of antiquarian booksellers. Indeed, apart from John Mappin, who is noted only as a subscriber to this festschrift, not one Canadian bookseller, living or dead, from outside Toronto is even mentioned.

A handsome book, with wonderful illustrations, both in colour and in black and white, it is very much in the elegant style of other publications in the St. Thomas Poetry Series. The editors, David Kent and Patricia Kennedy, have in the past collaborated with Hugh Anson-Cartwright as editor and publisher, notably on the splendid *Household of God: A Parish History of St. Thomas's Church, Toronto* (1993), as well as the poetry series. They have certainly made this celebration a labour of love. Perhaps it will encourage the bookseller to write his memoirs; now that *would* be a remarkable ‘tale of the trade.’

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Among the concerns of book historians today is the relationship between the two terms they use to describe themselves. Taken separately, “book” and “historian” pose few problems, but when they are brought together a barrier arises, and it’s one much harder for historians to scramble over than for bibliographers. “What, after all, *is* book history?” they ask; and why should it matter to scholars whose primary concern is with events and the problems of their interpretation? Surely this field is one of those inevitably spawned by mainstream disciplines to take care of secondary interests? Bibliographers used to be reciprocally innocent about history, but that innocence disappeared after *L’apparition du livre* (1958). And they have always been aware that the documents historians constantly exploit cry out for the kind of technical analysis that few historians—unwarily citing imperfect printed collections and out-dated calendars—are trained to engage in. The face of a young historian, informed of Randall McLeod’s view that most copies of Holinshed’s *Chronicles* (1587) differ from each other, is truly a study. Kevin Sharpe of the University of Southampton has been an exception.
His earliest work on Sir Robert Cotton and his intellectual circle (1979) was the book-centred prelude to a distinguished career in the history of seventeenth-century England, one still in its prolific maturity.

Sharpe’s latest study (at least when last I looked; he seems to produce a 700-page every 18 months) returns to book history, this time in the period of the mid-century Civil Wars. In 1993 he was at the Huntington when that library purchased a manuscript diary by Sir William Drake of Shardeloes (1609-69), a prosperous Buckinghamshire Puritan. Struck by its many references to reading, he subsequently traced and re-identified (for some had been wrongly attributed) no less than 54 volumes of commonplace books and reading notes documenting Drake’s reading from 1627 to the early 1660s, constituting “the greatest archival resource we have to chart how an early modern English gentleman read, and how reading shaped his mental universe” (73). Reading Revolutions consists of a detailed account of these documents, in the form of a case study of Drake and his books, divided into four parts.

Part One, “Learning to Read” is in fact a polemic addressed to those who ignore book history, and with it contemporary thinking about theories of textuality. Though directed specifically to British historians, upon whom it might have had more immediate effect as a journal article, it nevertheless functions as a quick primer for book historians who are themselves uncertain of the theoretical positioning of their work on book production in relation to the texts being produced. We need not only to “read” our texts, but read also their contexts (and not least our own) to understand the textuality of a distant time.

Part Two, “Learning to Read Early Stuart England,” is divided into two chapters. The first focuses on the texts Drake read as he noted them in his commonplace books, and on the seriousness with which he read, advising himself to “do it earnestly gathering together all the power of your mind to the study thereof, neither let your mind wander” (84). Drake notes the content of what he is reading, but also conducts a kind of conversation with himself on its significance, fashioning himself, as it were, as his acquaintance with his texts lengthens and deepens. The self he fashioned was not a pleasant one; he emerges as an intensely manipulative personality, more than a little paranoid and constructing his entire social and intellectual life towards the achievement of his own carefully calculated purposes. In a notebook now at the Folger, he wrote that “a man is
less disordered in his affairs who presupposeth the ingratitude and faithlessness of friends, the envy of neighbours, the fraud and force of enemies” (106). Sharpe’s second chapter is on Drake’s response, as recorded in the Huntington diary, to the decade preceding the Civil Wars of the 1640s. This is primarily a journal of current life and business, though Drake’s omnivorous curiosity, his project-seeking, and his interest in collecting maxims are everywhere in evidence. But though his reading was turned towards the life of action, the political conflicts of the times seem to have proved too much; Drake spent most of the 1640s abroad, engaging in his own form of that “retirement” which was more common among Royalists than Puritans, even those who held to the middle of the road.

