
The early 1540s saw the publication of several printed and illustrated books that are properly identified as masterpieces of scientific publishing, including, in 1542, Leonhart Fuchs’s *De historia stirpium* (On the history of plants); and, in 1543, the *De humani corporis fabrica libri VII* (Seven books on the fabric of the human body) by the Paduan professor Andreas Vesalius. Now, Sachiko Kusukawa, a Fellow in History and Philosophy of Science at Cambridge, has produced a masterful study of Fuchs and Vesalius that advances a powerful argument about the strategies developed by the two authors, working apparently on two very different projects, to inextricably link text and image in a single integrated presentation.

Essentially, Kusukawa argues that the *De fabrica* and the *De historia stirpium* are not in fact “illustrated” texts at all, but rather books in which text and image functioned in a necessarily reciprocal and dialogic way; that the details of this relationship were carefully worked out by the two individual authors; and that the success of their strategies was based, at least in part, on their ability to control a production process that was hardly designed to facilitate authorial intervention.

In addition, Kusukawa demonstrates that the textual and pictorial strategies developed by Fuchs and Vesalius aimed to facilitate a thoroughly Renaissance project,
the revival of antique medical knowledge; but she also shows that they did so precisely by confronting equally antique assumptions about the potential function of “descriptive” pictures within the dominant typology of knowledge.

Following a succinct introduction to some of the practical and theoretical problems implicated in both the original practice and the historical study of the production of “pictures of nature” during the Renaissance, the book is divided into three parts. The first surveys the production of early printed books, with a focus on the particular problems encountered in publications in which text and illustrations were combined in a single volume aimed primarily at a high-end market including, among others, university-trained physicians. The problems discussed are both technical and financial; and much of the material reviewed here should be familiar to students of bibliography.

To readers whose primary focus is medical and historical, rather than bibliographic, the takeaway is simple but essential: the production of complex works coordinating text and image was a demanding and expensive technical enterprise, requiring from the publisher a calculated commercial gamble (at best) and difficult for either author or publisher to control at virtually every stage. That Fuchs and Vesalius were able to succeed in this arena (unlike, for example, Conrad Gesner, whose unrealized project for a similarly comprehensive and illustrated “historia plantarum” is brilliantly used as a foil in the discussion of Fuchs) is a clear testimony to the diligent effort with which they pursued the realization of their particular projects.

Indeed, Fuchs and Vesalius realized something that might seem obvious today but was anything but obvious in the middle of the 16th century: that the identification of medicinal herbs or the understanding of human anatomy, both legitimate medical enterprises, could be enormously facilitated by a properly reciprocal and “dialectic” relationship of words and pictures, text and image. The problem here was not simply that the available classical evidence was, at best, ambiguous as to the utility of pictures in such enterprises. Rather, there was a deeper problem bound up with images in general, one that affected the character, status, and authority of the knowledge that they could constitute; and this was especially true, ironically, of precisely the kind of naturalistic images so profoundly definitive of the Renaissance view of the world.

Images of this type are bound to seem essentially descriptive: they appear on the surface to be pictures of particular things. And, as such, they could, by definition, never embody the kind of theoretically demonstrable, universal, and causal knowledge subsumed under the term scientia, and exemplified pictorially, for example, by the kind of abstract diagrams that might illustrate a volume of Euclid. Rather,
they belonged ineluctably to the world of description, the world of “accidents,” the
world of historia.

It was the genius of Fuchs and Vesalius that they were able to challenge the system
that so rigorously separated “history” and “science,” even (almost) without appearing
to do so. Although the particular arguments that they deployed vary considerably,
both Fuchs and Vesalius were at pains to demonstrate that the illustrations in
the De historia stirpium and the De fabrica were not intended to be taken as depic-
tions or “counterfeits” of merely specific objects, as were the three osteological fig-
ures in Vesalius’ earlier woodcut sheets, the Tabulae sex. Rather, they were intended
to convey a “completeness” (in the case of Fuchs) or a “canonicity” (in the case of
Vesalius) that rendered them conceptually “absolute” (absolutus) and in that sense
“perfect,” that is (to simplify considerably) “scientific,” rather than merely “histori-
cal.”

—Glenn Harcourt, Pasadena, California.

Karen Nipps. Lydia Bailey: A Checklist of Her Imprints. University Park, Pa.: The
Pennsylvania State University for the Bibliographical Society of America in
association with the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and the Library

From a review of the earlier published scholarship in the field of printing history,
an inquiring reader would surmise that women were not a significant part of commer-
cial letterpress printing during the handpress period. Scholarship in the last 20
years, however, has revealed that this is not the case. In fact, many recent studies
document women’s high degree of involvement from the earliest days of printing
in the Western world.

Lydia Bailey: A Checklist of Her Imprints is an important addition to the study of
the history of the book and of women’s roles in letterpress printing. It is a well-
researched biography of Lydia Bailey (1779–1869), a Philadelphia printer, and a
catalog of all her known, located imprints. In addition, there are valuable appen-
dices that contain information about unlocated imprints, her journal and a list of
names contained in it, and an annotated list of primary material relating to her.
The author draws most heavily from Bailey’s surviving business accounts to create
a well-written biography that is set effectively in the context of the book trade and
the society and politics of early 19th century Philadelphia.

While Nipps acknowledges the female historical precedents for Bailey, she also un-
derscores how Bailey’s social connections contributed to her success and how she
responded to “…the expanding demand for printed goods brought on by a growing
population, increasing social prosperity and literacy, and improved transportation”
(11). Bailey’s business benefited from this changing market “not by entrepreneurial