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Sidney and His Contemporaries: English Renaissance Readers Searching, Sifting, and Extracting for Value in the Ancient Texts

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**SIDNEY AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES—ENGLISH RENAISSANCE READERS  
SEARCHING, SIFTING, AND EXTRACTING FOR VALUE IN THE ANCIENT TEXTS**

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

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**ABSTRACT**

Sidney and His Contemporaries—English Renaissance Readers

Searching, Sifting, and Extracting for Value in the Ancient Texts

by Carol Lynn Robertson

Though a culture which produced such literary genius as Sidney, Shakespeare, and Milton should alone command closer examination, little attention has been given to how English Renaissance readers actually responded to and engaged with the pages of the Classics, their ancient Greek and Roman texts. As the scholarship work of Anthony Grafton suggests, few were passive readers, rather, as taught by men such as Erasmus, they approached the Classics with goal-oriented determination. While some sought political strategy and others sought literary stylistic techniques, mostly, and often simultaneously, they sought moral philosophy—the moral lesson or the mentor to follow—that which they judged could improve their lives. With a passion comparable to one searching and sifting for gold, these readers—the scholars, the translators, and the commonplacers (readers who kept their own personal notebooks) —searched and sifted through the riverbed of their ancient texts, interpreting and reinterpreting and, at times, reinventing these texts in order to extract a central core of moral philosophy—the gold! Citing specific examples of reading in the translators' prefaces and commentaries, a scholar's marginalia, and the commonplacers' personal notebooks, I demonstrate how this practice of reading to extract moral philosophy connects to Sir Philip Sidney's model of "how one should read" as revealed in his treatise, *The Defense of Poetry*. Since there is evidence of a wide-spread cultural practice of such active reading, I also explore how these reading practices may have affected the English Renaissance literary culture.

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## Introduction

I have explored various ways to define how Renaissance readers engaged with their rediscovered treasury of ancient Greek and Roman texts and found none so satisfactory as a recollection of my gold panning experiences with my uncle in Southern Oregon. Renaissance readers and gold miners have a lot in common. Panning for gold is not for those with passive interest. After “reading” the creek or stream bed and determining you have a likely spot, you fill your pan with gravel and sand, dip it in the stream to fill it with water, and begin a process of careful sifting: you gently move your pan back and forth in a sideways motion, re-dipping as the material in your pan begins to stratify, cautious not to lose the gold, the heavier material, which is settling to the bottom. Ultimately, you will remove unwanted rocks by hand—you do not want to throw away any nuggets! While some nuggets are most valuable as they are, most gold will be refined in order to extract its greatest potential value. My uncle now uses sophisticated equipment to extract placer gold (the gold in the sand and gravel), but the principles of searching, sifting, and extracting remain the same. Oregon’s *Mail Tribune* recently quoted him as saying, “There is a certain amount of excitement to mining because of the potential of hitting something very significant... You might possibly hit a pocket of gold.” The same excitement that accompanies a search for “something very significant” characterizes Renaissance readers of the Classics. The difference is my uncle looks for treasure in the gravelly dirt of Oregon’s riverbeds; Renaissance readers looked for treasure in the pagan Greek and Roman Classics. With the fervor of one mining for gold, Renaissance readers searched through their ancient texts, engaged in a process of intentional and careful sifting and extracting, as well as removing the unwanted elements “by hand,” in order to recover that which they perceived as valuable. Most often the nuggets they sought were in the form of the moral lesson, the pithy saying, or the mentor to follow—that moral philosophy which through application they deemed would improve their lives,<sup>1</sup> along with literary technique, “the sweetness of poetry.” As in the case of placer gold, much of the moral philosophy they discovered would require refinement in order to extract its greatest value. Renaissance readers were happy to apply all such means in order to achieve the end—namely, “virtue” or more precisely, “virtuous action,” which Sir Philip Sidney, echoing the culture of his day, affirmed to be the “ending end of all earthly learning” (29).

I later found the connection between Renaissance readers and gold miners was one Renaissance readers had themselves imagined in their day. Those who lived in 16<sup>th</sup> and early

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<sup>1</sup> It is well known that some readers sought political, medical, astronomical, and dialectical value as well as the literary technique, “the sweetness of poetry,” the ornamentation which would set virtue in “her best colours” (Sidney 37). Mary Crane, *Framing Authority*, writes that pithy sayings (adages) are “often described as precious jewels, a metaphor that implies, in addition to value as a commodity, qualities of timelessness and ornamentally” (62). Erasmus, *The Adages of Erasmus*, says the best adages are those “which equally give pleasure by their figurative colouring and profit by the value of their ideas” (5).

17<sup>th</sup> centuries were likely to be familiar with the wealth being extracted from rich mines such as Crawfurd Muir near Edinburgh, Scotland,<sup>2</sup> and terms of mining and metallurgy (refining ore) as well as references to recovering treasure were often used by their poets to describe the readers' interaction with the Classics—interpreting, reinterpreting, and at times re-imagining—their texts. Ben Jonson, celebrating George Chapman's translation of Hesiod into English, applauds Chapman's passion and purpose:

Whose work could this be, Chapman to refine  
 Old Hesiod's Ore, and give it us, but thine,  
 Who hadst before wrought in rich Homers Mine.  
 What treasure hast thou brought us! And what store  
 Still, still, dost thou arrive with, at our shore,  
 To make thy honor, and our wealth the more! (Hesiod 3)

Chapman's project of refining old Hesiod's and Homer's ore was not one confined to the translators of Greek and Roman works, but one common to readers of the Classics throughout England. We will examine this common project and consider the extent to which Sir Philip Sidney's ideal or model as to "how one ought to read" as revealed in his treatise, *A Defence of Poetry* (written in approximately 1581), exemplifies the reading practices of this generation. Sir Philip Sidney was a Christian knight, a gentleman, and an esteemed courtier of the Elizabethan court. Speaking of his countrymen's admiration, Jan A. Van writes, "They recognized him as the ideals of their age...his memory continued to be loved long after that, because he still represented the 'life and action good and great' (as one of his friends termed it) to which he had always applied his talents" (Sidney 9-10). Thus, how Sidney, a mentor and role model among his contemporaries, read the Classics and instructed others to read is significant. Indeed, the *Defence*, as many now call it, illustrates a dominant Elizabethan perspective on literature. Dorsten explains, "Most of the ideas expressed in it are not original thoughts, but represent Sidney's selections from the countless theories and literary commonplaces with which any self-respecting sixteenth century humanist was familiar" (Sidney 10). Sidney assumed his contemporaries would be looking for the precept and the example, for their "own use and learning" (35). Thus, his readers would exercise judgment and preference, preferring the text that illustrated an event or person "as it should be" (with virtue exalted) rather than "as it was" (the historically accurate version). While the methods of sifting and extracting among Sidney's contemporaries varied, the project and, likewise, the goal—the pursuit of virtuous action or "practical virtue"—were the same.

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<sup>2</sup> The Scotland Museum of Lead Mining reports the first documented evidence of the recovery of gold to be in the early 16th century, during the reign of King James IV of Scotland. Gold from the Crawfurd Muir was used to make the royal crowns of the King and Queen during the reign of King James V. The gold coinage of King James V and Mary Queen of Scots was minted in Edinburgh from gold from this area. Through the 16th and 17th centuries, Crawfurd Muir produced such quantities of gold that it became known as "God's Treasure House in Scotland." Website: [www.leadminingmuseum.co.uk](http://www.leadminingmuseum.co.uk).



We will examine specific examples of readers sifting and extracting in active search for the gold of moral philosophy. As we visit the translators in action, we will witness Grimald's exuberance as he uncovers Cicero—who "so rightly" pointed "out the pathway to all virtue as none can be righter, only Scripture excepted," we will explore refining in action as George Chapman works in the mines of old Hesiod and Homer; we will consider those mentors—especially Pliny and Cyrus—whom Philemon Holland was so pleased to introduce to England; and we will visit with George Sandys as he reimagines Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in his lengthy annexed commentary to the reader. Leaving the translators, we will visit the scholar—Gabriel Harvey—as he scribbles notes in the margin. Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine recently observed Harvey's active, goal-oriented search for political strategy in his marginalia;<sup>3</sup> we will look at how, simultaneously, Harvey sought and extracted moral philosophy. Finally, we will consider the widespread practice of commonplacing whereby readers extracted those passages in the Classics they deemed useful—worthy of remembering—and recorded them in their own personal book, connected them with other passages, and responded to them, writing their own commentaries.

Though an age which produced such literary genius as Sidney, Shakespeare, and Milton should alone compel us to a close investigation of such processes, it is only recently that scholarship has turned its attention to examining Renaissance/Early Modern practices of reading the Classics. The lack of interest in the reader may be partially due to the association of some widespread practices—particularly, commonplacing—with the "trivial" and "archaic." Mary Crane, author of *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (1993), is among those recent scholars who have challenged previous notions that commonplacing was little more than a mnemotechnical aid, involving cataloging and rote memorization. She states, "During this period, the twin discursive practices of 'gathering' these textual fragments and 'framing' or forming, arranging, and assimilating them created for English humanists a central mode of transaction with classical antiquity and provided an influential model for authorial practice and for authoritative self-fashioning" (3). Likewise, Kevin Sharpe's *Reading Revolutions*, which explores the commonplace books of Sir William Drake, and Robert Darnton's "Extraordinary Commonplaces" call for a new look at commonplacing. Sharpe's research led him to conclude that the commonplacers' personal notebook was anything but "common" (278). Darnton agrees: "The authorial self took shape in the common man's commonplace book, not merely in the works of great writers" (n. pag.).

In this project, I examine an ideal, a paradigm—embodied in Sir Philip's Sidney's implicit model of "how one ought to read"—and the active pursuit of the same ideal seen in the translators' prefaces and commentaries, the scholar's marginalia, and the commonplacers' notebooks. I hope to contribute to scholarship by demonstrating that the English Renaissance readers who searched and sifted through the Classics for the moral lesson, the pithy saying, or the role model to follow did so with great intention—they were seeking to extract that which

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<sup>3</sup> Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine studied Gabriel Harvey's marginalia in "Studied for Action: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy."

would improve their lives. In the process, they employed shared strategies—sifting, extracting, and when necessary, refining. These strategies and goals exemplified Sidney’s ideal for reading presented in his treatise, *A Defense of Poetry*. At the end of this study, I ask a new question, one for which I enlist the help of modern research: could these widespread practices of reading have been significant in contributing to a culture that fostered great literature?

### Theoretical Framework

You need only visit the Getty Center in Los Angeles to understand the impact of individual perspective—one’s outlook—upon matter. Geometric shapes—lines, squares, and curves of beige-colored travertine stone blocks—1.2 million square feet—are set in stately eloquence to catch and reflect the California sun and express, by intention of architect Richard Meier, qualities of permanence, solidity, simplicity, warmth, and craftsmanship. However, travel down to the central garden designed by Robert Irwin, and you will find the expansive geometric forms and shapes giving way to a pleasing complexity of variegated shades and vibrant colors, in which your eye searching for the small thing is continuously rewarded by a sense of intimacy. As you take pleasure in the plethora of sights, sounds, and smells that envelop your descent to a pool with a maze of floating azaleas and a cascading waterfall, you will find, carved into the plaza floor, Irwin’s statement, “Always changing, never quite the same.” While one Getty artist celebrates qualities of permanence, another celebrates continual change. Our worldview—the particular perspective through which we interpret and interact with our world—shapes us, and we in turn shape our environment.

Understanding the interplay between the individual and his environment is of significance if we are to understand the forces that gave shape to the literary art of the Renaissance. Steven Greenblatt, regarded as the founder of the New Historicist movement, asserts great art to be “an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of culture” (*Renaissance Self-Fashioning* 5). I have assumed the lens of new historicism in framing my own research. The new historicist model sees the text not as an autonomous aesthetic form, but instead, one of many forms of cultural production.<sup>4</sup> Thus, Greenblatt speaks of the significance of studying the writers of the past “engaged in their own acts of selection and shaping and who seem to drive themselves toward the most sensitive regions of their culture, to express and even, by design, to embody its dominant satisfactions and anxieties” (6,7). He later asserts: “The written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power” (7). Since as Robert Darnton asserts, these “readers became writers,” we take two steps back from the pens of the great writers of the Renaissance when we seek to catch a glimpse of

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<sup>4</sup> Early twentieth century formalism and American New Criticism reacted against the Literary Historicism of the nineteenth century, which assumed historiography capable of greater objectivity and reliability than literary criticism and other forms. Formalists and new critics insisted instead that the literary text be defined, above all, as an artwork and as such resistant to any attempts to understand it in terms of historical context or author intentions. [See “Literary History,” *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, by Lee Paterson (250-257).]

the readers—their selectivity and strategies. In the study of 16<sup>th</sup> century readers, there is no better place for examining the practices of Renaissance readers than examining how Sidney and his peers grappled with their Classic texts.

