

**BILL SHERMAN**  
**MATERIALS AND METHODS: MARGINALIA**  
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1) [Turning to original manuscripts after years of studying them in modern printed editions, I found texts that] had rough edges, not the clean carefully pruned lines of critical editions; ...edges...filled with dialogue about the text—glosses, marginal notes, pointing hands, illuminations...activities by which medieval people transformed one manuscript into another.  
--John Dagenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture* (1993)

2) [By the second decade of the sixteenth century] the printer's provision of all the aids that had previously been added [by hand]...effected the final step in the transformation of reading. In antiquity reading had implied an active role in the reception of the text.... Throughout the Middle Ages readers, even long after a book had been confected, felt free to clarify its meaning through the addition of...marginalia. Under the influence of printing, reading became increasingly an activity of the passive reception of a text that was inherently clear and unambiguous.

--Paul Saenger and Michael Heinlen, "Incunable Description and its Implication for the Analysis of Fifteenth-Century Reading Habits" (1991)

3) ...difficult words, or matters of speciall obseruation, [which] they doe reade in any Author, [should] be marked out; I meane all such words or things as eyther are hard to them in the learning of them, or which are of some speciall excellency, or vse.... For the marking of them, to doe it with little lines vnder them, or aboue them, or against such partes of the word wherein the difficulty lieth, or by some prickes, or whatsoever letter or marke may best helpe to cal the knowledge of the thing to remembrance.... To doe this, to the end that they may oft-times reade ouer these, or examine and meditate of them more seriously, vntill that they be as perfect in them, as in any of the rest of their bookes: for hauing these then haue they all.

...In the highest fourmes, cause them to set downe all the Sermons. As Text, diuision, exposition, or meaning, doctrines, and how the seuerall doctrines were gathered, all the proofes, reasons, vses, applications. ...And also for further directing them, and better helping their vnderstanding and memories, for the repetition thereof; cause them to leaue spaces betweene euery part, and where neede is to diuide them with lines. So also to distinguish the seuerall parts by letters or figures, and setting the sum of euery thing in the margent ouer against each matter in a word or two. ...Direct them to leaue good margents for these purposes and so soone as euer the Preacher quotes any scripture, as he nameth it, to set it in the Margent against the place, lest it slip out of memorie. And presently after the sermon is done, to run ouer all againe, correcting it, and setting downe the sum of euerie chief head, faire and distinctly in the margent ouer against the place, if his leasure will suffer.

...*Legere & non intellegere negligere est*. To read and not to vnderstand what wee read, or not to know how to make vse of it, is nothing else but a neglect of all good learning, and a meere abuse of the means & helps to attaine the same.

--John Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius: Or, The Grammar Schoole* (1612)

4)

...this one pleasoure haue I  
Of bokes[:] to haue grete plenty and aparayle[.]  
I take no wysdome by them....  
But yet I haue them in great reuerence  
And honoure[,] sauynge them from fylth and ordure

By often brusshynge, and moche dylygence[.]  
 Full goodly bounde in pleasaunt couerture  
 Of domas, satyn, or els of veluet pure[.]  
 ...Lo in lyke wyse of bokys I haue store[.]  
 But fewe I rede, and fewer vnderstande[:]  
 I folowe nat theyr doctryne nor theyr lore[.]  
 It is ynoughe to bere a boke in hande[.]  
 --Sebastian Brant, "De inutilibus libris [Unused Books]," *Stultifera navis [The Ship of Fools]*  
 (1509)

5) ¶ turne back & beginn at this marke ¶ Heare much. Speake little. Meditate, and gather the hony, of whatsoever you reade or heare spoken./ casting awaye all vanitie, and superfluities of vanitie./ that your hart may be the tresurie of all vertue, and true substance of matter./ ✎ now read Through the gracious will of God, &c:

☞ And lastly I desyre you in the name of the Lorde, to peruse often & diligently these places of scripture quoted in the Margin which is the lyfe of these myne exhortations to the[e] and your excercise therein maye make the more deepe impression in your mynde, bycause they procede from God himself, which places, as they are gathered and sett vpon the very point of my Meditations, so, let the Lord ingrowe the same in our harts, whose holy spirit be ever with you. Your Louing Grandmother, Grace Mildmay.

