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Verbal and Visual Communication in Early English Texts ed.
by Matti Peikola et al. (review)

Lydia Yaitsky Kertz

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Matti Peikola, Aleksí Mäkilähde, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liisa Varila, and Janne Skaffari, eds. *Verbal and Visual Communication in Early English Texts*. Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 37. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. Xii + 280 pp., 30 black and white illustrations, 11 graphs, 9 black and white tables. €80. ISBN: 978-2-503-57464-6.

LYDIA YAITSKY KERTZ
SUNY Geneseo

VERBAL AND VISUAL COMMUNICATION in *Early English Texts*, edited by Matti Peikola, Aleksí Mäkilähde, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liisa Varila, and Janne Skaffari, is a product of an interdisciplinary scholarly conversation that began at the 2014 international symposium *Linguistics Meets Book History: Seeking New Approaches*, held in Turku, Finland. The aims of the collection are similar to the aims of the symposium: to facilitate a productive exchange between scholars who approach textual artifacts from two disciplines: linguistics (discourse and socio-linguistics, pragmatics and historical pragmatics, stylistics) and book history (textual scholarship, critical bibliography, codicology, material philology). The two approaches share an interest in bringing attention to the sheer multiplicity or multivocality of historical modes of communication as available to scholars today via close analysis of physical artifacts such as books, documents, or inscribed objects. The scope of the volume is ambitious as it aims to survey writing and printing practices from early medieval runic and Latin alphabetic systems through the early modern period (both manuscript and print) and into the long eighteenth century (which some essays refer to as the late modern period). Most essays address English texts (produced in England, but not necessarily written or printed in English), though the larger practices are sometimes contextualized within continental trends.

The essays in the volume explore historically situated texts and propose methods for analyzing their visual/material features as modes of communication. The essays are divided into two categories based on scholarly and methodological concerns: four essays address higher order features such as

layout and mise-en-page, and five essays address lower order features such as script and typography. In “Part II: Communicating Through Layout,” the first two essays deploy the methodologies of historical pragmatics to analyze textual communication practices within specific discourse communities (Collette on Middle English saints’ lives and Mackay on Pitscottie’s *Chronicle* in manuscript and print). The last two essays from the section on layout both analyze the same data set of *Early Modern English Medical Texts* and its successor *Late Modern English Medical Texts*, which constitute a larger project on which these three researchers are collaborating (Ratia, Suhr, and Tyrkkö). In “Part III: Communicating Through Script and Typography,” the essays address readerly navigation of the movement between alphabetic systems (Liu), from script to early print (Adair), between languages in script and print (Kaislaniemi), from simple to nuanced typography of dictionaries (McConchie), and modern readers’ differentiation between scribal and holograph contributions (Marcus). This grouping represents a conscious effort to open a dialogue across the linguistics/book history, script/print, and medieval/early modern disciplinary divides.

To facilitate such a conversation, in their introduction, the editors Matti Peikola, Aleksi Mäkilähde, Hanna Salmi, Mari-Liisa Varila, and Janne Skaffari, all of whom are on the faculty of the English Department at the University of Turku, lay out some basic definitions of key terms and a literature review that contextualizes the development and use of these terms across disciplines. Mise-en-page, for example, is defined with recourse to D. Muzerelle’s work as “the overall arrangement of the verbal and visual elements on the page” (6), while “layout” is presented as its English terminological synonym, with an extensive bibliography on the usage of both and their semantic overlap. Yet, despite the editorial attempts at generating a common vocabulary, some terminological inconsistencies across essays nevertheless persist. For example, at least one essay attributes the act of “composing” to a scribe in a non-holograph and even multi-scribe manuscript context. From a book history perspective, “compose” connotes a type of authorial practice as distinct from scribal practices of manuscript design, copying, and punctuation and script choices, as we see in Matthew Fisher’s *Scribal Authorship and the Writing of History in Medieval England* (2012) and

Daniel Wakelin's *Scribal Correction and Literary Craft: English Manuscripts, 1375–1510* (2014). This terminological precision is crucial to the work of volume contributor I. J. Marcus, who puts forth a methodology for identifying scribal profiles in epistolary corpora. Elsewhere in the volume, terminological inconsistencies arise over the use of “script” and “hand.”

Speaking across disciplinary divides is not an easy task and one that sometimes necessitates explaining conventions or practices that those of us within the disciplines would consider as axiomatic. These moments of over-explanation combined with overreliance on discipline-specific jargon constitute both a weakness and a strength of the volume. Several authors independently cite the same group of scholars, introducing their work in similar ways. While this practice speaks to a shared knowledge base and works well in discontinuous reading situations (where individual essays are read out of context, which is becoming fairly standard practice for academic essays in edited collections such as this one), the repeated review of literature feels redundant for someone who reads the volume in its entirety. For a more coherent conversation, it would have been helpful if individual contributors had been granted access to the introductory chapter and noted how their engagement with the common core of scholarship constitutes a categorical shift within the field.

The critical apparatus of the volume could be more user-friendly as well. For example, there is no comprehensive list of illustrations. The figures throughout the volume are not cited in a uniform fashion: several reproductions are missing crucial bibliographic details such as shelfmarks or STC/Wing numbers. While the bibliography at the end provides a useful list of manuscripts and early prints discussed in the volume, without similarly rigorous labeling practices across essays, it is difficult to tell which reproductions correspond to which archival materials. Brief bios for all contributors would also be helpful in elucidating their disciplinary alignments and conventions for readers from other fields.

Overall, the collection is a successful contribution to the interdisciplinary dialogue, and the individual essays present practical evidence of the types of scholarship that can be produced when we combine methodologies from historical pragmatics/discourse linguistics and history of the book/

materialist philology. It is this reviewer's hope that edited volumes such as this one will promote future collaborations on a more global scale and widen disciplinary representation to include fields like art history and history of science.

Alpo Honkapohja. *Alchemy, Medicine, and Commercial Book Production: A Codicological and Linguistic Study of the Voigts-Sloane Manuscript Group*. Turnhout: Brepols, 2017. Xv + 250 pp., 57 black and white illustrations + 3 color illustrations, 20 black and white tables. €80. ISBN: 978-2-503-56647-4.

WINSTON BLACK
Clark University

IN A SERIES OF articles from 1989 to 2003, Linda Ehrsam Voigts identified a group of eleven manuscripts produced in England during the later fifteenth century that are relatively uniform in layout, contents, or both. These professionally made, but utilitarian, paper manuscripts contain similar medical, alchemical, astrological, and magical texts written mostly in self-contained booklets. Because six of the eleven manuscripts are found in the Sloane manuscript collection of the British Library (the other five are in different libraries), Voigts called them the "Sloane Group." She tentatively argued that the Sloane Group was an example of speculative publishing, aimed at a growing market for technical literature, before the advent of printing in England. Her theories about the Sloane Group have had a great influence on the study of book production at the dawn of print, but they have also been accepted uncritically at times.

Alpo Honkapohja's *Alchemy, Medicine, and Commercial Book Production* is the first book-length study of the Sloane Group, in which he modifies or challenges the ideas of Voigts and other scholars about the production of