CHAPTER I

Towards a material history of reading

This book was written over a decade that brought electronic communication and literacy into the offices and homes of a great variety of readers, fundamentally altering the material form of much of their reading and writing. Companies now circulate memos electronically, families keep in touch through email, consumers shop online, travelers plan itineraries on the web, acquaintances "google" one another before a first date. As email supplants air mail, as websites displace storefronts, electronic formats, it would follow, will replace printed books. Within the academy, research libraries have pushed readers towards electronic versions of scholarly journals, and leaders of major professional organizations have called for modifications to the tenure process to recognize the electronic publication of monographs. And yet this seemingly irreversible proliferation of electronic media and its displacement of print have prompted a range of questions about the materiality and the survival of printed books: what practices does the codex encourage and allow? What should be preserved of this medium? What is extraneous? What might an electronic book look like? What would it make possible? Further, readers' continued attachment to printed books begins to suggest the extent to which the very materiality of the book matters to them. To devoted readers of print, the codex seems at once wonderfully portable, hefty, durable, and destructible. As a child, I perched atop a stack of books on a chair to reach the dinner table at a holiday meal. As a college student, I ascended a fog-shrouded mountainside once I'd torn pages from a copy of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* and placed them under rocks to guide my descent. As a graduate student, I learned how to read books not just in the bath but in the shower as well. As the mother of two small children, I have discovered anew the force that books can hold as objects and occasions for rituals. To earmark a page, to remember a passage by its placement midway down a left opening, to scribble a name on a flyleaf: all these acts depend upon the spines, bindings,

I

and pages of printed books, which at once make and hold impressions for
their readers.

   As our own culture grapples with the anxieties and the promise attendant
upon a new medium, the historicity and materiality of reading are brought
into sharp relief. For all its seeming ethereality, privacy, and idiosyncrasy,
the act of reading is finally rooted in the material facts and circumstances
of a specific culture and historical moment. Virginia Woolf anticipated
recent scholars' claims for the historicity of reading when she conjured "the
ghosts of those old readers" as she gazed at the handwritten names on the
flyleaves of her copy of *The Countesse of Pembrokes Arcadia*: "Each has read
differently, with the insight and the blindness of his own generation."[1] Such
insight and blindness, the fascinations and habits of several generations of
early modern readers, are the objects of this present inquiry. As Woolf
observed, these "ghosts" have left traces in the flyleaves and margins of
their books. But many readers did not leave even such ghostly traces, and
the phantasmagoria of many others has long since vanished. While both
of Woolf's texts here – Sidney's *Arcadia* and the manuscript marks on
the flyleaves – are central to this study, material evidence of past readers
survives as well in the preliminaries of their books and the records of their
consumption. My investigation into all these material traces recovers actual
readers rather than the phantom idealized readers of recent critical theory.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND THEORETICAL CONTEXTS

This book belongs to the emerging field of the history of early modern
reading, and it both complements and challenges the pioneering work of
Anthony Grafton, Lisa Jardine, and William Sherman.[2] Whereas their work

---

[1] Virginia Woolf, "The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia," *The Common Reader*, 2nd ser. (New York: Harcourt, 1948), p. 38. In a lucid survey of the methodological challenges for the historian of reading, Robert Darnton argues persuasively that "reading has a history. It was not always and everywhere the same. . . . As our ancestors lived in different mental worlds, they must have read differently" ("First Steps Toward a History of Reading," *Australian Journal of French Studies* 23 [1986]: 24). See also James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor (eds.), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 5–10; and Sasha Roberts, "Reading in Early Modern England: Contexts and Problems," *Critical Survey* 12.2 (2000): 1–16. Jonathan Culler and Susan Noakes earlier insisted upon the historicity of reading when making claims about the formation of literary systems and the development of the canon. See Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 130; Susan Noakes, *Timely Reading: Between Exegesis and Interpretation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. ix, xi–xii.

