
David Greer. *Manuscript Inscriptions in Early English Printed Music.* Music and Material Culture Series. Farnham/Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015, xv + 206 pp., 36 figures, 8 tables, 84 music examples, £ 60.00.

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Marginalia have moved to the centre in recent years, at least to the centre of attention in publications inspired by a “material culture” approach, a trend which has been fashionably identified as the “material turn” in the humanities. In this vein, series such as *Music and Material Culture* were launched and this series proves to be particularly adequate for the book under review here, Greer’s collection and investigation of handwritten inscriptions and scribbles in surviving books of music published before 1640, among them works of the major Tudor and Stuart composers Byrd, Dowland, Gibbons, Morley, Weelkes and Tallis. On the basis of contemporaneous textual, musical and visual marginalia, the book aims at being a study of the “multifarious ways” in which early owners used their copies of musical books (blurb).

In his preface, David Greer, Emeritus Professor in the Department of Music at the University of Durham and a renowned specialist on English music of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, describes the beginnings of this book as a “habit” rather than a “project” (xvii), namely a habit of collecting annotations and

marginalia in books of early music, in particular those of contemporaries of the composers. The result of this “habit” is now presented in “Part II” (61–189), a catalogue of “Manuscript Inscriptions and Other Owners’ Marks” attested in books of early English music published before 1640 (book selection is based on *STC2*, albeit excluding many liturgical books, such as all of the books of the Sarum rite; see Table 1.1, 5–10). This catalogue of sources records information on the individual books (earlier and current shelf-marks, catalogues, etc.) together with a transcription of all of their annotations before the “modern” era (marginalia from the 19th and 20th are generally disregarded; 4). Each of these inscriptions is meticulously documented by recording the full texts (for, e.g., ownership inscriptions, additional stanzas added to songs or pieces of poetry) or by providing comprehensive descriptions or illustrations (snippets or complete pictures) for visual marginalia such as drawings (54–59); in the case of musical additions, the incipits are given with added barlines but otherwise a minimum of editorial intervention.

In a first investigation of this source material as collected in Part II, different aspects of the musical culture in early modern England are discussed in the five chapters of Part I. The material does not seem to lend itself easily to a coherent account of handwritten inscriptions in musical books and so these chapters can be characterized as sketches of areas meriting further investigation. Chapter 2 (“Names and other Indications of Ownership”; 11–24) gathers material on the acquisition and possession of the books in their early years; it discusses their roles as presentation copies to patrons or friends (e.g. the presentation copies of *Ravencroft’s A Briefe Discourse* to dignitaries of the City of London; 14) and also sheds light on early private libraries, such as the library of Sir Charles Somerset, or on consecutive ownerships in the Cavendish family of Chatsworth and Hardwick (15). The name that appears most often is that of Conyers D’arcy, and signatures identifying three of his cousins as dedicatees of pieces or collections by Weelkes, Dowland and Morley nicely illustrate the music environments in his family.

Other indications of ownership and book collection are particular signs or numbers (discussed in Chapter 4, “Numbers”; 40–48). The sign most often found is the Greek sigma (31 instances in nine different libraries), and the “sigma books” can indeed be shown to have at one time formed (part of) a significant collection (23). Through the additions of page numbers by the same hands, Greer is even able to re-assemble early sets of part-books or to establish collections of books once bound together.

The chapters “Words and Music” (Chapter 3; 25–39) and “Scribbling in Books” (Chapter 5; 51–60) gather miscellaneous kinds of annotations and additions by individual users of the books. These relate to practical uses of the music, such as the corrections of printing errors (which are of some relevance to today’s

editors of the pieces), rehearsal cues in, for instance, the form of crosses or insertions of sharps and flats, where the readers – “judiciously or not” (25) – thought them necessary. Annotations with a clear didactic function are few, but there are some additions which supply bits of theoretical information, such as diagrams of note-shapes and their equivalent rests or diagrams of concords and discords (51). A further instance of practical use is one of the few added stage directions – *sensuall appetite must syng thys song and hys company must answere hym lykwyse* – next to “So merely let us daunce” (52).

Ever so often we also see owners altering the words of songs to fit new political or personal purposes. Among these instances, which are indicative of continual usage of the books, are changes of the feminine pronouns *she/her* to the masculine ones *he/his* after change of reign, e.g. in “Prayer [...] for the Queenes Maiestie” (36, 88), or when a carol for Christmas Day is turned into a song celebrating the foiling of the Gunpowder Plot (highlighted by “5 November” in the margin; 37, 113). In the replacement of the name *Leonilla* by *Ophelia* in “Fair Leonilla” in Cambridge University Library, Kk.3.i.13, a copy of Wilbye’s *Second Set of Madrigals*, Greer sees perhaps the first mention of this character in *Hamlet* outside the play itself (37, 73). In another alteration of a nominal phrase, the replacement of *darling* by *Phyllis* in one of Morley’s *Canzonets* (81) might reflect a very intimate setting of this song or an instance of the topical ‘pastoral’ semantics of *Phyllis*. The motivation of the writer is obviously religious, though, when a love-song in praise of Daphne becomes a heartfelt song to *my Jesus*. Particularly interesting in this context are the more extensive transformations in religious *contrafacta* of secular song texts (93).

Lengthier new materials are also attested in the addition of music or extra stanzas in space between the printed matter. While much of the added music is known from other sources (in particular catches that were very popular in the 17th century), there is also some otherwise unattested material (25–28). Greer is thus certainly right when referring to many of the marginalia in his source catalogue as “a hidden repertory that offers materials of interest to musicologists and literary scholars” (4). And since Greer comprehensively and meticulously charts and introduces these new items and also records all known parallels (see, e.g., 167, 170), the book is indeed a “treasure trove” (blurb), which will be highly welcomed not only by musicologists but also by literary historians or researchers on literacy or the history of the book. Given the many female names attested as owners, presenters or dedicatees of the books (although dating is not always easy), the material can also serve as a new source for studying gendered (musical) literacy. For literary historians it will be particularly interesting to see how the material gathered here compares to marginalia and annotations in contemporaneous non-musical books (see, e.g., Sherman 2007 and 2011).

The character of the book as a catalogue of sources charting all kinds of annotations in these early music books is guided by Greer's very general aim at investigating in how far the jottings and annotations "left clues to the multifarious ways" in which music "played a part" in the lives of individuals of the Tudor and Stuart era, thus providing "information about the musical culture" in early modern England (blurb). The book reflects Greer's outstanding expertise in the material, from the many years he has spent with these books, and his "observations" will most certainly be – an intention spelt out on page 4 – "a starting-point for further study" of the historical, socio-cultural, literary and musical material found as a "hidden repertory" in these early music books.

Works Cited

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- Sherman, William. 2011. "The Social Life of Books". In: Raymond Joad (ed.). *The Oxford History of Popular Print Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 163–170.
- STC2 = A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave (eds.). 1976–1991. *A Short-Title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, & Ireland, and of English Books Printed Abroad 1475–1640*. 2nd ed., 3 vols., revised and enlarged by W. A. Jackson and F. S. Ferguson, completed by K. F. Pantzer. London: Bibliographical Society.