MATCHES: A LIGHT BOOK
Praise for *Matches*

“The vision of history illuminating these pages is not the conventional one of progress, but the much more radical one of Rousseauism: a 'left-wing nostalgia' that performs a detour through the past—a world anterior to privilege and hypocrisy—with the aim not of restoring it, but of giving it a radically new form.”

—Michael Löwy, *Le Monde diplomatique*

“There are books that have the ability to throw your whole life into question, but these are the terms of engagement…. In the weeks I spent reading *Matches* I was more jittery than usual, my mind constantly reeling. I felt like I was on the edge of something, though I could not tell what that might be. I am always behaving badly, but this was different. I wanted to quarrel, I needed to question everything. Books seemed to be ruining my life…. But I love changing my mind.”

—Anna Zalokostas, *Full Stop*

“A truly thorough examination of *Matches: A Light Book* would map all the terrain and take an unusual form: a multi-week course containing lectures, slides, video, theatre, playtime, and interactivity. S.D. Chrostowska is a writer of importance, and with this work she has raised her own personal bar.”

—Jeff Bursey, *Numéro Cinq*
“As in the writings of Nietzsche and Adorno, the targets of Chrostowska’s illuminating arson are cultural: the art world, publishing, academia, popular media, political economy, and the various phenomena that are the warp and woof of our daily newsfeeds. At more than 500 pages, Matches is an epic of the little form. Encyclopedic in its range and ambition, it includes nearly every variant on the aphorism attempted since the Corpus Hippocraticum. The book puts itself in dialogue with its most important practitioners as well as with today’s thinkers.”

—Ryan Ruby, *Lapham’s Quarterly*

“Matches poses its greatest challenge to academic criticism, demonstrating that intellectually rigorous issues can be addressed in an accessible way without diluting or oversimplifying those issues. Certainly Matches demonstrates that an intelligent, informed critic can use the aphorism and the fragment to explore the most serious and substantive critical and philosophical subjects, providing sufficiently radiant illumination to guide us in our own consideration of these subjects. It is a very rewarding book, read either in sequence and in its entirety or in isolated selections, but…it is less a specific model of what criticism might become in the digital age than simply a challenge to seriously reflect on what Matthew Arnold called ‘the function of criticism at the present time.’”

—Daniel Green, *Los Angeles Review of Books*
Before you start to read this book, take this moment to think about making a donation to punctum books, an independent non-profit press, @ http://punctumbooks.com/about/

If you're reading the e-book, you can click on the image below to go directly to our donations site. Any amount, no matter the size, is appreciated and will help us to keep our ship of fools afloat. Contributions from dedicated readers will also help us to keep our commons open and to cultivate new work that can’t find a welcoming port elsewhere. Our adventure is not possible without your support.

Vive la Open Access.

Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, Ship of Fools (1490-1500)
MATCHES: A LIGHT BOOK
© 2015, 2019 S.D. Chrostowska

This work carries a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA 4.0 International license, which means that you are free to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format, and you may also remix, transform and build upon the material, as long as you clearly attribute the work to the authors (but not in a way that suggests the authors or punctum endorses you and your work), you do not use this work for commercial gain in any form whatsoever, and that for any remixing and transformation, you distribute your rebuild under the same license.
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/

First edition 2015
Second edition published in 2019 by punctum books
Earth, Milky Way
http://punctumbooks.com

A number of the pieces in this volume have previously appeared in The Review of Contemporary Fiction, Convolution, 3:AM, BOMB, and Off the Books.


DOI: 10.21983/P3.251.1.00

LCCN: 2019937768
Library of Congress Cataloging Data is available from the Library of Congress

Cover and interior images:
“Strike,” design by Schneck & Zweigbergk, HAY.
With the striking surface moved from the side to the front, “Strike” matchboxes honour the activity of making a flame.
The common matchbox and book have long been used for advertising, including of literature: though rarely, they have borne poems, short fiction, and reproductions of book covers. Putting “Strike” matchboxes on the cover of this book seconds their tribute to flame-making and acknowledges the small and unlikely role matches have played in promoting books.

Cover and book design: Chris Piuma.
MATCHES
A LIGHT BOOK

S.D. CHROSTOWSKA