

This study is an extremely learned, ambitious, and engaging work which grapples with an elusive conceptual field. Hadfield ably problematizes the place and role of lying in early modern English culture and deftly reconstructs many of the emergent anxieties in a post-Reformation society coming to terms with a new culture of oaths. Whilst it does not always provide wholly defined and convincing answers (and perhaps that was never its intent), it nonetheless raises important questions which should impact upon the research of literary scholars and historians alike. Looming largest amongst them is the idea which gave rise to the author's research: 'what if much of the information we use when constructing any history is not actually true?' (3). In probing the validity of historical evidence produced by a society submerged in the practice of lying, Hadfield's study serves as an unnerving reminder that the sanctity of the archival record is not always inviolate.

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JENNIFER RICHARDS, *Voices and Books in the English Renaissance: A New History of Reading*. Pp. xiii-xvii + 329. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. £65.00 (ISBN 978 0 19 880906 7).

In her book *Literacy and Orality: Composition, Performance and Transmission* (2018) the cultural anthropologist Ruth Finnegan challenges the idea that 'literary forms [are] sometimes said to go with particular forms of society', and she associates the work of Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong with an essentialist 'binary typology' dependent upon preserving a fundamental historical distinction between 'orality' and 'literacy'. Jennifer Richards' new book, with its insistence upon 'voices' and subtitled 'A New History of Reading' takes to heart Finnegan's observation that the two categories of speaking and writing are fundamentally trans-historical and have always been 'mixed' in practice. This is substantially,

though not entirely, the view that cultural anthropologist Jack Goody subscribes to in part, although his suggestion that 'a new means of communication does not replace the earlier (except in certain limited spheres); it adds to it and alters it', (*Myth, Ritual and The Oral* (2010) p.155) offers a crucial modification.

There is, of course a long history of the tension between 'writing' and 'orality', and the dangers ascribed to the former, that we can trace back to Plato's *Phaedrus*; but while cultural anthropologists have continued to debate the accuracy, and, indeed, the relevance, of the empirical evidence, literary scholars have found the McLuhan-Ong insistence on this distinction attractive, if not entirely persuasive, especially in relation to the Renaissance and to the emergence of print culture. What is 'new' about Richards' thesis is that she believes that it is possible to recover actual 'voices' from printed Renaissance texts: an activity that can extend from what has become a familiar enquiry into the *materiality* of the book as object into the domain of discourse and the rhetoric of representation. Indeed, she argues, a full appreciation of the scholarly adjustments necessary to extend the empirical evidence to sustain this argument will lead to a 'new', and hitherto obscured 'history' of reading.

As a scholar of Renaissance rhetoric Richards returns initially to what have, hitherto, been the literary emphases on the material aspects of print culture. She begins by arguing that of the five divisions of classical rhetoric: '*inventio* the discovering of material, *dispositio*, the skill of organising it effectively, *elocutio*, or style, and *memoria*, the ability to remember both the material we have gathered and how we want to present it' and *pronunciatio*, 'dedicated to the training of the voice' (30), it is *pronunciatio* that has been overlooked. To accord it a proper place in the history of reading is to transform the act of reading itself into an oral *performance*, but also, more importantly, it steers attention away from the book as 'object' along with 'the experience of the solitary reader, pen in hand, marking the text', to experience the act reading itself as an 'event' (31). In the first three chapters under the general heading of 'Locating the Voice' Richards sets out to pinpoint three crucial

locations: 'The Voice on the page' (ch.1), 'The Voice in the Schoolroom' (ch.2) and 'The Voice in the Church' (ch.3), where the latter two deal explicitly with the overlap between the spatial and the oral dimensions of language. Part 2, headed 'Voices and Books: Case Studies' consists of two chapters, designed to pinpoint particular voices in printed texts, such as those of John Bale, Anne Askew and William Baldwin. This part of the discussion deals specifically, and intriguingly, with topics such as 'The Voice in the Printing House'(ch. 4), situating orality at the heart of the process of printing itself. Chapter 5 concentrates on 'Thomas Nashe On and Off the Page', and invites us to consider his difficult style in relation to printing, 'Live Performance', his relation to the drama of the period, and to his confrontation with the comparatively literary Gabriel Harvey. A short Conclusion: "Where Next?" seeks to push the debate into the future of book history that resists 'McLuhan's and Ong's conception of print as an exclusively visual medium which, over time, silenced the word', in favour of a 'conception of the early printed book as a live event', (288) a truly dialogic activity in which the reader is invited to participate. This raises an interesting question of a possible difference between an early modern address to 'the reader', and those frequent addresses once print becomes the dominant mode of representation (in the novel, for example).

