

# Reality Hunger: A Manifesto

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Rare Book

## Sarah Manguso Reviews Reality Hunger

Sarah Manguso is the author of *The Two Kinds of Decay*, a memoir, and two books of poetry, *Siste Viator* and *The Captain Lands in Paradise*. Read Manguso's guest review of *Reality Hunger*:

"I doubt very much that I'm the only person who's finding it more and more difficult to want to read or write novels." David Shields acknowledges in *Reality Hunger*, then seeks to understand how the conventional literary novel has become as lifeless a form as the mass market bodice-ripper. Shields provides an *ars poetica* for writers and other artists who, exhausted by the artificiality of our culture, "obsessed by real events because we experience hardly any," are taking larger and larger pieces of the real world and using them in their work. *Reality Hunger* is made of 600-odd numbered fragments, many of them quotations from other sources, some from Shields's own books, but none properly sourced--the project being not a treasure hunt or a con but a good-faith presentation of what literature might look like if it caught up to contemporary strategies and devices used in the other arts, and allowed for samples (that is, quotation from art and from the world) to revivify existing forms. Shields challenges the perceived superiority of the imagination and exposes conventional literary pieties as imitation writing, the textual equivalent of artificial flavoring, sleepwalking, and small talk. I can't name a more necessary or a more thrilling book. --Sarah Manguso

(Photo  Marion Ellinger)

David Shields is the bestselling author of twenty books, including *The Thing About Life*, *Reality Hunger*, *Black Planet*, *Remote*, and *War Is Beautiful*. He and his wife live in Seattle, where he is the Milliman Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at the University of Washington. His work has been translated into twenty languages.

### Other Books

*The Documentary Imagination in Twentieth-Century French Literature*. *The Documentary Imagination in Twentieth-Century French Literature* identifies a documentary impulse in French literature that emerges at the end of the nineteenth century and culminates in a proliferation of factual writings in the twenty-first. Focusing on the period bookended by these two moments, it highlights the enduring concern with factual reference in texts that engage either with current events or the historical archive. Specifically, it considers a set of ideas and practices centered on the conceptualization and use of documents. In doing so, it contests the widespread narrative that twentieth-century French literature abandons the realist enterprise, and argues that writers instead renegotiate the realist legacy outside, or at the margins of, the fictional space of the novel. Analyzing works by authors including Gide, Breton, Aragon, Yourcenar, Duras, and Modiano, the book defines a specific documentary mode of literary representation that records, assembles, and investigates

material traces of reality. The document is a textual, visual, or material piece of evidence repurposed through its visual insertion, textual transcription, or description within a literary work. It is a fact, but it also becomes a figure, standing for literature's confrontation with the real. The documentary imagination involves a fantasy of direct access to a reality that speaks for itself. At the same time, it gives rise to concrete textual practices that open up new directions for literature, by interrogating the construction and interpretation of facts.

Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ Ⓜ . Alan Morris has shown that Modiano's revision of the text between the 1997 Gallimard Blanche and the 1999 Folio edition ... 121 Alan Morris , " Avec Klarsfeld , contre l'oubli : Patrick Modiano's Dora Bruder , " Journal of European ..."