# Renaissance and Reformation
# Renaissance et Réforme

## Warkentin, Germaine, Joseph L. Black, and William R. Bowen (eds.). The Library of the Sidneys of Penshurst Place Circa 1665

Katherine R. Larson

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Larson, K. (2014). Review of [Warkentin, Germaine, Joseph L. Black, and William R. Bowen (eds.). The Library of the Sidneys of Penshurst Place Circa 1665]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme, 37*(1), 185–187. https://doi.org/10.33137/rr.v37i1.21304

**Warkentin, Germaine, Joseph L. Black, and William R. Bowen (eds.).**
*The Library of the Sidneys of Penshurst Place Circa 1665.*
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013. Pp. xiv, 406 + 11 ill. ISBN 978-0-8020-4293-4 (hardcover) $185.

In 1967 Germaine Warkentin, then still a graduate student, was asked, "What do we know about the books of Sir Philip Sidney?" (vii). That question, along with the fortuitous archival discovery in 1984 of a manuscript catalogue of Penshurst's mid-seventeenth-century library, laid the foundation for *The Library of the Sidneys of Penshurst Place*. This masterful edition, the product of decades of collaborative research, represents a remarkable contribution both to Sidney studies and to early modern book history.

The focus of the volume is the catalogue itself, which documents the library begun by Robert Sidney, first earl of Leicester (1563–1626) and developed especially by his son, also Robert Sidney (1595–1677). An avid book collector, the second earl seems to have turned to the organization of his library and the resources it afforded for extensive commonplacing as a way of coping with the upheavals of the Civil Wars. The catalogue emerged out of this context. Compiled by a member of the earl's household, Gilbert Spencer, it testifies to an impressive number of books—nearly 5,000 volumes—held at Penshurst between ca. 1652 and 1665.

The books encompass all manner of topics. Some—on estate and household management, military strategy, theology, and political theory—reflect the Sidneys' responsibilities as estate owners, their social and political status, their ongoing commitment to Protestantism, and their involvement in republican debates. Others testify to the family's wide-ranging interests, notably in science and mathematics, travel and exploration, drama, poetry, and life writing. The eclectic—and multilingual—collection also includes books on magic and witchcraft, on tobacco, on hawking, and (fittingly) on library organization, as well as contributions by women writers like Anna Maria van Schurman and Margaret Cavendish. Taken as a whole, the catalogue provides a fascinating glimpse into the reading and collecting habits of the first and second earl, as well as of their methods of organizing and engaging with their books.

Warkentin and her co-editors Joseph Black and William Bowen are to be commended for the clarity of their editorial principles and the meticulousness of their annotations. Each numbered catalogue entry includes a full

transcription (in bold), followed by the identifying features of the book (its title, author, place of publication and printer, format, and current location, if known), as well as any cross-references or duplicate entries in the catalogue. The excellent annotations, helpfully included within each entry rather than as a separate textual apparatus, highlight any transcription problems and errors in the manuscript. Where applicable, they also elucidate the connections between individual books and members of the Sidney family, noting, for instance, purchase records and relevant allusions in the Sidneys' correspondence and other writings. The annotations are complemented by an appendix, which documents extant books associated with the early modern holdings at Penshurst but not included in the catalogue.

This volume stands out also for its splendid introduction. Co-authored by Warkentin and Black, it positions the second earl's book collection at the centre of a much larger story about the Sidneys' reading practices between the 1540s and the 1740s and the development of a library—and a designated library space—at Penshurst. Placing letters, wills, book bills, bookplates, commonplace books, and architectural records in dialogue with Spencer's catalogue, Warkentin and Black chart the literary interests of Sir Henry Sidney, Sir Philip Sidney, and his brother Robert Sidney, and examine the conditions that made possible the establishment of a more permanent collection of books under the tenure of the second earl. They also document the Sidneys' continued involvement in book collection after the earl's death and the eventual sale of the books and dismantling of the library shelves in the 1740s. Their analysis illuminates the trajectory of a collection of books connected to one of the most important literary and political families of the period, and provides compelling insight into the history of the early modern library.

Our knowledge and assessment of the Sidneys as readers have been frustrated by many gaps. The Penshurst holdings were dispersed in the eighteenth century, and it is not clear whether the collection included books owned or used by prominent literary figures like Sir Philip Sidney, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, and Lady Mary Wroth, who were not based regularly at Penshurst as adults. The material reality of book acquisition and storage in the period, moreover, can make the very notion of a "library" a difficult one to pin down. The surprisingly small number of music titles in Spencer's catalogue, for instance, should not be taken to suggest that the Sidneys were uninterested in the subject; music books, especially those used for performance, were likely stored

elsewhere in the house. While the Penshurst catalogue still leaves us with many questions, this superb edition clearly establishes the significance of the books gathered by the first and second earls of Leicester for our understanding of the Sidneys' reading and collecting practices and the place of the library within Penshurst and within early modern literary culture.

KATHERINE R. LARSON
University of Toronto

**Whitfield, Peter.**
*Illustrating Shakespeare.*
London: British Library / Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. 160 + ill. ISBN 978-0-7123-5889-7 (hardcover) $35.

*Illustrating Shakespeare* is Peter Whitfield's latest in a series of similarly expansive titles that he has published in the past few decades through the British Library. Despite its rather illustrious provenance, Whitfield's collection is not a scholarly monograph in the sense that it makes no attempt to break new ground by challenging or advancing received ideas, or even to engage in any transparent way with past scholarship. Rather than focus at length on any particular aspect of his chosen topic, Whitfield offers in just 160 pages a sweeping survey of three and a half centuries of Shakespeare illustration that considers about a hundred images, four countries, and numerous aesthetic periods and styles in 35 chapters that average just four or five pages each. The discussion that accompanies the attractive colour plates engages not in critical analysis but rather in summarizing the scholarship on the topic without ever acknowledging its sources. In its comportment, then, Whitfield's project apparently partakes in two of the modern movements that its chapters address: "…the Book Beautiful" (chapter 29) and Bardolatry (chapter 35).

Whitfield's point of entry for his roughly chronological treatment of Shakespeare illustration (chapter 2: "Before 1700") may be taken as exemplary of both the book's shortcomings and its successes: Henry Peacham's sketch, from the Longeat manuscript, purportedly illustrating Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, Whitfield addresses in just two brief paragraphs (16–17). Cobbling together only some of the scholarly analysis, debate, and controversy that the