At one level, Richards' approach seems an obvious one, which is perhaps, why it appears to have been overlooked. Moreover, at a time when print technology was in its relatively early stages, the inconsistencies of the marks on the page have been usually contained within the quasi-scientific domain of textual bibliography. This does not quite resolve one of the issues that Richards' argument raises: the problematic elision of 'writing' and 'print'. Writing as a form of representation has always had a trans-historically controversial existence, and, the philosophical sophistications of Jacques Derrida notwithstanding, has continued to be located as part of a hierarchy in which 'speech' has been accorded an almost religious superiority. Literary critics have consistently raised the question of how 'voice' enters into printed texts and is

represented in them, although here the epithet 'voice' has come to be predominantly metaphorical.

It was Mikhail Bakhtin who emphasised 'the word ... born in dialogue as a living rejoinder within it' (*The Dialogic Imagination* (1981), 279) and who insisted that 'the orientation toward the listener is usually considered the basic constitutive feature of rhetorical discourse' .280). Bakhtin's identification of different 'voices' in the novel ('heteroglossia'), however, extends beyond the printed page to identify 'the speaking person' as 'always, to some degree or another, and *ideologue*, and his (*sic*) words are always *ideologemes*'. This marks the entry into a politically stratified 'society'(333) that Richards' primarily empirical approach downplays, although she is perfectly aware of some of the *ideological* implications of 'voice' especially in relation to religious, and to gendered discourses. Beginning from the observation that reading was not, at this historical conjuncture, a silent and solitary activity, Richards searches for 'cues' in printed texts that will support the foregrounding of the living voice, recreating through the emerging medium of print its 'soundscape'—a term announced in the 1980s and developed by Bruce Smith in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (1999: 44ff). Perhaps the reason why Bakhtin attracts so little of Richards' attention (his name appears in mediated form only briefly in one footnote, 230 fn.2) is because she perceives vocality as an indispensable aural feature of communication, where, to quote Smith, 'a speech community also constitutes an *acoustic* community' whose 'identity is maintained not only by what its members *say* in common but what they *hear* in common' (46). Richards wants to extend this to the material body of the early modern text itself; for example, in addition to the ways in which early modern readers are addressed, she also notes that early modern authors and composers used different typographical features 'to represent different speaking voices.' (40) Indeed, she argues that the printed page is 'full of cues for reading aloud' and that 'vocal cues can only ever serve as prompts to perform' (66).

The question here, however, is, of course, the precise relationship between the vocal and

the spatial elements of the printed page. It was Ong's contention in his book *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue* (1958), that Ramistic logic filtered out the 'nonspatial' elements of sound (Ong, 89) thereby reducing dialogue, although it would seem that it was Bakhtin who brought dialogic and dialectic back together again. So long as we focus exclusively on the empirical evidence, then Richards' thesis provides a timely corrective to the implications of the McLuhan-Ong position related specifically to the question of historical periodization, and she offers a partial response to the question of how transitional *was* the early modern period. The range of texts that Richards calls on to sustain her thesis is impressive, and she draws her evidence from rhetoric books, educational manuals, religious texts, and early modern fiction. Throughout she is at pains to emphasize that reading is, in all these cases, 'performance' that establishes a much closer relationship with the emerging theatre than with the silent spatial model that has so often been associated with print culture. She invokes Patrick Collinson's 'acoustic reading' (131) as part of her heuristic strategy to foreground *pronunciation*, and argues that the emphasis upon 'listening' 'to something as ephemeral as oral reading' offers a valuable adjunct to the kind of recent scholarly work that seeks 'to recover both the politics of Bible reading and the political implications of Erasmus's *Paraphrases*' (133).

Her treatment of *The First and Second Examinations of Anne Askew* (1546–7) (190ff.) excavates a gender politics that discloses how the voice of John Bale shapes our reading of her words, arguably de-authoring her writing, or attempting to tame her resistant voice to create 'a passively silent compliant victim' (193). The typographical peculiarities of these two texts, that give Askew a distinctive print 'voice', also emphasize her direct, and quite unusual unmediated speaking of scripture as 'an act of ventriloquisation' (199). What emerges is a recognizable gender politics, although Richards' displacement of Askew's 'performance' onto the experience of the reader who is now made complicit in the subversion of the patriarchal insistence upon a severely limited access to scripture could, perhaps have been extended further to consider

the complex, theological and ideological implications of this observation.