[2] Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton's seminal article, "'Studied for Action': How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy" (*Past and Present* 129 [1990]: 30–78), opened and initially defined the field. Major studies include William H. Sherman, *John Dee: The Politics of Reading and Writing in the English Renaissance*

takes as its focus the "goal-orientated" reading of professional scholars, this project centers on less extraordinary readers.[3] Shifting the attention from men of letters to men and women at leisure, this study examines the recreational reading of the "trifles" and "riffe-raffe" books – prose romances, poetic miscellanies, playbooks, chapbooks – that now constitute the literature of the period. The reading of these texts is central to the period's own self-definition and crucial to our understanding of the period and its literature. As John Heminge and Henry Condell addressed the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays "To the great Variety of Readers," defining this "Variety" as encompassing readers "From the most able, to him that can but spell," *Reading Material* examines the acts and habits of a "great Variety" of early modern readers. None, perhaps, is ordinary, for to have survived in the historical record at all is to beat the odds, but the readers glimpsed in the following chapters are, at least, more various and less extraordinary than those described in earlier studies.[4]

The history of reading is a highly interdisciplinary and necessarily collaborative field, and it will take many studies to map out the multiple histories

---

(Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995); Eugene R. Kintgen, *Reading in Tudor England*, Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996); Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); and Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2002). Providing broader surveys of Western reading are Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading* (New York: Penguin, 1996), and Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).

[3] For "goal-orientated" reading, see Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action'"; Jardine and Sherman, "Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in Late Elizabethan England," in Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture, and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 102–24; and Sherman, "The Place of Reading in the English Renaissance: John Dee Revisited," in Raven, Small, and Tadmor (eds.), *Practice and Representation*, pp. 62–76. Sharpe's case study of Sir William Drake, too, illuminates the practices of an extraordinary reader who "studied for action." Sharpe describes Drake's range of reading as "awe-inspiring" and his manuscript records as "the best opportunity to address all the questions about how seventeenth-century readers read" (*Reading Revolutions*, pp. 258, 78, 62). Kintgen's *Reading in Tudor England* does not move much beyond exceptional readers like Gabriel Harvey and E. K. of Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender*. Notable exceptions to this focus on elite readers are the studies by Margaret Spufford, Tessa Watt, and Adam Fox. Fox attempts to "capture people from the lower and middling ranks of early seventeenth-century English society in the act of reading." He does so by focusing on juridical accounts of the circulation of scurrilous verses at "the least literate levels of society" ("Popular Verses and Their Readership in the Early Seventeenth Century," in Raven, Small, and Tadmor [eds.], *Practice and Representation*, pp. 125–26, 136).

[4] J. Heminge and H. Condell, "To the great Variety of Readers," in *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies* (London, 1623), rpt. in Charlton Hinman (ed.), *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, 2nd edn., with an introduction by Peter W. M. Blayney (New York: Norton, 1996), sig. A3^r. Many of these readers are what microhistorians would call "normal exceptions." See chapter 5 for a fuller discussion of this concept.

of early modern reading.[5] This study contributes to this growing conversation with its full inclusion of women in this history and with its attention to actions on both sides of the printing press. While several scholars have skillfully documented the constructions of female readers, that important work attends more closely to representation than to practice.[6] Recent work in several other closely related fields informs my study and lays the groundwork for some of the issues explored here. Harold Love, Arthur Marotti, Steven May, H. R. Woudhuysen, and Ian Moulton have uncovered many of the material practices of manuscript circulation in early modern England, while other scholars have advanced our understanding of the role of printed books in both reflecting and producing social anxiety.[7] Juliet Fleming's

