
Professor Jackson should have known my grandmother. Her form of correspondence was, cultural protocols aside, that she regarded the entire page of a letter (margins and all) as fair game for her first, second, and (often) third thoughts. So once the template of the "text itself" of the letter had been composed, she would go back into it, writing explanatory (or sometimes coercive) notes scrawling up - and down - the margins (right, left, top, and bottom), either with long scraggly lines keying the note to the original text or with an elaborate system of sigla performing the same function. To her, the letter as genre had not been completed with the central text, but achieved documentary fulfillment only when every possible inviting white space had been covered by her thick and very aggressive-looking hand. She did not (as did some letter-writers of the nineteenth century) write two letters on the same page, with one set of lines conventionally horizontal, these being then overwritten with a second set written vertically. No, to her, the margins and interlinear glosses were the place to construct a single (if interrupted) text. Finally, there was no real expository distinction between text and margin, only the accident of space, and since all of that space was eventually to yield, from sheer exhaustion, to her determination to make the page a totalized expression, the rhetorical (as opposed to the spatial) distinction between text and margin pretty much evaporated.

I mention this documentary anecdote for a number of reasons. To begin with, there is no exact analogue to this peculiar practice of the total enveloping of space in H.J. Jackson's *Marginalia* (though Jackson does deal with individual writers returning to their own notes and reannotating the book being analyzed, sometimes after a considerable period of reconsideration, or after having sent out the book with the first set of annotations to other readers, who would typically add their own layers of notes). Moreover, my grandmother's
notes on herself cover several of the different rhetorical classes of marginalia Jackson observes in her history and genre-study of annotation: the explicatory, the revisionist, the social, the personal, and the interrogative. But my grandmother does not sit easily in Jackson’s typology, which (as the subtitle of the book suggests, “readers writing in books”) depends for the most part on two separate (and chronologically distinct) genres and modes of production: the first is obviously the printed book itself (and Jackson’s survey is bounded by the age of print – and more specifically 1700-2000 – and to some extent by archival collections of printed books in those last three centuries); and second by the manuscript commentary (sometimes pencil, sometimes ink, and Jackson has some very telling examples of this distinction) set down at a later time. My grandmother’s effusions were, of course, all manuscript, and can be considered as part of a single act of utterance, though its serial nature can largely depend on the physical placement on the page. But both Jackson’s concern with the printed book and its manuscript reflections (sometimes then becoming so much a part of the transmission of the work that they might be typeset into later editions), and my grandmother’s complete and aggressive subjugation of the medium can both be seen as a post-New Critical, post-Formalist (in the linguistic sense) denial of the central function of the “text itself” (shorn of its contextual, personal, historical, and bibliographical features). Furthermore, my grandmother’s idiosyncratic usus scribendi and Jackson’s own study can together be seen as a shift towards a concentration on both the spatial nature of book production and dissemination and an incorporation of the annotation, the gloss, the interlinear commentary, even the self-wrought index of topics. (Jackson is particularly insightful in her several analyses of this practice of the personal re-ordering of the topoi of a book, though it is not always clear whether this occurs in books that lack “rival” indices that are essentially put sous nature by the personalized version, or whether the construction of the index – in books that otherwise lack them – can also be seen as a social gesture towards future readers, a distinction between the private and public that is one of the rhetorical staples of her “genre” theory of annotation.) All of these “extra-textual” elements in the physical “make-up” – in both its purely bibliographical as well as its colloquial senses – can also be used as an integral, indeed a necessary part, of the history of the book, especially of course as such features can be regarded as the signs whereby we can chart the reception of books,
and thus provide critical empowerment of the parallel study of the history of reading. As such studies as Gerard Genette’s *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (trans. Jane E. Lewin, Cambridge UP, 1997) – a work (perhaps) strangely not consulted by Jackson – have shown, abetted by Jerome J. McGann’s insistence on the interpretative (if usually ignored) “bibliographical codes” of a book as distinct from its “linguistic codes” (see, for example, his “What Is Critical Editing?” *Text* 5 [1991]: 15-30, repr. in *The Textual Condition* [Princeton UP, 1991]) – the former concentration on the Formalist “text itself” has yielded to a much broader concern with the physicality of the book and concomitantly with those features (among which would be included the readerly interposition and response to the book), which had been largely ignored as extraneous to the scholarly study of book history.