New historicism, according to Stephen Greenblatt, is not a theory, but rather represents a series of questions—an “array of reading practices that investigate a series of issues that emerge when critics seek to chart the ways texts, in dialectical fashion, both represent a society’s behavior patterns and perpetuate, shape, or alter that culture’s dominant codes” (Cadzow, Conway, Traister n. pag.). Like the historicists of the past, the new historicist insists texts are best understood when considered in the context of their specific historical period; however, unlike the historicists of the nineteenth century, the new historicist does not assume the existence of a coherent worldview mirrored by a whole population, but rather acknowledges culture to be complex and assumes tension—antagonistic institutions, contradictory beliefs, and subversive as well as orthodox impulses—and assumes, as well, these struggles to be registered within the authors’ texts (Cadzow, Conway, Traister n. pag.). It is, therefore, the responsibility of the new historicist to “delineate the ways” the texts they study are linked to the “network of institutions, practices, and beliefs that constituted Renaissance culture in its entirety” (Cadzow, Conway, Traister n. pag.).

I am appreciative of the scholarship of Steven Greenblatt, Anthony Grafton, Kevin Sharpe, and others who have set forth a model of such scrupulous research. Grafton describes his case-by-case scholarship as charting “a course across a small segment of this enormous territory,” examining certain “Renaissance intellectuals at work on the hard task of making sense of the Greek and Latin Classics” (*Commerce with the Classics* 7), and I have used these navigational tools to chart my own course, examining one scholar’s work at a time, as I look at Grimald, Chapman, Holland, etc. The rewards of the historical encounter are worth the struggle. Jean E. Howard, “The New Historicism of Renaissance” expresses it this way:

Any move into history is an intervention, an attempt to reach from the present moment into the past to rescue both from meaningless banality. One hopes that from the encounter...[will] come revisioning of both the past and the present. But such encounters start somewhere, and that is with the active intervention of the historically constituted critic. (qtd. in Kinney and Collins 33)

Such studies contribute to the endeavor of scholarship to build a bridge between the present and the past—a time when readers processed the information on the pages of their texts differently. As Robert Darnton asserts in “Extraordinary Commonplaces,” these readers belong to a “mental universe far removed from ours” (Darnton). He later adds, “We may pay closer attention to reading as an element in what used to be called the history of mentalities—that is, world views and ways of thinking.” I hope to add to such research as well as the history of reading.

This project has, however, certain limitations. The techniques and methods by which the reader sifted and extracted from the Classic texts varied. Grafton points out, “Every humanist teacher felt the need to provide precise instructions for his students on how to read and annotate

the Classics...some held that readers should mark their books, others that they should copy out extracts into notebooks. Some wanted notes to be brief and schematic, others to be full and informative” (*Commerce with the Classics* 6). So, too, there was no simple method for interpreting the Classical texts. It was the compulsion to interpret—to sift and extract—in order to acquire that which they perceived useful to their lives and harmonious with their Christian worldview that most unified the readers, not the particular techniques or methods by which they sifted and extracted. By studying the practice and habits of some individual readers—Grimald, Holland, Chapman, Sandys, Harvey, and Drake—I hope to demonstrate their common commitment to careful and intentional sifting and extracting and thus add to our sense of the flavor of the culture.

Research of broader scope will address the tendency for men and women of that time to be “read to” (Sharpe 271). Kevin Sharpe writes: “Though scholars are familiar with the practice of hearing a book read, none has adequately considered its importance, or the relationship of ‘readers’ and auditors for the processes of the absorption and comprehension of, and the reaction to, texts” (272). Furthermore, a more comprehensive examination of the culture of these readers must include the physical forms of Classical books. As Grafton points out, “The shape that Renaissance books took had effects on their appeal to buyers and their impact on readers.” These physical aspects of reading, says Grafton, are vital to “any effort to produce a three-dimensional vision of this lost world of experience” (*Commerce with the Classics* 8). A study of Renaissance reading could also be greatly enhanced by studying actual examples of reading as well as pedagogy within the fictional texts of the eras’ authors. I hope to take up that challenge in future research. Though the practices of a small sampling of readers examined in this paper do not constitute the whole of the Renaissance reading experience, they do give evidence to a shared philosophy of reading and contribute to our efforts to gaze with understanding into another time and place.

### **Early Renaissance Readers—Sifting and Extracting for Value**

#### ***Caring Only for Eloquence and Morality***

Sifting the Classics and extracting valuable morality and the poetic technique to support the teaching of morality were characteristic of the humanist agenda long before Sidney and a good while after. Anthony Grafton in *Defenders of the Text: The Traditions of Scholarship in an Age of Science, 1450-1800*, examines some letters and essays attacking the humanist approach to Classical scholarship. Humanist scholars were criticized for caring “only for eloquence and morality, not for rigor and power” (1). While these writings demonstrate that men read the Classics for more than just morality, they also demonstrate a solid recognition among contemporaries that the pursuit of moral philosophy, and the poetic style that would serve it, held the preeminent place in Classical scholarship, however passionately it was challenged. In one essay in Grafton’s compilation, “Renaissance Readers and Ancient Texts: Comments on Some Commentaries,” Grafton points out that historical accuracy in the Classics was of much less importance to Renaissance scholars than what Lorenzo Guidetti called “important forms of

knowledge” (24). Grafton’s essay treats the late 15th century correspondence between Guidetti, a disciple of Cristoforo Landino, and Buonacorso Massari, a pupil of Giovanni Pietro. For Guidetti, the task of scholarship was to “extract from his text—an ideal thing outside of any particular time, space, or individual experience—a central core of moral and literary instruction” (25). Massari saw the purpose of scholarship differently than Guidetti—the task of scholarship for Massari was “to offer exact knowledge about minute details of ancient culture” (25-26). Scholars in the Massari camp, concerned with historical accuracy, appear outnumbered. The majority read the Classics with deep commitment to extract the “ideal thing.” Grafton remarks: “Few of the humanists actually reveal on close inspection that commitment to a strictly historical approach” (33). Such an orientation as Guidetti demonstrated is in harmony with Sidney’s model of reading which held that the reader should prefer texts which show the world “as it should be” rather than “as it is” (35), since, “the ending end of all earthly learning” is “virtuous action” (26).

### ***Erasmus Taught Them “How to Read.”***

Any discussion of how Sidney and his contemporaries read their Classic texts must begin with Erasmus, since the student is best understood in light of the student’s instructor. Erasmus (1466-1536)—the Dutch Renaissance Classical scholar, teacher, and Catholic priest—was known as “the crowning glory of the Christian humanists” (Latourette 661). The high esteem of Erasmus for the Classics contributed to their wide acceptance; Erasmus writes, “Traditionally, almost all knowledge of things is to be sought in the Greek authors. For in short, whence can one draw a draught so pure, so easy, and so delightful as from the very fountain-head” (*De ratione studii* 670). Erasmus communicated this sense of great delight at the rediscovery of the Classics to both teachers and students. He taught them “how” to read “carefully” and extract the value—the nuggets of moral philosophy or the stylistic techniques:

...you will carefully observe when reading writers whether any striking word occurs, if diction is archaic or novel, if some argument shows brilliant invention or has been skillfully adapted from elsewhere, if there is any brilliance in the style, if there is any adage, historical parallel, or maxim worth committing to memory. Such a passage should be indicated by some appropriate mark. For not only must a variety of marks be employed but appropriate ones at that, so that they will immediately indicate their purpose. (*De ratione studii* 670)

The instructor was to search for stylistic techniques—“brilliant invention, skillful adaptation, brilliant style”—and moral philosophy—“worthy adages, parallels, or maxims.” Finding them, he was to mark them and “immediately” indicate their purpose. To Erasmus, the pithy sayings strewn throughout the Classics, though small, were of great value and worth going to a great deal of trouble to retrieve.<sup>5</sup> Citing Aristotle, Erasmus urges that they be looked into “not in sluggish

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<sup>5</sup> Erasmus writes, “If the adage seems a tiny thing, we must remember that it has to be estimated not by its size but by its value. What man of sane mind would not prefer gems, however small, to immense rocks” (*Adages of Erasmus* 12).

or careless fashion, but closely and deeply: for underlying them [adages] there are what one might call sparks of that ancient philosophy” (*Adages* 13). Thus, teachers, compliant to Erasmus, instilled their students with a passion for intense and application-purposed study of the Classics. While readers were encouraged to search for wisdom’s ore, Erasmus made no pretense that all that glittered was gold. He directed teachers, after exploring the author’s stylistic techniques and plot, to “skillfully bring out the moral implication of the poets’ stories, or employ them as patterns...” (De ratione studii 683), and he forewarned the teacher to take heed, since some passages were capable of “corrupting” the young:

And so it will come about (assuming mental agility on the teacher’s part) that if some passage is encountered which may corrupt the young, far from its harming their morals it may in fact confer some benefit, namely by concentrating their attention, partly on annotation of the passage, partly on loftier thoughts. If, for instance, someone were going to read Virgil’s second Eclogue, he should prepare or rather protect the minds of his audience with a suitable preface along the following lines: friendship can exist only among similar people, for similarity promotes mutual good will, while dissimilarity on the other hand is the parent of hatred and distrust; moreover, the greater, the truer, the more deeply rooted the similarity, the firmer and closer will be the friendship. (De ratione studii 683)

Erasmus suggests the agile teacher will find a way to extract gold from even potentially harmful passages. Indeed, the commission is that teachers not only extract the moral precept from such texts, but in its seeming absence, to construct a “suitable” preface. As example, Erasmus refers to Virgil’s Second Eclogue, the story of the shepherd Corydon’s unrequited homoerotic love for Alexis—a story that Renaissance scholars, wishing to conform the text to Christian values, found difficult. Erasmus demonstrates the creativity he expects the teacher to employ as he constructs a “suitable” preface, one that focuses the audience away from the homosexual implications of Corydon’s love for Alexis and onto “loftier thoughts.” In the preface of Erasmus, the story becomes an illustration of failed friendship. Alexis, whom Erasmus sees as a high-born lord, rejects Corydon, a countryman and shepherd. The fault for the “ill-formed ‘friendship’” is social inequality, which Erasmus supports with such observations as “Corydon is unsophisticated (for Virgil calls his songs artless), while Alexis widely read...Corydon is advanced in years, Alexis in his early manhood.” Included in the preface of Erasmus are such pithy admonitions as “Equal delights equal; look for a wife who is your equal; God always brings like to like.” In the case of Virgil’s Second Eclogue, the gold, which Erasmus sought, did not appear readily on the surface. It would be necessary to dig deep and refine heavily; nonetheless, Erasmus and the generations that followed him were up to the task.

### ***Plutarch Taught Them “How to Read.”***

Erasmian methods of “how to read” do not appear entirely original. John Wallace in his essay, “Examples Are the Best Precepts...,” brought to light the previously ignored influence of Plutarch (46 – 120 AD), the Greek historian and essayist. He asserts, “The single most neglected document in recent accounts of reading habits in the Renaissance is Plutarch’s essay on ‘How a

yoong man ought to heare poets, and how he may take profit by reading poemes” (277).

Wallace explains that Plutarch’s emphasis “was not on writing or speaking but on reading; not on construction but interpretation.” According to Plutarch, philosophy was “the onely scope whereunto yoong men must tend in reading of Poets.” Wallace explains,

Plutarch was grappling with the problem that “literature, like life, was a mixture of virtue and vice, truth and deception.” A reader had therefore to acquire a set of critical attitudes that would defend him from the damage, which poems could potentially cause. He needed antidotes for the poison in poetical flowers, and like the bee must learn to transmute venom into honey. (277)

The Classical texts contained virtue and vice, truth and deception. Plutarch’s instructions were clear—readers must read critically. Wallace concludes, “No young man could have taken Plutarch seriously without becoming thoroughly suspicious of any literary work, and learning to inquire closely into the probable reasons of every speech and action” (277). Plutarch’s careful reader sought immunity for the poison in poetical flowers. Wallace writes, “Immunity could be obtained by studying the implicit commentary within a work on the bad deeds and characters, by remembering better statements made elsewhere by the author, by paying careful attention to etymological niceties, and so on” (277). According to Plutarch, the poison found in the Classics should not deter readers from the pursuit of moral philosophy—“True reading” would extract the moral philosophy that good authors mixed with their fictions, or import it from outside (278). In fact, explains Wallace, “The seductive forms of poetry enticed a reader to make far-reaching investigations into the moral structures that must underlie them, however deeply they might be hidden. A reader trained in such a school would have developed powers of inference quite as subtle as those of our most ingenious modern critics” (278). Not only is it apparent that Plutarch was mentor to the mentor, Erasmus, whose instructions echo Plutarch’s own instructions, but also Wallace demonstrates Plutarch’s influence to the generations that followed Erasmus, including Sidney and his contemporaries.

### **Sidney’s Model of How One Ought to Read**

Sir Philip Sidney and his contemporaries engaged with their Classic texts as they had been taught—sifting, extracting, and refining, when necessary, to separate the unwanted elements from the gold. Their methods differed, yet the end goal was the same: to extract from the Classics a central core of moral philosophy—the gold. To accomplish this end, Sidney, writing in the *Defense*, showed clear preference for one text above another, preferring poetically “refined” texts—texts which not only accomplish the task of transmuting “venom into honey” (as Plutarch advised), but set virtue “out in her best colours” in order that one may be “enamoured of her” (37). He extolled the poet for the creative capacity, which enabled him to move the heart to virtue by capturing, through “the feigned image of poetry,” that which “should be.” According to Sidney, neither History nor Philosophy could so well promote virtue or, most significantly, “virtuous action”—“the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action...” (29). Sidney argues that the philosopher’s knowledge “standeth so upon the abstract and

general” that it is both difficult to understand and apply. Sidney then turns to the historian. Noting that the historian is “bound to tell things as things were,” Sidney asks the reader, “How will you discern what to follow but by your own discretion” (36)? Earlier, Sidney clarified the problem with history: The historian, tied to “what is,” rather than “what should be” (32) lacks “precept”—he draws “no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine” (32).

