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Debora Shuger. *Paratexts of the English Bible, 1525-1611.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 368 pp. ISBN 9780192843579. \$115.00 hardback.

by Kevin Killeen

Debora Shuger's *Paratexts of the English Bible, 1525-1611* explores the vast machinery for reading the printed Bible that developed in the Reformation era, in the margins and in the swollen prefatory pages. There are maps and calendars, genealogies and chronologies, multi-part infographics, summaries, histories, doctrine, and notes on authority. Then there are prayers and glosses, elaborate schemes of cross-reference, and woodcuts, both crude and elegant. Shuger, in her brilliant way, sets that vast machinery in motion, to show how and why and for whom it was written, and what was at stake that such handrails were put in place, to guard against misreading or mere bafflement.

This is a great book. It is written with style and underwritten by immense, lightly worn knowledge of early modern religious history, church politics, book history, and theological battles. It will be more or less instantly important in all of the above fields, but will, I think, go further in its appeal. The meat of the book consists of careful analysis of the paratexts and prefatory material of early modern Bibles, the marginalia and headings, images, tables, and other such material, which are often enough noted in histories of English religious thought but widely presumed to say the same thing over and over. This study shows the nuance and carefully wrought religious positions advanced in this paratextual material of the sixteenth century.

The decision not to look at the 1611 Authorized Version (AV), while initially seeming a curious choice (given how weighty a version it has come to seem), is shown to be more than justified insofar as it demonstrates the vigor and substance of earlier Bibles in defining and framing the various, albeit temporary, religious settlements

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represented by the translations, and the varied editions of those translations. The common version of this story, namely that the Geneva Bible was uniquely seditious, and its wayward marginalia was the target of the AV's reticence, is shown to be far from accurate. The AV is not excluded on the grounds that it does not contain any glossatory material (for it does, albeit of a relatively bland sort). There is just so much going on, of interest, in the earlier, Tudor Reformation era.

What is especially enjoyable in this book is the way that rigorous scholarly sleuthing and careful book history, pursued with focus and breadth, does not permit its sources and book history to become the sole focus of the writing. Continually, it brings its 'raw' material-histories into conversation with the content of the paratexts, elucidating the nuance and the significance of the material: calendars underlie a particular sense of sacred time; maps speak to a specific engagement with the historical sensibility of the sixteenth century; humanist concepts of sacred rhetoric and theories of the translation-as-exegesis remain in sight in the finished biblical products. The paratextual material is shown to address urgent theological construals of reality for its writers and readers.

The construction and logic of the book works well and makes sense, though it is not a Bible-by-Bible account of paratextual content. There is a chronological sweep of sorts across chapters 1, 3 and 5, as it registers the print origins of the translations, sometimes as private evangelical projects and sometimes as state-backed enterprises. At the same time, the story of the paratexts does not lend itself to straightforward chronology, for much is borrowed, reprinted, reformulated from one Bible to the next or from one edition of the same Bible to the next. The tale needs to be told aslant to make sense. The paratexts do, however, give an important sense of the tides of religious controversy, the engagement with, and withdrawal from older liturgical and calendrical traditions and so on. By the latter parts of the sixteenth century, a new dynamic is at play, and the objects of polemical contention have changed, and this, it is demonstrated (in Chapter 3), is fully on show in the prefatory materials, with continental battles and intra-English contention being aired in the paratexts in ways that have not been noted in previous scholarship.

In parallel to the theological developments in the paratexts, attention to the humanist material—philological, historical, and interpretative—adds an important dimension to the book and demonstrates how the biblical mattered centrally to more or less every scholarly project of the renaissance. Shuger's earlier work, particularly

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The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity (1994), has been so immensely important precisely because it demonstrated this so fully: that the literary, humanist, and intellectual scholarship of the early modern era was intricately bound up with the period's scriptural obsessions. This dynamic in the current book, applied to the paratexts of the Bibles, means that the book's importance will go a long way beyond those interested in book history, interacting as it does with many areas of scholarly interest. The attention to Protestant intellectual sensibilities is both insightful and written with a sympathy and wit that one does not always encounter in relation to what can be quite dry source material, that never cracks a conscious joke. Shuger does.