My “perhaps” in reference to Jackson’s omission of Genette (McGann fares only slightly better, in a list of the “Anglo-American context” in a note [p. 272] on a “literate person” having a “repertoire of reading modes” [p. 66]) is a serious comment on the bibliographical territory covered by *Marginalia*, and yet a reminder that, in effect, it is in the sub-title “Readers writing in books,” together with its period limitations, that Jackson’s research and contribution to the field ought to be set rather than in its main title *Marginalia*, even though it was her experience in editing the marginalia, as well as her considerable editorial scholarship in editing the poetry and letters of the most renowned of modern “writers in books,” S. T. Coleridge, that inspired her work in the current book, and even though it was Coleridge who first co-opted the Latin term in a quasi-English usage: “Marginalia. Marginal notes. 1832 Coleridge *Lett. 22 Apr. (1895) II. 76r. A facsimile of John Asgil’s tracts with a life and copious notes, to which I would affix Postilla et Marginalia,” (according to *OED*. 2nd Ed. Electronic Edition. Version 2.0; first citation). Needless to say, what I find fascinating about this citation is not just Coleridge’s usage, but the implied distinction between the “copious notes” and the “marginalia,” together with the fact that Coleridge is sufficiently aware of his Latin co-option that he embeds the *anglicised?* word in a phrase (with “Postilla et”) that could be seen as a recognition that a) marginalia are not the same thing as “copious notes” and that b) *marginalia* (even by its best-known practitioner) partakes of the long non-vernacular tradition to which Coleridge now plans/hopes to create an English-language discourse genre. Now, of course one may argue that an entity (perhaps especially
an entity in the history of letters) can exist in concrete, documentary form long before it receives an accepted genre definition, a definition which Coleridge was himself to undermine by incorporating the “new” genre of “marginalia” within the more loosely defined “copious notes,” but I do not offer here simply a quibble on linguistic history but on Jackson’s (acknowledged, but not fully explicated) awareness that vernacular “marginalia” (or whatever else we should call them before they achieved a proper designation) drew upon a much longer history of classical and medieval and renaissance “readers writing in books” that was a familiar feature in book dissemination to many, if not most, of those very “readers writing in books” with whom Jackson deals. In introducing her study, Jackson does admit this precedent history in her somewhat hedged acknowledgment that “[modern annotators] with very, very few exceptions [unexplained] ... reproduce the common practices of readers since the Middle Ages” (p. 5). Even here, we are limited by that weasel word “since,” as if (unnamed and undescribed) “common practices” during and before the Middle Ages belonged to a different order. Of course, I recognise that Jackson is dealing with the material she knows best (and, as I will show later, she knows it very well indeed), but one does miss, especially given the ambiguous or problematic origins and usage of “marginalia,” at least the concession that readers have been writing in “books” (more fully admitted to the bibliographical canon than just printed books) since the very first records we have of the integral “book.”

Without belabouring the issue, and faulting Jackson for not having written a study different from the one before us, the fact remains that from (at least) the “shouting at” the dead author – a nice locution Jackson borrows from John Hollander’s “The Widener Burying-Ground” (pp. 83, 274) – practised by such Alexandrian librarians as Zenodotus of Ephesus and his introduction of sigla denoting “spurious” Homeric lines (i.e., “shouting at” the transmitter of the text), through the layers of “adversaria” in that very public medium, the graffito, to those “standard” Aristotle textbooks made for student use at the medieval universities (in which the central text is very deliberately surrounded by an excess of white space, specifically designed to be filled by layers upon layers of commentary, until the text was “fulfilled,” like my grandmother’s letters), there has been a long and fairly continuous history of “readers writing in books,” sometimes (as in the Aristotle examples) deliberately designed for such “writing” as a communal activity. And note that, especially in
the case of the Aristotle university texts, and most of the surviving legal and biblical "core" texts, the decision of the annotator to intervene in the "space" between text and later reader is not simply whimsical, or even volitional: it is a requirement that the current holder of the book "write" in that inviting space. To fail to do so would have been a denial of the bibliographical function of the book as an instrument of transmission. Thus, one might argue that these precedent centuries set an even greater premium upon the cultural and rhetorical necessity for writerly intervention than do the typical examples Jackson cites in her study.

