation no longer passes the torch to new scholars who will take up the search for truth. As one might expect from such a source, the writing is replete with literary examples and allusions. True to his belief in the power of presentational art, Shaw's views are often expressed aphoristically or poetically, rather than in tight, logical arguments. Some readers will find this frustrating, but many others will rejoice in Shaw's erudition. Either way, Shaw's challenges to the current trends in higher education deserve careful attention.—*W. Bede Mitchell, Georgia Southern University.*

The Future of the Page. Ed. Peter Stoicheff and Andrew Taylor. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Pr. (*Studies in Book and Print Culture*), 2004. 272p. cloth $65 (ISBN 0802088023); paper $29.95 (ISBN 0802085849). LC: 2005-391277

If the title of this volume reminds you of conferences you attended in the 1990s, early issues of *Wired* magazine, "the Gutenberg elegies," and the Age of Irrational Exuberance, you will not be disappointed. It collects papers from a conference in Saskatoon in 2000 and duly reflects agendas that have largely been eclipsed in the interim. The optimism and anxieties that underlie many of the papers here have receded as we slowly adjust to the addition of yet one more medium of communication. The irony of this, given the topic, will surely not have been lost on the editors nor on the University of Toronto Press. Print culture may be slow, but it is dependably relentless. The explosion of interest in the history of written and printed word that occurred in the 1990s as a response to the arrival of the Internet and the Web was a great good thing and continues to yield an important and impressive harvest of articles and monographs. Had the Saskatoon conference focused on a retrospective look at the page, its proceedings would have stood up better. The page, like the codex in which it nestles, has been around for millennia, its architectonics remarkable for their permanence. Better understanding the history of its formation and mutations must surely remain a priority for students of the history of the book. However, musings from the past about the future are likely to be of limited interest in the present. Much better, I think, to fly at dusk with Hegel's owl of Minerva.

To the extent that the contributors did address the topic of the conference, their prognostications sounded some familiar themes. The space of the new electronic page was greeted by many as a zone of liberation from the multiple tyrannies of print culture and its regime of fixity, its many straightjackets, orthodoxies, and hegemonies. How this will be accomplished and who will be liberated from what, however, remains largely implicit in the various soundings. The mutability of all texts was proclaimed, while authors killed once by critical theory are sacrificed again at the altar of new technology, as empowered readers claim texts by others as their own. At the same time, this destabilizing electronic space was seen by many as a new communal space that will create new ecologies of textual producers and consumers. The few medievalists at the table saw all these trends at work long ago in manuscript culture, where the idiosyncrasies of scribes had always made the page an unstable terrain. Because most of the participants hail from North American English departments, their preoccupation with authors, readers, and texts is understandable. Among the contributors are accomplished scholars, cultural materialists, and late twentieth-century Marxists. Contributions span a broad range from canonical texts to Na-

tive American alternatives to the Western page. "Subversives" abound, including a Canadian artist, Edison del Canto, whose contribution is a mini-artist's book that takes aim at the traditional page and its guardians: "Academic expert culture is a culture of command…. It achieves command and authority by subjecting you to institutionally legitimated intellectual and sociological power structures." Whatever the future of the page, its past and present are anything but innocent to many of the contributors.

However, the page itself is not really the focus of this volume. The concerns of most of the contributors are with the larger issues of print versus digital communication. Whatever overall coherence "the page" may have given this volume was lost as contributors pursued their own agendas. The result is not a reconsideration of the durable page but, rather, a series of slimly connected speculations about the promises and perils of online formats.

Although the volume feels at times ponderously PC and dated, it does contain some useful pieces. Jerome McGann's "Visible and Invisible Books" is a valuable chronicle of how the evolution of digital technologies has forced him to reconsider the very nature and meaning of editing text and image archives. For McGann, technology has a long way to go before it catches up with the needs of those who see texts as more than informational sites. A similar note is stuck by Michael Groden recounting his experiences in editing Joyce's *Ulysses* online. Joseph Tabbi has a provocative piece on the potential of digital technology to facilitate the understanding of writing as a procedure (as opposed to a project) and in particular to capture the complicated self-referencing of what he terms "cognitive fictions." Allison Muri provides an interesting diagnostic of those who fear for man's very identity, his humanity, in an age of unembodied communication.

Stoicheff and Taylor launch their volume with a smart and brisk introduction to the history of the page in the West. If they ever collaborate on *that* topic, I will be sure to make a return visit. Otherwise, the future is best left where it is—ahead of us, somewhere.—*Michael Ryan, University of Pennsylvania.*

Against the Law: Crime, Sharp Practice and the Control of Print. Ed. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote. New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll; London: British Library (*Publishing Pathways*), 2004. 184p. $45 (ISBN: 158456153X, Oak Knoll); (0712348964, British Library). LC: 2005-544193

The eight essays in this handsomely printed volume constitute the published proceedings of the 26th annual book trade history conference held at the St. Bride Printing Library and Birkbeck College of the University of London. The list of approximately sixty attendees included scholars from England, Wales, France, Italy, and the United States. All these essays are concerned with historical aspects of the book trade and, specifically, its role as one of the gatekeepers to social status, reputation, money, and power. The editors state in their introduction that the contributors of essays "explore the underside of the book trade, revealing the ways in which laws and regulations relating to books have been exploited and manipulated, or evaded and broken, over many centuries."

Christopher de Hamel's "Book Thefts in the Middle Ages" cites examples of medieval book thefts and the measures taken by book owners and monastic librarians to protect their literary property, including curses or anathemas on the person or persons who would steal their books. De Hamel shows that the very fact that book thefts were not uncommon is evidence of an active books market and furthermore that the book trade often was either consciously or unwittingly an accomplice of the thieves, making it easier for thieves to ply their sharp practices, deceptions, and frauds.