In contrast, the work of Sidney’s poet would bear much fruit. The fruit, to which Sidney refers, is exemplified when he later extols Xenophon’s poetry, which setting forth an ideal, bestows “a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses” (24). He insists, “The poet nameth Cyrus and Aeneas no other way than to show what men of their fames, fortunes, and estates should do” (54). Sidney compares the poetical versions of some Classics in which an event or model is “set down as it should be” with the historical version as he speaks to the reader whom he assumes will judge and prefer to a similar standard. We read:

But if the question be, for your own use and learning, whether it be better to have it set down as it should be, or as it was? then, certainly, is more doctrinable the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon, than the true Cyrus in Justin; and the feigned Aeneas in Virgil, than the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius; as to a lady that desired to fashion her countenance to the best grace, a painter should more benefit her, to portrait a most sweet face, writing Canidia upon it, than to paint Canidia as she was, who, Horace sweareth, was full ill-favoured. If the poet do his part aright, he will show you in Tantalus, Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses, each thing to be followed... (35, 36)

In this passage, the purpose of the Classical study for Sidney’s reader is assumed to be for his “own use and learning.” The reader, he therefore assumes, will be searching for texts that are most “doctrinable” for that purpose. In so doing, he would then “certainly,” says Sidney, choose the imagined Aeneas in Virgil rather than the “right” (historically accurate) Aeneas in Dares Phrygius. Like Guidetti, mentioned earlier, Sidney’s reader is much less concerned with historical accuracy than searching for an “ideal thing,” outside of time and space. Prior to the above passage, Sidney cites Aristotle who “plainly determineth” the question of “images of true matters” vs. those of poetry: “His” (Aristotle’s) reason is, because poesy dealeth with...the universal consideration and history with the particular: now, saith he, the universal weighs what is fit to be said or done...and the particular only marks whether Alcibiades did, or suffered, this or that” (35). Sidney then concludes: “If the question were whether it were better to have a particular act truly or falsely set down, there is no doubt which is to be chosen” (35). The Renaissance reader of the Classics was sifting for gold—the ideal thing, the “universal” consideration—and the “feigned image of poetry” was more likely to set it forth for the taking. Borrowing the illustration from Horace, Sidney presumes a woman (Canidia) would not wish to be painted with all her faults visible (implying neither should his readers wish to see her as such). Sidney’s preference for himself and the preference he assumes for the reader is clear—the ideal is to be valued over the real. Since the goal is the extraction of virtue, leading to “well doing,”



those texts that are most practical are those that most clearly set forth the model of that which “should be.”

To assist the reader with this endeavor, Sidney’s poet is assumed to “do his part right,” and show the reader “nothing that is not to be shunned” (Tantalus, Atreus) and “each thing to be followed” (Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses). In other words, Sidney’s poet will not recount the evil deeds of Tantalus and Atreus as though such actions were without consequence, but rather will show these men to suffer as a result of their poor choices; therefore, the reader will shun evil. Sidney’s poet will, as well, show you examples of men who are fit to be followed as role models (Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses), often greatly imagined examples, yet valuable for “your own use and learning.”

### ***Cyrus in Justin and Xenophon***

In order to understand better Sidney’s process of sifting and extracting in these and other Classical texts, one might examine his contrast between the “feigned Cyrus in Xenophon” and “the true Cyrus in Justin” as well as “the feigned Aeneas in Virgil” and “the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius.” Justin’s history of Cyrus, while giving the appearance of historical accuracy,<sup>6</sup> does lack in substance to be gleaned for moral philosophy. We read:

But Cyrus thought the will of his father an injustice, and secretly made preparations for war with his brother. News of his intentions being brought to Artaxerxes, he sent for him, and, when he pretended innocence, and denied all thoughts of war, he bound him with golden fetters, and would have put him to death, had not his mother interposed. Cyrus, in consequence of her intercession, being allowed to depart, began to prepare for war, no longer secretly, but publicly, not with dissimulation, but with an open avowal of it, and assembled auxiliary troops from all quarters.

(Justinus bk 5)

We see Cyrus, greedy for more land, not willing to honor the wishes of his father. Though guilty, he claims complete innocence before his brother and relies on his mother to rescue him—appearing cowardly, and then with apparently no shame in his deceit, he turns around and publicly prepares for war. Such a historical account would leave little for the virtue seeker to extract. His character offers no model to follow, nor does the insipid presentation of his actions provoke us to “shun” evil, since no just consequences ensue. Hence, we see Sidney’s preference for Xenophon’s feigned or “reinvented history.”

In crafting the *Cyropaedia*, Xenophon was determined to enquire “by what birth, with what natural disposition, and under what discipline and education...[Cyrus] so much excelled in the ‘art of governing men’” (115). According to Bodil Due, Xenophon believed that “without the highest possible moral standards in the leader...there is no hope of improving the sad and confused conditions of human life” (237). Therefore, in Xenophon’s Cyrus, we see the

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<sup>6</sup> The Justin Sidney refers to is the Roman historian, Marcus Junianus Justinus, author of *Epitome*, an abridgement of the “lost” *Philippic Histories* by Pompeius Trogus. (See *Encyclopedia Britannica*.)

construction of an ideal, the portrait of the perfect leader—just, benign, a lover of mankind, temperate, wisdom-seeking, respectful to the gods and authorities, courageous and strong. Xenophon’s Cyrus was able to uphold moral integrity and withstand physical hardship in the face of much adversity. Xenophon summarized the results of the moral education of Cyrus as boy, describing him as a “boy of a great good nature” (119).

When Henry Holland presented Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* to King James, it is intriguing that his honest admission that Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* is “not according to the truth of history” seemed to need no apology. Xenophon presents the “image” of a good leader and a just empire, and the image is considered of great value in political and moral education. According to Bodil Due, even the immediate collapse of Cyrus’s empire upon his death, did not dishearten Xenophon (Nadon 5). Instead, he encompasses his whole work in a circular “train of thoughts” concluding the only way to avoid having such a miserable state of affairs is to have a perfect leader; one could become a perfect leader by reading Xenophon’s Cyrus! However “falsely” set down, Sidney admires Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*. He has made Cyrus “as he should be” and thus more fit for the readers “use and learning.” Sidney was no doubt considering Xenophon when he asserted, “The peerless poet...giveth a perfect picture ...for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image” (32). Shortly, we will discuss Holland’s translation of the *Cyropaedia*.

### ***Aeneas in Dares and Virgil***

The “right” (historically accurate) Aeneas comes from a short prose historical account of the fall of Troy, which purports to be a first-hand account by Dares, a Trojan priest mentioned in the *Iliad*.<sup>7</sup> Dares describes Aeneas as an appointed officer of King Priam in the Trojan army raised to fight the Greeks—“auburn-haired, stocky, eloquent, courteous, prudent, pious, and charming” with eyes “black and twinkling.” According to Dares, after years of long wars between the Greeks and the Trojans, the Greeks finally gained the upper-hand, surrounding the walls of Troy with their forces and preventing anyone’s departure. Aeneas, along with Antenor and Polydamas, urged Priam, the King of Troy, to sue for peace with the Greeks by giving up Helen and the booty they had taken from the Greeks. King Priam refused. Following the advice of his “brave” young son, Amphimachus, he ordered the Trojans to prepare: “When the signal was given, they must rush from the gates and either conquer or die.” King Priam began to plot the death of Aeneas and Antenor, fearing they would betray him and lead other Trojans to follow. However, Antenor and others, fearing the King was “devising some treachery,” conceived their own plot and sent word to Aeneas: “They must,” said Antenor, “betray their country, and in such a way that they might safeguard themselves and their families.” Securing allegiance from one another, they appointed one among them, Polydamas, who they felt would arouse least suspicion “to go in secret and see Agamemnon,” the Greek leader, devising a plan whereby the Greeks could enter the gates by night. After some debate and precaution, the Greeks decided to

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<sup>7</sup> Dares Phrygius, a Trojan priest of Hephaestus reports to be the author of the “lost pre-Homeric ‘eyewitness’ account of the Trojan War.” However, the Greek original may be dated to the 3rd century ad. (The Latin translation dates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century.) (See *Encyclopedia Britannica*.)

“trust the traitors,” and we read that “Antenor, Aeneas, and all their associates,” were to go “by night to the Scaean gate and open the bolt, and raise a torch, and thus welcome the Greeks.” We read, “That night Antenor and Aeneas were ready at the gate and let Neoptolemus in. After opening the bolt and raising the torch, they looked to a means of escape for themselves and their people.” Antenor led the Greeks to the castle where King Priam was “cut down at the altar of Jupiter.” We read: “During the whole night the Greeks did not cease wreaking slaughter and carrying off plunder.”

But, if betrayal of one’s country does not cause readers to doubt his innocence, Aeneas’ virtue is once more questionable as fleeing Hecuba entrusts him to hide her daughter, Polyxena (the beloved of Achilles, whose promised hand had led him into an ambush where he was slain by the Trojans). Aeneas agreed and hid her with his father; however, later, upon demand of Agamemnon, he handed her over to the Greeks at which time the vengeful son of Achilles, Neoptolemus, ruthlessly cut her throat before the grave of his father. Despised by Agamemnon for agreeing to hide Polyxena, Aeneas is sent into exile.

In Dares’ purportedly historical account, Aeneas shows neither courage nor piety. No love of country or people other than his own family and associates is shown. While some may claim him a victim of circumstance, none would claim him an example. He betrays his country and the young woman he was entrusted to hide. There is little to follow, little “doctrinable.”

In contrast to the historical account of an officer who flees the scene of battle, leaving his beloved country and King to their fate, Virgil transforms Aeneas into a “god-like” man. Virgil’s Aeneas scarcely restrains his tears over the woeful fall of his people as he recounts the story to Dido, Queen of Carthage. When the ghost of Hector (the valiant and patriotic son of King Priam who bears “the wounds of his country”) presents the woeful news of Troy’s surprise invasion to Aeneas in a dream, he insists that it is already too late for Aeneas to come to the aid of King Priam and his people: “The wall is possessed,” the city is in flames, and Troy “totters to her fall.” Hector urges and thus sanctions “his timely flight”; he assures him that “enough is paid to Priam’s royal name / more than enough to duty and to fame.” It is duty that calls Virgil’s Aeneas, as Hector commends to him the “future state of Troy,” and he is commissioned to take Troy’s gods of hearth and household. But, though commissioned to flee, Virgil’s courageous Aeneas all but ignores the commission; he would rather “die in arms.” We read: “I run to meet th’ alarms, / Resolv’d on death, resolv’d to die in arms, / But first to gather friends, with them t’ oppose / (If fortune favor’d) and repel the foes; / Spurr’d by my courage, by my country fir’d, / With sense of honor and revenge inspir’d.” Courage, honor, and dutiful revenge swell within Aeneas. Finding his friend, Pantheas, he urges, “What hope, O Pantheus? whither can we run? / Where make a stand? and what may yet be done?” Pantheus warns that resistance is vain. Still Aeneas and others “...rush undaunted to defend the walls.” Though feeling abandoned by his “passive” gods, Virgil’s Aeneas still presses on against hope and encourages his friends: ““We, feeble few, conspire / To save a sinking town, involv’d in fire. / Then let us fall, but fall amidst our foes: / Despair of life the means of living shows.’ / So bold a speech encourag’d their desire / Of death, and added fuel to their fire.” Though some Greeks fell as they engaged in fierce combat—

