comma), the detailed record of Bewick’s involvement, and extensive notes which reveal, among other things, that only 250 copies were printed, based on a notice in The Times. We are given a page collation (the “[1]” is unnecessary as it is an inserted plate) and a list of sources. The real focus of the description is, of course, John Bewick and the full-page cut of “The Sad Historian,” perhaps his most fully realized image, is illustrated.

In his acknowledgments Tattersfield pays tribute to “bibliothecal databases” and especially ESTC. He implies that without such resources his work on John Bewick would have been much more difficult. We are fortunate that he has utilized them so well.

RICHARD LANDON
Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto


This is a beautiful book illustrating the evolution of the book jacket in the twentieth century. It begins with a short overview essay on the history of the book jacket and then moves chronologically through the century, showing changes and developments, and focussing on landmarks in design, technical developments, publishing houses, and individual designers. Typically, each section is given a double-page spread with illustrations of eight to ten jackets and annotated captions.

Powers divides the evolution of the book jacket into four chronological periods, each introduced with a brief summary: the impact of modernism in the 1920s and 30s, with particularly good sections on the publisher Victor Gollancz and the designer Barnett Freedman; the creation of style 1940-60, including the James Bond books, Lolita, pulp fiction, and American graphics; the revolution in print of the 1960s and 70s including psychedelic designs best forgotten, and what Powers labels “Cold war paranoia,” the spy books and psychological thrillers of the east-west divide; and design in the digital age, the 1980s and 90s, with good sections on new publishers such as Bloomsbury and Canongate, and designers including Andrzej Klimowski who has done several of the Milan
Kundera jackets for Penguin and Faber & Faber, and Jeff Fisher, most famous for the *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* cover. There is a less than complete Directory of Designers and similarly thin List of Publishers at the back of the book and a General Bibliography heavily weighted to titles before 1970.

The book jacket is packaging, designed not merely to contain the product but to sell it. Packaging is product marketing whether the product is laundry detergent, potato chips or the latest Danielle Steel novel. As Powers points out, however, the book jacket as selling device is in an ambiguous position because the book has never been purely a consumer device. The book can, especially with age, acquire an aura that transcends its physical form; it can resist obsolescence; and even in the case of modern mass-production it can in a matter of days become loaded with sentimental association for its owner.

Commercially produced book jackets have been around since the nineteenth century, although it was only in the twentieth century, from about the 1920s, that they came to be valued and indeed conserved and even collected. Before that, putting your books on the bookshelf in their jackets would have been rather like keeping your new shoes always in the shoe box. The life of the packaging was designed to be protective and temporary, until you took the book home. So early jackets tended to be dull and plain. Powers claims that consumerism, spreading from the United States after the First World War, led to company-named goods; that the impact of motion-picture films made people more alert to visual images; that colour printing was also by then more advanced; and that the concept of so-called commercial art in art colleges meant that serious artists were willing to turn their attention to books. The time was right for jacket illustration to take off. As well as the eye-catching front, the jacket had to have a back and it had to hang on to the book by its flaps and so there was room for blurbs, author biographies and advertising.

By the 1920s it was becoming more or less standard that books would have jackets and very often decorated jackets. The jacket became a selling device and competition between publishers meant that jackets became more elaborate. The attractiveness of the jacket was now perceived as fundamental to selling the book. It involved not just packaging but also the move from what we would now call generic to branded goods. The decorated book jacket opened the possibility to create a brand image, brand recognition, and hence
brand loyalty, a guarantee of satisfaction. It allowed publishers to create a new kind of series based on visual recognition.

The Vanessa Bell jackets for the Hogarth Press are a good example. Right from the origins on the dining table in Richmond, the Woolfs used Vanessa Bell illustrations on their jacket covers. Bell’s style quickly became synonymous with the Woolfs and the Hogarth Press. Her use of colour, pattern, and simple lettering, and the marriage between text and jacket design became hallmarks of the Press. The sisters’ collaboration also meant that unlike most authors Woolf, who was also her own publisher, had at least some say in what appeared on her own book jackets. So did J.R.R. Tolkien who designed the green, black, and white jacket for *The Hobbit* that you still see today even on paperbacks. J.D. Salinger insisted on total control of his jacket designs, not wanting interpretations or misinterpretations of his texts depicted on the covers. The familiar cover of *The Catcher in the Rye* is still the blank silver grey he approved. Salinger insisted on contracts that prohibited his publishers from using any pictorial covers, any extracts from reviews, or any biographical or descriptive jacket blurbs that he had not written himself. Far from detracting from the appearance, the plainness of Salinger’s jackets became their attractive and most recognisable feature.

Powers illustrates his arguments with almost three hundred colour photographs of book jackets. One of his best examples is Penguin Books, perhaps the world’s best known series. Examples from Penguin occur throughout *Front Cover* and in major and separate sections in each of Powers’s four chronological divisions. There were paperbound books long before Penguins of course, but nothing that had sold on quite their scale. Penguins were a great leap forward and their launch in 1935 is one of the key moments in publishing history. Allen Lane proposed the series as a way of selling cheap books to help save the Bodley Head publishing house. They rejected the idea and so he set up in business alone, launching ten titles under the new Penguin imprint at 6d each. André Maurois’s *Ariel*, with a purple and white cover and a penguin logo, was the first title. The rest is history. It was a huge success. The understated, orange cover became the standard format for years for Penguin fiction. Allen Lane not only drew on the Bodley Head publishing list of contemporary authors but also acquired new authors and released out-of-copyright and classic nineteenth-century titles. He launched subsidiary lines – Pelicans for non-fiction, Puffins for children’s
books – all with the same easily-recognisable format. The design was very basic yet instantly identifiable. While other publishers in the 1940s and 50s were using images, colour, and innovative and artistic designs, Penguins stayed the same. Even in the 1960s and 70s when they did use pictures, photographs, and designs, the orange background was still there, and it lingers on some Penguin spines even today, however much they may try not to look like Penguins. Penguin itself seemingly admits the appeal of the old formula with the 2000 launch of the retro series – Jack Kerouac’s On the Road and the like in 1950s dress – but Powers seems to have gone to press too early for that, otherwise the 2000 series would have provided a nice addition to his Beat Generation section.

There is more to be said about book jackets than Front Cover attempts. Indeed any one of its double-page spreads could be the starting point for a case study in publishing history. Powers does not deal, for example, with the interpretations and misinterpretations of the text that can happen on a book cover. His focus is design rather than text, form rather than content. He might well have looked too at the variant jackets publishers sometimes issue. The Harry Potter books with their children’s and adults’ covers are a good example. Readers’ self-consciousness about how books actually look as physical objects, whether on the subway or on the bookshelf, is a preoccupation to which publishers are apparently happy to cater. Nor does Powers examine the recent phenomenon of which his own book’s jacket is a good example: book jackets with pictures of book jackets and writing implements. Recent examples include the latest edition of E.M. Forster’s Aspects of the Novel, Henry Petroski’s study of shelving, The Book on the Bookshelf; Martha Cooley’s novel The Archivist; and Martin Amis’s collection of essays, The War Against Cliché. You can see photographs of them on any internet bookstore website. There is a predictability about this new generation of self-reflexive jackets. It was inevitable that Front Cover would have a jacket of jackets.

Front Cover is a starting point rather than a reference book, its target a general audience rather than bibliographers or publishing historians. But it is not much the worse for that.

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