

Julia Crick and Alexandra Walsham, eds. *The Uses of Script and Print, 1300-1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. xiv + 298 pp. + 6 illus. Review by WILLIAM E. ENGEL, UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH, SEWANEE.

Readers interested in what used to fall under the heading of “History of the Book” will welcome this timely and provocative corrective to literacy studies. And yet, as Margaret Astron writes in her Epilogue to this collation that will make us “more conscious of the mutability of exchange that operated in the early modern period between the spoken, handwritten and printed” (289), the word “revisionism” does not appear, and “interaction” rather than “impact” is used to “describe the dynamism of texts, their makers, owners, readers, users and hearers” (275).

Along these lines, the bibliographic references in these essays, each of which focuses intently on specific elements and local conditions in the diverse and fluid culture of script and print, trace important developments in all aspects of the history of literacy. The notes in the editors’ introduction alone could well form the reading list of any serious student of early modern cultural studies, and serve as a checklist for those of us currently researching either side of the long standing divide between the scribal tradition and print culture. For, as is pointed out early on, this “opposition between the two media is institutionalized in libraries in which the ‘Rare Books’ and ‘Manuscript’ rooms occupy separate spaces and are frequented by different sets of readers” (4). This volume goes a long way toward helping scholars rethink the rationale for such a split, and offers useful insights for setting a new agenda.

Many of these essays emphasize that long after the introduction of mechanized press, scribal copying remained economically and politically viable. Indeed, it is shown to have been “a competitive technology for transmitting texts even after 1700” (9). As others have previously pointed out, early printed books often took the form and typographical layout of manuscripts; this volume makes the reverse case as well, pointing out that bureaucratic documents “such as indulgence certificates and legal contracts” simulated medieval chancery hands, and that “both incunables and marriage charters sometimes left the printers unfinished, with the expectation that initials, decoration and even text would be added by hand” (16). This collection encourages scholars to reconceptualize the boundaries between script and print in terms of “inter-

mixture and hybridity” (12). Each essay is filled with close encounters with the sets of problems attending modes of communication within specific communities, which, regrettably, owing to limitations of space, can be mentioned only in the briefest of ways *seriatim* in hope of indicating the broad readership this book warrants.

In the first section, on late medieval religion, Felicity Riddy seeks to answer the question, “Before the introduction of printing into England, how did authors publish their works?” (29). This leads to a subtle discussion of the range of meanings given to the Middle English “publisshen,” which “is closely related to speech; ‘publisshen’ means ‘announce,’ ‘proclaim,’ ‘divulge’ (as in divulge a secret), ‘spread abroad’ (as in gossip or news), ‘propagate,’ ‘publicise,’ ‘become known’” (41). The essay concludes with an account of the textual transmissions of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe. David d’Avray looks at the book production that lay behind the popular preaching of the friars, and concludes that with “both heretical and orthodox religion, the combination of manuscript copying and oral dissemination should not be underestimated” (68). It should be recalled, and as this essay bears out in an appendix, “scribes acted as authors or editors, modifying the text they copied more or less freely in ways that made sense: i.e. we are not talking of scribal errors” (69). James G. Clark reminds us of the dangers “in exaggerating the discontinuities that emerged in the European shift from manuscript to moveable metal types” and makes a compelling case that the Benedictines played an important role in the promotion of printing (72). Moreover, on the eve of the Dissolution, “the monasteries were well stocked with a wide range of newly printed material” (75). Long before the printing press abetted religious radicals in the 1520s, as Clark demonstrates, “it had already come to occupy an honored position at the very heart of the religious establishment” (90).