“resolv'd, in death, the last extremes to try”—Aeneas saw the futility of their situation and moaned, “But, ah! what use of valor can be made, / When heav'n's propitious pow'rs refuse their aid!” Yet, again, despite fate, Aeneas pushes on: “Renew'd in courage with recover'd breath, / A second time we ran to tempt our death....” However, arriving at the palace in time to witness the cruel death of King Priam and his son, he remembers his family and yearns for their welfare: “Again I thought on my forsaken wife, / And trembled for my son's abandon'd life.” Finding himself now alone, deserted by friends, he makes his way to his family. But his noble aging father, while encouraging Aeneas to flee, refuses to leave, feeling he is too old to sustain exile and would therefore rather die. Though desperate to save his family, paternal love bids Aeneas to refuse to leave his father: “What hope remains, but what my death must give? / Can I, without so dear a father, live?” Aeneas will not watch his family die; so he resolves once more to enter the battle to die in the hopeless effort to defend them: “Restore me to the yet unfinish'd fight: / My death is wanting to conclude the night.” However, his farewell embraces to his wife and son are interrupted by the gods who send signs, celestial omens, which his discerning father is compelled to understand give promise that Aeneas is meant to restore the “ruined town.” His father now urges Aeneas to make no delay and to “yield” to “follow where Heav'n shews the way.” Once more, departure is sanctioned, and we see the noble Aeneas carrying his honored father on his back and holding his young son’s hand. We are gripped with the courage and tenderness of Aeneas as we read: “Haste, my dear father, ('t is no time to wait,) / And load my shoulders with a willing freight. / Whate'er befalls, your life shall be my care; / One death, or one deliv'rance, we will share. / My hand shall lead our little son; and you, / My faithful consort, shall our steps pursue.” Virgil now reinforces that even in fleeing, Aeneas was brave—“bold and dauntless”—fearing only for his family’s safety as he leads them past danger (his father, a welcome load, on his “bending back” and his son tripping along at uneven pace while hanging on to his “better hand.”) Despite his effort, he lost his wife who had trailed behind; once more fearless, with “ungoverned madness,” he returned to the city to search for her, loudly calling her name amid the conquering Greeks. The ghost of his wife who comforted him interrupted his certain end: “Nor tears, nor cries, can give the dead relief. / Desist, my much-lov'd lord, 't indulge your pain; / You bear no more than what the gods ordain.” His wife, as did Hector, prophesies of his future on Latium’s happy shore, the new state, and thus, again, sanctions his swift departure. When Aeneas returns to his father and son, he is amazed to find a great increase of friends who have fled Troy. We read, “Thus having pass'd the night in fruitless pain, / I to my longing friends return again, / Amaz'd th' augmented number to behold, / Of men and matrons mix'd, of young and old; / A wretched exil'd crew together brought, / With arms appointed, and with treasure fraught, / Resolv'd, and willing, under my command, / To run all hazards both of sea and land.” Note, these men are “longing friends,” “resolved and willing” under his command, and “prepared to run all hazards.” Virgil is careful to portray these fleeing friends as devoted and courageous men, leaving no room to suspect that there could be among them any ignoble or cowardly. We then see Aeneas, reluctantly yielding to fate, as he carries his father up the hill and leads his

exiled crew out of Troy: “Before the gates the Grecians took their post, / And all pretense of late relief was lost. / I yield to Fate, unwillingly retire, / And, loaded, up the hill convey my sire.”

No better picture of nobility and virtue could be painted. Not only is his departure from beloved Troy sanctioned by the gods and destiny; it is further sanctified by his pious and heroic acts. Aeneas is transformed by the poet’s touch to a man of valor and courage, patriotism, and sacrificial family and paternal love. His loyalty is matched only by his willingness to accept fate and destiny. The care of “self” seems never to get in the way. Though, as history records, he fled Troy, no braver or better founder could Rome desire, and yet what a contrast to the “right” Aeneas! The picture is clearly not as it was, but as “it should be.” Sidney found it “doctrinable,” filled with moral precepts and that which could be “followed.” Virgil’s Aeneas survives the ethical sifting and any further pressure to refine it—to Sidney, it is a work of pure gold.

As we compare and consider those values set forth in Xenophon’s Cyrus and Virgil’s Aeneas as opposed to Justin’s Cyrus and Dares’ Aeneas, we get a “snapshot,” perhaps, of some of the values for which Sidney and his friends sifted. Consider the following side-by-side excerpts from the two accounts—historical and imagined—of the ancient hero Cyrus regarding the important Renaissance value of respect for the father:

#### **“As It Was” or “As It Should Be”**

##### **The true Cyrus in Justin**

Cyrus thought the will of his father an injustice and secretly made preparations for war with his brother.

(Justinus bk 5).

##### **The feigned Cyrus in Xenophon**

“Father, said Cyrus, “I will always continue using my utmost care, according to your instruction, to render the gods propitious to us.”

(Xenophon 66).

Now consider the two accounts—historical and imagined—of the ancient hero Aeneas when it comes to the important Renaissance/Early Modern value of loyalty to one’s country:

##### **The right Aeneas in Dares**

“They must,” he said, “betray their country, and in such a way that they might safeguard themselves and their families” (Theoi/Dares 1)

##### **The feigned Aeneas in Virgil**

“...I run to meet th’ alarms,  
Resolv’d on death, resolv’d to die in arms,  
But first to gather friends, with them t’ oppose  
(If fortune favor’d) and repel the foes;  
Spurr’d by my courage, by my country fir’d,  
With sense of honor and revenge inspir’d”  
(Virgil 2)

To Sidney, the choice is easy. Historical accuracy is not important to the reader who reads for his “own use an learning,” virtue is. Sidney’s reader sought direction—that universal ideal that is “fit to be said or done.” “Even in the most excellent determination of goodness,” Sidney

questions, what counsel can “so readily direct a prince, as the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon; or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as Aeneas in Virgil” (33)? In the *Defense*, the selective reader and the creative poet comprised a team with the same end goal. Both would approach the Classics with high interest. The reader would read with discernment “for his own use and learning.” The poet would reimagine and refine for his own and his readers’ “use and learning.” In either case, the Classics were viewed as potential wealth to be mined. The gold was to be extracted by the poet’s vigorous refinement and the reader’s vigorous selectivity.

Sidney’s example of sifting for that that is, above all else, “doctrinable” in the Classical texts is a practice of reading evident in the translators’ pretexts and commentaries, the marginalia, and commonplace books of his day.

### **The Translators in Action**

English Renaissance translators such as Nicolas Grimald, George Chapman, Philemon Holland and George Sandys were certain the gold of moral philosophy which they sought for their countrymen’s “use and learning” was to be found in the Classics. In some Classics, such as Grimald’s translation of Cicero’s *De Officiis* and Holland’s translation of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, the gold was readily apparent on the surface, but other Classics, such as Chapman’s translation of *Iliad* and *Hesiod*, Holland’s translation of Pliny’s *Natural History*, and Sandys’ translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, would require extensive sifting and refining to remove the impurities. In the case of Sandys’ translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, the gold of moral philosophy was buried deep. Extracting would, therefore, require a great deal of poetic imagination. The translators employed different strategies—Holland and Sandys, committed to more literal translation, attached interpretive commentaries to guide their readers—but their objective was the same: to extract moral gold.

#### ***Grimald’s Translation of Cicero—“A Treasure...for the Fashioning of Their Life.”***

Nicolas Grimald, an English scholar, translator, and poet, writing twenty years earlier than Sidney, was no less persuaded than Sidney and Erasmus, his mentor, that the Classics could be mined for moral philosophy. Grimald is best known for his translations of Cicero’s *De Officiis* in 1556 and Virgil’s *Georgics*, printed 1591. In his prefatory letter to an unnamed bishop, “the Right Reverend Father,” Grimald extols the value he found in Cicero. Delighted and “furthered” as a university student by the “old studies,” Grimald writes of his determination to give himself “chiefly to such kind of learning as would serve best” both to his university studies and the “governance” of his life, “so that comparing my experience and reading together, I might make my private diligence in studying do service to the open use of living.” As with Sidney, we see a commitment to extracting practical moral philosophy from the Classics—for the “open use of living.” Thus, when Grimald discovered Cicero’s *De Officiis*, it seemed to him “a matter containing the whole trade how to live among men discreetly and honestly, and so rightly pointing out the pathway to all virtue as none can be righter, only Scripture excepted.” Grimald could not deny his countryman this discovery, which he describes as “the mirror of wisdom, the

fortress of justice, the master of manliness, the school to temperance, the jewel of comeliness.” He explains, “I wished many mo to be partners of such sweetness.” He writes: “I have made this Latin writer English, and have now brought into light that [which] from them so long was hidden, and have caused an ancient writing to become, in a manner, new again, and a book used but of few to wax common to a great many; so that our men, understanding what a treasure is among them for the fashioning of their life, and being by nature most of all other nations given to civility and humanity, when they shall be aided and directed by these perfect precepts, may, in all points of good demeanor, become people peerless.” To Grimald, Cicero is a treasure bestowed on the English “for the fashioning of their life.” That this useful end is what gives value to the means, the means being the translation of a secular author, is apparent as Grimald begins his preface to the reader: “All things in the world (good reader) be made for some use and end, which end is more worthy than all that doth service thereunto; and where both the end is good and what so serves thereto: there the whole doing is likewise good.” Grimald then clarifies that “the best end is to use ourselves well and worthily.” He then turns to the praise of *De Officiis*: “Rulers have here found much witty policy appertaining to the governance of realms. Householders and parents have picked out of these books virtuous instructions for their children and their servants. Doctors and divines have here met with moral sentence and ensamples very excellent.” One notes that it is not only the scholar who Grimald affirms will extract value from this Classic, but English society in general, including children and servants who will hear “virtuous instructions” from the readers—“householders and parents.”

Finding much to be “deeply pondered” in Cicero, Grimald describes how he read Cicero and what sort of reader Cicero requires: “As oft as I read him,” exclaimed Grimald, “so oft somewhat I find that I marked not before and that hath need to be deeply pondered...me thinks, he requires a very heedful, and a musing reader.” Thus, before turning over his reader to the “divine orator and worthy philosopher,” Grimald tells his reader how to read: “If this work hap into a good student’s hand, he will not think it enough to run over it once, as we fare with trifles and toys; but advisedly and with good leisure, three or four or five times, he will read it, and read it, and read it again: first by the principal points, by the definitions and the divisions, to see what is treated, how far forth, in what order, and with what variety; then, to mark the precepts, reasons, conclusions, and commonplaces.” Grimald, echoing Erasmus, exhorts students/readers to study with careful diligence, perhaps reading five times; the readers, themselves, will sift and extract, “marking” the precepts, reasons, conclusions, and commonplaces. Seeing Cicero as “useful” for the improvement of one’s life, Grimald assumed “high interest” on the part of his readers, the same high interest that motivated him to read attentively—deeply pondering and marking his texts in order to extract the treasure of moral philosophy.

Grimald, along with other English Renaissance translators, exemplifies the high interest of their society in acquiring practical moral philosophy from the Classics for individual and collective benefit. Through Grimald’s translation efforts, the moral education of the English society would be furthered: “Perfect precepts” would “aid and direct” the English people in becoming a “people peerless.”

### ***Chapman Refines Homer and Hesiod***

George Chapman, a scholar and translator as well as dramatist and poet, is remembered for his translations of the Classics, including Homer's *Iliad* (1598) and *The Works of Hesiod* (1618). As Ben Jonson noted in his poem of dedication (mentioned earlier), Chapman sifted and refined these works for the enrichment of his countrymen. In comparing Chapman's translation of Homer's *Iliad* to a literal modern translation [Lang, Leaf, and Myers (released in 2002)], one becomes aware of Chapman's refinement of the Greek original. Indeed, at points, Chapman's translation seems entirely different from Homer.

In Book I, the Greek warrior, Achilles, and the commander-and-chief of the Greek army, Agamemnon, engage in a passionate argument. The two men had taken captive two beautiful maidens, Chryseis and Briseis, when they sacked a Trojan-allied town. The heart-broken father of Chryseis offered a generous ransom for his daughter's return, but Agamemnon refused the offer. When the father cried out to Apollo, the Greek camp was plagued. The prophet, Chalcas, reveals the reason for the plague to Achilles who beseeches Agamemnon to return Chryseis and thus end the plague. Angered by the prospect of giving up his "only" gift, Agamemnon threatens to take Briseis from Achilles to compensate his loss. Achilles is ready to draw his sword when the goddess Athena appears. In Chapman's version, she exhorts him:

And cease contention: draw no sword; use words, and such as may  
Be bitter to his pride, but just; for trust in what I say,  
A time shall come, when thrice the worth of that he forceth now,  
He shall propose for recompense of these wrongs: therefore throw  
Reins on thy passions, and serve us. He answer'd: Though my heart  
Burn in just anger, yet my soul must conquer the' angry part,  
And yield you conquest: who subdues his earthy part for heaven,  
Heaven to his prayer subdues his wish. This said, her charge was given  
Fit honour: in his silver hilt he held his able hand, And forced his broad sword up...

Yet as soon as Athena leaves Achilles' side, "again forsook / Patience his passion, and no more his silence could confine / His wrath," and he addresses Agamemnon with "broad" language, "Thou ever steep'd in wine! Dog's face!..." (32, 33).

We see a different goddess and a different Achilles in the modern translation:

Then the bright-eyed goddess Athene spake to him again: "I came from heaven to stay thine anger, if perchance thou wilt hearken to me...Go to now, cease from strife, and let not thine hand draw the sword; yet with words indeed revile him, even as it shall come to pass. For thus will I say to thee, and so it shall be fulfilled; hereafter shall goodly gifts come to thee, yea in three-fold measure, by reason of this despite; hold thou thine hand, and hearken to us."

As in Chapman, Achilles responds favorably. We read, "And Achilles fleet of foot made answer and said to her: 'Goddess, needs must a man observe the saying of you twain, even though he be very wroth at heart; for so is the better way. Whosoever obeyeth the gods, to him they gladly hearken.' He said, and stayed his heavy hand on the silver hilt, and thrust the great



Sword back into the sheath, and was not disobedient to the saying of Athene.” When Athena “forthwith was departed to Olympus,” Achilles “spake again with bitter words to Atreus’ son [Agamemnon] and in no wise ceased from anger: “Thou heavy with wine, thou with face of dog...””