Richards also wants to restore 'voice' to printing house practice, and she cites Hornschuch's *Orthotypographia* (1573–1616) to suggest that press correction was in part an 'oral' activity (207) leaving traces that were, in some ways, passed on to the reader. At such points her image of 'illiterate workmen' collides with the McLuhan-Ong thesis that distinguishes between 'illiteracy' and 'non-literacy'. 'Speech' diversity in print has long been accepted by critics as a central feature of the novel which emerged historically as a particular species of printed narrative, but even if we acknowledge the mixture of discourses in early modern printed texts, as Richards persuades us that we should, the question still remains of the extent to which practices such as reading aloud, and in groups, have always been a determining feature of the activity, or whether, with the advent of movable type, vocalisation, as Richards describes it, can be regarded as a 'residual', or transitional element in the business of representation. In some of the texts that she chooses: Askew's *Examinations* or William Baldwin's *Beware the Cat* (1584), the texts contain, for example, a plethora of tildes. This raises the question of whether the reader is required to visually supply missing letters, (where visual adjustment functions to normalise the spacing of words in a justified line of print) or to vocalise them and hence to 'listen' to their sounds. Either way, we need to revise what we mean when we designate a reader 'literate' or 'illiterate', and indeed, also what 'reading' in the printing house—as a combination of vocal and spatial awareness, or indeed as a primarily acoustic activity—actually involved.

These examples offer fertile grounds for the development of Richards' argument, although she leaves the most difficult case, that of Thomas Nashe until the last chapter of the book. Her controversial claim is that Nashe makes meaning 'off the page' and 'in the ears and mouths of readers' (230). Her point of entry into the 'materiality' of his style is via Martin Marprelate's 'conceit of oral reading' (231–2), and it should be remembered that Marprelate's pamphlets made much of

addressing 'readers' and inviting his adversaries into public (not necessarily printed) dialogue. Nashe, we are told, however, makes a distinction 'between a solid materiality and a materiality that is in the process of being transformed into something else'. This is not an easy formulation to unpick, but Richards' point is that she wants to move from the book as 'material object' to one that embodies 'a live experience', and to show that what was on the page 'could be transformed into something as immaterial as thought'. (232). Nashe produces 'dynamic sentences' in a style she describes as 'cut-and-paste' and taking her cue from *The Anatomie of Absurdity* (1589) she demonstrates how he makes 'his advice on thinking as one speaks or writes part of our live reading experience' (235). Richards acknowledges the familiar critical recognition of the way in which Nashe 'moves easily between the technologies of print and voice' but she refuses to accept that his style is in any way transitional by insisting that 'there is nothing silent about print', and that 'there is nothing residual about Nashe's orality' (238). Her claim is that, in a very constitutive sense, Nashe anticipates and envisages 'the performance of his texts', hence his abiding interest in the emerging professional theatre, and his contribution to the production of theatre script-writing (244–5). The point is well taken in the case of a text such as *Christ's Tears* which is cast in the form of the sermon, and hence offers a key to the much wider issue of religious *performance* and the controversies that it attracted. But this also becomes central to her discussion of Jack Wilton's 'voices' in *The Unfortunate Traveller* (1594) where 'Wilton recalls the oral/aural origins of Aretino's writing', and where Nashe imitates Aretino's 'vocality' (269). Richards brings out the distinction between a bookish reader such as Gabriel Harvey, whose modes of reading 'have come to dominate our histories of reading', (282) and Nashe who retains a mode of reading that is 'full of voices' (281).

Although there is much to quibble over in Richards' extraordinarily resourceful book, the wealth of examples she draws on, and the detailed attention she gives to the presence of 'vocality' that they demonstrate, makes this a very important intervention in the advancement of our understanding of the history of

early modern reading practices. Her approach stretches across a range of disciplines, and her arguments, developed in an admirably collegiate tone, throw down a gauntlet to those historians of the book who do not progress much beyond historical description. Jennifer Richards' book will be indispensable for anyone interested in the history of early modern reading, and the controversies she launches will occupy scholars for some time to come.

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JEAN R. BRINK. *The Early Spenser: 'Minde on Honour Fixed'*. Pp.xiv + 236. Manchester: Manchester University Press (The Manchester Spenser). £80 (hbk.). (ISBN: 978-1-5261-4258-0)

Jean Brink's revisionist new account of the first half of Spenser's life takes us up the age of 26 (Brink, rightly I think, dates Spenser's birth to 1554), with the poet poised to travel to Ireland as secretary to the Lord Deputy, Arthur Lord Grey de Wilton. The ten chapters cover the poet's schooldays, his time at Cambridge, the largely absent evidence of his life and deeds before *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579), his relationship with Gabriel Harvey and the publication of the *Familiar Letters* (1580), his relationship with Sir Philip Sidney, his first marriage, and why he might have gone to Ireland.

There are many highpoints and new revelations in this narrative, resulting from Professor Brink's excellent archival skills and diligence in following clues. No one has written better on the 'Nowell Account Book', the work that contains details of the finances of Robert Nowell, a prominent lawyer and brother of Alexander Nowell, the dean of St. Paul's. The importance of the account book was first realized by the