In the next section, on the textual tradition, Anthony Musson explores how “the embodiment of law in written text affected the authority of the law and knowledge of its precepts both within the legal profession and among the general populace at large” (95). Musson reminds us that private collections of statutes and official documents, purchased through teams of manuscript copiers and later put in book form, were, for the most part, in Anglo-Norman. Indeed, French achieved respectability as a language of government, “a status not accorded to English until the fifteenth century” (99). Further, the spoken word remained important “not only in court (where

oral pleadings and the personal evidence of witnesses and jurors were paramount), but also in the conveyance of royal will through proclamations” (114). Julia Crick is concerned with the art of the unprinted, for manuscripts “eluded the regular scrutiny of the state” (116). With a focus on Coke and Selden, among other collectors, she pursues the implications of the “particular authority attached to the singular, hand-written word” (134). Readers of this journal will welcome Scott Mandelbrote’s consideration of the “practical and intellectual problems created by the editing of Scripture and the translation and publication of the Bible in English, especially during the seventeenth century” (136). He focuses primarily on “the relationship between the compromises made by printers and scholars transmitting the text of Scripture and changes in attitudes to the authority of the Bible” (137). Among his findings is the fact that, by the late eighteenth century, tens of thousands of “errors” in the printed text of the Bible could be traced to the italics from the Cambridge editors to indicate words that were not present in the original Hebrew or Greek. “Print was in fact a much less certain medium than early modern Protestant commentators would have liked it to be” (139).

In the third section, on speech, Andrew Butcher investigates “practical literacy” by questioning why records contain so much apparently “superfluous” detail and “why communities go to such lengths to preserve and store such records” (162). His test case is the port town of Hythe, which had trading connection to France, the Low Countries, the North Sea basin, and especially the east coast of England from as far north as Newcastle, which made for a “‘speech/text community’ of some size and complexity” (163). To be sure though, as is taken into account and analyzed, what survives must be seen not so much as accident but as archival choice (167). Christopher Marsh is concerned with the extent to which melody made meaning. His is a fascinating account of the way printed tunes functioned beyond visual symbols of melodic sound, and he calls for more serious attention to how music “does not often engage our conscious minds by stimulating us to think articulate thoughts about its role in our lives” (176). He is able to show, among other things, the way ballad-writers were able to popularize William of Orange in a song that was strongly associated with songs celebrating the defeat of the Spanish Armada a century earlier (187). Jonathan Barry looks at the contested civic culture of communication in Bristol “during the period most commonly identified with the emergence of this new public sphere, namely

1640-1714" (192).

The final section on persecution begins with Alexandra Walsham's account of how speech frequently remained "essential in authenticating and mediating texts to a body of auditors" (212). Of special interest is the observation that for Quakers, who spent long periods in custody, "books were an important replacement for communal interaction" (220). The reverse is considered as well, for when religious communities achieved a position of monopoly and dominance, "they had less need for manuscript and printed texts" (232). Thomas S. Freeman turns attention to the Marian Protestants, who tended to rely "more heavily on the written than the printed words as a means of communicating with their followers" (235). This leads to a careful examination of the conditions of incarceration, for "a Marian prison was only as secure as its gaolers" (239). Ann Hughes contributes to our understanding of Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena* (1646), seen as an exemplar of the power of print in mid-seventeenth-century England, which vividly demonstrates how it could "define, persuade, and mobilize" (257).

Taken together, this collection provides useful insights into "noisy reading" in the wake of so much recent scholarship on silent reading (278), as well as about how the handwritten page provided opportunities for circulating works among known groups for a variety of reasons, as has been observed by literary historians most notably regarding Shakespeare's sonnets and the publication of poems by Marlowe and Donne (282). Above all, this volume must make the historian and literary critic pause and consider the myriad uses of memory, speech, script, and print which tended to overlap and intermingle in important—and sometimes overlooked—ways.

Nancy E. Wright, Margaret Ferguson, A. R. Buck, eds. *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. ix + 304 pp. \$65.00. Review by NANCY M. BUNKER, MACON STATE COLLEGE.

*Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, an interdisciplinary examination of women's legal status and property relationships, directs attention away from the "well-known narrative about women's legal disabilities in the common law regime" and toward women whose actions "shift" established parameters to "indicate the letter of the law was neither