The differences between the two translations are notable: Chapman’s Achilles was exhorted simply to “use words”—words that would be bitter to Agamemnon’s pride, but “just”; Athena’s advice is consistent with Christian temperance, which extends to words as well as physical action. The goddess further exhorts, “throw reins on thy passions, and serve us,” calling Achilles to a higher moral ground. Achilles’ resolve, in response, was noble; however, it later weakened as he railed upon Agamemnon. While Chapman underscores the disobedience of Achilles, who “forsook patience” and used “broad language,” the modern translation gives us no hint that Achilles turned from obedience to disobedience, for the goddess exhorted him to “revile” Agamemnon, and so he did! It would appear he was not only obedient in putting away his sword, but obedient in the harsh reviling of Agamemnon that later ensued.

In Chapman’s translation, Achilles’ actions are characterized in terms of ethics. He “forsakes patience.” Since he could no longer control his passion, he could no longer keep silent. He looses “the rein” on his passion in clear disobedience to his deity, and he is not excused—the defining line between good and evil is drawn in accordance with Christian values. However, in the 2002 translation, Achilles appears to need no amendment to his behavior other than to refrain from doing physical harm to Agamemnon, to not “draw the sword.” The pagan language is also modified in Chapman’s version of this passage—the “gods” becoming “Heaven.” Homer’s ore has been refined. The text has been set down as it “should be,” not as “it was.”

Chapman’s translation of Hesiod reflects the 16<sup>th</sup> century inclination to replace Jupiter or Zeus, the Roman and Greek names for the supreme deity, with Jove. Sixteenth-century readers considered “Jove” to be a derivation of “Jehovah” and held that the wisest ancients shared the Judeo-Christian belief in one “supreme Deity.” John Wilkins, writing in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, thus maintains: “The most considering and the wisest men in all Ages and Nations have constantly differed from the Vulgar in their thoughts about these things, believing but one supreme Deity, the Father of all other subordinate Powers... Whom they called Jupiter or Jove, with plain reference to the Hebrew name Jehovah” (Wilkins 51). Whether or not Chapman felt Hesiod to be among the wise ancients who recognized one all-powerful deity, he was not willing to risk any confusion. He substituted “Jove” for “Zeus” and the appositive of Zeus, “son of Cronos,” used repeatedly in the Greek original.<sup>8</sup>

Chapman was equally careful to align Hesiod’s deity with Christian notions of the attributes of God. Therefore, when Chapman translates Hesiod’s story of Prometheus stealing the fire for mankind—an act done to benefit man, enabling his progress and civilization—he endeavors to depict Jove as good and to show Prometheus as sinful. Chapman’s God withheld fire from man because the “mean life”—a life of neither riches or poverty, but requiring man’s diligent labor—was best for him. In Chapman’s translation, Hesiod warns:

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<sup>8</sup> See Hugh G. Evelyn-White’s translation (1914) for many instances of this substitution.

O Fools, that all things into Judgment call;  
 Yet know not how much half is more than all.  
 Nor how the mean life is the firmest still.  
 Nor of the Mallow and the Daffodil  
 How great a good the little meals contain.  
 But God hath hid from men the healthful mean;  
 For otherwise, a man might heap (and play)  
 Enough to serve the whole year in a day;  
 And strait his draught-Tree hang up in the smoke,  
 Nor more his laboring mules nor oxen yoke.  
 But Jove man's knowledge of his Best bereav'd,  
 Conceiving anger since he was deceiv'd  
 By that same wisdom-wresting Japhet's son,  
 For which all ill all earth did over-run.  
 For Jove, close keeping in a hollow cane  
 His holy fire, to serve the use of man  
 Prometheus stole it by his human sleight  
 From him that hath, of all heaven's wit the height. (3)

Chapman's footnote further explains to the reader: "He commends the Mean, and reproves those kings or judges that are too indulgent to their covetous and glorious appetites, from the frugal, and competent life declining... showing how ignorant they are that the virtue of Justice and Mediocrity is to be preferred to injustice and insatiate Avarice." By contrast, in Hugh G. Evelyn-White's modern translation (1914), it is less clear that God's initial act of withholding fire from man is what is "best" for man:

Fools! They know not how much more the half is than the whole, nor what great advantage there is in mallow and asphodel (1). For the gods keep hidden from men the means of life. Else you would easily do work enough in a day to supply you for a full year even without working; soon would you put away your rudder over the smoke, and the fields worked by ox and sturdy mule would run to waste. But Zeus in the anger of his heart hid it, because Prometheus the crafty deceived him; therefore he planned sorrow and mischief against men. He hid fire; but that the noble son of Iapetus stole again for men from Zeus the counsellor... (ll. 41-53)

According to the modern translation, when Prometheus deceived him, Zeus hid the fire from man "in the anger of his heart," and when Prometheus stole the fire, Zeus, in vengeance, planned "sorrow and mischief against men." Chapman, however, softens the language: Jove "conceives anger since he was deceiv'd." Note, we are not told against whom he conceives this anger. Later, when Jove pronounces judgment, "a great plague," Chapman's version clearly focuses the blame on Prometheus. It was Prometheus that "plagued" his race, not Jove. In the modern translation, Zeus does not appear concerned with a justification of his actions against man, an innocent offender, but rather, plagues both Prometheus and man: "a great plague to you yourself

and to men that shall be.” From the modern translation, one could deduce man to suffer more from God’s judgment than Prometheus; however, in Chapman’s translation, Prometheus will experience grief for his actions. Chapman has labored, in his translation, to preserve the image of Jove. While a god who could be “deceived” is not consistent with 16th century Christianity, a god who plans “mischief and sorrow” as revenge against man (man whose crime was merely to receive the stolen fire from Prometheus) is less consistent. In Evelyn-White’s translation Prometheus is “crafty”; in Chapman’s translation, he is first noted to be “wisdom-wresting,” which, as Chapman’s footnote to the reader explains, implies that he twisted the wisdom granted to him, perverting “divine knowledge” to serve his own ends. Chapman writes:

He calls Prometheus...[he] who wrests that wisdom which God hath given him to use to his glory, to his own ends—which is cause to all the miseries Men suffer, and of all their impious actions that deserve them. Jove’s fire signifies truth; which Prometheus stealing, figures learned Men’s over-subtle abuse of divine knowledge, wresting it in false expositions to their own objects, thereby to inspire and puff up their own profane earth, intending [signifying] their corporeal parts and the irreligious delights of them.

While Evelyn-White’s “crafty” Prometheus need not be construed by the reader as immoral, Chapman’s Prometheus appears governed by “impious” desires. In Evelyn-White’s translation, Prometheus is the “noble son of Iapetus” who “stole again (the fire) for men.” The reader may be easily led to imagine a friend of man and an antagonistic god. Chapman’s translation does not call Prometheus “noble.” The character of Jove has been reimagined to fit, at least more comfortably, with the Christian beliefs about the character of deity. Like Homer’s ore, Hesiod’s ore has been refined. Chapman reconstructs the characters of both Zeus and Prometheus in order to present a deity somewhat closer to what “should be,” not “what was” in archaic Greek legend.

### ***Holland presents Livy, Plutarch, Pliny, and Cyrus***

Dr. Philemon Holland, a scholar and prolific translator, was educated at Cambridge. Having received a degree in medicine, he practiced among the poor in Coventry and later became director of a free school in Coventry. In addition to these pursuits, a good deal of his time was devoted to his translation work. He translated Livy, Plutarch, Pliny, Cyrus, and others. F. O. Matthiessen’s *Translation, an Elizabethan Art* asserts that it was the general opinion of Holland’s contemporaries that “in a period of great translations, he stood preeminent, the very symbol for a translator, as Sidney was the symbol for a gentleman.” Holland indeed seemed to embody the excitement and anticipation with which Renaissance readers approached Classical texts. He embraced the mentorship of the ancient heroes, including Pliny and Cyrus, and appreciated the wealth of moral instruction by which he could better his own life and the lives of his countrymen. Matthiessen observes, “The secret of Holland’s success lies in the fact that what he read became part of his life. Livy and Suetonius were not ancient Classics, but men with something to say that might be vital to England’s destiny. They were not be laid up on shelves and studied, but to be read as eagerly as one would talk on matters of importance with one’s fellow townsmen” (181). Thus, in his translation of Livy, Holland introduces the Roman historian to the Queen as though he stood there, in the flesh, offering his services to her and

England: "Reach forth your gracious hand to T. Livius: who having arrived long since and conversed as a mere stranger in this your famous land, and now for love thereof learned in some sort the language...he shall duly keep his own allegiance, and acquaint your liege subjects with religious devotion after his manner, with wisdom, policy, virtue, valor and loyalty, and not otherwise" (181).

When Holland translated Pliny's *Natural History* (1601), including the attacks on miracles and divine providence, with nothing but his commentary annexed to instruct the reader (in keeping with his commitment to reconstruct accurately "the monuments left by former writers"), his careful attempt to justify the "as is" (unfiltered, unrefined) translation demonstrates that Holland was acutely aware of the cultural practice of sifting for value. Pliny the elder (A.D. 77-79) was a Roman author and natural philosopher. Holland is aware that Pliny's *Natural History*, an investigation of natural and geographical phenomena, will be suspect for its failure to attribute natural phenomena to God. He begins his defense of the value of Pliny to his countrymen with a "Preface to the Reader" in which he asserts the virtue of Pliny as a mentor and moral instructor and expresses his faith that his readers are qualified to discern, to filter for themselves. Though Holland will not filter the text to remove the moral detritus, he will provide his lengthy commentary in which he tells the reader how the text ought to be read. Holland must convince his readers that this rock he is attempting to save "whole" is strewn with the gold he and his readers are seeking ("practical virtue")—the gold exists in the veins between the clay<sup>9</sup>.

To do this, Holland proceeds to extol Pliny as an example of industry, leadership, sacrifice, patriotism and more. Regarding industry, he writes, "But when I look back to the example of Pliny, I must of necessity condemn both my own sloth, and also reprove the supine negligence of these days. A courtier he was, and great favorite of the Vespasians..." (n. pag.). Holland will continue to enumerate Pliny's honorable services as a commander, leader, statesman and more. Holland insists that each one of these services requires "a whole man," "yet amid these occasions," Pliny, "penned chronicles, wrote commentaries, compiled grammatical treatises, and many other volumes...wherein he has discoursed of all things even from the starry heaven to the center of the earth, a man would marvel how he could possibly either write or do anything else." Holland praises Pliny's "ardent desire to benefit to posterity" and his "indefatigable study both day and night." "Less wonder it is," writes Holland, "that he performed his service to prince and state according to his calling and withal delivered unto posterity so many fruits of wit and learning." Should one decide to test the sincerity of Holland's testimonial to Pliny as mentor, the proof is in the pudding—Holland's great grandson, Philemon Angel, would later attest to the Pliny-like virtues of his grandfather's character: "As a scholar he was a reserved man, most

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<sup>9</sup> Holland insists that his gift is not in doing or in constructing something worthy to be read, but in reconstructing accurately "the monuments left by former writers" and "annexing" his "worthy" commentaries to illustrate them. In doing so, he asserts, he has joined those writers, "learned men in several ages," who purpose to "save them entire and uncorrupt."

indefatigable in his study, saying often, that there was no greater burden and enemy to him than idleness”<sup>10</sup> (qtd. in Matthiesen 174).

However, Holland is aware that Pliny’s admirable industry and devotion to his country will not excuse his other offenses. Holland will be straightforward as he addresses his readers in his preface:

What remains now, but only to recommend unto my countrymen this work of his (which for mine own part I wish to be immortal) were it not for one scruple to be cleared, which at the first troubled myself a little, and might peradventure otherwise offend some readers. In attributing so much unto Nature, Pliny seems to derogate from the almighty God...and therefore dangerous (says one) to be divulged. Far be it from me, that I should publish anything to corrupt men’s manners, and much less to prejudice Christian religion.

Despite the scruples, Holland does not wish to “defraud the world of so rich an agent,” so, in order to defend his work against the criticism of promoting “irreligion,” he prefaces his translation with a letter from a “grave and learned” preacher who affirmed,

Though Plinie and the rest were not able by natures light to search so far as to find out the God of Nature, who sitteth in the glorie of light which none attaineth, but contrariwise in the vanitie of their imagination bewrayed the ignorance of foolish hearts, some doting upon Nature her selfe, and others upon speciall creatures, as their God: yet feare we not that Christians, in so cleare light, should be so farre bewitched by such blind teachers, as to fall before those heathen idols. Yea, though some of them (as namely Plinie) have spoken dishonourably of the only true God and of his providence, because they knew him not...I feare not the corrupting of unstable minds anything so much by these foolish Gentiles which are without...

Pliny is referred to as being among the “foolish” Gentiles (non-Christians). The preacher insists “nature’s” light could only assist him to “search so far,” and therefore his error should be excused. Furthermore, the preacher affirms he does not fear “the corrupting of the unstable minds by these foolish Gentiles,” since he finds it hardly plausible that “Christians, in so clear light,” should be corrupted. Holland will, therefore, trust that his readers, “enlightened” Christians, are capable of judging, sifting for themselves, as they read; therefore, his commentary on how one ought to read Pliny, coupled with the reader’s discretion, is sufficient to assure the gold will be extracted from the clay. Holland’s careful defense of his presentation of “the whole” Pliny witnesses his awareness of, and sensitivity to, a culture that demanded usefulness from the pagan Classics and sifted according to their values, values rooted in Christianity.

