

Martha W. Driver. *The Image in Print: Book Illustration in Late Medieval England and Its Sources*.

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Published by The British Library as part of its ongoing commitment to scholarship on book history, particularly of the Middle Ages, *The Image in Print: Book Illustration in Late Medieval England and Its Sources* addresses a number of crucial topics in the developing field of print illustration. Like Driver's earlier essays, of which the six chapters are at times expansions or recontextualizations, this book is testimony to the far-reaching interests and areas of expertise of the author. The opening chapters survey the range of forms book illustration could take. "Early Illustration in Print: Single Leaves, Block-Books and their Printed Progeny" could serve as an admirable introduction to anyone new to the field, at the same time raising central questions about literacy and memory important for advanced scholars. Chapter 2 "Woodcuts in Early English Books: Sources and Circulation," addresses several issues crucial to prior and current treatment of printed images: for example, the reuse of such images in vastly different contexts and by different printers. In these first chapters, Driver proves particularly astute in breaking down commonly perceived distinctions in book history, whether between medieval and Renaissance book manufacture, between English and Continental sites of production and trade, or between more specific printing techniques often thought to be mutually exclusive. Her demonstration of the simultaneous application of xylographic images (from a single carved block) and

movable type offers a critical challenge to received notions of the fixity and mobility of print culture in this period. Likewise, throughout the book, Driver moves skillfully and easily between print and manuscript examples, providing a model of how to think about such texts as complementary and interdependent.

Chapter 3, “Wynkyn de Worde and the Title Page,” represents the author’s most significant contribution to current scholarship: her knowledge of Wynkyn de Worde’s printing practices and shop appears particularly far-reaching. The chapter reminds readers of de Worde’s centrality to histories of printing practices not only in England but across early modern print centers. Likewise, the chapter on “Representations of Saintly Women in Late Medieval Woodcuts” displays an admirable depth of material on the creation and distribution of images of religious women, particularly those associated with de Worde and the Brigettine House of Syon: it will be of considerable value to anyone interested in women’s reading practices and alternative literacies. The book is at its best when countering previous over-emphases of sources and argument: for example, the use of William Caxton’s attitudes to images as indicative of the state of illustration in early English printing in general.

The second half of the book addresses more directly the role of illustration in the writing of social history, focusing in part on representations of black Africans in late medieval book illustration. This latter section of the chapter “Reconstructing Social Histories: Reading Images as Historical Documents” proves the most problematic in its assessment of its visual material, if the most ambitious in its scope. By not distinguishing between differing conventions of German and Italian heraldic depictions of Moors at work in her choice of images, for example, Driver blunts the edge of her claims for a reconsideration of the status of blackness in late medieval Europe.

However, a final chapter on the reception of book illustration in the Reformation (“Iconoclasm and Reform: the Survival of Late Medieval Images and the Printed Book”) is particularly fascinating for its revelation of the treatment, especially the selective defacement, of some of the works Driver examines earlier in the book. Such frequent uses of the same groupings of textual sources allow certain themes to emerge gradually throughout the book — concurrent but not concomitant with the stated aims of each chapter — an admirably subtle way of making additional arguments. For example, throughout the book, Driver provides instances of publishers’ appropriation of printers’ marks and seigniorial symbols as means by which they established their own multifaceted print identities, an important set of evidence that could itself be the explicit subject of a chapter.

Not exactly an overview, nor a book-length argument about one aspect of English book illustration, *The Image in Print* reads in part like the rich and varied collection of essays on which it was based. One should not see this as a deficit, however, but rather as a salutary means of recognizing and reflecting upon the mobility and multiplicity of sites of illustration and their producers in this period.

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