the battlefield, but it quickly spread throughout gentry society in the later 16th century. Any study of the practice is necessarily impressionistic, as duellists took pains to avoid prosecution for murder or affray, but scholars will shortly benefit from a comprehensive calendar of the records of the Earl Marshal’s court (housed at the College of Arms in London and are being calendared by Richard Cust and Andrew Hopper), established in 1623 specifically to check the spiralling problem of duelling in London and at Court.

The most interesting idea Manning touches upon is the thesis that the revival of a martial culture based upon edged weapons at a time when guns came to dominate the battlefield was a way in which elites validated their continuing claims to pre-eminence in civil society. In a nice piece of product placement, he suggests that this will receive more systematic coverage in his next book, but some of the strands of his argument can be discerned in this work: personal courage in the face of mortal danger, either on the battlefield or in a duel, served as an indicator of leadership ability (as true for Oliver Cromwell as it was for Theodore Roosevelt); and an honour code underpinned by a martial ethos was, to some extent, an aristocratic reaction against the centralizing tendencies of the early modern state (this is probably more true of France than England, although the 2nd Earl of Essex was a natural-born 
frondeur
). On the basis of these assumptions, he speculates that the martial ethos, when combined with classical republicanism and antiquarian scholarship, inspired resistance to Stuart absolutism. Well, perhaps. John Adamson makes a persuasive case for the political impact of such influences on several of the ancient nobility who sought to dominate the parliamentarian cause in the mid-1640s (see “The Baronial Context of the English Civil War,” Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th series XL [London, 1990], 93-120). However, most of the Court gallants and continental veterans who flocked to Charles’s colours in the north of England in 1639-40 ended up among the Cavaliers at Oxford during the Civil War, while Cromwell’s Ironsides were motivated not by classical republicanism but by Biblical providentialism.

In this study of early modern manuscripts and printed books and their readers, Heidi Brayman Hackel shifts the parameters of reader-response criticism to include the material artifacts of book production. Her discussion of what constitutes literacy in the period is especially illuminating, as she identifies a spectrum of reading competency that ranges from abecedarian reading (someone with rudimentary reading skills but unable to write, a status that is often statistically overlooked) to academic fluency. Her study group of “readers” in the period thus extends to include not only academics and gentlemen but also gentlewomen, servants, and an emerging class of casual readers. This range of what constitutes literate then renders her considerations of reading material as nuanced and wide-ranging. Similarly, she includes discussion of manuscript practices alongside printed books and offers interesting and detailed comparative examinations of each kind of book production. Again, this strategy has the effect of expanding the implications of her study beyond the consideration of early modern readership to include current technological transitions from print to electronic reading practices.

A brief introductory chapter is followed by four relatively substantial chapters. The first chapter, “Towards a material history of reading,” establishes the nature of books as material objects in terms of the shifting technologies of manuscript and print in the period. Her focus here is on what actual readers do, rather than, as in reader-response theory, what readers can do. This distinction is a careful one: though her “study of reading belongs to the larger framework of literary inquiry from which it emerged” (5), Hackel shifts “attention from men of letters to men and women of leisure” (3). In other words, she focuses her analysis of reading on the materiality of the text and of readers themselves as opposed to the “theoretical constructs, variously described as ‘mock,’ ‘ideal,’ ‘model,’ ‘implied,’ ‘encoded,’ ‘informed,’ and ‘super’ readers” (6). Her two main questions throughout are “What did books tell readers to do?” and “What did readers do with their books?” (9). Her return to the archives, then, motivated by a theoretical set of questions, is therefore both a way to provide substantial answers as well as to promote further discussion in new directions.

Chapter Two, “Impressions from a ‘scribbling age’: Gestures and habits of reading,” dismantles the categorical notions of literate/illiterate, private/public space, reading/writing/discourse, and manuscript/print. Instead, Hackel
describes these categories as matters of degree rather than kind. For instance, she cites the example of Anne Clifford hearing her books read to her by her servants in her bedchamber, instructing them to write out “sentences and sayings [and pin them] onto her Walls, her Bed, her Hangings, and Furniture.”

This scene involves a range of actors and activities that overlap and disrupt several categorical distinctions: “The image of servants circulating around a bed both writing and reading is a powerful reminder of the communal use of bedchambers so common even in aristocratic households” (38), not to mention the collaborative and variable practice of composing a manuscript commonplace “book” from a printed one. Tracing these kinds of reading patterns seems to derive from contemporary practices that blur the aural and visual senses, which is perhaps also a way to sensualize the act of reading—as when Sidney allegorizes a kiss as a rudimentary step, like spelling, toward sex, which is like reading, in *Astrophel and Stella* (“Yet those lippes so sweetly swelling, / do invite a stealing kisse; / Now but venture will I this, / Who will read must first leane spelling”; qtd 63).

