

Jean de Marconville, William Perkins, and George Webbe. *The Unruly Tongue in Early Modern England: Three Treatises*.

Ed. Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2012. lii + 248 pp. \$75. ISBN: 978-1-61147-469-5.

The three treatises on the tongue (all published in England from 1592 to 1619) that comprise Nathalie Vienne-Guerrin's edition register the ambivalence of the tongue in the early modern world and suggest numerous ways to control this "unruly member." Drawing from Bruce Smith's examination of soundscapes in *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England*, Vienne-Guerrin claims that these treatises present an early modern "tonguescape" that shows both men and women subjected to the sins of the tongue (xxii). These treatises, which Vienne-Guerrin argues have not received sufficient scholarly attention and have not been reedited in modern scholarly editions until now, are all derivative of the biblical quotation, "The tongue can no man tame" (James 3:8). Yet as the edition makes clear, these treatises attempt to do just that.

In her engaging introduction, Vienne-Guerrin provides a deft overview of the scholarship on the tongue over the past twenty-five years (including work by Boose, Luckyj, Mazzio, and Parker), while claiming that Renaissance tongue treatises have an "edifying, pedagogical purpose" (xxxiii). She traces the biblical and classical sources that the authors reference while presenting a brief overview of the anatomy of the tongue and the relationship between the tongue and heart (the good tongue, it was believed, derived from a pure heart). Furthermore, she shows how the texts call upon the commonplace that the tongue is contained but "never totally controlled by the double ramparts of the lips and teeth" (xxxv).

As Vienne-Guerrin makes clear, discussion of the tongue should not be reduced to gender issues (xxi). In fact, her nine-page index of biblical quotations points to how deeply entrenched religion was in these texts (one of the authors,

William Perkins, was a Puritan theologian, while another, George Webbe, was a preacher and Bishop of Limerick). All of the texts presented in this edition repeatedly call upon biblical injunctions regarding silence and the necessity of clear hearing as antidotes to the myriad abuses of the tongue.

The first treatise in the edition was written by the Catholic Jean de Marconville, *A Treatise of the Good and Evell Tounge* (first published in Paris in 1573; the French version is presented in the appendix). The treatise was translated and published in England in ca. 1592 and is a rewriting and abridgement of Erasmus's *Lingua* (which itself is derived from Plutarch). The anonymous T. S. in his preface to the English edition implores his Christian readers to bring their "circumcised eares and hartes" (4) to counter the tongue. The treatise is a "database of tongue stories" that presents "a huge heape" (9) of examples of the indiscreet tongue in Aristotle, Horace, and Hesiod.

William Perkins's *A Direction for the Government of the Tongue according to Gods worde* (1595, revised from the 1593 edition) is, in Vienne-Guerrin's words, "a do-it-yourself guide to taming the tongue" (xxix). Perkins encourages his readers to rule their tongues and amend their lives, endorsing holy speech and holy silence while railing against "rotten speech" (47). Perkins relies to a greater extent than Marconville on biblical stories, which he claims "must be as warnings from heaven to admonish us, and to make us afraide of the abuse of the Tongue: especially when it tendeth to the dishonour of God" (70).

The most intriguing of the treatises is George Webbe's *The Araignment of an unruly Tongue* (1619), which takes a theatrical turn and provides a "judicial proceeding" against the tongue (88). The treatise, using a "web of biblical quotations" (xxxi), seeks to discover the faults and dangers of the tongue while prescribing remedies for the "right ordering of the Tongue" (81), which rests on engaging in prayer so that "our Eares ever be attentive to thy will" (123).

One of the most useful features of the book is the collection of striking images relating to the tongue that Vienne-Guerrin has collected in the appendix. With the exception of one, all eighteen illustrations are from the sixteenth century, while over half of the illustrations come from texts published in France. Vienne-Guerrin has also provided an appendix that includes some variations of tongue stories by writers that include Gabriel Harvey, Joseph Swetnam, and John Foxe.

Vienne-Guerrin's edition effectively situates the representation of the tongue in the noisy world of early modern England, although more attention could be given to early modern political and legal discourse as it relates to the tongue. Readers will be interested to trace the multiple depictions of men's unruly tongues (and their resulting failures of the ear) as opposed to traditional notions of the railing female tongue. The edition is a useful resource for scholars and students interested in silence, speech, and the period's obsession with that "hellhoundish," "naughty," and "blasphemous" bodily member.

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