And the more "vocal" readers in these earlier periods might even challenge the authority of the author or update his/her opinions or "facts" (as Jackson illustrates so colourfully in the later centuries) where, for example, the scribes (readers and writers melded in a single role) of Trevisa's fourteenth-century translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De Proprietatibus Rerum would often interject "Trevisa here lakketh ..." (and go on to explain how the eminent author "lakketh"), or when Stephen Batman, in his 1582 edition of the same work, would regularly update the information in the medieval encyclopedia, "signing" his interlocution with the original by a different typeface, or on occasion becoming almost apoplectic in an interjectory note like "Not so!" or in quarreling with the authority of his author by claiming that he was "herein deceived, for want of experience." And, like numerous "readers" cited by Jackson, he will often address a putative third presence — the future reader — by directing him/her to a particularly "good note" (printed in the margin) or by steering this later reader to "Read all the additions to the chapter of this book."

My point is the obvious one (and the attentive reader will note that I have not even touched on the Midrash or multi-layered Patristic commentary): that Jackson's account, valuable as it is, is not strictly speaking a description or history of "marginalia" as such (nor even of "readers writing in books"), but of one part only of this tradition, in which a good proportion of the practitioners (especially in the eighteenth century, the period from which Jackson draws the great bulk of her examples) would have been acutely aware that they were continuing and participating in a tradition with many distinguished forebears. Thus, Jackson's account of Pope's Dunciad Variorum (p. 58), with its layers of loquacious and "parodic" notes, is all perfectly apt (and good reading too), but it fails to draw attention to what the object of these "parodic" notes might have
been; as James McLaverty has shown ("The Mode of Existence of Literary Works of Art: The case of the *Dunciad Variorum,*" *Studies in Bibliography* 37 [1984]: 82-103), the parodic target of the spatial satire in the *mise en page,* especially in the piling of note upon note, was those Dutch scholarly editions of the "classical" authors who for centuries had attracted this sort of "annotation upon annotation" (see W. Speed Hill's article of the same name in *Margins of the Text,* ed. Greetham [U of Michigan P, 1997], in which he uses Richard Hooker as a renaissance example of, among other things, the accretional nature of such commentary, its often highly polemical tone — "shouting at" the text again, its very careful distinction among various layers of "annotation," usually through spatial placement and distinguishing typography, and the almost deconstructive co-option of either the originating text or a specific commentary thereon to make it do things it was never intended to do: the relationship is often very clearly adversarial, public, and discursive).

Now, I recognize that Jackson's very deliberate exclusion of this "pre-history" of marginalia (though I might be tempted to call it the "central" history, of which the examples in the three centuries covered by *Marginalia* are merely the belated inheritors) does have an observable rhetorical economy as well as an articulated rationale. She declares: "discursive and original readers' notes of the kind I am concerned with are rare before 1700 and increasingly common (in relation to other forms of annotation) thereafter" (p. 15). This is historically inaccurate, to say the least. But it is true that she marshals a very impressive array — by chronology, by genre, by intention ("motivation"), by formal qualities ("poetics") — together with some lengthier case studies ("Object Lessons" and "Two Profiles," somewhat varying in quality and interest, at least for this reader) — that seem to support this claim, or at least one part of it — the presence of these "discursive" and "original" notes in the specific works she studies. And I am obviously aware that it would lie very much outside the scope of the current book to attempt to prove the absence of these same qualities in other periods. I am therefore content (no, delightedly content) with the range of Jackson's erudition and archival research and with the sheer excitement she generates in decoding the meaning of marginalia (vis-à-vis both the "authorizing" original text, and the later accretions of additional — and often contentiously different — marginalia by other hands as the text makes its way through its reception history). Who would not find simply
the pleasure of discovery in the account of Francis Douce annotating books for "future readers in the British Museum" (p. 96), or in the speculation that "it is possible that works of fiction simply do not find their way into the sort of special collection libraries that I have been depending on" (a concessive gesture about the nature of archives – and of archivists), immediately reinforced by a "generic" psychology of reading: "The absorbed state of mind normal for reading fiction [but not philosophy or history or science?] seems to be incompatible with the practice of annotation" (p. 77), or in Southey’s "deploring" of Coleridge’s way with books, having a fine collection [of annotated books] himself and being particularly fastidious about it – his own marginalia are normally restricted to a tiny discreet ‘S’ in pencil markings in pencil marking noteworthy passages” (p. 157), a fastidiousness which Jackson ironically undercuts by noting that even a reticent annotator like Southey “can in the end be found laboriously overtracing Coleridge’s notes in ink ‘that nothing be lost’” (p. 157).

