2019

Reasons to Destroy a Book

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“women are reduced […] to philistines who value a book for its material properties”

—Leah Price, How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain

She rips the marriage negotiation scene from the novel’s spine, wrapping it around a soft square of butter. With four chapters of backstory and some paste, she relines her cupboard and traveling case. From the resolution, she scissors out the pattern of a new dress’s sleeve. The crux of the plot she saves for outhouse paper, the frontispiece she stuffs where the wind gnaws through a plaster crack. One sheet of rising action, ripped into strips, becomes a handful of spills to light her husband’s pipe. Another she balls in her fist and tosses to the cat. It doesn’t matter. She knows the story— ask her anything. When she lays the title page over the apple pie, flies land like letters and author new meanings.