Later, Holland would undertake, by direction of King James, the translation of an already highly esteemed Classic text, the aforementioned “feigned” Cyrus—“The Cyropaedia,” by Xenophon—for the education (“contemplation and use”) of young Prince Henry. Holland died before completing his work; however his son, Henry Holland, brought it to publication. The text being already esteemed, Henry Holland simply affirmed why his fellow Englishmen should find it valuable. As noted earlier, Henry Holland admits that Xenophon (“a deep philosopher, a

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<sup>10</sup> A. Wood, *Fasti Oxonienses*, ed. P. Bliss (London, 1815), I, 234.

politic counselor of state, and an expert warrior”) wrote, “not according to the truth of history,” but, “the image of a just empire.” “Yet,” continues Holland, “in such request they were that Scipio Africanus the famous Roman commander, was never wont to lay them out of his hands.” “By nature,” Xenophon says, Cyrus was reported to be “a most beautiful person” with a “mind of the greatest benignity and love to mankind,” and to be “most desirous of knowledge and most ambitious of glory” (7). The Persian education that molded Cyrus is described as “careful, from the beginning, to provide that their citizens shall not be such as to be capable of meddling with any action that is base and vile” (7); rather, Xenophon reports that Persian school boys, “pass their time in learning justice, and tell you, that they go for that purpose, as those with us who go to learn letters” (9). Since, Cyrus was both a worthy military and moral model, the *Cyropaedia* was judged “worthy of the view and imitation” of young Prince Charles with the “devout prayer, that he may grow up in stature and in favor with God and man.”

The *Cyropaedia* was not only practical but also palatable. Praising Xenophon’s manner of delivery, Henry Holland writes, “All these books wrote he so sweetly and eloquently in Greek, that he was named the Muse. . . the bee of Athens.” His words, reports Holland, “flowed more sweetly than honey.” This very “palatable” form of writing is what Sir Philip Sidney praised in the ancient poets as being the “charming sweetness,” which would draw “wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge” (19).

It is furthermore notable that Henry Holland adds to this appeal for the King’s acceptance that the *Cyrus* written of is “that Cyrus the Elder, of whom the Holy Scripture maketh honorable mention.” Such honorable mention could not but help gain acceptance for the *Cyropaedia*. Did it matter at all that the *Cyropaedia* was feigned? It seems it mattered very little. The *Cyropaedia*, as noted earlier, presented the “image” of a prince as he “should be,” not as he was, and that model was valued as an ideal to be imitated. The end or the goal was that Prince Charles and other readers would “grow up in stature and in favor with God and man” and much less important was the factual accuracy. The *Cyropaedia* provided a portrait of a good leader, a worthy mentor, and both political and moral instruction.

Thomas Farnaby’s prefatory memorial poem defended the useful, practical value of Holland’s translations, which included the *Cyropaedia*: “Why should not courtiers read what courtiers write? / And soldiers know what soldiers do recite? Besides, that authors oft are rectifi’d / In the translating, and their wants suppli’d” (1). Holland’s translations found their value in their practicality. In the case of the *Cyropaedia*, courtiers and soldiers found valuable mentorship from the study of Cyrus. However, not only is practicality praised but Holland’s readiness to supply, “to rectify” (to mend or fix), the author’s “wants”—In the works of Pliny, Livy, Plutarch and others, Holland’s commentaries amended those places where translation of the Greek and Roman original was not suitable for the readers “use and learning,” since it was not “as it should be.” According to Matthiessen, Holland’s translation work represented “the full flowering of the cardinal belief of the sixteenth-century humanists: that the great classics of Greece and Rome were to be read for their ethical values” (177).

### *Sandys' Translation of Ovid*

George Sandys was an English poet, translator, traveler, and colonist who briefly studied at Oxford. When George Sandys completed translation of Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in 1626, he too attached a lengthy commentary, giving us insight both as to how he read the *Metamorphosis* and how he thought others should read it. In "The Mind of the Frontispiece and Argument of this Worke," Sandys writes:

... in these ancient Fables lie  
 The mysteries of all Philosophie.  
 Some Natures secrets shew; in some appeare  
 Distempers staines; some teach us how to beare  
 Both Fortunes, bridling Ioy, Griefe, Hope, and Feare.  
 These Pietie, Deuotion those excite;  
 These prompt to Vertue, those from Vice affright;  
 All fitly minging Profit with Delight.  
 This Course our Poet steeres: and those that faile,  
 By wandring stars, not by his Compasse, saile.

According to Sandys, it seems, the poet Ovid "means" to steer a course that would excite us to "piety and devotion," "prompt us to Virtue," and from "Vice affright." Sandys, like Holland, anticipates that the reader himself will exercise judgment and extract good philosophy from the Classic. Those who fail to extract such good philosophy may blame their own wandering imaginations—they are not so guided by Ovid, whose compass would lead them rightly. Sandys, echoing Sidney's exaltation of poetry, tells us profit will be mingled with delight as the reader is prompted to virtue and frightened from vice. Nonetheless, Sandys is determined to assist the Christian reader. By means of his lengthy, annexed commentary, Sandys carefully filters out meaning, drawing out the moral lessons and "inventing" them when necessary as well as finding occasions where science or principle may be in agreement with the Scripture. Despite his expressed faith concerning the course Ovid means to steer, Sandys is aware, as he addresses Prince Charles, that his commentary is an essential addition to Ovid's work. He writes: "To this have I added, as the mind to the body, the history and philosophical sense of the fables (with the shadow of either in picture) which I humbly offer at the same altar" (both his translation and attached commentary are submitted for approval). Without Sandys' "history and philosophical sense," Ovid's fables were not likely to prove useful to his Christian countrymen.

In places where the reader might not have seen a lesson, Sandys was pleased to construct it; he exercised the creativity of Sidney's poet, assisting the reader in imagining Ovid "as he should be." We see an instance of such reading when, with "just anger," Jove calls a council in heaven to determine how to punish the wickedness of men on earth (8). Those invited to the "ever open doors" of his high court to aid in Jove's decision ("Jove being "not more perplexed than at this sad time") included both "nobler Deities" and "the vulgar." Sandys clarifies in his commentary that this Jove is a "counterfeit" Jehovah (11); yet, he finds three valuable lessons in Jove's actions for Christian 16th century readers. Sandys writes: "Jupiter calls a council to inform us

how all human affairs are governed by the certain decree and providence of God; not by chance or Fortune, as the Tragedian complaineth.”<sup>11</sup> The first lesson we should observe from Jove’s decree is that the affairs of men are subject to God’s providence and not the result of chance. Then, he turns to the Scriptures, pointing out that David wrestled with the same mystery until “he had entered the sanctuary.” No doubt he is referring to Psalm 73—which deals with David’s questioning the prosperity of the wicked, while he himself was “plagued, and chastened every morning.” David concluded that “truly God was good” since the end of the wicked would be desolation, but *he* would be “guided” by God’s counsel and “received” to glory. Thus the lesson concludes: Our life is led by providence for which, despite our troubles, we should be thankful. The reader is then ushered to another lesson. Sandys says we are “admonished” by Jove’s actions that “nothing in a commonwealth is to be decreed unadvisedly or rashly” (12). He points out that Jove, who is all-powerful, would do nothing rashly, nothing without consent of the gods—therefore, “how much more men, who have so small a portion of divine wisdom.” Finally, we learn what we should “not” do from the “feigned” Jove: Jove’s Parliament, says Sandys, consisted of the Nobels and the Commons (the vulgar). “By involving” these lower gods, truth was “abolished” through “the suggestion of the devil, to make confusion and induce unto error.” Sandys quotes Homer’s Ulysses, “All cannot rule; for many rulers bring / Confusion: let there be one Lord, one King.” Sandys concludes a monarchy is to be preferred over such a council, which incurred “murmurings” as a result of the diversity of noble and vulgar gods.

When one considers Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, Book One, one wonders how Sandys could redeem a story where the gods, Apollo (Phoebus) and Jove (Jupiter), are overtaken by lust and move to rape their love objects (successfully, in the case of Jove and Io!), yet Sandys, like Sidney’s poet, is committed to showing the reader “nothing that is ‘not’ to be shunned and “each thing to be followed”—wicked actions will be shown only in connection with undesirable consequences. Therefore, in Sandy’s interpretive commentary, the gods’ reckless actions are turned into lessons that extol virtue and dissuade from vice. Apollo, struck by Cupid’s bow, and thence falling in love with Daphne, becomes a “great boaster” who is “drawn on by barren hope.” The hot pursuit of Apollo prompted Daphne’s desperate cries to the deities of the river and earth: “Help father, if your streams contain a Power, / May earth, for too well pleasing, me devour! / Or, by transforming, O destroy this shape, / That thus betrays me to undoing rape” (21)! “Forthwith,” we read, Daphne was changed into a laurel tree. Sandys, in his commentary, turns the readers’ focus away from the sad fate of Daphne. Extracting the gold he finds within the incident, Daphne becomes a picture of the immortal honor of a woman who preserves her virginity. Ovid tells us that Daphne “emulates un-wed Pheobe,” the goddess Diana (17) which, says Sandys, represents: “chastity: preserved by solitariness, labor, and neglect of curiosity” (19). The gods, says Sandys, assisted Daphne in her “distressed virtue” when they turned her into a laurel tree, “the image of her beauty and chastity, which was later ennobled by her lover with

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<sup>11</sup> To explain his reference to “the Tragedean,” he cites Seneca in *Hippolytus*, which complains that “the affairs of men” are governed “with so much neglect.”



addition of honors.” Her transformation to “a never-withering tree” thus shows “what immortal honor a virgin obtains by preserving her chastity.” The reader has learned, through the story of Apollo and Daphne, that love can make men foolish and preserving virginity is worthy of “immortal honors.”

Sandys admits that Ovid presents Jupiter, ruler of the gods, as an adulterer, “a ravisher of virgins” (19, 20). Ovid tells the story the capture of Io, the young maiden who became the object of Jupiter’s lust: Jupiter calls after Io, “O, fly not! for she fled. The pastures past / Of Lerna and Lyrcaen’s gloomy wast, / He in the air a sable cloud display’d, / Caught and devirginates the strugg’ling maid” (23). Well aware of the problem this presents to the reader, Sandys finds a way to deal with the hurdle. He recounts a story from Herodotus in which Phoenician merchants sailing to Greece capture some women of Argos, “among whom was Io.” Io, “the most beautiful woman of that age” married Osiris, “called Jupiter...from whence the fable of Jupiter’s love unto Io was derived.” Sandys is satisfied to explain the source of this fable by a historical account he claims “more agreeth with the truth”: Sandys writes: “But Herodotus [tells] how the Phoenician merchants sailing into Greece, and the women of Argos (among whom was Io) coming aboard to see their commodities, were surprised by them, and carried thether...Diodorus writes how being the most beautiful woman of that age, she was married by Osiris; he called Jupiter, and Isis, from whence the fable of Jupiter’s love unto Io was derived” (20). While Sandys offers this explanation, he says “others have wrested this fable to morality.” “Wresting” or not, Sandys will supply the reader with their interpretation: Jupiter is made to signify “the mind of man, falling from Heaven and joining with Io, the body, in a cloud.” There he “is turned into a beast, as forgetful of his own original and captivated by his vices.” As the story proceeds, “reason bridles and subdues the exorbitancies of the affections.” Juno, the wife of Jupiter, becomes “the stings of the conscience.” Sandys then submits the following poem:

A hell on earth: th’afflicted mind dismay’d,  
Full of foul crimes, and of itself afraid.  
Some safely sin, none sin securely bear;  
But suffer still the vengeance which they fear (20)

Ultimately, the sad fate of Jupiter is turned around. Sandys finishes the interpretation: “This horror begets repentance; repentance, reformation, by which he is restored to his former beauty and becomes like the gods through his sanctity and integrity” (20). Sandys manages to turn Ovid’s *Metamorphosis* into stories replete with moral lessons; when this is not possible, an historical event or euhemerism (the theory that gods arose out of the deification of historical heroes) such as recounted by Herodotus may have resulted in misunderstanding of truth.

How possible is it that Ovid, the poems author, would himself draw some of the conclusions that Sandys draws? Yet, this seems of little concern to Sandys who must sift, extract, and employ all the inventive creativity of Sidney’s poet in order to find value for himself and his countrymen in the *Metamorphosis*.

### A Scholar in Action

This form of sifting and extracting for value is observable, too, in the work Gabriel Harvey, a scholar employed in the house of Sir Thomas Smith. As mentioned earlier, Gabriel Harvey's marginalia—hand written annotations and reflections scribbled in the margins—were analyzed by authors Lisa Jardine and Anthony Grafton in their essay, “‘Studied for Action’: How Gabriel Harvey Read His Livy.” Their study uncovered the surprising “seriousness” in which scholarly reading of the Classics was conducted within the circle of prominent Elizabethan political figures in the hope of gleaning political strategy. Harvey's interest in sifting for political theory as he read Livy is undeniable. A second look at his marginalia, however, makes it apparent that he also sought moral philosophy; his pursuit of moral and political philosophy was often intertwined. Harvey, we read, preferred aphorisms and examples to a tedious history: He writes, “Aphorisms and examples will speedily make you great and admirable”<sup>12</sup> (60). In one annotation of a particular reading concerning Annibal, we see Harvey sifting for both moral philosophy and political value, referencing and comparing his favorite commentaries.