So Jackson’s book is indeed a “goldmine,” in which perhaps hundreds of such examples are to be found. She has steeped herself in the archives of marginalia and it would be difficult to imagine any reader, no matter how scholarly or how specialized, who would not find a treasure trove of such examples in this book and would not be fascinated, amused, illuminated, and the better scholar, for having been exposed to Jackson’s evidence and her learning. And yet ...

Take, for example, her citing of Kenneth Grahame’s "whimsical" idea that “the world might hope for a ‘book of verse consisting entirely of margin,’” a sentiment to which Jackson responds with the commonsensical “I have to protest, all the same, that a book without text is a book without marginalia” (p. 81); logical as Jackson’s comment might seem, how would such an attitude deal with those books consisting of the “free-floating” classical and medieval marginalia – without text – which by such a stern taxonomy would not be considered as an important part of the history of the genre (see below)? Even within Jackson’s own period, Robert Darnton has discovered an entire section of the Bibliothèque Nationale full of “keys” (i.e., explanatory or speculative marginalia) to the “underground” and seditious romans à clefs of pre-revolutionary France, where the marginalia are not only entirely physically separated from their texts, but then become texts for further annotation and marginal commentary, with later hands “correcting” the print identifications in the “keys.” Indeed, Darnton reports that he found
himself drawn into this continuum of commentary by adding his own interpretative “corrections” of the “corrections.” Annotation upon annotation upon annotation, all without a physically present text.

And even Jackson’s chronological typology of the various “discourse-types” (from the highly personal and self-fashioning discursive notes of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century to the “publishable” notes of the later period, consciously written as a dialogue not only with the author but with future readers) are, together with the intermediate stages, plausible enough from the examples cited, but in the name of order and descriptive discipline, one misses the sort of challenging, frustrating, illuminating, but ultimately more rewarding hypotheses and speculations on marginalia and annotation found in, say, Stephen Barney’s collection *Annotation and Its Texts* (Oxford UP, 1991), which is by no means as clean and careful an assembling of the evidence as Jackson affords, but from which one comes away bemused, enchanted, apoplectic, or simply wanting more, not responses that a typical reader of Jackson’s book is likely to feel.

Thus, it is quite appropriate that Jackson’s discourse-types are perhaps inevitably inductive rather than deductive (whereas in Barney’s authors they are idiosyncratic, contradictory, and decidedly ragged and rough rather than neat and coherent). Jackson has before her this enormous range of marginalia, and, like all good scholars, she wants to make sense of it. So she will find certain rhetorical modes (and the relation of these modes to the “core” text) more prevalent in marginalia of one period rather than another. Her explanation of the shifts as a manifestation of intellectual history or even of documentary history is for the most part locally plausible, but not irrefutably so. The intellectual history, for example, is not specifically linked to similar shifts during the same three-century period as, say, between the early empiricism (but rhetorically highly ornate, even self-indulgent, as who would have it otherwise?) of the seventeenth century (Bacon, Browne), superseded by the expository “plain style” of the Royal Society and Spratt, and the growth of such phenomena as constitutionalism (in its belief that the perfect formation of an ideal language of communication could successfully describe the laws of human nature and society) and the Enlightenment seeds of modernism, with an emphasis on the essentialism of the genre of utterance, hardly broached before it was shattered by the idiosyncratic genres of Romanticism. Even such directly literary
issues as the commodification of literary “work” (i.e., “labour” or what became known as “the sweat of the brow” rationale) as personal and thus protectable under Locke’s theory of property (espoused vociferously by Defoe and others), and thereby gradually leading to the Romantic concept of both organicism and “copyright” in that original formulation of the organic whole do not form an intellectual matrix against which these rhetorical shifts in the relations between the marginalia (think of Coleridge’s shoulder notes to “The Ancient Mariner”: are they a part of the organic work without which the work is “incomplete,” or are they a marginal “trot” for the inexperienced reader, to be discarded once the central “poem” has been successfully negotiated?) and, well, that modernist icon, the “text itself.” Such matters, which one might have thought would have formed a fundamental set of intellectual shifts that might in part explain, or at least comment on, the rhetorical shifts that Jackson so learnedly describes, seem to be absent from her concerns, and yet could have provided her with at least the possibility of linking rhetoric in marginalia with the broader intellectual and social matters at debate at various times during these three centuries.

