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Introduction:

Voicing Text 1500–1700

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The history of early modern reading as we know it is really a history of silent reading.¹ We have long assumed that, with the exception of the performance of the divine offices and scripture, silent, solitary reading gradually became the preferred mode from about the seventh century.² There have inevitably been some discreet challenges to this view. Roger Chartier's argument in the 1990s that for the majority of people in the early modern era the usual experience of reading was aural is generally accepted, and the last few years have seen several studies focused on the relationship between speech and writing, on oral reading, and on acoustic history.³ It is now acknowledged by many historians that silent and private

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¹ See Alvin B. Kernan, *Printing Technology, Letters and Samuel Johnson* (Princeton, N.J., 1987), 220–21: "Knowledge comes to readers not through the ear but through the eye alone, not from exchange of views with others *viva voce* but by scanning and interpreting fixed rows of silent signs, not in a noisy community of other persons but in the silence of the library and the isolated consciousness." The history of Renaissance reading has long privileged the material evidence of silent study: annotation and other kinds of mark left behind in books by "real," historical readers. For an important dissenting voice, see Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender and Literacy* (Cambridge, 2005).

² Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford, Calif., 1997).

³ Roger Chartier, "Leisure and Sociability: Reading Aloud in Early Modern Europe," trans. Carol Mossman, in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman (Newark, N.J., 1989), 103–120. For two excellent, wide-ranging collections of essays on the oral cultures of Renaissance Italy, see *Interactions between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Italian*

reading only slowly entered into the everyday lives of literate and well-educated laypeople over the course of the early modern era. By the fifteenth century the ability to read silently was probably the norm for learned readers who also knew how to write, but it did not become the default mode of experiencing literature until well into the nineteenth-century. “Reading” remained linked with the sound of the speaking voice, and indeed it still is for some readers today.⁴

However, there is much more work to be done. It is one thing to acknowledge that reading and speaking are interrelated activities, quite another to make this insight central to our histories of reading and our methods of textual analysis. The problem is that work on acoustic histories remains marginal rather than mainstream, and most literary scholars and a surprising number of musicologists continue to think of reading and performance as separate spheres of activity. It is not hard to understand why, since we have little documentary evidence of the oral performance of texts before the invention of mechanical recording in the late-nineteenth century. “Sound,” Walter J. Ong famously wrote in 1982, “exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent, and it is sensed as evanescent. When I pronounce the word ‘permanence,’ by the time I get to the ‘-

Culture, ed. Luca Degli’Innocenti, Brian Richardson, and Chiara Sbordoni (Abingdon, U.K., 2016); and *Voices and Texts in Early Modern Italian Society*, ed. Stefano Dall’Aglia, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospocher (Abingdon, U.K., 2016). For studies of oral reading in medieval and early modern England, see Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996); Elspeth Jajdelska, *Speech, Print and Decorum in Britain, 1600–1750: Studies in Social Rank and Communication* (London, 2016); Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven, Conn., 2017); and Patricia Howell Michaelson, *Speaking Volumes: Women, Reading and Speech in the Age of Austen* (Stanford, Calif., 2004). See also Jennifer Richards, *Voices and Books in the English Renaissance: A New History of Reading* (Oxford, forthcoming). For representative work in the acoustic history of reading, see especially Bruce R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England: Attending to the O-Factor* (Chicago, 1999); and on oral cultures, Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (Oxford, 2000); and Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf, *The Spoken Word: Oral Culture in Britain, 1500–1850* (Manchester, 2002). On the art of hearing, see especially Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590–1640* (Cambridge, 2010).

⁴ Yves Castan François Lebrun and Roger Chartier, “Figures of Modernity,” in *A History of Private Life, III: Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Roger Chartier (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 124–27. On writing and print as representations of speech see Jajdelska, *Speech, Print and Decorum*, 1–8.

nence,' the 'perma-' is gone, and has to be gone."⁵ Moreover, we know from experience that the way we learn to read in the West involves progressing from oral reading to reading "without moving the lips," consigning the activity to an interior dimension.