One who wants political axioms here should read Daneau's political axioms from Polybius, or rather should himself collect more prudent ones, and more appropriate to civil and military discipline, from political principles. For example: Justinian's rules of law, Vegetius' rules of war, Isocrates' rules of civilized life. Or like the political principles of Aristotle, which come from Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Homer and others. There is no specialist in political, or economic, or ethical axioms drawn from histories and poems to match Aristotle in his Politics, or economic or Ethics...Machiavelli certainly out did Aristotle in observation of this above all, though he had a weaker foundation in technical rules and philosophical principles. Hence I generally prefer Aristotle's rules, Machiavelli's examples.<sup>13</sup>

Harvey prefers the aphorisms of Calvinist pastor, Lambert Daneau, and clearly, for “philosophy,” prefers Aristotle to Machiavelli. For this reading in Livy, Danuea constructs the following: “Those who break public treaties first are starting wars in a hateful way (that is why Polybius condemns the Carthaginians).” Speaking of Harvey's preference for aphorisms,<sup>14</sup> (60)—Grafton writes: “What may surprise us, though—and here the need to study the habits of actual readers emerges—is the nature of the source where he looks for them. Harvey boasts of his knowledge of Aristotle and Machiavelli. But he finds actual guidance in formulating aphorisms in the much humbler little collection of political axioms by the Calvinist pastor and theologian Lambert Daneau” (61). It is, however, less surprising when we consider Harvey as part of a reading culture in which “virtue” remains the “end of all earthly learning.” No doubt, Daneau's interpretation, though perhaps the less eloquent, weighed heaviest on the value scale.

<sup>12</sup> Harvey's Frontinus, Houghton Lib., Harvard, sig. a vir.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey's Livy, p. 273

<sup>14</sup> Harvey writes, “Aphorisms and examples will speedily make you great and admirable,” Harvey's Frontinus, Houghton Lib., Harvard, sig. a vir.

We see how Harvey processes his reading, extracting value, when he annotates with his own aphoristic creation: “Virtue regains strength after being wounded; it is the adamantine basis for generous rivalry and excellence.” He adds to this annotation: “Had Carthage not been Rome's bitter enemy, Rome would never have become the powerful mistress of the world.” Harvey further thoughtfully interacts with the text, drawing from it the useful lesson, as he writes: “The harsher the ill fortune, the greater the favourable fortune in the end, where unvanquished virtue, the splendid contestant for victory, serves.” On the bottom of the same page, Harvey writes, “I want a politician who fixes the adamantine basis on deeper foundations, and illustrates the best precepts with the best examples — and thus outdoes Aristotle himself in weight of principles, Machiavelli in choice of histories”<sup>15</sup> (62). Harvey echoes Sidney when he declares his search for a politician he can admire—one with “the best precepts” and “the best examples.”

The strategies Harvey employed to achieve his goal are as amazing as his determination to extract political and moral philosophy. From the above examples, we have seen Harvey extracting the precept—sometimes restating; other times, borrowing; and other times, constructing his own aphorism. We have seen him them *further* responding to the text with his own meditation. As Grafton points out, “Harvey read not simply to reflect, boil down and imitate, but also to savour, speculate and admire” (69). Not only this, but Grafton explains that in Harvey’s “outcome” based form of reading, “a single text could give rise to a variety of goal-directed readings” (32) and “a plurality of possible responses” (33). One example of this, occurring in Harvey’s later years (1590 reading), is his response to the story of the Horatii and the Curiatii (Romans and Albans) in the middle of Livy’s Book One. Harvey responds to the combat example and the subsequent murder of Horatius’ sister, condemning its imprudence and reflecting on the lessons learned. He draws in the commentary of Augustine (*The City of God*, iii.14), which insists the war and the murder of Horatius’ sister deserve condemnation and writes, “See how, and how often, the divine wisdom of Augustine refutes the human prudence of Livy.”<sup>16</sup> He then concludes, “while each city had its virtues, the divine one was both ‘more securely built’ and ‘more fortunate’” (69, 70). Harvey then lengthens his own commentary as he continues to reflect on “heroic duels”—the Old Testament duel of David and Goliath, Hercules and Cygnus in Hesiod, Achilles and Hector in Homer, and Aeneas and Turnus in Virgil. Harvey read critically, sifting for value; he sought personal application to his own life as well as the Elizabethan political structure, considering worthy precepts and examples and identifying virtue and vice; and he made connections with previous learning. His practice of reading affirms the goal-driven vigor we have thus far seen in the Renaissance readers. Renaissance tutors and their students generally sought the gold of practical virtue in Classics such as Cicero, Isocrates, Seneca, and Plutarch which were considered to possess a wealth of moral philosophy<sup>17</sup>, yet even when Harvey read his Livy, he sifted and found much to extract.

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<sup>15</sup> Harvey’s Livy, p. 275

<sup>16</sup> Harvey’s Livy, p. 6

<sup>17</sup> Margo Todd’s *Christian Humanism* has studied student reading notes and book inventories which reveal that Cicero, Isocrates, Seneca, Plutarch and other Classics with a wealth of moral

### The Uncommon Commonplacers

Perhaps the most widespread cultural practice that demonstrates interaction with the Classical text in the manner of sifting and extracting is commonplacing. Commonplace readers authored their own notebooks of literary memoranda as they read the Classics, extracting that which they perceived useful and applicable to their lives—the worthy passage, the adage, or the truism. They would record it under the proper topic heading, and often respond to the extracted text, writing their own commentaries.

As mentioned earlier, Mary Crane, author of *Framing Authority: Sayings, Self, and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* (1993), is among those recent scholars who have challenged previous notions of commonplacing as little more than a mnemotechnical aid, involving cataloging and rote memorization. Crane writes, “During this period, the twin discursive practices of “gathering” these textual fragments and “framing” or forming, arranging, and assimilating them created for English humanists a central mode of transaction with classical antiquity and provided an influential model for authorial practice and for authoritative self-fashioning” (3). While challenging previous assumptions and acknowledging the influence of commonplacing in shaping authorial identity, Crane also feels the “educational program” involved in the use of “aphoristic fragments” asserted a form of control over the “middle-class” subject, giving “rise to a version of authorship that was collective instead of individualist, published instead of private” (4). However, Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions* (2000), challenges Crane’s assumption that commoplaces were, in her words, the “building blocks of common knowledge and thus basic elements of social cohesion” (Crane 18). He points out that although what the compiler copied was “extracted from a common storehouse of wisdom, the manner in which extracts were copied, arranged, juxtaposed, cross-referenced or indexed was personal and individual” (278). Robert Darnton, too, saw much more in commonplacing than had previously been suggested. His essay, “Extraordinary Commonplaces” (2000), calls for a second look at what commonplacing represented to the individuals engaged with their texts and the culture as a whole. Darnton, explains the practice of “commonplacing” as follows:

They broke texts into fragments and assembled them into new patterns by transcribing them in different sections of their notebooks. Then they reread the copies and rearranged the patterns while adding more excerpts. Reading and writing were therefore inseparable activities. They belonged to a continuous effort to make sense of things...by keeping an account of your readings, you made a book of your own, one stamped with your personality. (n. pag.)

Not only did it foster authorial self-identity, Darnton asserts that segmental reading (“concentrating on small chunks of text and jumping from book to book”) compelled Renaissance readers “to read actively, to exercise critical judgment, and to impose their own pattern on their reading matter.” It was adapted to ‘reading for action’...in order to get their

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philosophy were the most popular among tutors and their students, which might be expected, given the early modern link between education and “living virtuously” (Todd 64).

bearings in perilous times, not to pursue knowledge for its own sake or to amuse themselves.” That commonplace books were, each one, stamped with the author’s personality is more than evident as one visits Harvard’s new (2012) online site, “Reading,”<sup>18</sup> and browses through their open collections of commonplace books—the style and focus of each is unique to the author. While some, including Milton, drew primarily from the Classics, others recorded poems, sermons, religious meditations, and epithets, and political reflections—some, short pithy sayings; others, longer essays. Some added little commentary, leaving us to guess their intentions by their selections alone; others responded profusely, unafraid to scribble in the margins. Darnton describes commonplacing as like quilting: “It produced pictures some more beautiful than others, but each of them interesting in its own way. The assembled texts reveal patterns of culture: the segments that went into it, the stitching that connected them, the tears that pulled them apart, and the common cloth of which they were composed.”

Kevin Sharpe’s exploration of the commonplace books of Sir William Drake (1606-1669) offers a wealth of insight into commonplacing as a practice, even though Sharpe does not pretend that Drake is the typical reader. Drake is one that pushed against his boundaries and took a rather cynical view on life. His bent toward the writing of Tacitus, Machiavelli, and Guicciardini as well as his collection of an “arsenal of sententious material”<sup>19</sup> suggest Drake was one to challenge the traditional view of political life (75). His preference for Classical authors Polybius and Livy also betray his preference for policy and politics and the “intensely pragmatic” (80). Yet, that he thrived within the Renaissance culture carries a strong message that commonplacing is a “personal space” and that his learned reading strategies did indeed encourage “critical thinking.” Sharpe writes, “Individual practices of selection, transcription and organization, and still more personal notions of ‘use’, made the commonplace book not only an individual act of writing but a personal construction of meaning. In a commonplace book the ‘platitudes’ were taken out of the textual contexts that had endowed them with meaning and reconstituted in a new environment” (279). In light of this, Sharpe points out new “critical confrontations” with the text occurred. He concludes, “Far, then from simply circulating a common repository of wisdom and reinforcing shared Christian humanist values, the act of commonplacing led to a questioning of that wisdom and those values...the early modern reader exercised his own mind and wrote his own identity” (279).

The study of Drake’s commonplace book also gives evidence, as noted by Grafton, that “a single text could give rise to a variety of goal-directed readings” (Grafton 32). Drake instructs, Gather out and observe how they are applied all Tacitus his sayings, out of Lipsius Civili Doctrina, Clapmarius De Arcanis et Juro publico, Michael Piccartus Hist. Pol. Obser and his comment on Aristotle’s Politics; to these join Machiavelli’s works and gather the marrow out of what he hath written in this kine, but above all study Guicciardini’s history

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<sup>18</sup> “Commonplace Books.” *Reading: Harvard Views of Readers, Readership, and Reading History*. Harvard University Library Open Collections Programs. 2012.

<<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/reading/commonplace.html>>

<sup>19</sup> Sharpe quotes Stuart Clark’s observations: “Wisdom Literature I,” pp. 298.

which I esteem the best that ever was written, likewise be frequent in reading Tacitus and noting him as I read him.<sup>20</sup>

Not only do Drake's commonplace books reveal active connections from text to text, but also to lectures, discussions, and other modes of information exchange as well as his own reflections (85, 86). Drake regarded reading as "a converse with the wise"<sup>21</sup> (86).

Drake also reveals an understanding of the culture of reading that surrounded him—a culture, as we have suggested, intent on actively sifting and extracting value. Sharpe writes: "The absence of very long passages of quotation in the notebooks is explained by his observation that 'a wary reader will not endeavour to remember the mass and whole bulk of books but only to extract the spirit and quintessence thereof and what is most applicable to business'"<sup>22</sup> (85). Drake, here, affirms the goal-directed interest of his contemporaries when reading. Renaissance readers were interested in extraction of "the spirit and quintessence of their readings" and that which they deemed personally useful, "applicable to business."

A great example of a commonplace book focusing on moral philosophy is William Baldwin's *A Treatise of Morall Philosophie* (1547), an Elizabethan best seller reflecting what Robert Hood Bowers described as England's "omnivorous appetite for assemblages of proverbs and commonplaces" (vi). In the manner of commonplacing, Baldwin, and later Thomas Palfreyman who expanded and revised Baldwin's collection (1557), selected and extracted "precepts, godly counsels, and wise sayings" (5) from the ancients. In his dedicatory letter to Henry Hastings, Earle of Huntington, Palfreyman writes of the purpose of his collection: not only would it be "very expedient" to "those that by virtue of knowledge shall have the governance of a commonwealth," but also to anyone who is bent "to seek forth and follow such godly counsels...as are in this present treatise...to the increase of virtues and furtherance of all such good and lively motions" (4).

This "very expedient" book categorized these extracted ancient quotes—the second through tenth books had such headings as "Of Parents," "Of Obedience," "Of Friends, Friendship, and Amitie," "Of Sloth and idleness," "Of Fortune," and "Of Riches," to name only a few.