[5] Frances E. Dolan calls for more collaboration across disciplinary lines generally in the project of understanding early modern England ("Ashes and 'the Archive': The London Fire of 1666, Partisanship, and Proof," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 [2001]: 379–408). Significantly, a number of collections of essays have shaped the field, beginning with Raven, Small, and Tadmor (eds.), *Practice and Representation*. See also Sasha Roberts (ed.), *Reading in Early Modern England*, special issue of *Critical Survey* 12.2 (2000); Sabrina A. Baron (ed.), with Elizabeth Walsh and Susan Scola, *The Reader Revealed* (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2001); Jennifer Andersen and Elizabeth Sauer (eds.), *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002); and Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (eds.), *Reading, Society, and Politics in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). The richness of the field is well documented in John Barnard and D. F. McKenzie (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4: *1557–1695* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[6] Mary Ellen Lamb, "Women Readers in Mary Wroth's *Urania*," in Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller (eds.), *Reading Mary Wroth: Representing Alternatives in Early Modern England* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 210–27, and "Constructions of Women Readers," in Susanne Woods and Margaret P. Hannay (eds.), *Teaching Tudor and Stuart Women Writers* (New York: Modern Language Association, 2000), pp. 23–34; Frances Dolan, "Reading, Writing, and Other Crimes," in Valerie Traub, M. Lindsay Kaplan, and Dympna Callaghan (eds.), *Feminist Readings of Early Modern Culture: Emerging Subjects* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 142–67; Jacqueline Pearson, "Women Reading, Reading Women," in Helen Wilcox (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 80–99; Eve Rachele Sanders, *Gender and Literacy on Stage in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003). For discussions of historical women readers who were not also authors, see Lamb, "The Agency of the Split Subject: Lady Anne Clifford and the Uses of Reading," *English Literary Renaissance* 22 (1992): 347–68, and "Margaret Hoby's Diary: Women's Reading Practices and the Gendering of the Reformation Subject," in Sigrid King (ed.), *Pilgrimage for Love: Essays in Early Modern Literature in Honor of Josephine A. Roberts* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), pp. 63–94; and Mary Erler, "The Books and Lives of Three Tudor Women," in Jean R. Brink (ed.), *Privileging Gender in Early Modern England* (Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1993), pp. 5–17. Sasha Roberts, *Reading Shakespeare's Poems*, and Helen Hackett, *Women and Romance Fiction in the English Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), notably include both representations and practices.

[7] See especially Evelyn Byrd Tribble, *Margins and Marginality: The Printed Page in Early Modern England* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993); Alexandra Halasz, *The Marketplace of Print: Pamphlets and the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); and Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). Lori Humphrey Newcomb usefully bridges work on oral popular

work on wall-writing and graffiti challenges understandings of the relationship between writing, reading, and domesticity by arguing that the whitewashed domestic wall may have been "the primary scene of writing in early modern England." Although they work on different periods and cultures, leading historians of the book (most notably Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Cathy Davidson, and David Hall) have defined a set of concerns and methodologies that can be transferred to early modern England.[8]

While it is deeply informed by this historical work, my study of reading belongs to the larger framework of literary inquiry from which it emerged. Among the most significant contributions of literary theory in the past three decades has been the opening up of the category of the text. Post-structuralism undermined the stability of the text itself while feminism, New Historicism, and cultural studies have expanded the set of texts deemed appropriate for literary study. Critiques of the New Bibliography have drawn attention to the multiple agencies that produce a text, and the New Textualism has focused on the "materiality" of the text.[9] Post-structuralist proclamations of the "death of the author" and textual bibliographers' attention to multiple agency have prompted important questions about authorship. Just as notions of the text and of authorship have been interrogated and revised, the other member of the trio – the reader – also demands

---

culture and emergent print authorship in her notion of "popular print authorship" (*Reading Popular Romance in Early Modern England* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2002]).

[8] Juliet Fleming, "Graffiti, Grammatology, and the Age of Shakespeare," in Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (eds.), *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 329. David D. Hall provides an overview of the history of reading in early America with a perspective that is "recurrently transatlantic"; his final essay succinctly surveys the challenges and variety of methodological and theoretical approaches in this field (*Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996], pp. 1, 169–87).

[9] For classics of post-structuralism, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), and Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text*, trans. Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975). For a critique of the New Bibliography, see Jerome J. McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Joseph Loewenstein examines the origins of the New Bibliography in "Authentic Reproductions: The Material Origins of the New Bibliography," in Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger (eds.), *Textual Formations and Reformations* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1998), pp. 23–44, and *The Author's Due: Printing and the Prehistory of Copyright* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). Douglas A. Brooks usefully surveys the shifting place of the author in twentieth-century textual scholarship in *From Playhouse to Printing House: Drama and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 3–9. See, too, Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass on the "materiality of the text," a central tenet of the New Textualism ("The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44 [1993]: 255–83), and Leah S. Marcus on the "new field of textual studies that investigates the historically situated nature of textual production (whether manuscript or printed material) and textual alteration over time," which she dubs the "new philology" ("Shopping-Mall Shakespeare: Quartos, Folios, and Social Difference," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58 [1996]: 163). H. Aram Veeser, *The New Historicism* (New York: Routledge, 1989) provides a useful orientation.