Yet in reality, the distinction between the two is not clear-cut, and we might take inspiration from some familiar cross-fertilizations. The advent of sound recording in 1877 changed the evanescence of the voice forever, while tweets and text messages today remind us that common forms of writing are increasingly ephemeral. In an age in which the visual dominates the aural in the acquisition and processing of information, and in which reading (and increasingly, the consumption of film, television, video, and even music) take place in a private sphere, there are important exceptions: the audiobook thrives even if, as Matthew Rubery astutely observes, literary scholars don't quite know "what to do with a book that speaks for itself." Can we call an audiobook a *book*, he asks?⁶ Does listening to one still count as reading? Such cross-fertilizations between speech and text were predicted by Marshall McLuhan and his gifted graduate student Walter Ong, who called the stage in the history of communication that began in the mid-twentieth century "secondary orality."⁷

Still, we did not have to wait until the mid-twentieth century for such cross-fertilizations to happen; they were keenly felt in the early modern world too, although again this is not always obvious, because McLuhan and Ong's grand story of the relationship between technological innovation and communication is structured as a series of *transitions* rather than cross-fertilizations, from primary orality to literacy, and from literacy to

⁵ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon, U.K., 2012), 32

⁶ Matthew Rubery, *The Untold Story of the Talking Book* (Cambridge, Mass., 2016), 7, 11, 24.

⁷ See both Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (1962; repr., Toronto, 2010); and Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1971).

secondary orality. This narrative still informs how we think about reading today.⁸ Popular phrases like Ong's "oral residue" remain in currency, inclining even the most acoustically attuned literary scholars to look for oral effects rather than performance cues in early modern texts.⁹

To be sure, there have been challenges to this story of transition by scholars attempting to recover the richness and diversity of oral cultures, past and present.¹⁰ Given the low levels of literacy in early modern England, it is recognized that this was already a culture in which literacy was fundamentally oral.¹¹ In England, the Reformation ensured that reading aloud was an important part of domestic worship: "Shared reading, in familial or devotional settings," Adam Fox and Daniel Woolf acknowledge, "provided the means to use the spoken word to bring the otherwise inaccessible printed page to the attention of those who could not

⁸ Even the esteemed bibliographer D. F. McKenzie argued that McLuhan's views "ought by now to have stimulated more substantial refutations by historians of the book than it has," in "Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve," in *Making Meaning: "Printers of the Mind" and Other Essays*, ed. Peter D. McDonald and Michel F. Suarez, S. J. (Amherst, Mass., 2002), 198–236, 218n32.

⁹ Walter J. Ong describes as "oral residue" the "habits of thought and expression tracing back to pre-literate situations or practice, or deriving from the dominance of the oral as a medium in a given culture, or indicating a reluctance or inability to dissociate the written medium from the spoken," in "Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 80, no. 3 (1965): 145–54 at 146. On the simulation of oral effects in literature, see Neil Rhodes, "Oral Speech, Print, and the New Media: Thomas Nashe and Marshall McLuhan," *Oral Tradition*, 24, no. 2 (2009): 373–92.

¹⁰ See especially Ruth Finnegan, "Literacy versus Non-Literacy: The Great Divide? Some Comments on the Significance of 'Literature' in Non-Literate Cultures," in *Modes of Thought: Essays on Thinking in Western and Non-Western Societies*, ed. Robin Horton and Ruth Finnegan (London, 1973), 112–44. For studies criticizing the ongoing influence of Ong, see Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public*; and Jajdelska, *Speech, Print and Decorum*.

¹¹ There is a large body of work on literary rates in England, beginning with David Cressy's conservative estimate at the accession of Elizabeth I roughly 20 percent of men and only 5 percent of women could read, and by the time of the civil war, this had increased to 30 percent of men and 10 percent of women; *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980), 176. For a challenge to these low estimates and the methodology, see Keith Thomas, "The Meaning of Literacy in Early Modern England," in *The Written Word: Literacy in Transition*, ed. Gerd Baumann (Oxford, 1986), 97–131. On the importance of recognizing this for "girls and lower-class boys," who usually did not stay long enough at school to receive instruction in writing, see Margaret W. Ferguson, *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France* (Chicago, 2003), 67–68. For a helpful summary of the debates, see Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England*, 56–68.

read it on their own.”¹² More recently still, Stefano Dall’Aglia, Brian Richardson, and Massimo Rospocher have established that “Renaissance Italy was a deeply hybrid oral/written culture” at every level of society and in a variety of urban soundscapes.¹³ Such insights are indicative that a “turn” is taking place, and the editors and authors of this special issue have contributed to that. However, with this special issue we aim to go a step further, shifting attention from oral cultures broadly understood to the semiotics of the physical voice, which includes the features that convey emotion, which we call “tone”—pitch, loudness/softness, pace, rhythm—as well as timbre, or “the overall sound of the voice.” These features are meaningful: they can change how a text sounds and thus what it means.¹⁴ The physical voice, we propose, should be integral to how we understand writing in this period, not least because it informed how men and, in a different way, women, both learned to read *and* to perform, and how they experienced text in the two nations foregrounded in this special issue: England and France.¹⁵

There are, of course, important differences between England and France in the ways that literacy was acquired. In Catholic France boys learned to “read Latin first, and only later—if ever—progressed to reading French.”¹⁶ In Reformation England, the situation was the reverse: grammar school statutes often stipulated that boys should be able to read English before they were admitted to study Latin.¹⁷ All the same, the process of learning to read was

¹² Fox and Woolf, *The Spoken Word*, 7.

