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THE READER IN THE BOOK

A Study of Spaces and Traces

STEPHEN ORGEL

ACRON



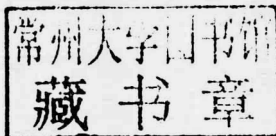
H Vmano capiti. De inæqualitate operis lo-
quitur & dat præceptū scribēdi poema. Et
prius præceptū ē de dispositione & cōuenientia
carminis. Scribit autē ad Pisones uiros nobiles &
disertos: ad patrē & filiū: uel ut alii dicūt ad fra-
tres. capiti at cōparat poema: q̄ sine œconomia
fit picturæ eiusmodi simile: quæ habebat ceruicē
equinā & diuersorū animaliuū mēbra & pēnas q̄
p̄sona desinat in piscē. ¶ Et uarias inducere plu-
mas. i. ponere plumas uariis coloribus natura flo-
ridas: uel uarios diuersarū auiū colores. ¶ Undiq̄
ex diuersis. s. animalibus. ¶ Collatis autē mēbris.
cōiunctis ad superiorē & descriptā formā: ut ha-
beat humanū caput & collū equi & caudam pi-
scis. & multū præcipit conuenientiam poetā ser-
uare debere. ¶ Atrum. foedū: magnum. ¶ Desinat.
finiat. ¶ In piscem. hoc est in marinam belluam. i.
pistricem. ¶ Formosa superne. ut facie sit formo-
sa mulier. inferius autem monstris uariis detur.

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OXFORD TEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES

The Reader in the Book

STEPHAN JEDAL

OXFORD
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GENERAL EDITORS

Elaine Treharne Greg Walker

To
Bradin Cormack
lectori optimo
carissimo amico

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Marginalia have always fascinated me. I have collected volumes with marks of ownership and annotations for decades, and have written occasionally about them. The fascinating exhibit at the Harvard Library *Marks in Books* organized by Roger Stoddard in 1985, with its excellent catalogue, helped to focus my interests, and H. J. Jackson's *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (2001), though concerned with later periods, offered a valuable example of how to take marginalia into account in writing about the history of books. But the idea that my passion could become a book of my own derives largely from encouraging conversations with the great pioneer in this field, William Sherman, as well as from the recent exemplary models provided by his *Used Books* and Heidi Brayman Hackel's *Reading Material in Early Modern England*. *The Reader in the Book* derives more immediately from the enthusiasm of my colleague Elaine Treharne, who saw the shape of the project before I did, and over a thrilling lunch made it all possible. For discussions over many years, and constant material assistance, I am indebted to Stanford's superb Curator of Rare Books, John Mustain; and, for receptive audiences, to the students in the course we teach jointly in "The History of the Book." For two decades I have had my best reader, Bradin Cormack, to talk with about marginalia; he has supplied me with endless information and excellent advice, as well as tireless paleographical and linguistic assistance. Early in the project Diego Pirillo helped me to clarify the argument and pointed me to useful references. Maurizio Campanelli deciphered the first of many sets of baffling Latin postilli for me, and Jane Stevenson generously responded to queries about the history of Latin pronunciation. My polymath colleague Ivan Lupać has been a peerless interpreter of Renaissance Latin and bad handwriting; he led me to Irena Bratičević of the University of Zagreb, who promptly solved the most intractable bit of my intractable schoolboy Latin cruxes. During the six months of my visiting professorship at Harvard's Villa I Tatti in Fiesole, I benefitted from the expertise of my colleagues Eugenio Refini and Davide Baldi,

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“Reading Lady Anne Clifford’s *A Mirovr for Magistrates*,” in *Lady Anne Clifford: Culture, Patronage and Gender in 17th-Century Britain*, ed. Karen Hearn and Lynne Hulse (Yorkshire Archeological Society Occasional Paper No. 7, 2009); “Marginal Maternity: Reading Lady Anne Clifford’s *A Mirror for Magistrates*,” in *Printing and Parenting in Early Modern England*, ed. Douglas A. Brooks (Aldershot, Hants: Ashgate, 2005).

“The Book of the Play,” in *From Performance to Print in Shakespeare’s England*, ed. Peter Holland and Stephen Orgel (Basingstoke, Hants: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

“Margins of Truth,” in *The Renaissance Text*, ed. Andrew Murphy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

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Reading in Action

Textuality has therefore become the exact antithesis and displacement of what might be called history. Textuality is considered to take place, yes, but by the same token it does not take place anywhere or anytime in particular. It is produced, but by no one and at no time. It can be read and interpreted, although reading and interpreting are routinely understood to occur in the form of misreading and misinterpreting. The list of examples could be extended indefinitely, but the point would remain the same. As it is practiced in the American academy today, literary theory has for the most part isolated textuality from the circumstances, the events, the physical senses that made it possible and render it intelligible as the result of human work.

Edward Said, "Secular Criticism"¹

General statements in humanities disciplines [...] are neither enunciations of general laws which are testable by experiment, as in the physical sciences, nor are they probabilities expressed in statistical form as in the social sciences. Often, in current practice they turn out to be deliberated hypotheses; historical scholarship is a department of rhetoric. In particular, whatever general claims we may like to make about "The Renaissance reader" cannot be assumed in advance to apply to any given individual act of reading.

Harold Love, "Early Modern Print Culture"²

¹ Edward Said, "Secular Criticism," in *The Edward Said Reader*, ed. M. Bayoumi and A. Rubin (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), pp. 221–2.

² Harold Love, "Early Modern Print Culture," *Parergon* 20.1 (January 2003), 45.

This is a book about individual acts of reading. Writing it has been possible only because reading in early modern culture sometimes left traces, and sometimes those traces are decipherable. In the past twenty years or so there has been a revolution in bibliographical studies which has involved noticing what had been unnoticeable and finding evidence in the hitherto irrelevant; so that habits of reading, manifested in various marks and marginalia, have become as central to the nature of the book as format and typography, watermarks and chain lines. The recent history of the book, in this construction, is not merely a history of print technology; more important, the history of any particular book does not conclude with its publication. Much significant recent work in the field focuses on readers, booksellers, and collectors, rather than on printers and publishers, on bindings and inscriptions rather than on foul papers (rough drafts), copy texts, scribes, and compositors, and views the print revolution as, in significant ways, a reading revolution, a revolution not only of technology but also of dissemination and reception.

My focus here is on a particular aspect of this history of the book, an archaeology of the use of margins and other blank spaces, a sociology of reading and writing in relation to ownership. What did early modern people write in their books, and how can we, as historians of both the book and literature, take it into account? One of the most commonplace aspects of old books is the fact that people wrote in them, something that until very recently has infuriated modern collectors and librarians. But these inscriptions constitute a significant dimension of the book's history; and one of the strangest phenomena of modern bibliophilic and curatorial psychology has been the desire for pristine copies of books, books that reveal no history of ownership (modern first editions especially lose a large percentage of their value if they have an owner's name on the flyleaf, unless the owner is very famous, or the name is part of an inscription from the author). It has not been uncommon for collectors to attempt to obliterate early marginalia, as if to restore the book's virginity. A 1997 catalogue of the venerable London bookseller Bernard Quaritch lists a first edition of *Areopagitica* with two manuscript corrections, which are "very faint [...] all but washed out during some restoration in the past."³ The same corrections

³ Bernard Quaritch (London), Catalogue 1243 (1997), item 50.