Take, for example, the extremely emblematic moment at which Wordsworth enshrines the “poet” as a “national treasure” precisely because of his ability to construct an original organicism that had never existed before. This theory (and even Wordsworth’s own formulation of it) finds its way into the drafting of the 1842 Copyright Act, and to this day is the touchstone for judicial decisions as to what is the “real” work and what is “extraneous” to it (those shoulder notes?), in other words between the “text itself” and its generated “marginalia.” Since the marginalia depend for their rationale on the pre-extant organicism of the “original” text, copyright conventions (if not actual legislation) would appear to offer protection only for the “core” text and not for the “hangers on” of that text, the marginalia. Such an assumption would surely have an effect on the nature and the rhetorical swerves that marginalia (of a type with, say, those “mock” scholarly notes in Pope’s *Dunciad Variorum*) might take. Consider those well documented cases of individuals lending their “texts” to Coleridge for the specific intention of receiving back Coleridge’s annotations (mentioned in Jackson, p. 96): in such examples, the core “text” becomes socially merely a “pretext” for the construction of a non-organic, dispersed form of rhetoric that motivates the entire cultural exchange, thereby calling into question intention, the originary moment of inscription, and the integrated
"work" upon which Wordsworth's poetic (and its embodiment in the 1842 Copyright Act) depends. But while Jackson certainly provides us with several fascinating examples of this cultural exchange, she does not seem to be particularly interested in how such exchanges might challenge the prevailing cultural and intellectual context. Her genre descriptions are very self-referential, as they have to be, and her history (as I have suggested), an inductive rather than a deductive exercise. This comment is not to derogate inductive studies in the way that they can function as a useful "goldmine" (Jackson's own term, p. 6) and this persuasion — and it is a perfectly valid one — underwrites Jackson's project, even when she recognizes, immediately after identifying the "goldmine," that it is heavily "contested" (p. 6), although it is not clear, either in this passage or in the argument of the book as a whole, on what grounds the "contestation" is based, or indeed who are the agents of the contestation.

For example, as I have suggested, one of the major "contests," both within and without the "literaratory," beginning in the eighteenth century and still a major concern in the distinction between "original" and "derivative, "core" and "margin," "writing" and "rewriting" (even indexing), has been copyright, the growth of which is thus virtually co-terminous with the period Jackson sets out to study, and whose careful calibrations between the original and the derivative could play a major part in Jackson's similarly finely calibrated description of the rhetorical relations between "text" and "marginalia," does not even merit an entry in her "Index of Personal Names and Topics," although "commonplace books" (an expected entry) and "cookbooks" (perhaps a little less so) are both given an appropriate entry. (The great value of this index, incidentally, is that when authors are described in the book as annotators, they merit an asterisk [*], but whenever they are simply discussed as authors they lack this symbolic honorific. It is a technique that might well be almost universally applied in books on a thematic topic, although I did find it rather strange that there is not an asterisk to be found among the several references to the Bible, although all of them deal with the annotation of the Bible, and the first such reference (p. 45) is one of the rare occasions when Jackson does acknowledge the precursors: "[g]losses, rubrics, and scholia are the basic particles of the matter generated by annotators. We find them attached, seemingly from the start, to the most revered of texts, circulating in manuscript: the great works of classical literature, the Bible, and the legal code" (p. 45). Her argument is nicely illustrated by a page from Edward
Coke's *The First Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England, or, A Commentary upon Littleton*, ed. Francis Hargrave (1775), folio 33v, with the text of Littleton at the core, hemmed in by various levels of typographical commentary, and (in this copy) supplemented by manuscript annotations added by Hargrave. (It is in this all-too-brief section, covering only a couple of pages in a 324-page book, that Jackson recognizes not only that “[t]he marginalia that we see and write today are in a direct line of descent from those of two thousand years ago” (p. 44), but also that, as glosses on the biblical and legal text(s) became a genre to themselves, eventually having “sufficient mass” to form a “free-standing glossary” (p. 45), the scholia could be cast adrift from the “core” text as an independent work. One would have liked to have seen this challenge posed by the precursor marginalia taken up during the three “modern” centuries (the Variorum Milton Commentary?).