¹³ *Voices and Texts*, ed. Dall’Aglia, Richardson, and Rospocher, 2.

¹⁴ David Crystal, *Sounds Appealing: The Passionate Story of English Pronunciation* (London, 2018), 32–40.

¹⁵ We are returning to the kind of questions raised more than three decades ago by the Swiss medievalist Paul Zumthor, in “The Text and the Voice,” *New Literary History* 16, no. 1 (1984): 67–92.

¹⁶ Kate van Orden, “Children’s Voices: Singing and Literacy in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Early Music History* 25 (2006): 209–56, 210; and van Orden, *Materialities: Books, Readers, and the Chanson in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford, 2015), 118.

¹⁷ On teaching English before Latin, see M. Claire Cross, *The Free Grammar School of Leicester* (Leicester, U.K., 1953), 18. On the teaching of elementary literacy and recitation in English, see also Elspeth Jajdelska, *Silent Reading and the Birth of the Narrator* (Toronto, 2007), 36–39.

similar in the sense that it was dependent on the exercise of the voice: boys and girls began by sounding letters, then nonsense syllables, before blending them to pronounce real words.¹⁸

In the French parochial schools or *petites écoles*, learning to read might also be linked to learning to sing, as Kate van Orden has established, and as Xavier Bisaro argues in this special issue. And in both France and England, learning to read also meant learning to read the printed page for vocal cues.¹⁹ Moreover, boys who continued with their Latin education would also have learned to deliver written texts. This meant pronouncing sentences correctly in a foreign language, a topic John Gallagher explores in this issue with regard to vernacular tongues, and achieving the tonal variation necessary to affect hearers (*pronuntiatio*).

Pronuntiatio is one of the most neglected areas of the history of rhetoric although, as with the history of oral reading, this is beginning to change, and its importance for such performance cultures as the London stage or the education of French preachers is increasingly recognized.²⁰ And while the formal teaching of *pronuntiatio* was restricted to the male-dominated grammar school, there were other opportunities to practice this skill, allowing us to begin to recover female performers. Education happened not only in schoolrooms but also

¹⁸ See van Orden's essay in this issue.

¹⁹ See Bisaro's essay in this issue; van Orden, *Materialities*; and Richards, *Voices and Books*, chap. 1.

²⁰ For attention to *pronuntiatio* and the importance of tonal variation in the English grammar schoolroom, see chapter 2 of Richards, *Voices and Books*. See also Lynn Enterline, *Shakespeare's Schoolroom: Rhetoric, Discipline, Emotion* (Philadelphia, 2012); John Wesley, "Rhetorical Delivery for Renaissance English: Voice, Gesture, Emotion, and the Sixteenth-Century Vernacular Turn," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no. 4 (2015): 1265–96; Lawrence D. Green, "Rhetoricall Daunsinge: *Pronunciatio* and *Actio* in Renaissance Rhetoric," in *Rhetorical Arguments: Essays in Honour of Lucia Calboli Montefusco*, ed. Maria Silvana Celentano, Pierre Chiron, and Peter Mack (Hildesheim, Germany, 2015), 353–62. For French preaching, see Marc Fumaroli, "Le corps eloquent: Une somme d'*actio et pronuntiatio rhetorica* au XVII^e siècle: Les *Vacationes autumnale* du P. Louis de Cressoles (1620)," in the *XVII^e Siècle* 3 (1981) *Rhétorique du geste et de la voix à l'âge classique*: 237–64; Françoise Waquet, "Au 'pays de belles paroles': Premiers recherches sur la voix en Italie aux XI et XVII siècles," *Rhetorica* 11, no. 3 (1993): 275–92. And from a musical point of view, see Todd Borgerding, "Preachers, *Pronunciatio*, and Music: Hearing Rhetoric in Renaissance Sacred Polyphony," *Musical Quarterly* 82, no. 3/4 (1998): 586–98.