In Part Three, “Reading and Revolution,” Sharpe turns to the voluminous and more miscellaneous reading notes Drake made, usually with the aid of an amanuensis, during the later 1640s and 1650s. As he shrewdly points out, such evidence casts a very different light on events than is afforded by the traditional resources of biography or political history. It is here that his definition of reading becomes most capacious; while Drake is reading in his multitude of authors, he is also “reading the world” around him. Sharpe also uses this material to discuss the making of commonplace books in general, and notes the crucial difference it exposes between early modern and contemporary modes of reading:

Our modern reading habit, of annotating as we proceed through a whole book ... is prompted and conditioned by the text. Because we have not laid out headings ... the book itself gives rise to thoughts about how to arrange its observations. By contrast the commonplace method places the reader in a more dominant position and forces the text into categories he has conceived. (181)

As Rolf Engelsing has pointed out (though Sharpe nowhere mentions him), early readers perused a few books intensively—and returned to them often, using different categories—rather than reading many books straight through superficially and then putting them aside. What the sheer quantity of Drake’s notes does succeed in revealing is how much the filter provided by many and various commented editions could transform the reading of those “auctores”; Drake’s Aristotle, Sharpe observes, is sometimes almost unrecognizable to a modern reader. At the same time, Drake was aware that “interpretation was intimately bound up with power and authority. Words used to rulers met with the danger that they ’not be taken as
the party means but as it pleaseth the prince to construe” (217). As Sharpe goes on to show, we see here the substance of a late-Renaissance belief in the cosmic hierarchy, but transmuted into the dark skepticism of an Early Modern observer of the politics of ragione di stato. Drake had read the world as a Hobbesian before he read Hobbes.

In Part Four, “Reading and Politics,” the book dwindles into an over-extended and occasionally repetitious dilation on previous themes, one which does not conclude the book’s argument so much as expand with addenda its already almost superfluous detail. The information on the making of commonplace books by other gentleman readers, and the resources in their libraries, would have been much better situated earlier as comparative material intended to highlight the specific ways Drake used his books. Nevertheless Sharpe casts an interesting glance at annotations in the small number of books traceable from Drake’s now-dispersed library. He finds, as before, that for Drake, “the rules of politics, the principles of prudence and interest, were the rules for all who lived in society; they were manuals for the self” (265). Drake’s saturation in the classics in which he locates these principles marks him off, Sharpe argues, from his contemporaries among the gentry, but he is also marked off from English late-humanist scholars by the devastatingly practical uses to which he believes such learning should be put. From our own time he is marked off by the unexpected sociability of his reading, which Sharpe pays special attention to: the use of an amanuensis, the habit of reading aloud or being read to.

Sharpe is careful to point out that Reading Revolutions is not a study of humanist editions, translations, and commentaries (which he invites) but of “the interaction between scholarship and values, reading and politics” (75). In the end, his study impresses most by the thoroughness with which he has set out for us the daunting profusion of materials which can now be attributed to Drake. But he insists too much that this kind of material has heretofore been too little explored, and the very intensity of his focus on Drake leads him to over-stress his subject’s singularity. Drake’s reading may have been wide, but in character it is replicated in some of the gentry and aristocratic libraries I know of, indeed almost duplicating that of Robert, the second earl of Leicester, on whose larger library and smaller number of commonplace books I have been working. Similarly, Drake’s common-placing and note-taking follow orthodox late-Renaissance practice. Indeed, there is not much that Sharpe lays
before us—beyond the enviable richness of his evidence—that would surprise either a scholar of the Continental Renaissance or an informed historian of early libraries. And his expository method has its limits; though he describes the documents themselves in praiseworthy detail, he has chosen to narrate to us, with the same profusion of detail—what is actually in them, instead of presenting aids to research that would be of greater long-term use: an “Appendix of Books Read,” for example. The long list of authors and titles has to be picked slowly out of the narrative, or tracked in the index.

This is, nevertheless a pioneering study. It’s greatest strength, for the book historian, is in what it contributes to our knowledge of the ways in which a man of that time and place did his reading. Sharpe’s energy, and the forceful and effective way he demonstrates to his fellow historians the case for book history, will surely begin to attract to the field historians who will richly profit from it.

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Mary Pollard’s goal with this dictionary is to provide “a chronological account of the working life of each member of the Dublin book trade, with documentation for each statement made” (xxxix). Perhaps alarmingly for potential users, the first words in the Foreword to this monumental work state that “at the end of several years’ work I realize, too late to mend my ways, that the following accounts of members of the Dublin book trade appear to be, and perhaps are, unnecessarily complicated ... I should be sorry to think that the method of presentation had impeded the use of what is aimed to give both a quick guide to dating the undated book and a basis for further research” (vii). This review takes the stance that Pollard is both right and wrong in her self-assessment. Even a brief comparison with the layout and clarity of Elizabeth Hulse’s A Dictionary of Toronto Printers, Publishers, Booksellers and the Allied Trades, 1798-1900 (Toronto: Anson-Cartwright Editions, 1982) would tend to