

Renaissance Humanism: An Anthology of Sources. Margaret L. King, ed. and trans. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2014. xxiii + 352 pp. \$19.

Through thirty-nine judiciously chosen texts spanning the 1350s to the 1650s, Margaret King introduces students to humanism as a cultural toolkit devised, applied, appropriated, and sometimes reworked or challenged by diverse historical protagonists. The humanists whom readers encounter here include men and women, elites and commoners. And while most writers who King incorporates lived and worked in European localities, a few examples take the reader to Latin America and East Asia.

The volume divides into ten chapters, each with a theme that King introduces with concision, depth, and wit, and for which she provides useful bibliographic suggestions: “Antiquity Reborn”; “Explorations of the Self”; “The Civic Experience”; “A World in Crisis”; “Machiavelli, Erasmus and More: Visions of the State”; “Humanism and the Arts”; “Humanism and Religion”; “Humanism, Science and Philosophy”; “Women and

Humanism”; and “Other Worlds.” Within each chapter, King arranges the sources chronologically, thereby giving readers purchase on the major cultural and historical problems that humanism engaged, while enabling them to consider change over time and across space. King consistently proves a masterly and engaging guide for readers new to the subject of humanism, but without (to my mind) closing down possibilities for discussion. And that guidance includes pithy grounding in relevant historiographical debates, especially concerning the meanings and varieties of humanism, its reconcilability with religion, and its fraught relationship to science, without delving into too much minutiae.

This anthology comes close to achieving that elusive perfect balance between chronological logic and thematic cohesion, but there are some problems in this regard. Occasionally protagonists emerge before King has introduced issues necessary to situate them fully. For instance, she makes the inspired decision to include letters by Olympia Fulvia Morata in her chapter “A World in Crisis” (i.e., the Italian Wars), but both the chapter on women and humanism and that concerning the Reformations come later. Accordingly, instructors planning to move through the book from cover to cover should remain (as ever) ready to provide additional context before any given assignment. This potential hitch is only worth mentioning (paradoxically) because King’s introduction to the volume, as well as her chapter and author introductions, are so helpful that an instructor might be tempted to get lazy. This collection almost teaches itself, but the occasional missing piece of a protagonist’s frame urges the usual pedagogical foresight and vigilance.

Many anthologies attempt to treat either early modern Europe, making for selections that come dangerously close to being sound bites, or else the Italian Renaissance in a comprehensive sense, and they still suffer from space constraints dictated by multiplicity of topics, even if their shorter chronology offers some breathing room. Even the best anthologies in the latter category, such as those by Kenneth Bartlett, Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber, Benjamin Kohl and Alison Smith, and Kenneth Gouwens, necessarily favor breadth over depth. By contrast, previous collections of humanist writings, such as *The Earthly Republic*, edited by Benjamin Kohl and Ronald Witt, focus on political culture, which allows for extensive selections but can make humanism seem a rather narrow enterprise. *Renaissance Humanism* keeps the topical focus but gives that topic a flexible definition, enabling both inclusion of a range of sources and substantive selections. Most of King’s excerpts constitute at least five pages of text, with lacunae deftly summarized. The translations, many of them King’s, offer readers lively renderings. And while no collection can include all our favorite sources or all the passages we would deem essential, readers should find the representativeness and diversity of the materials satisfying. The chapter on humanism and the arts, for example, includes not only the ubiquitous Leon Battista Alberti, but also a sample of Isabella d’Este’s correspondence with artists and buyers, as well as letters from Albrecht Dürer to Willibald Pirckheimer. Similarly, the chapter “Other Worlds” introduces students not only to Amerigo Vespucci, but also to Garcilaso della Vega (“el Inca”), Francis Xavier, and Luís Vas de Camões.

Renaissance Humanism would enhance undergraduate electives and seminars on the Renaissance. The volume's chronological and topical sweep, moreover, and its relative affordability make it appropriate for inclusion in broader surveys of early modern European history as well.

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