Baldwin not only collected the sayings under each category, but also wrote a brief summary of the categorized collective sayings in the form of a short-metered poem. Again, responding to the text—commenting or summarizing—was a key feature of commonplacing. For example, in the category, "Of Wit and Discretion," Baldwin collects quotes from Plato, Socrates, Seneca, Xenophon, Diogenes, Solon, and more (170-174). He then writes his summary of wit as follows:

The Sum of All

The greatest treasure without comparison,  
For man's felicity here in this life,  
Above gold and silver, is Wit and Discretion,  
To temper the joyful and comfort the pensive,

<sup>20</sup> Drake quoted: Ogden MS 7/45 f. 166

<sup>21</sup> Drake quoted: Ogden MS 7/8 f. 46.

<sup>22</sup> Drake quoted: Ogden MS 7/7 f. 148v.

Or otherwise to instruct man in peace or strife,  
 Wit also is increased by often reading,  
 And like the fruitless tree is wit without learning. (174)

His summary echoes the collective wisdom of the ancients. For instance, in the first three lines, we hear a summation of Seneca, “There is no greater treasure than discretion and wit”; Plato, “Wisdom is the treasure, where with everyman ought to enrich himself”; and Photion: “It is better to want riches than wit.” In the last line, the metaphor which likens wit to a fruitless tree is borrowed from Seneca, “Wit without learning is like a tree without fruit”; but it also reflects other quotations such as Tullius (Cicero), “Man’s wit (by the will of God) is naturally nourished and fed with the gift of learning and knowledge: and by time spent in study.” Extracting from extractions, Baldwin arrives at the quintessence of the ancient’s “godly counsel and witty sayings” regarding wit. Commonplacers such as Baldwin and Palfreyman might then reflect, “Wit is valuable above great riches for the following reasons...therefore, I should esteem it highly. I can increase in wit by reading and learning.” In so doing, they will have extracted from their readings that which they consider useful and capable of improving their lives.

Since commonplacing was such a widespread practice, it deserves the new look that Sharpe and Darnton have urged. That texts were processed “deeply” is, again, more than apparent in the practices of the commonplacers—selecting, extracting, making connections with other texts, and responding to or summarizing the extracted texts. Moreover, as we consider the vibrant literary culture of the Renaissance, it is worth noting that “readers became writers,” as Darnton asserted, and that “the authorial self took shape in the common man’s commonplace book,” not merely in the works of great writers.” Milton kept a commonplace book.

### **The Meaning of the Method—Connecting Modern Research**

Throughout this project we have explored the idea that Renaissance readers of the Classics read differently than we imagine readers in modern times. As we have seen, they were taught to do so by men such as Erasmus and Plutarch. They were always, as Anthony Grafton points out in his study of Gabriel Harvey, “looking for something” and not merely assimilating information. As we have previously asserted, most often they sought “practical virtue”—that which would directly improve their lives—thus a high level of personal interest fueled their search. However, they looked in dangerous territory—the Classics were pagan, so sifting was essential. Just as Sidney’s poet, whose aim was to teach and delight, was “to range with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be” (26), Sidney’s reader of the Classics was to judge that which was appropriate as well as useful “for his own use and learning.” Thus the reader who followed Sidney’s recommendations would reject or accept whole texts, showing clear preference for poetically imagined texts over those that were assumed to be historically accurate texts as we have seen in our discussion of Sidney’s “reader recommendations” (Xenophon’s *Cyrus* as opposed to Justin’s *Cyrus* and Virgil’s *Aeneas* as opposed to Dares’ *Aeneas*).

But, their work was not yet done; from these texts, readers extracted the worthy precepts and the examples—the pithy sayings, the moral lessons, and the mentors to follow (or not to follow as the case may be). They sought the quintessence of meaning, the core of moral philosophy, from the texts they perused. Without the extraction of such nuggets of practical moral philosophy, the text would have been of little value to their chief end, although perhaps of value for their stylistic techniques, which Sidney exalts in the *Defense* as the means to lure readers to the teaching of virtue: “Words set in delightful proportion. . . which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner; and, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue” (40). Sifting and extraction often involved responding to text with marginalia, as we have seen with Gabriel Harvey, or the physical relocation of valued textual fragments, as was the case with the widespread practice of commonplacing, which often involved not only responding, but paraphrasing or rewriting the text and connecting the extracted texts to other texts. In the same spirit, the translators sought to refine and occasionally re-invent as they translated into the mother tongue, sometimes by annexing lengthy explanatory commentaries directing readers “how to read.” In summary, Renaissance readers “rolled up their sleeves” when they approached their ancient texts.

### ***Deep Processing***

I have explored the implications of such practices of reading—searching, sifting, extracting, and refining—by looking at modern research addressing information-processing, an area in which we continue to make enormous strides in our understanding of the cognitive functions of reading, memory, and learning in the intertwining fields of neuroscience, psychology, and pedagogy.<sup>23</sup> Recent exploration of the cognitive “levels of processing” by a leading memory scientist, Fergus I.M. Craik,<sup>24</sup> has given substantial basis for a re-analysis of those cognitive processes involved as Renaissance readers interacted with the Classic texts by sifting and extracting. In “Levels of processing: A framework for memory research” (1972), Fergus I.M. Craik and Robert S. Lockhart suggest that information is processed and remembered along a continuum of shallow to deep processing. Shallow processing is fragile, useful for only short-term retention and subject to immediate decay. In contrast, deep processing, “where greater ‘depth’ implies a greater degree of semantic or cognitive analysis and more successful retention” involves elaborate encoding (671-684). Craik and Lockhart write: “Later stages are more concerned with matching the input against stored abstractions from past learning; that is, later stages are concerned with pattern recognition and the extraction of meaning.” In “Levels of

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<sup>23</sup> Cognitive neuroscience is the branch of neuroscience that studies the biological foundations of mental phenomena. Memory scientist, Fergus I. M. Craik, known for his ground-breaking research on the “levels of processing,” draws from both fields—cognitive neuroscience and cognitive psychology—to research his theories.

<sup>24</sup> Memory Scientist Fergus I. M. Craik continues to conduct his research as a Senior Scientist at the Rotman Research Institute, Baycrest, and a Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Toronto.



processing: Past, present...and future?" (2002), Craik further explains: "The concept of depth of processing is not hard to grasp—"deeper" refers to the analysis of meaning, inference, and implication, in contrast to "shallow" analyses." (308). He explains, "Recollection improves as further meaningful processing is performed at the time of encoding" (311).

Additionally, recent studies conducted by Huy Phuong Phan (2009) support his argument that "the processing of information at a deep level" facilitates "critical examination and analysis of information" (794). Both more effective memory retention and enhanced critical thinking skills result from the employment of deep processing strategies.

### ***The Role of Interest in Deep Processing***

Later, in "Levels of Processing and Zinchenko's Approach to Memory Research" (2009), in conversation with other researchers, Craik acknowledges the role of "self-processing" which includes the concepts of one's "activity and goals." The connection, he says, is "dramatic and undeniable." Craik writes: "Perhaps the roles of activity, targets, motivation, and purpose are essentially to focus processing on the material to be remembered and to link that processing to personal schemas—it is well established that 'self-reference' processing is particularly effective for later memory" (56).

Research by Ulrich Schiefele (1991) confirms the connection between "interest" (one's activities and goals) and deep processing which he defines as "relating new material to prior knowledge, posing questions, searching for main ideas, looking for additional sources of information, and critical evaluation" (311). Schiefele, in "Interest, Learning, and Motivation," defines interest as "content-specific" ("always related to specific topics, tasks, or activities") and a "directive force" ("able to explain choice of an area in which one strives for high levels of performance or exhibits intrinsic motivation") (301). He explains "intrinsic" interest as involvement in a topic "for its own sake" and not for external reasons (303). His findings are that "high-interest" readers process the text in a way that reflect their search for meaning and that interest influences the use of learning strategies. Schiefele concludes, "Obviously, interest is an important motivator for the use of learning strategies that facilitate deep processing." Throughout this project, we have traced high interest as the common thread which motivated Renaissance readers of the Classics, as they searched with anticipation for that which they judged would improve their lives and the lives of others.

### ***Renaissance Readers and Deep Processing Strategies***

The catalyst to deep processing—"high interest"—and the strategies, which imply deep processing, are everywhere present when one examines the Renaissance readers of the Classics. Examining the translators' prefaces and commentaries, we have seen Grimald advising his readers to apply the same "careful diligence" he applied to the study Cicero, "reading five times...and marking the precepts, reasons, conclusions and commonplaces." We have seen the careful analysis characteristic of Sidney's creative poet as we witness Chapman refining the works of Homer and Hesiod and Holland refining Pliny's *Natural History* by means of his commentary. We have watched Sandys dig deeper still to re-imagine Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in

his attached commentary. We have seen the scholar Gabriel Harvey not only responding to the text through his marginalia—sometimes adding his personal commentary, summarizing, and extracting meaning—but also connecting a single text with a number of other readings. Likewise, we have seen the commonplacers such as Drake and Baldwin, who viewed reading as “a converse with the wise,” respond to their texts by making many active connections and writing their own commentaries.

Application of this modern research to evaluate the reading practices of Renaissance readers leads to an easy conclusion: Renaissance readers were likely to engage in deep processing by means of the methods they employed and the high level of personal interest that fueled those methods. Again, what are the benefits of deep processing? As we have stated, the elaborate encoding of deep processing supports memory retention and facilitates critical thinking.

### **High Interest and Renaissance Readers**

So, if we are to conclude that Renaissance styles of reading differed from our own—that they showed a more general tendency to process their text in a manner Craik and Schiefele term “deep processing”—what accounts for the difference? If Schiefele is correct, it was “high interest” that sparked their “deep processing,” but what inspired these readers to approach their text so deliberately? Matthiessen points out that the translator’s intense interest in his work was an act of patriotism: “He believed that foreign books were just as important for England’s destiny as the discoveries of her seamen, and he brought them into his native speech with all the enthusiasm of a conquest” (3). Matthiessen also points out the element of competition Englishmen sensed with Europe: “The nation had grown conscious of its cultural inferiority to the Continent, and suddenly burned with the desire to excel its rivals in letters, as well as in ships and gold (3).” It is true, also, that the very manner in which Renaissance readers were taught to read by their mentors, such as Erasmus and Plutarch, fostered a high level of engagement with the text. Readers were encouraged to read their Classic texts critically. As mentioned before, they were aware that they sifted and extracted the gold of moral philosophy in dangerous territory—“not all that glittered was gold.” As Wallace concluded, young men who took Plutarch seriously became “thoroughly suspicious of any literary work”; they learned to “inquire closely” concerning the reasons of “every speech and action” (277). It seems also the case, as we have demonstrated, that readers were convinced they would find useful, *personal* value, which could be applied to their daily living. With readers such as Drake, this high interest could be associated with a quest for upward mobility politically; however, as we have seen, there is substantial evidence that most readers, some simultaneously, sought the acquisition of moral philosophy. Again, Sidney echoes the belief of his day: “...the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action” (29).

In a discussion of high-interest in the Renaissance reader, worldviews become significant. It should be considered that to the Renaissance reader, neither heaven nor hell were matters of fiction; thus the course one set upon, given the end of the course, mattered significantly, both for one’s personal well being and eternal destiny. These readers’ passionate quest for virtue was based on the assumption that such ideals as define virtue, such general universal truths, exist, and

therefore were worthy of their intense pursuit. Looking back, G. K. Chesterton, a well-known British author, literary critic, historian, and Christian apologist, contrasted those who lived in that day to those of his time (the early 20<sup>th</sup> century) in *Heretics*. Chesterton argues that “philosophy mattered” back then, and the importance they assigned to philosophy instilled men with a passion to grapple with issues in an effort “to get it right.” Perhaps, it is passion and conviction that contribute to the high level of interest, the fervor of the gold miner, as Renaissance readers approached their texts looking for that moral philosophy they judged would improve their lives. According to Chesterton, it infused the pages of their writings as well.

### **Conclusion**

The manner and intensity with which Renaissance readers approached the pages of the Classics, searching for the core value of wisdom—the gold of moral philosophy—with which they could enrich their life, was unique. Sidney, the translators—Grimald, Holland, Chapman, and Sandys—the scholar, Gabriel Harvey, and the commonplacers we have studied represent a joint project to mine the Classics for their wealth. Since the gold they sought was situated in the dangerous territory of the pagan Classics, the method was one of careful and attentive sifting, selecting and preferring some texts and rejecting others, in part or in whole, in keeping with their own cultural values. Sifting and extracting for moral philosophy may have included responding to their texts with their own writing. At times, they copied and included valued fragments of text in their own notebooks. They often connected the texts they read with previous texts and their own experiences. When necessary, “the gold” was separated from the worthless elements and refined—reimagined and reinvented—in accordance with construction of a world “as it should be,” not as it was or had been. All this was part of their fervent effort to extract that which they considered useful and practical—that practical virtue which could improve their lives. We may consider that their reading practices were not only influential in affirming their shared cultural values, but also influential in the shaping of great authors in the Renaissance “as readers became writers.” As we have noted, their reading practices imply the level of engagement with their texts, which Craik refers to as “deep processing.” Their high-personal interest as well as their cautious attentiveness fueled such strategies—strategies which fostered authorial self-identity, critical evaluation, creativity, and invention—as they confronted and engaged with their Classical texts for their “own use and learning.” There was gold in the river, so they had been told, and the message would not be taken lightly.

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