in “dimly lit churches, paneled closets, crowded streets and rowdy playhouses.”²¹ It also happened at home, where girls might learn to speak modern languages (principally French and Italian), to share the Bible, to sing psalms, and even to perform domestic plays.²²

Attending to the vocality of fluent readers matters because the written word changes its meaning when it is understood as inextricably linked to voice. The voice is uniquely meaningful because of its distinctive qualities—pitch, volume, pace, rhythm, timbre—that have the power to convey emotion directly to hearers, as Quintilian understood only too well, and as Erasmus would explain with some care in his *Ecclesiastes*: “an appropriate change in the voice helps not only to stir the emotions but also to create credibility.”²³ Voice has these powers irrespective of texts. But when we add the sounding voice to written text, words gain in power. Early modern readers understood this, as do scholars who are attentive to voice today. Recognizing the interrelationship between voice and text has led one teacher of writing, Peter Elbow, to make reading aloud an integral stage in the process of revision in his classroom. We write better, he argues, when we read our writing aloud, “revising or fiddling with it till it feels right in the mouth and sounds right in the ear.”²⁴ It also has led the British sociologist Anne Karpf to urge oral historians to attend to the voices of those interviewed as well as the transcript of what they have said. To underscore this, she describes the effect of listening to an interview with Mercedes Rojas about her husband, one of Chile’s

²¹ Kathryn M. Moncrieff and Kathryn R. McPherson, “‘Shall I Teach You to Know?’: Intersections of Pedagogy, Performance, and Gender,” in *Performing Pedagogy in Early Modern England: Gender, Instruction, and Performance*, ed. Moncrieff and McPherson (London, 2011), 1–17 at 17.

²² See also Jerome de Groot, “‘Euery One Teacheth after Thyr Owne Fantasie’: French Language Instruction,” in *Performing Pedagogy*, ed. Moncrieff and McPherson, 33–51. In the same collection, see also Deborah Uman, “‘Wonderfullye Astonied at the Stoutenes of Her Minde’: Translating Rhetoric and Education in Jane Lumley’s *The Tragedie of Iphigenia*,” 53–64; and Chris Laoutaris, “The Radical Pedagogies of Lady Elizabeth Russell,” 65–83.

²³ Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 9.3.62; Desiderius Erasmus, *Exomologesis and Ecclesiastes: Spiritualia and Pastoralia*, vol. 2, *Ecclesiastes 2–4*, ed. Frederick J. McGinness, trans. James L. P. Butrica, *Collected Works of Erasmus* 68 (Toronto, 2015), bk. 3, p. 742.

²⁴ Peter Elbow, *Vernacular Eloquence: What Speech Can Bring to Writing* (Oxford, 2010), 222

“disappeared,” after she had read the transcript: “What in transcript had been somewhat flat, though still powerful, is transformed through the voice into a still continuing human tragedy, and a very particular and personal one; coloured by Rojas’s soft voice, accent and slow pace.”²⁵ We should not forget that performance can also create social meaning through shared experience. The social performance of what we are calling the vocal dimension of reading, as Roger Chartier explains, “brings the body into play, it is inscribed in a space and a relationship with oneself or with others.”²⁶

These kinds of meaning-making clearly apply to certain specialized performance texts: proclamations, playscripts, sermons, ballads, language manuals, and many more, including such pedagogical materials as anatomy books, which lecturers read aloud as bodies were dissected.²⁷ However, we are also asking if they apply to all literary texts, including those we usually absorb silently. Can we assume that literary texts were impervious to their performance? Or is it not more likely—in this hybrid culture where ballads were heard on streets, plays audited in the London theaters, and the Bible read in homes—that the full realization of any written text would have been dependent on its being vocalized, or at least on imagining that it was?²⁸ This is what we believe. At the very least, we want to consider

²⁵ Anne Karpf, “The Human Voice and the Texture of Experience,” *Oral History* 42, no. 2 (2014): 50–55 at 52. “As you listen,” she explains, “you also become aware of a certain ambiguity: that the torture she refers to is that which was inflicted upon her husband but is also, in some sense, that which has been inflicted upon her. I read this transcript several times but it was only when I heard the recording of Rojas that I understood properly that her voice was expressing this double agony.” See also Karpf, *The Human Voice: The Story of a Remarkable Talent* (London, 2006).

²⁶ Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge, 1994), 8.