rigorous theorization and historicization. Reader-response critics have ably foregrounded the role of the reader, developing theories of reading and establishing the reader as central to the construction of textual meaning. The power attributed to the reader varies from critic to critic, as these theorists are united not so much by a coherent, consistent doctrine as by their efforts to bring the reader back into the center of literary understanding.[10] Feminist criticism, too, attends to the reader, specifically the female reader and the ways in which her reading experience is gendered and has been obscured by male critics, who have shaped a literary canon around the reading experiences that they have found pleasurable.[11]

   Reader-response and feminist criticism have done much to focus attention on the reader; both approaches, however, tend to theorize, rather than adequately historicize, the position of this reader. Reader-response critics often ignore actual readers in favor of theoretical constructs, variously described as "mock," "ideal," "model," "implied," "encoded," "informed," and "super" readers.[12] Even the tendency to refer in the singular to

[10] Their success might be measured by Umberto Eco's observation in 1990: "Undoubtedly the universe of literary studies has been haunted during the last years by the ghost of the reader" (*The Limits of Interpretation* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990], p. 46). For an overview of reader-response criticism and reception theories, see Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader-Response Criticism* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Janice Radway, "Interpretive Communities and Variable Literacies: The Functions of Romance Reading," *Daedalus* 113.3 (1984): 49–73; Susan R. Suleiman, "Introduction: Varieties of Audience-Oriented Criticism," in Susan Suleiman and Inge Crosman (eds.), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 3–45; and Jane P. Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). For more recent work, see James L. Machor and Philip Goldstein (eds.), *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

[11] Annette Kolodny connects aesthetic judgment and reading experience when she observes that "we read well, and with pleasure, what we already know how to read" ("Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice, and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism," in Elaine Showalter [ed.], *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory* [New York: Pantheon, 1985], p. 154). Samuel Torshell anticipated this insight in a seventeenth-century sermon: "We are easily *fashioned* into what we reade much, and with delight" (*The Womans Glorie. A Treatise, Asserting the Due Honour of That Sexe, and Directing Wherein That Honour Consists* [London, 1645], pp. 125–26).

[12] For "mock," see Walker Gibson, "Authors, Speakers, Readers, and Mock Readers," in Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism*, pp. 1–6; for "ideal," see Culler, *Structuralist Poetics*, p. 124; for "model," see Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), p. 7; for "implied," see Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 34–38; for "encoded," see Christine Brooke-Rose, "The Readerhood of Man," in Suleiman and Crosman (eds.), *Reader in the Text*, pp. 122–48; for "informed," see Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 48–49; and for "super," see Michael Riffaterre, "Describing Poetic Structures: Two Approaches to Baudelaire's 'Les Chats,'" in Tompkins (ed.), *Reader-Response Criticism*, pp. 37–38. Freund provides an even longer list of these proliferating "personifications" of the reader (*Return of the Reader*, p. 7), and Eco names "an equally

"the reader" obscures the diversity of individual readers and the range of reading practices available at any one historical moment. Though feminist criticism emphasizes that readers are performing a learned activity that is deeply embedded in the ideologies of their culture, it still threatens to slide into transhistorical notions of an essentialized female reader.[13] While reader-response and feminist critics have theorized the role of the reader in literary production, the necessary historical work has only begun. "Theory has now brought us to the point where we must begin to respond to its significant challenges," David Kastan argues, "not by producing more theory but more facts, however value-laden they will necessarily be, that will reveal the specific historical conditions that have determined the reading and writing of literature."[14] Scholars, therefore, need now to return to the archives with the questions that literary theory has raised but cannot fully answer. This study responds to these questions by tracking historical readers, who linger in material traces in early modern books and in other documentary records. By historicizing the experiences of various readers, we may hope to understand more fully the ways in which gender shapes reading and the forms in which readers and authors contest and create meaning.

Certainly, scholars have long been studying how great writers made use of their reading: how Spenser read Chaucer, how Shakespeare read Holinshed, how Milton read Spenser. All source studies, after all, are ultimately investigations into the procedures of extraordinary readers. Recent work has been conducted as well on material records of these great readers' habits: interpreting famous readers' handwritten annotations, scholars catch Ben Jonson reading Spenser, Gabriel Harvey mulling over Livy.[15]

---

impressive crowd" (*Limits of Interpretation*, p. 44). Culler takes as his interest not the performance of reading but the underlying competence required for this performance, that is, not what actual readers do but what an "ideal reader must know implicitly" (*Structuralist Poetics*, pp. 123–24). Kintgen's work follows this approach in focusing on "discourses about reading and not . . . what readers actually did" (*Reading in Tudor England*, p. 13). For a thoughtful defense of a cultural study of implied readers, see Randall Ingram, "*Lego Ego*: Reading Seventeenth-Century Books of Epigrams," in Andersen and Sauer (eds.), *Books and Readers*, pp. 160–76.