In the third chapter, “Framing ‘gentle readers’ in preliminaries and margins,” Hackel turns to the ways that prefaces and marginalia both direct reading and support ambiguities, very much like modern footnotes (91-92). Citing a number of illuminating examples, she points to the anxieties of early modern writers to elucidate meaning through addressing and clarifying the nature of their readers. Both “gentle readers” and “vulgar” readers are addressed as such in prefatory material, and each are given direction as to what to do with the book in hand: “early modern readers need both reliable guides and sound judgment to escape the reading process unscathed” (78), because “who one was and how one read were considered one and the same: identity, that is, determined interpretation” (83), and presumably vice versa too. And because “preliminaries and marginalia are the most explicitly collaborative parts of a printed book … often of indeterminate or suppressed provenance” (92-93), they strategically model the kinds of collaboration that take place in reading practices (as in Clifford’s bedchamber). Hackel also addresses the business element of patronage, pointing out that “the patron is often not figured as a reader” (114). And yet, books need “protection” as well as “a careful, complete reading” (118), and often re-reading too (120), in order to be fully and properly understood.

The fourth chapter, “Noting readers of the *Arcadia* in marginalia and
REVIEWS

commonplace books,” treats samples of extant hand-annotated copies of Sidney’s *Arcadia* to analyse the things that “readers do with their books.” Hackel focuses on three kinds of annotation: marks of active reading such as deictics, underlining, summaries, cross-references, queries; marks of ownership, including proprietary verses; and marks of recording such as debts, marriages, births, etc. (138). Each, she establishes, “suggest that the book has physical value … [because] they convey that the book is a site of information … as intellectual process, as valued object, and as available paper” (138). (I couldn’t help being struck by this analysis of personal annotation, as I was at that moment pursuing the same task while reading her book.) What emerges from these analyses is the particularly early modern emphasis on reading in order to be “studied for action”: “to read widely is not enough; one must ‘marke’ what one reads and prepare it for use” (145). In fact, the “radical decontextualization performed by the commonplace book” (146) is a literal re-writing, in the reader’s hand, of another’s words—often shifting the recording to reflect a very different context or point of view (for instance shifting third person pronouns to first-person). Thus, “By taking up a pen, a reader transforms both the text and the activity of reading” (182), applying the text to her own life through writing it in her own script.

Chapter Five considers the libraries of two gentlewomen. “Consuming readers: Ladies, lapdogs, and libraries” challenges the “central archive for the history of reading in early modern England” and its focus “on goal-oriented, professional, and contestatory readings” which neglect female readers (196). (It would have been interesting, here, to see what Hackel might have said about Anne Askew, Lady Jane Grey, and other accomplished women speaker/writers from Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*, about whom much has been written.) The two sample libraries here, Anne Clifford’s (the Countess of Pembroke) and Frances Egerton’s (the Countess of Bridgewater), afford fascinating glimpses into the history of bibliophilia, though I am less persuaded that the issue of gender is significant here. Certainly, if Hackel’s book has a flaw, it is in the titular assumption of the importance of gender to her subject matter. This chapter in particular spends half its time twisting itself around established arguments that are not entirely consistent with the material nor with her analysis of these gentlewomen’s libraries. For instance, Hackel describes Clifford and Egerton as constrained gentlewomen who yet managed to assemble their own libraries, revealing “both resistance and conformity to the ideals of
feminine literacy.” Yet this seems not to fit with the assertion that women’s reading is “circumscribed by legal and cultural injunctions for … female readerly silence–restraint from public reading, limitations on linguistic proficiency, and abstention from vocal criticism” (197). Unfortunately, after previous enlightening discussions about the slipperiness of the public/private distinction, the widespread variability of literacy and literate proficiency, and the profound overlap between verbal or vocal discourses and the collaborative dialogue of reading, such discussion seems out of place at best and contradictory at worst. Undoubtedly it compromises the discussions of the remarkable reading material of Clifford and Egerton, and their promotion of reading among their own servants who were, if not “men and women of leisure,” at least men and women both.

Hackel’s book offers a considerable contribution to the emerging fields of New Textualism and the more established theories of reader-response criticism. Her analysis is thoughtful and often inclined to original insights with regard to reading evidence as a genre of literature in itself. Indeed, though exegesis has long been considered a medieval genre of scriptural import, Hackel points to ways in which growing literacy rates in the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries contribute to the dissemination of this kind of practice beyond the exclusively monastic or learned arena. At several points in the book, she alludes to “the discourse that sexualized women’s reading” (153 and elsewhere, especially in the fifth chapter), without fully explaining what she means by this and not fully integrating this discussion of gendered reading into the rest of her otherwise cohesive argument. Nevertheless, Hackel’s attention to the traces of “regular” or “ordinary” readers, as well as to non-religious exegesis as with Sidney’s and Greene’s Arcadia, opens the consideration of reading as an active engagement beyond previously established boundaries.


By expressing their ideas in print, Quaker leaders in seventeenth-century England engaged with contemporary political and religious affairs in a way