²⁷ On the anatomy theatre as a performance space, see Cynthia Klestinec, *Theaters of Anatomy: Students, Teachers, and Traditions of Dissection in Renaissance Venice* (Baltimore, 2011), 95–97, 98–100. On the oral reading of Italian and English anatomy books, see Jennifer Richards and Richard Wistreich, “The Anatomy of the Renaissance Voice,” in *Edinburgh Companion to the Critical Medical Humanities*, ed. Anne Whitehead, Angela Woods, Sarah Atkinson, Jane Macnaughton, and Jennifer Richards (Edinburgh, 2016), 276–93.

²⁸ On plays, see Simon Palfrey and Tiffany Stern, *Shakespeare in Parts* (Oxford, 2007); on sermons, Hunt, *Art of Hearing*; on ballads, see Bruce R. Smith, “Female Impersonation in Early Modern Ballads,” in *Women Players in England, 1500–1660: Beyond the All-Male Stage*, ed. Pamela Allen Brown and Peter Parolin (Aldershot, U.K., 2005), 281–304; Angela J. McShane, *Political Broadside*

what would happen if we were to assume that all early modern writers worked within a paradigm of vocality. This is a valuable exercise in itself, we suggest, because it leads us to think afresh about the interpretative tool in order to take account of the historical experience of books. We would go so far as to suggest that unless we acknowledge the semiotics of the physical voice as a constituent of the literary, our interpretation of early modern texts in this period is distorted. For example, breathing in the right place is essential to understanding many texts, as their authors make clear. And as Neil Rhodes argues in this issue, and as Xavier Bisaro similarly shows for liturgical chant, punctuation or pointing in both manuscript and printed books was still used to mark those breathing places even as the use of the semicolon signaled awareness of syntax. The association of punctuation with breathing places is demonstrated in *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593), the author of which, Barnabe Barnes, uses first-person narration to imagine the conundrum of a poet (Parthenophil) who overhears his beloved (Parthenophe) reading badly a poem he has written for her, deliberately missing the breath marks he has added to ensure she expresses what he wants to hear. Her eyes dart at colons when she should be pausing; instead of taking a breath when she gets to a comma, she sighs; when she gets to “Interrogations,” she stumbles, refusing to bring his torment to an end by answering in the affirmative:

Furies them selves have at my passions wondred,
Yet thou (Parthenophe) well pleased sittes
Whilst in me so thy moystures heate hath thondred,
And thine eyes dartes at every colon hittes
My soule with double prickes which myne hart splittes.
Whose faintyng breath with sighing commaes broken

Ballads of Seventeenth-Century England: A Critical Bibliography (London, 2011); and Christopher Marsh, *Music and Society in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2010).

Drawes on the sentence of my death by pawses:
Ever prolonging out myne endlesse clauses
With iffs Parenthesis, yet finde no token
When with my greefe, I should stand even or odde:
My life still making preparations
Through thy loves dartes to beare the periodde,
Yet stumbleth on Interrogations.
These are those scholler like vexations
Which greeve me when those studies I applye.
I misse my lesson still, but with loves rodde
For each small accent sounded but awrye
Am I tormented, yet I can not dye.²⁹

The function of breath in reading matters for a different reason in our next example. It brings to life the words of the dead in a way that reading them silently cannot. The significance of the word breath in its two senses, spirit and life, were important to the reformer, John Bale, the editor of the testimony of Anne Askew. Askew was the young woman who, early in the Reformation, famously walked into Lincoln Cathedral and occupied it for six days, reading the newly translated and printed English Bible on display there. She was arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and eventually burned at the stake at Smithfield in 1546. The record of her interrogations, possibly written in her own hand but more likely dictated, was smuggled out of her prison cell and edited by Bale. Much ink has been spilled on the question of how we might add Askew to the canon of women writers, rescuing her from the interference of her male editor, who surrounds her words with his interpretation of them. But what mattered to

²⁹ Barnabe Barnes, "Elegie II," *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (London, 1593), 76.