[13] Pointing to Judith Fetterley's notion of the "resisting reader," David Hall has observed, "In the case of women's reading, an adequately historical description has taken second place to ideological criticism" (*Cultures of Print*, p. 182). Janice Radway's ethnographic work with the female romance readers of "Smithton" is a notable exception, which Hall, too, singles out for praise (*Cultures of Print*, p. 184). In a new introduction, Radway argues for the historicity of reading and calls for "ethnographies of reading" (*Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, new edn. [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991], p. 4).

[14] David Scott Kastan, *Shakespeare After Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 31.

[15] For Jonson's marginalia in his copy of the 1617 Spenser Folio, see James A. Riddell and Stanley Stewart, *Jonson's Spenser: Evidence and Historical Criticism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press,

This study attends instead to the constructions and practices of less extraordinary readers, who often remain visible in the historical record only because of their occasional traces in books. For it is these readers, not the celebrated poets or career scholars, whose entry into the print marketplace provoked debate and changed the definition of literacy in early modern England. By telling their stories, *Reading Material* displaces both the singular "ideal" or transhistorical reader and the extraordinary male reader.

STRUCTURE AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

This book seeks to historicize, rather than idealize or merely theorize, the various experiences of early modern readers. But such work presents many challenges: much of the information that would be valuable to the recovery of their reading habits was never recorded or even articulated, and much surely has been lost. It is hard enough to work with living readers, as Norman Holland and Janice Radway have shown.[16] For readers rarely articulate their assumptions, and the historian of reading is trapped within her own reading strategies and habits of interpretation. Roger Chartier pinpoints this primary challenge when he describes reading as a practice "that only rarely leaves traces, that is scattered in an infinity of singular acts, and that easily shakes off all constraints." Yet for all its elusiveness, reading is always a material practice "embodied in acts, spaces, and habits."[17] Accordingly, the work for a history of reading must be done piecemeal, with an alertness to particulars and attention to anecdote.

This study examines the intellectual and material activities on both sides of the early modern printing press in order to reconstruct both the strategies recommended to readers and the practices in which they then engaged. Throughout, constructions and representations of readers are balanced

---

1995). See, too, Robert C. Evans, "Ben Jonson's Library and Marginalia: New Evidence from the Folger Collection," *Philological Quarterly* 66 (1987): 521–28; "Ben Jonson's Chaucer," *English Literary Renaissance* 19 (1989): 324–45; "Ben Jonson Reads Daphnis and Chloe," *English Language Notes* 27.4 (1990): 28–32; "Jonson's Copy of Seneca," *Comparative Drama* 25 (1991): 257–92. On Harvey, see Jardine and Grafton, "'Studied for Action.'" One could use this basic approach but cast a wider net: Isabel Whitney and Margaret Tyler, for instance, both write revealingly about their reading in the prefaces to their works. In an even fuller account, Esther Sowernam makes one process of reading explicit in her point-by-point refutation of Swetnam's misogynist tract, *The Arraignment of Women* (London, 1617). But the approach still restricts an investigation to the extraordinary reader, that is, the published author as reader.

[16] Norman N. Holland, *5 Readers Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), and Radway, *Reading the Romance*.

[17] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 1–3.

against their practices. Most broadly, the book moves from the question "What did books tell readers to do?" to its counterpart, "What did readers do with their books?" Owen Feltham, leaving room in his book "for the *Comments* of the man that reads," expressed a willingness to share the page with his readers and recognized textual meaning as constructed by both authors and readers.[18] Accordingly, a study of early modern reading needs to explore the activities on both sides of the press. Robert Darnton has charted a model of a communications circuit, in which the "life cycle" of a printed book progresses from author to publisher to printers, shippers, booksellers, and on to readers. Yet, too often, other historians of the book and of reading analyze only one segment of this circuit, thus losing the necessary sense of the relationships between authors, publishers, and readers.[19] Even reader-response critics tend to focus on the text as it is received by the reader, overlooking the ways in which the text–reader relationship is a reciprocal one. As Radway shrewdly observes, these theories are well and tellingly named: for most of these theorists, the priority still rests with the text, which the reader responds to or receives.[20] And yet, for the early modern period at least, the acknowledged reciprocity between authors and publishers and readers shaped the ways in which texts were presented and then read.