--The closing "Exhortations" in *Lady Grace Mildmay's Meditations* (d.1620)

6) Fragments of verse, lists of clothing, enigmatic phrases, incomplete calculations, sassy records of ownership: some of these traces merely puzzle. Drawings and doodlings in other copies hint at other associations or preoccupations: a shield painted in watercolors, impish faces peering out from the margin, geometric figures on a flyleaf, a mother and child on a blank sheet. Pens are not the only objects that have left impressions in these books; pressed flowers survive in two volumes, and the rust outlines of a pair of scissors [in] two other copies. ...Fifty-six percent of the books carry marginalia or scribblings on flyleaves, most commonly in the form of penmanship practice, emendations, underlinings, and finding notes.

--Heidi Brayman Hackel's description of the marks she found in surveying 150 early copies of Sidney's *Arcadia* in *Reading Material in Early Modern England* (2005)

7)

A. Marks with no apparent relationship to the book: include doodles, pen trials, and drafts or sample texts.

B. Notes with an oblique relationship to the book: include ownership marks, copied letterforms or texts, copied illuminations, additional texts, marks of attribution, tables of contents, and introductory materials.

C. Marks that constitute a coherent or systematic response to the text:

- I. Narrative Reading Aids (Topic, Source, Citation, Dramatis Personae, Rhetorical Device, Translation, Summation [either gleaned from the text or paraphrased])
- II. Ethical Pointers (Precepts, Exemplifications, Exhortations)
- III. Polemical Responses (Social Comment, Ecclesiastical Comment, Political Comment)
- IV. Literary Responses (Participation, Humor, Allegory, Language Issues)
- V. Graphical Responses (Illuminations, Initials, Punctuation)

--Carl James Grindley's taxonomy of readers marks in *Medieval and Early Modern manuscripts and printed books* (2001)

**MARGINALIA AND OTHER MARKS IN BOOKS  
(MOSTLY MED-REN AND MOSTLY ENGLISH)**

**ESSENTIAL READINGS**

Barney, Stephen A. (ed.). Annotation and its Texts (Oxford UP, 1991)

Baron, Sabrina (ed.). The Reader Revealed (Washington, DC: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2001)

Blair, Ann. "Reading Strategies for Coping with Information Overload." Journal of the History of Ideas 64 (2003), 11-28

Brayman Hackel, Heidi. Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy (Cambridge UP, 2005)

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Cormack, Bradin and Carla Mazzio. Book Use, Book Theory, 1500-1700 (University of Chicago Library, 2005)

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Duffy, Eamon. Marking the Hours: English People and Their Prayers, 1240-1570 (Yale UP, 2006)

Gingerich, Owen. The Book Nobody Read: Chasing the Revolutions of Nicolaus Copernicus (London: Arrow, 2004)

Grafton, Anthony. Commerce with the Classics: Ancient Books and Renaissance Readers (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 1997)

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Jackson, H. J. Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books (Yale UP, 2001)

Jardine, Lisa and Anthony Grafton. "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy," Past and Present 129 (1990), 30-78

Myers, Robin, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote (eds.). Owners, Annotators and the Signs of Reading (British Library/Oak Knoll, 2005)

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Schurink, Fred. "'Like a hand in the margine of a booke': William Blount's Marginalia and the Politics of Sidney's Arcadia," Review of English Studies 59 (2008)

Sharpe, Kevin. Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England (Yale UP, 2000)

Sherman, William H. Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007)

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Slights, William W. E. Managing Readers: Printed Marginalia in English Renaissance Books (Ann Arbor: U Michigan P, 2001)

Stoddard, Roger. Marks in Books, Illustrated and Explained (Houghton Library, Harvard University, 1985)

Van Hulle, Dirk and Wim Van Mierlo (eds.). Reading Notes (a special issue), Variants 2/3 (2004)

Zwicker, Steven N. "The Constitution of Opinion and the Pacification of Reading," in Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker (eds.), Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England (Cambridge UP, 2003)

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