Bale, and might matter to us, was not whether she wrote her testimony but that she spoke it aloud, animating the Word of God. The first testimony ends with a psalm: “The voyce of Anne Askewe out of the 54. Psalme of David.” Whether Askew prepared this paraphrase is less important than that she is imagined as speaking it. Through the agency of her breath she transfers to herself the spirit of David’s call for revenge. The message is that if we, too, read her psalm aloud then we bring her spirit to life again even as we transfer her call for revenge to ourselves.³⁰

The implications of an example like this last one are far-reaching, shifting the emphasis from women’s writing to women’s reading, and from women’s silent reading to their active ventriloquizing of words on a page. As Christopher Marsh and Michelle O’Callaghan remind us in this special issue, attending to the physical voice encourages us to imagine the possibilities of agency that performance can open to women. And it changes the dynamic between writers and their readers: the making of meaning happens off the page as well as on it, and it is the reader—or the performer—who is the final arbiter of this. As Marsh reminds us, singing a ballad can affect our interpretation of words we have only read silently, unaware of the possibilities of vocal performance. In an earlier essay, Marsh cites as an example a ballad that was dismissed by a fellow historian as childish and “trite” but that in the hands, mouths, and lungs of his students trained in traditional Irish music became “a rhythmic, fast, relentless, accelerating and pulsating thing,” not a nursery rhyme as once was thought but full of “bawdy innuendo.”³¹ The same applies to any text that is performed, or that is imagined as heard.

³⁰ See Jennifer Richards, “The Voice of Anne Askew,” *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* (2017), accessed November 30, 2018, <http://www.northernrenaissance.org/the-voice-of-anne-askew/>.

³¹ Christopher Marsh, “The Sound of Print in Early Modern England: The Broadside Ballad as Song,” in *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300–1700*, ed. Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham (Cambridge, 2004), 171–90, 178–79.

The aim of this special issue is to make us think again about the role of voice in relation to the literature of the early modern period and specifically to the history of the act of reading. So far we have focused on the speaking voice in reading, but our argument extends to the most obviously sounded texts of all: songs. Here, we hope to initiate a new kind of conversation between literary scholars and musicologists to the benefit of both. Just as with oral literary texts, in the study of Western art music the epistemology underpinning the analysis almost always returns students to the “text” of the musical work.³² That is, although any musical text is in fact unavoidably contingent on its relationship with performance, the performers (insofar as they are pertinent to the discussions of musicologists at all) have conventionally been regarded only as the executants of it, regardless of whether the object of study is a notated score with or without words, a sound or video recording, or even a live rendering of a notated or unnotated original.

The hierarchy that has been established whereby performance is secondary to the text is in part a result of the historical influence of literary studies on musicology. Indeed, the study of many word-based musical genres, including art song, opera, and popular music, has required often deep involvement by musicologists in the techniques and styles of criticism that literary scholars developed to understand the poetics of genres of writing.³³ This approach is also a by-product of the development of tools of

³² Richard Wistreich, “‘Inclosed in This Tabernacle of Flesh’: Body, Soul, and the Singing Voice,” *Journal of the Northern Renaissance* (2017), accessed November 30, 2018, <https://www.northernrenaissance.org/inclosed-in-this-tabernacle-of-flesh-body-soul-and-the-singing-voice/>.

³³ The scholarship in this field is vast, particularly with respect to early modern music and texts. For general overviews and some notable studies of individual composers in the principal European language areas, see, for England: Joseph Kerman, *The Elizabethan Madrigal: A Comparative Study*

rhetorical analysis within musicology itself, which made it easier to naturalize literary ways of thinking. Writing in 1600, the Bolognese music theorist, Giovanni Maria Artusi, declared that the role of the singers of a well-formed contrapuntal vocal composition is to “represent the true meaning of the composer to us.” He acknowledges that the job of effectively “representing the composer’s meaning” to the listening world can be very skilled and even high status, calling for “out of the ordinary” practitioners.³⁴ Yet he sets himself self-consciously against what we know was otherwise considered an essential and highly prized feature of the singer’s art, that is, the expectation that the written music will be made individual in the moment of performance (what we today loosely call “interpretation”). Interpretation involves the tasteful application of a wide range of rhetorical agogics, expressive colorations, and vocal embellishments, many of them technically sophisticated and characterized by the unique qualities of each singer’s vocal instrument. In practice, the responsibility vested in the performer of precomposed art music in the early modern period required a balancing act that was dependent on both the contingency of, and the separation between, composer and performer. Early-modern music composition differed from its modern equivalent in significant ways; in particular, the “completion” of even the most carefully written-down composed “work” (and much composed music remained only partially written-down, if it was written at all) was entirely contingent on the exigencies of its

