

Jennifer Richards. *Voices & Books in the English Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019. xvii + 329 + 25 illus. \$61.00. Review by MARGARET J. OAKES, FURMAN UNIVERSITY.

“There is an obvious problem that we need to acknowledge right from the start of this chapter: we cannot recover the Renaissance voice in any straightforward way” (279). This statement is from a chapter co-authored by Jennifer Richards in *The Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, entitled “The Anatomy of the Renaissance Voice.” The authors of that chapter go on to contemplate the paradox of a fleeting phenomenon, unique to each individual and changeable instantaneously with mood, intent, and meaning, created from the physicality of the voice box, larynx, nose, and mouth. Richards, the Joseph Cowen Professor of English Literature at Newcastle University, writes frequently on speaking and hearing voices in the early modern period, but voices as they are mediated through and create meaning from printed books read aloud. In her latest book, Richards locates texts, situations, and commentary that can tell us when, why, and how the vocal transmission of the written book was a crucial means of an “embodied experience” (187) for listeners of the book. Richards argues that the “voice is a physiological technology for making meaning” (24), and she rethinks both the material object of the book and the circumstances in which it might be heard, in a literal sense, in less obvious ways. *Voices and Books* does not consider oral genres such as drama and ballads, but “first person poetry and prose in print” (25). The historical subject matter of the book includes a limited range of materials, some based on Richards’ previous work, and none of which are the texts of non-dramatic fiction or nonfiction that a reader might expect. Richards’ work lays a brief foundation for further exploration of vocal cues in a wide range of early modern genres and formats of texts.

While the notion that Appalachian Mountains harbored the remnants of “Shakespeare’s English” is the scholarly version of an urban myth, its continued life speaks to the fascination that we have for the sound of lost voices. We can capture words, images, and even some idea of sounds through music, but the first and most basic communicative tool that humans have is paradoxically fleeting. Meaning is added to words exponentially by pitch, tone, pauses, volume, emo-

tion, and non-verbal additions such as laughter, stammering, “um,” and whatever was the early modern version of the twenty-first century “like.” Richards asserts that attention to the material object of the book in recent historical studies and an overemphasis on the silent, male scholar reading alone in his study has hampered our view of books as tools for oral communication that were interpreted by variations in the voice, which held within them the cues for aiding oral readers.

The objective of *Voices and Books* is twofold: to elevate the role of *pronuntiatio*, the often-overlooked aspect of rhetoric and to reconsider the role of books as “events”: tools for interpretation that only have full meaning when they are read aloud. *Pronuntiatio* emphasizes the physicality of oral delivery: the “quality” of the voice, stance, gestures, posture, and facial expressions, which she distinguishes from the concept of *elocutio*, which is more related to the stylistic construction of communication. It can mean pronouncing words correctly, but Richards argues that the expression of words by the voice was a more important channel than historians have acknowledged in the past. Because this is a history of understanding the physical voice in action, the subject matter is somewhat disjointed, and each section of the book is better understood as standing alone in its analysis. The first section discusses locations and uses of voices in the period, both to make meaning and as the voice was used by certain figures. The examination of the material book for vocal cues inserted by readers or printers is intriguing, and the section on the use of *pronuntiatio* in teaching is just commonsense. Richards argues persuasively and logically that the schoolroom was heavily dependent on oral reading for teaching both content and maturity of expression in oral communication, something that tends to be assigned to “rhetoric” in modern thinking (when it is taught at all). While Richards seems concerned about the difficulty of determining how vocal modulation was taught from books (repeating this point three times in Chapter 2, with a concern that Renaissance texts do not discuss *pronuntiatio*), this seems unnecessary to make her point. A tradition of reading aloud to students, and helping them learn through the instructor’s oral expression, seems like a practice that is so obvious as a pedagogical tool that it would not need much exhortation or explanation. The unit on the sounds of children being beaten in the early modern classroom seems

strained as a topic for this book. However, the look at women's education is useful, not because we know how girls sounded as they were being taught to read aloud, but to add to the considerable work on female literacy by scholars such as Heidi Brayman Hackel, Catherine E. Kelly, Margaret W. Ferguson, and Mihoko Susuki and to address concerns in the period by female writers such as Margaret Cavendish over how readers read her work.

