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,
not women) celebrated in one way or another, usually either as great book collectors, or as distinguished authors, and they aimed chiefly to illuminate the mind-set of that person, or, at worst, their purchasing power. The modern reader wants to know how such a library was amassed, how it was used, what became of it afterwards and, if possible, how it compares with others of a similar date and put together by persons of similar social standing. It is seldom that all these questions can be answered within the compass of a single volume, and the last question, comparison with comparabilia, is one which the reader will normally rejoice to perform for his or her self, and which, in the case of Henry VIII's libraries is scarcely feasible. For the rest, however, the reader of this book is handsomely served.

We seldom, if ever, have a complete tally of the books that anyone has owned in the early modern period. Books come and go, and many were thought too slight to be inventoried. The problem is exacerbated when, as here, the owner had books in several places. Thanks to Professor Carley's labours, however, we now have a splendidly complete account of how, why, and whence books came to some of Henry's libraries, and of the present location of the surviving books, an extraordinary number of which he has managed to trace, many, of course, in the Royal collection in the British Library, but others in locations as diverse as Aberdeen and Malibu. In many cases, moreover, we have an unusually precise knowledge of how they were used.

The bulk of the books listed here are those that came to rest in the king's libraries at Richmond and, particularly, at Westminster, and these are complemented and/or amplified by Thomas Berthelet's account with Henry for 1541 to 1543, books noted by John Bale in or around 1548, and extracts from the post-mortem inventories of Henry's palaces from 1547 to 1550. The books at Greenwich, and elsewhere, were not inventoried (or at least, no inventories survive), so that, although many uncatalogued Henrician books have been identified, they do not find a place within the confines of the Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues.

Henry came by his books in various ways. Some he inherited from his royal predecessors, others came as gifts, some were, involuntarily enough, left, if not bequeathed, to him by his wives, others were sequestrated from the victims of treason trials. Some, indeed, were bought, but most of them came as a direct result of the King's Great Matter and the dissolution of the monasteries. As a medievalist, and a chronicler of monastic libraries, Professor Carley
comes to his mammoth task most pointedly from the angle of ascertaining these sources of Henry VIII's library, and the means whereby the books were selected and collected. Thus we find catalogued here over a hundred books from Rochester (none of them, apparently, directly from John Fisher), almost thirty from St Augustine's, Canterbury, and almost twenty from St Albans. Among the individuals who contributed unwillingly to the royal library we find Wolsey, George Boleyn, and Sir Nicholas Carew, and among the wives we find recorded, either in the introduction or in the catalogues, books owned by all but Anne of Cleves. Survivors from the libraries of Henry V, VI, and VII, as well as of Edward IV are also to be found.

To some extent, then, this looks like the record not of the collections of an individual, but of a nascent national library. Professor Carley demonstrates, however, that the great majority of the books selected from the monastic libraries were chosen, not for their beauty or their rarity, but for their use in bolstering the theological arguments for the king's divorce and, later, the historical arguments for the independence of the English church. In some cases, moreover, we know, what we seldom enough know about the books of lesser men, that the king did, in fact, read a book, because he annotated it.

The king's collection, as is appropriate for this series, is largely one of manuscripts, outnumbering printed books by almost two to one, and the entry for each manuscript gives us, most generously, not only the present location, where known, but also references to the most modern edition of the text, and to discussions both of the text and, where appropriate, of the attribution to Henry's collections. Previous and subsequent owners are indexed, as are the manuscripts themselves, by their modern call-marks correlated with their catalogue numbers. More than this, the introduction discusses the manner in which the books were stored, a subject too often ignored, even when the all too rare evidence is present.

In addition to all this, we have detailed accounts of how certain of the royal books escaped, very comprehensive indexes and informative plates, altogether a volume fit for a king's library.

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