In his *Apologie* (1596), Sir John Harington imagines this reciprocity gone awry when a group of hostile readers – "M. Zoilus, M. Momus, and three or four good natured Gentlemen more of the same crew" – assemble at a dinner party. Casting about for something to do after dinner on a rainy night, they begin discussing recently published books, among them Lipsius' *de Cruce*, Rainolds's "booke againste Bellarmine," and two editions of *The Faerie Queene*, until "at last one of them pulled out of his bosome a booke that was not to be sold in Paules Churchyard, but onely that he had borrowed it of his friend."[21] The book is Harington's own *Meta-morphosis of Ajax*, of course. Hostile and bored, these quintessentially bad readers proceed systematically through Harington's book, assessing first

[18] Owen Feltham, *Resolves: A Duple Century* (London, 1628), sig. A2ʳ.
[19] Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* III.3 (1982): 67.
[20] Radway, "Interpretive Communities," p. 51. Several prominent historians of reading have struggled with the limitations of the history of the book and reception theories. In his manifesto for a new history of reading, Chartier rejects both approaches in favor of an "archaeology of reading practices" (*Order of Books*, p. 22). In her study of early American readers of novels, Cathy N. Davidson combines the strengths of reception theory and the history of the book in a new approach she terms "*histoire du texte*" (*Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], p. 4). Kevin Sharpe similarly argues for a "historicised reception theory or historical reader-response criticism" (*Reading Revolutions*, p. 37).
[21] Sir John Harington, *An Apologie, or Rather a Retractation* (London, 1596), sig. A2ʳ.

the title page and then the prefatory letters, printed annotations, and illustrations, before collectively annotating its pages. Maddened by the prefatory verses addressed to them ("Ad Zoilum & Momum") and having already located the dirty bits by following marginal citations to Rabelais, Harington's readers "vowed a solemne reuenge, and taking penne and inke," they annotate his *Metamorphosis of Ajax* page by page.[22] Though these readers misconstrue the work, they nevertheless engage in a range of practices familiar to early modern readers: they have access to books through informal networks, they attend to preliminaries, they read sociably aloud, they use printed marginalia as a finding aid, and they scribble nastily in the margins. (To be fair, their recourse to "fiftie pipes of Tabacco betweene fiue of them" after reading the offending verses is probably atypical.)[23] A real but similarly angry reader, for instance, recorded a frustrating reading experience in his copy of John Hayward's *Edward the Sixt*: "I am a ffoolle for Reding this and hee that Reades itt may kis the Righters Ass."[24]

This study follows the lead of Harington's mock readers in its organization, first setting the scenes of reading, then examining preliminaries, printed marginalia, and readers' annotations, and finally turning to readers excluded from this crew of gentlemen readers. Chapter 2 explores several literary representations of readers and readings, articulating the practices and assumptions that make such scenes of reading possible and plausible. Chapter 3 then establishes the qualities of both "Gentle Readers" and their counterparts, the Zoili, in order to define an ideal reader historically by attending to the instructions and guides most routinely produced by authors, publishers, and printers: preliminary materials and printed annotations.[25] These conventional prescriptions figure "gentle reading" as friendly, compliant, and thorough, and they set a standard by which to measure actual readers' behavior. Chapter 4 responds to these historicized prescriptions by tracking readers through their scribblings in margins and commonplace books and by catching readers fragmenting and applying the texts they have read. From these records emerge scenes of individual readers

---

[22] Ibid., sig. A3ʳ.   [23] Ibid., sig. A2ᵛ.

[24] Sir John Hayward, *The Life, and Raigne of King Edward the Sixt* (Oxford, 1630), Folger Shakespeare Library [henceforth Folger] STC 12998, copy 4, fol. iiʳ. Heather Wolfe kindly advised me on this transcription.

[25] Gérard Genette has termed these parts of the book "paratext," defined as "a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that – whether well or poorly understood and achieved – is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it" (*Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], p. 2).