(n.p., 1949), esp. chap. 1 (“English Madrigal Verse”); Edward Doughtie, *English Renaissance Song* (Boston, Mass., 1986); and Jeremy L. Smith, *Verse and Voice in Byrd’s Song Collections of 1588 and 1589* (Woodbridge, U.K., 2016); for France: *Poetry and Music in the French Renaissance*, ed. Jeanice Brooks, Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge, 1999); and *The Concordance of Music and Poetry in Sixteenth-Century France*, ed. Frank Dobbins (Cambridge, 2001); for Italy: James Haar, *Essays on Italian Poetry and Music in the Renaissance, 1350–1600* (Berkeley, Calif., 1986); Lorenzo Bianconi, “Parole e musica: Il Cinquecento e il Seicento,” in *Teatro, musica, tradizione dei classici*, Letteratura italiana 6 (Turin, 1986), 319–63; and Nino Pirrotta, “Monteverdi’s Poetic Choices,” in Pirrotta, *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays*, trans. David Morgenstern (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), 271–31.

³⁴ Giovanni Maria Artusi, *Seconda parte dell’Artusi ovvero delle imperfettioni della moderna musica* (Venice, 1603), 19–20 (translation by Richard Wistreich).

performance. But by the late eighteenth century, this balance was tipping: the hierarchical priority of the composer's text over its enactment had been established; by the late nineteenth century, vocal performance seemed to have been reduced to little more than an execution of the composer's score. The continuation of this model into the present remains one of the main differences between the performance of Western art-music and that of most other music genres.³⁵

At the end of the last century, scholarship did start to take more account of the role of performers in the making of musical meaning, although this has yet to produce a fundamental realignment of modes of critical reading of music's "texts." But this fresh way of thinking about the performance of text is worth revisiting, we are suggesting, because it challenges our own modern hierarchy that places the authority of the text above its "execution" by readers and, in so doing, it offers a way forward not only for musicology but also for literary studies.

In recent decades, musicologists have been gradually coming to terms with music's apparently dual identity as both a thing and a process, a confusion long exacerbated by the word *music* itself, which, in English, stands for both the theoretical and acoustical phenomenon of *musica humana* and its representation as written notation.³⁶ As a result there is an increasing recognition of the need to pay attention to the performance dimension of musical material. Twenty years ago, the music philosopher Christopher Small famously proposed an alternative to musicology's relentless focus on "the music itself." His compelling idea was that we should not restrict the quest for music's meanings to examining musical texts in order to unlock

³⁵ See Richard Wistreich, "Vocal Performance," in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Historical Performance in Music*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge, 2018), 676–80.

³⁶ Richard Wistreich, "Musical Materials and Cultural Spaces," *Renaissance Studies* 26 (2012): 1–12 at 2.

their internally encoded subjectivities. Rather we should broaden our study of music to take in its articulation and celebration of the sets of relationships that are constructed among all those who, as he says, “take part in any capacity in a musical performance, whether by performing or by listening.”³⁷ Just a few years later, Nicholas Cook would argue that there remains a prevailing structural “grammar” inherent in almost all musicological engagements with performance, which he characterizes as “a conceptual paradigm that constructs process as subordinate to product.”³⁸ Both of these interventions in the traditional mode of musical analysis have been only partially successful in changing the discipline. In most musicological analysis of musical texts, the role of practitioners continues to be situated as secondary to and, in many ways, somehow separate from the “music itself.” Yet, the solution that Cook proposed in 2001—that we should see musical works as “scripts in response to which social relationships are enacted,” so that “the object of analysis is now present and self-evident in the interactions between performers, and in the acoustic trace that they leave”—remains very much relevant today.³⁹ And herein lies a new possibility: we are proposing in this issue that this insight is applicable to all kinds of text, not just musical scores, and that it points to how we might realign literary studies and musicology.

More recent developments in musicology can give literary scholars interested in the physical voice fresh ways to think about text. Musicologists who believe that it is not possible to analyze music by studying its scores alone have developed a variety of new approaches. First, there is *performance analysis*, which applies empirical and qualitative methods to analyze what performers do when they turn texts into sounds; second, *historical performance*

³⁷ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, N.H., 1998), 9.