As I have said, the Coke illustration performs a valuable service in rendering into a graphic, visual medium the argument it illustrates. True, technically it is rather a poor rendition of this medium, for Yale has decided that there shall be no half-tones in this book about marginalia, only a very monochromatic grey which could presumably be printed simultaneously with the text, without needing a separate gathering. Not only is this an unfortunate decision in itself (most of the commentary in the Coke illustration is illegible, even with a magnifying glass, so we pretty much have to take the word of the author that marginalia x do y), but I find it almost incredible that a book relying so much on the graphic medium should have so little of it. This reticence (to use as non-judgmental a term as I can come up with) does a serious disservice to the book: so many times in this very well written account I have cried out, “But let me see the damned thing!” only to be disappointed. The fact that there is no index of figures should, I suppose, have alerted me to the fact that this was going to be a book of text, not a book of graphics and text (for it is in that “and” that one of the main functions of marginalia is surely to be found). One simply has to follow the argument, which is both instructive and mellifluously expressed, and just hope that perhaps it will be made manifest by an appropriate illustration, and is more often than not disappointed. And when those very few illustrations do appear (some 10 among 324 pages of text) one can sometimes wonder whose decision it was to choose this one rather than something more (shall we say?) enlivening. The final figure (fig. 10, p. 238) offers, if I read it correctly (for the top section is
virtually a smudge of black), what I take to be a representation of an ape "underlining" a book. I remain unconvinced (even if I am right about what is supposed to be represented here) that this figure was entirely necessary to the argument, when so many other opportunities have been passed over. Compare (dare one?) the dozens of half-tone illustrations (89 in a 176-page book) in Michael Camille's *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Harvard UP, 1992, not cited in Jackson), each one complementing and advancing the textual argument, and not one of them of a smudgy ape.

Despite the several demurrals I have made about this book, there can be little doubt that any serious scholar of book and reading history (and not just those specializing in the last three centuries) will want to have it on his/her shelves. The sheer wealth of (unillustrated) "illustration" is sufficient to guarantee its status for anyone wishing to have what amounts to a database of marginalia in English over the last three centuries, compiled in a pleasantly light style by a clearly highly knowledgeable scholar. It is perhaps unfortunate that she could not have found a publisher more aware of the inherent interrelationship of word and image, but there is an extremely useful "Bibliography of Annotated Books Cited," with shelf-marks or other necessary bibliographical identifiers, and ranging from *The Aberdeen Cookery Book*. 2nd ed. (Aberdeen: Aberdeen Press and Journal Office, 1931. National Library of Scotland. Shelf-mark NG.837.e.1), to Virginia Woolf's "Writing in the Margin." *The Virginia Woolf Manuscripts from the Monks House Papers at the University of Sussex* (Microform Edition. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1985. Reel 2). There will surely be many travel grant proposals written as a result of this book, so the absence of illustration may be more of a challenge than a drawback.

My own attraction to the topic and reservations about Jackson's treatment of it can be illustrated by a personal anecdote related to me while still in graduate school by one of the most learned of Coleridgeans, Thomas McFarland. He told the story of his having had insomnia one night, and, giving up on immediate sleep, having gone down to his library and idly picking a book off his shelves to read. It was not until he had got a good hundred pages into the book that he realized that he had already read it! But it was not the text of the book that convinced him of its familiarity, but the marginalia, annotations written in his own hand. Of course, this is a particularly apt story for a Coleridgean, but what was striking to me on first hearing and remains so is that wonderful sense of discovery
and personal proprietorship that the marginalia almost inevitably inspire. Despite the learning, the sheer range of the evidence, and the clear scholarship of its author, I came away from a reading of *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* not with McFarland’s idiosyncratic (re)discovery of himself, not with a shared enthusiasm with the author, but with a much less vibrant and inspiring feeling of having covered the ground dutifully and comprehensively. Now that’s done. What’s next?

Can I risk a final demurral (or at least a missed opportunity)? Of course, this is a book about marginalia, not a book of marginalia. But I was disappointed (or perhaps made a little uneasy) that, apart from a calligraphic typeface chosen in the running chapter titles at the bottom of the page (supplemented by the dustjacket of an annotated *Rasselas*), chosen one assumes by the designer Rebecca Gibb, the rest of the book is set in an unassuming but pleasant enough roman Fournier. And there are NO MARGINALIA! I am happy to report that this condition has now been rectified, and that my copy of the book (in common, I am sure, with other readers’) is now cheerfully decorated with my own marginalia. I am a “reader writing in a book.” And in that sense, by making it my own, I have achieved some private discovery different (one assumes) from all other readers’.

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This is a major contribution to the history of libraries generally as well as an outstanding contribution to a series of enormous utility and distinction. Probably no library catalogue published long after it served its original function — the practical, even mundane, one of enabling the owner, or his (or occasionally her) minions, to know what books were in the library, and even, perhaps, where to find them — can usefully stand on its own. The earliest editions of the libraries of single individuals were, like this one, those of men ( alas,