

SARAH R. KYLE, *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy: The Carrara Herbal in Padua*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. Pp. xiii + 243. ISBN 978-1-4724-4652-7. £110.00 (hardcover).
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Sarah Kyle's *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy: The Carrara Herbal* is the delightful and useful first book of a young scholar. It is made up of an introduction, six chapters, a conclusion, an appendix, a bibliography and an index. The structure is that of a doctoral thesis in an improved version. Kyle is an art historian at the University of Central Oklahoma with a penchant for interdisciplinarity. She is at her best writing about art history, something that she does with remarkable clarity in beautiful prose. She is equally remarkable at tackling medical history subjects. On the other hand, *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy* either provides far too much or far too little background about some of the non-art-historical or medical subjects, particularly with reference to Petrarch. Overall, Kyle has managed to produce a good first book, which will be useful to American undergraduates, and will delight more experienced researchers with its interdisciplinary flare.

Kyle has set out to contextualize the *Carrara Herbal* ('Egerton 2020', British Library). It contains a translation in Paduan dialect of a Latin version of the mid-thirteenth-century Arabic pharmacopoeia, *Kitāb al-Adwiyā al-mufrada* (The Book of Simple Medicines), by Ibn Sarābi, a Christian physician working in al-Andalus, and known in the Latin West as Serapion the Younger. The *Carrara Herbal* is the means whereby Kyle looks at the Carrara family patronage in relation both to their Petrarchan-inspired imitation of the ancient, and to their novel patronage strategy centred around a celebration of contemporary Paduan medical learning.

Chapter 1 deals with 'The *Carrara Herbal* and the traditions of illustrated books of *materia medica*' (pp. 23–66). The herbal is an early northern Italian illustrated vernacular translation of an Arabic medical treatise. Kyle perceptively analyses its context of production, in relation to both the history of the book and the history of medicine in the East and late medieval Latin West. Anyone wishing to study the *Carrara Herbal* should start from *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy*. In fact, Kyle's reflections on the herbal as a history-of-medicine source (p. 30) can easily be applied to later periods – I am thinking of Paul de Sorbait's *Herbulationen* in late seventeenth-century Vienna, for example. The pictures in the chapter are well chosen, and do help understand the art-historical and medical points made along the way. On the other hand, endnotes, in this chapter as in all the subsequent ones, are an annoying editorial choice. *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy* is published in the Routledge series *Medicine in the Medieval Mediterranean*. The book's extensive endnotes often convey information that readers need straight away in order to follow the argument. Given Routledge's endnote policy, it would have been advisable to let Kyle insert most of that information within the body of the text, thereby saving readers from flapping back and forth all the time. Besides, Routledge might wish to reconsider their endnote policy altogether, as ill-suited to academic monographs of this kind.

Chapter 2 unearths 'The healthy pleasures of reading the *Carrara Herbal*' (pp. 67–87). This is possibly the best example of Kyle's gift for clarity. Explanations of Avicenna's medical theories (pp. 76–77), and her discussion of the notion of joy as a medical device against the contagion of the Black Death (p. 78–79), provide us with ideal material to teach history-of-medicine undergraduates. Chapter 3, 'The "physician prince" and his book' (pp. 88–115), presents a convincing argument about Francesco Novello Carrara's aim to develop his personal library as a means to celebrate the glories of medical knowledge at the University of Padua. It ushers in Chapter 4 on 'Portraits of the Carrara' (pp. 116–148), which is the most problematic part of *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy*. The section on 'Petrarch and the Carrara library' (pp. 133–135) suffers from lack of background about Petrarch's wider, non-Paduan contexts. Kyle reconstructs in a highly selective manner the vagaries of Petrarch's personal library. By doing so, the

non-expert Petrarchan reader is misled into considering Petrarch as eminently tied to the patronage of the Carrara family. Long endnotes do not help here, either. Endnotes 115 and 117 contain several inaccuracies, if not outright mistakes, about the history of Petrarch's collections, and indeed of his own life outside Padua. The historiography cited is outdated. An expert reader's advice prior to publication should have saved the author from such naive misrepresentations. Petrarch was only briefly in Padua, and even though I share Kyle's overall take on the poet's relation with and influence on the iconography of the Carrara library, I remain utterly unimpressed by her way of dealing with such a major historical and literary figure. I would have liked to see mentioned, for instance, the centrality of Petrarch's French years, stretching all through 1312–1353, including the Avignon period and the coming and going between Italian states and France in the later years. Surely Petrarch's ideas as reflected in the Carrara library were the result of much French influence? Indeed, Kyle herself could have developed this point in relation to the prologue to the French translation of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which she discussed on page 78. It is true that Jacopo II Carrara made Petrarch a canon of the Padua *duomo* in 1349, but that was late in the poet's life, well after Petrarch had developed his ideas in writing. Indeed, so much evidence hints at the major importance of French and Provençal cultures for Petrarch that King's College London has received ERC funding for its The Values of French project (www.tvof.ac.uk).

I was equally disappointed with Chapter 5, 'Physiognomy in late medieval Padua' (pp. 149–168), because it is mainly derivative. While its presence can be understood within the economy of a doctoral thesis on the *Carrara Herbal*, because it provides some context about teaching and medical practice at the University of Padua, I would have advised cutting it significantly and inserting what was left into the first chapter. Finally, Chapter 6, 'Embodiment of virtue in Francesco Novello's library' (pp. 169–187), is the most art-historical of all. It is well written and well argued. It presents the library iconography in tune with contemporary treatises of political thought, as one might expect, and reiterates Kyle's argument about Carrara patronage as a means for the ruling family to address their peers among the urban elite, mainly those in the university.

Overall, *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy* is a good and useful book, which makes a contribution to the history of medicine from an interdisciplinary perspective. It would have benefited from better advice prior to publication, and from lighter footnotes rather than longer endnotes. But these are not Kyle's faults, who has managed to turn a good thesis into a good monograph. I recommend it to historians of medicine, and to book and art historians alike.

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INGRID ALEXANDER-SKIPNES (ed.), **Visual Culture and Mathematics in the Early Modern Period**. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2017. Pp. ix + 204. ISBN 978-1-138-67938-2. £110.00 (hardcover).

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The edited volume of Ingrid Alexander-Skipnes, a lecturer in art history at the Kunstgeschichtliches Institut of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg and an associate professor emerita of art history at the University of Stavanger, Norway, is a collection of essays on the cultural history of mathematics and art, with a focus on the early modern period. The title is very appropriate, since visual culture and mathematics have mutually enriched each other from prehistoric times to the present day. From medieval times and the Renaissance, mathematics became the key support of innovations in the arts and of the emergent modern science and thence of modern technology and engineering. This book covers this historical period. It promotes new models of inquiry and new narratives of early modern art and its history, with a focus on mathematics. It is organized in nine chapters covering how mathematics developed in Europe between 1400 and 1800, in relation to painting, sculpture and architecture, with special reference to religious and/or ritual practices.