³⁸ Nicholas Cook, “Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance,” *Music Theory Online* 7, no. 2 (April 2001), para. 5, accessed November 30, 2018, <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html>

³⁹ Cook, “Between Process and Product,” para. 31.

practice studies use contextual information including organology, pedagogical treatises, cultural history, and acoustics, among other fields, to inform the re-sounding of historical music texts within the context of the wider contemporary phenomenon of the “performance of history.”⁴⁰ Performance analysts have developed sophisticated means of listening intensively to the ways that different interpreters execute the same text. They may, for example, compare, usually with the help of computer software, minute variations of speed, dynamics, or other parameters in recordings of the same piece of music. These analyses are made possible in some cases to the now-extensive archive of recordings available for the study of musical performances over many decades.⁴¹ In the field of historical performance practice, performers and scholars working closely together use a wide range of contextual information to reconstruct the parameters of performance. These are rarely notated but are nevertheless critical to the effective “reading aloud” of historical music texts, in order to understand how they might have once sounded and to bring them to life in the present. Both methodologies are limited by a range of factors, not least of which is the impossibility of any kind of objectivity when it comes to the emotional and embodied dimension of reading aloud. Yet there is no reason why these methodologies should not inspire new conversations and new ways of reading early modern literary texts. Such reconstructions give us access to their embodied materiality and help us understand the potential energy that would be released by reversing the

⁴⁰ The literature in the field of study of historical performance practice is extensive. The key scholarly journals include *Early Music* (1973–) and *Performance Practice Review* (1988–); for general overviews of the field, see, for example, *The Cambridge History of Musical Performance*, ed. Colin Lawson and Robin Stowell (Cambridge, 2012). In addition to scholarly studies of individual topics, there are also numerous guides to general matters of historical performance aimed at practitioners, such as *A Performer’s Guide to Medieval Music*, ed. Ross W. Duffin (Bloomington Ind., 2000); and *A Performer’s Guide to Renaissance Music*, ed. Jeffrey Kite-Powell, 2nd ed. (New York, 2007).

⁴¹ For an overview of recent research in performance analysis, see Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford, 2013); and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance* (London, 2009), version 1.1, modified February 14, 2010, <http://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/intro.html>.

sleight of hand that turned an oral/aural event into a written document, that is, a text that awaits its reanimation by articulate readers. This is an ambition for the future development of a voice-centered textual criticism. We are therefore thinking both prospectively and provocatively in proposing this way forward, inviting a new kind of crossdisciplinary conversation between literary studies and musicology.⁴²

This special issue is, we hope, the beginning of this conversation. Its authors already traverse the boundary between our fields, either because they are musicologists who understand the close correspondence between reading and singing (van Orden, Bisaro), or because they are cultural historians who work with musical texts (Marsh, O’Callaghan), or because they are historians and literary scholars who are engaged with the performance possibilities of printed texts (Gallagher, Rhodes, Chenovick). The essays in this special issue speak to their audiences in particular disciplines—music, literary studies, history—but they also speak to each other, creating a varied soundscape of the early modern world, one that recognizes that sounds as well as texts travel across borders (van Orden, Gallagher), that printed paratext can be used to guide tongues as well as eyes (Bisaro, Gallagher, Rhodes), that reading aloud was practiced in a variety of schoolrooms from the *petites écoles* of provincial sixteenth-century France (Bisaro) to the language academies of seventeenth-century London (Gallagher), and that texts can represent and be animated by both female and male voices (Marsh, O’Callaghan). All of the authors think imaginatively about the kind of textual evidence we might use to recover historical voices, and they challenge the conventional hierarchy that treats text as primary and performance as secondary. We end this special issue with an essay that goes out of its way to recover the significance and meaning of

⁴² See also Katherine Larson, *Texts in and of the Air: The Matter of Song in Early Modern England*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

a phenomenon that is as light as air: breath. Sighs and groans, Chenovick reminds us, cued by a writer of religious poetry, George Herbert, constitute a physical expression of contrition that will move the spirit of God. We hope the conversation between our two disciplines that this issue represents will help us to appreciate textual cultures in ways our forebears would understand. In 1580, the French philosopher Pierre de la Primaudaye described writing as essentially a means for preserving speech and communicating it to other places and times. Musical notation is similarly a convenient means for preserving past performances or enabling present and future performances. In other words, both documents and scores are fundamentally cues for reanimating the voices essential to communication and understanding:

And although voice and speach flie into the aire as if they had wings, insomuch that a man can neither beholde them with his eies, nor smell them with his nose, nor holde them with his hands; neuerthelesse speach is kept still before the eyes, and may be called backe when a man will by meanes of writing, and by the benefite of letters. Yea, it may be sent to them that are absent, and as far as one will, that they may vnderstand it, euen to them also that are not yet borne.⁴³

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⁴³ Pierre de la Primaudaye, *Suite de l'academie francoise, en laquelle il est traicté de l'homme* {this is the title of the 1580 edition per BnF: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k8707794z>} (Paris, 1580); translated as *The French Academie: Fully Discoursed and Finished in Foure Books* (London, 1618), 384.