Given the contention over the use of the Bishop's Bible in English churches to promote Bible comprehension and concerns over ill-trained preachers as expressed by people such as Launcelot Andrewes and George Herbert, it is not surprising that Richards offers a section that supplements the well-considered topic of sermon presentation with that of reading the Bible out loud and distinguishes between the reading of verses, the reading of prepared homilies, and the reading of sermons prepared by the individual preacher. "Bare reading" is complained of in the period, meaning both straight reading without exposition and poor delivery, and Richards asserts, somewhat obviously, that a lively and expressive public reading of the Bible might have been preferable also because it does not rely on the "charismatic voice of the preacher" (150). This is also a theological point—if one believes that the Bible is easily understood without pastoral interpretation, then reading the Bible out loud to a congregation may be sufficient, but a view of the clergy as mediator and explicator may render "mere" reading an inferior activity. Richards attempts to fill in the gaps of our ability to discern concerns about audience comprehension by looking at the use of paraphrase from the pulpit, particularly Erasmus' *Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum* which under Edward VI was intended to be read aloud as a way of further explicating the difficulties of the gospels. Richards' study does not go past the Bishops' or Geneva Bibles, so a reader looking for the rich history of the goals of the translators of the Authorized Version should look to the work of David Norton or Alistair McGrath.

The final section addresses a few examples of what Richards describes as "talking books": "records of past speech (historical and fictional)" (187) and scripts of speeches. This portion is taken mostly from her previous work with the writings of Anne Askew and William Baldwin, and a new in-depth look at the copious and difficult to

define corpus of Thomas Nashe. These are idiosyncratic and somewhat anecdotal selections, but Richards' purpose is not to provide a broad coverage of this category, rather a deep view of how the richness of someone's oral communication is translated to the page. Two examples are of the message in the testimony of a Protestant martyr as transmitted by a concerned auditor and editor (in Askew's case, John Bale) and by the reception and response of an oral reading of a pamphlet to some illiterate seamen in *Westerne Wyll*, attributed to William Baldwin. Richards shows that these texts are committed to conveying both the full meaning of the speaker's expression of their message, and in the latter case, to show that a clear and expressive reading can prompt an informed response even in unlettered listeners. The detailed section on Nashe, which includes a biography, seems somewhat out of place in a broad overview of a topic. Nashe's interest in the sound of a voice would seem apparent by the fact that he was also a playwright, and Richards seems to move away from her subject matter as she dives into the content of *The Unfortunate Traveller* and the protracted public dispute between Nashe and Gabriel Harvey.

Richards asserts in her conclusion that "the voice is currently a niche area of study" (283). This is not true for dramatists or rhetoricians, who have an interest in the speaking style of people such as Richard Burbage or Elizabeth I. However, she provides an introduction to much further rethinking about other types of prose fiction of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Other scholars will be able to take Richards' work for study of the vocalization in other texts of prose and poetry from the period. Some obvious choices exist, such as the *Faerie Queene*, with its heavy use of both dialogue and an occasionally bossy narrator, but others show great promise as well. William Harrison's *Description of England* was first published as part of Holinshed's *Chronicles*, but the chatty tone and self-referential, self-deprecating asides are much more than the transmission of historical facts that make his voice audible and make the inferences from reading it aloud rich. In *The Adventures of Master F.J.* (1573), the dialogue of George Gascoigne's characters drips with sarcasm and fairly begs to be read aloud. Thomas Deloney's *Jack of Newbury* is a study in cross-class conversation, and the delivery of dialogue between Jack and his lower-class neighbors in comparison with the King, Queen, and Lord Chancellor

is worth examining in light of Richards' background. The principles of vocal delivery and the attention to what printed books can tell us about that can greatly enhance both the reading pleasure of early modern books and our understanding of literate culture of the time.

Greg Walker. *John Heywood: Comedy and Survival in Tudor England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020. x + 477 pp. \$85.00. Review by SARAH K. SCOTT, MOUNT ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY.

Greg Walker's *John Heywood: Comedy and Survival in Tudor England* presents the first comprehensive scholarly biography of the sixteenth-century musical composer, poet, playwright, epigram and proverb collector, admired in his time and too often neglected in present-day early modern studies. As Walker explains throughout his remarkable and substantial examination of Heywood's corpus, the playwright-poet is most deserving of study not only because of the astonishing variety of his writings but because of the ways they give expression to Heywood's moment, the tumultuous years of the English Reformation that spans the reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, and Mary I. The author's works, urban, urbane, satirical, bawdy, philosophical, and humanist, are profound engagements in the vexed moral, social, religious, and political climate. By showing readers how this is so, Walker brings a long-deceased poet and his work to life. Across eighteen chronologically arranged chapters, Walker's narrative approach reveals what is known about the writer and his milieu as it relates to England's tensions and the leading figures involved in them. At the same time, he offers fulsome summaries and analyses of Heywood's creations, including discussions of how the works directly or indirectly address the complex issues of the age. Printer, lawyer, and father-in-law John Rastell and his brother-in-law Thomas More are made central figures early on in Walker's story for the profound influence they had on the entirety of Heywood's artistic career, most notably through their shared affinity for the humanist enterprise and a passion for the powers and pleasures of all forms of moral satire and colloquial turns-of-phrase. Printer William Rastell, son of John, joins the scene shortly thereafter. Walker's interlacing of texts