

Sachiko Kusukawa. *Picturing the Book of Nature: Image, Text, and Argument in Sixteenth-Century Human Anatomy and Medical Botany*.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012. xvii + 332 pp. \$45. ISBN: 978-0-226-46529-6.

In *Picturing the Book of Nature*, Sachiko Kusukawa considers two justly famous sixteenth-century intellectual projects — Leonhart Fuchs's *De historia stirpium* (*On the History of Plants* [1542]) and Andreas Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica* (*On the Fabric of the Human Body* [1543]) — by way of making a dense, nuanced,

and very persuasive argument about the nature of visual argument and its specific relevance to Renaissance science. Kusakawa's topics include the ways in which text and image function together, supporting and constructing the basic rhetorical structure of these treatises and, more broadly, the sixteenth-century scientific enterprise.

This approach is a bracing antidote to the tendency of art historians and historians of science to talk past one another. Until recently, accounts of medieval pharmacology and plant lore often focused exclusively on the words on the printed or manuscript page, relegating any images that might be present to a supporting role. Art historians have long charted the pictorial antecedents of plant images and imagery, addressing a self-contained series of questions about the presumed lineage of artistic models and copies. Anatomical drawings — specifically the work of Leonardo and Vesalius — frequently occasioned more collaborative treatment, but even here Kusakawa charts new ground.

The argument of *Picturing the Book of Nature* is first grounded in issues of process — in technology, craft, and commerce: how images were printed, divisions of labor, the cost of illustrating books, the reuse of printed images, the ways images were colored, and the amount of control exercised by printers and authors. Building on this valuable, synthetic presentation, the two sections that follow address what Fuchs and Vesalius have to say about the role of images, how images are fully implicated in the ways they understood nature, and the process by which they aligned their theories with those of classical authority.

Kusakawa argues that both authors “used pictures to make generalizing arguments, discuss complete or ideal objects, and claim authority in matters of knowledge” (3) — all rhetorical strategies that are far more dynamic than simple, dependent illustration or clarification of physical features. In support, she offers the responses, criticisms, and counterarguments of contemporary physicians who themselves accepted or opposed the use of images. These disputations are incredibly rich, from Conrad Gessner's plans for his unpublished *Historia plantarum*, to the claims of authority voiced by Pietro Andrea Mattioli, to the low tone (and unexpected vehemence and even humor) of the treatises launched in the disputations and counterattacks that engaged Fuchs's ire.

Enormous care has gone into the making of this book. The distilled information and analysis presented in part one will benefit students and scholars with interests well beyond the narrow confines of sixteenth-century medicine, anatomy, and science. Indeed, Kusakawa goes to great lengths throughout to bring along her readers, by summarizing her points and verbally diagramming her line of argument. The results are never pedantic, but always helpful for broad classes of readers. The press collaborated in presenting a book with images (including many color plates) in the body of the text, a treat for the eye. One unfortunate decision, however, detracts from the reader's full enjoyment and even understanding of the richness of Kusakawa's argument. Printing the notes at the end of the volume is standard these days, but the format is so cryptic that the reader then must turn to the bibliographies. Any active reader, student or expert, will want to know to whom

Kusukawa is responding, and the book's format awkwardly intrudes on this extended conversation.

This detail aside, Kusukawa offers her readers an intellectual feast that is both satisfying and likely to stimulate more hunger for the questions at hand. Exciting conversations about art, nature, and science are already in progress elsewhere, thanks to the work of scholars such as Peter Murray Jones, Martin Kemp, Katherine Park, Lorraine Daston, and Pamela Smith. Other new work has expanded our sense of maps, diagrams, and even the marks left on pages by readers. In providing a scholarly demonstration of the connectedness of visual, verbal, and rhetorical strategies, Kusukawa has moved the conversation to new territory.

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