Running through the book, and dealt with explicitly in the introduction, is an attention to the knotty issue of historical terminology, including "Calvinist" and "Anglican" and the various vocabularies that have been tried out to mitigate the clunky nature of these terms. It is good to have this discussion up front, and the case made around retaining various terms is convincing, without being evangelical. Some readers, no doubt, will have an immovable investment in still using "Puritan," for all its own difficulties, but there is a very good case made for being careful with it and for thinking through retrospective naming more generally.

The chapters are detailed and impressive, thinking with careful attention to the question of development between (and, indeed, rivalry between) editions, but it never feels narrowly (para)textual to the exclusion of context, and the doctrinal weight of annotative material is brought in with reference to treatises, political spats, and historical matters. I suppose it might be that a wider audience could be more fully catered for, at some points, in the introductions to chapters. The plunge into the detail of work by William Tyndale, for example, presumes a good bit of knowledge. On the other hand, it is probably the case that most readers will have this background, and the nuance of the argument is clearer for not being too swamped with material that is relatively familiar. The attention is focused on dedicatory epistles, calendars, tables, prefaces, and so on and how the various paratexts pursue their varied causes. There are clearly many such causes and disputes in play at once, from the conception of law in Tyndale, for example, and how it differs from other biblical legalisms to more polemical-confessional elements, in the Coverdale, Taverner, and Great Bibles. The attention to images is thoroughgoing and constitutes far more subtle readings of these woodcuts and title pages than any other I have read. Many of these images are, I think,

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quite unfamiliar. There are a lot of them, but they add considerably to the author's arguments and illustrate effectively the careful and varied attention lavished on the Bible's emotional (as well as theological) dynamics.

The first chapter develops a topic that becomes increasingly prominent, the interpretative license implicit in or invited by the paratexts, but this is rarely a straightforward matter of being more or less radical—often the annotative material is solidly philological in character, and at other points, Bibles that seem vehemently evangelical contain glosses that appear quite Catholic. The survey of Bibles moves in the third chapter to the Elizabethan publications, which are vast, rich, and fuller of paratextual material than has been previously recognized. It looks at the Geneva editions, with their undertow of “Protestant jihadism” (128), the Bishops' Bible, and others. The publication of the Catholic Rheims and Douai Bibles enmeshes the contemporary Protestant Scriptures in a new set of controversies, repudiating the Romish readings in their paratexts and prologues, and these are dealt with both in broad terms and with particular focus on the mini-case-study glosses of Psalms, Romans, and others. The fifth chapter shifts the emphasis to the use and popularity of editions in the later part of the century, and the increasing Calvinist attention in the prefatory material, albeit this story is made more complex than it might seem by the habit of biblical editors of stealing the materials of previous editions and translations.

The concern with interpretative practice is taken up in the study of humanist exegesis in the second and fourth chapters, which deal with the incorporation of scholarly material, patristic and contemporary, into the Bibles, in at least short form. These range from the place of the apocrypha to the exegetical protocols and the concern for “juggling” (105) hermeneutics that obscure more than they clarify. The second chapter engages with a historiography that puts pre-critical and humanist modes of reading in opposition and explores the presuppositions that come with these modes of understanding and the purposes behind glossatory materials. The fourth chapter gives detailed attention to the early-modern historical reconstruction of the Judaic past, in chronologies and customs, and the era's development of a sense of temporal specificity. The presence of this obsession with times, genealogies, and fakery is richly illustrated. As is only appropriate, the book concludes with its own set of paratextual materials, in a series of detailed and helpful appendices including the texts of the *Summe* in the Matthew and Bishops Bibles and a detailing of printed editions. This is a large book and deals with a lot of detail. In the hands of a less

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talented writer, this could run aground very easily, but Shuger's style combines scholarly quality with panache and an impressively readable pace, and the writing remains lovely throughout.

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