

central to her spiritual progress. As Kempe's growing holy reputation is linked to her role as a foreseer of death, she becomes a sought-after deathbed attendant. And as Kempe's physical body weakens, her spiritual body strengthens: here Kalas highlights the 'signs of death' tradition, which matches physical symptoms with spiritual conditions, a powerful imbrication of these two traditions. This chapter demonstrates the connection that Kempe draws between her own pains and Christ's death pains: with every meditation on his pains, she is able 'to relieve, or *re-die*, each time she recollects the vision, just as she presumably hopes her readers will as they encounter the infinite potential of these visions as subjects for meditation' (p. 180).

Chapter vi, 'Senescent reproduction: writing anamnestic pain', represents the culmination of the life-course argument. Here we find Kempe an old woman, embodying an 'edifying, senescent pain' (p. 184) that grants her the ultimate forms of authority and healing power. In contrast to medieval misogynist stereotypes of the repellent old woman, Kempe embodies 'aged asceticism', in which she leverages the suffering of her aged body in a new form of productivity, one Kalas calls 'anamnestic' [recollective] (p. 190). Medieval society envisioned a place for old women as healers and sages: Kempe takes advantage of this possibility in her aged adventures, including a painful final pilgrimage and a late career of spiritual teaching at home and abroad.

Kalas's Afterword opens out onto Kempe's documented social existence as a member of Lynn's Holy Trinity Guild. Kempe's revision of *Book*, part I, dictation of part II and her entry into the guild, ensuring postmortem prayers, were contemporaneous. 'Her membership, then, symbolises her own preparation for dying according to the *Ars moriendi* tradition, at the same time as she prepares her *Book* as both a memorial of her spiritual life and a generative legacy for the future' (p. 217). As Kalas shows throughout, Kempe refuses to separate the mystical from the social, the spiritual from the medical, the past from the future. Kalas elegantly theorises these interconnections, offering a host of new insights for students of Kempe's *Book*.

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Sebastian Brant (1457–1521). Europäisches Wissen in der Hand eines Intellektuellen der Frühen Neuzeit. Edited by Peter Andersen and Nikolaus Henkel. (Kulturtopographie des alemannischen Raums, 13.) Pp. xiv + 446 incl. 101 colour and black-and-white ills. Berlin–Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. £91. 978 3 11 102325 0; 1867 8203
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This volume is the result of a conference held in 2021 to commemorate the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of the Alsatian humanist and sometime *Stadtschreiber* (chancellor) of Strassburg, Sebastian Brant (1457–1521). It comprises thirteen essays on a wide variety of topics concerning Brant, his scholarly output and his intellectual environment. Nikolaus Henkel's introduction outlines the imbalances of research on Sebastian Brant, noting that he has largely been

investigated within the field of German studies, and within that field scholars have devoted most of their attention to Brant's wildly popular *Narrenschiff*, a satirical German-language poem from 1494. Henkel then outlines four major 'cultural fields' (p. 1) in which Brant was known to have been active but which have been entirely neglected or received scant attention: Brant's interest in law, his contributions to religious literature, his accomplishments as a textual editor and his work with woodcuts. The editors set out to rectify this previous imbalance and explore aspects of Brant's output beyond German studies and the *Narrenschiff*.

In this endeavour, they are successful. At least one, if not more, of the essays in this volume contributes to each of the various 'cultural fields' outlined by Henkel: law (Becker, Deutsch), religious literature (Henkel), textual editing (Deutsch, Zimmermann-Homeyer) and woodcuts (Zimmermann-Homeyer). The other essays research various aspects of Brant's life, including his life and activities in Strassburg (Bischoff), his family's coat of arms and his epitaph (Andersen, Henkel/Andersen), texts beyond the *Narrenschiff* (Wilhelmi) and music (Schwindt). Three essays do discuss the *Narrenschiff*, but indirectly, treating various stages of its reception (Schillinger, Frick, Hamm). Particularly welcome is Joachim Knappe's reevaluation of the longstanding scholarly assessment of Brant as a 'conservative humanist', showing him rather as innovative and representative of transformations in European intellectual culture around 1500.

Anderson and Henkel's volume has considerable strengths. It is accessible through the Open Access Network's 'Open-Access-Transition', which allows the articles to be more readily available to an audience that might not be able to afford such normally costly books. The book also usefully reproduces Latin and French quotations in translation and the original language, and includes a hundred images (many large and full colour). Particularly striking are the forty-three images in Andersen's essay on the Brant family's coat of arms.

There are only a few weaknesses. The first is the handful of proofing errors scattered throughout the book.¹ The second, which, unlike the first, does actually detract from the volume, is the poor quality of the English-language abstracts at the beginning of each chapter. Technically these are written in English, but the syntax is very much not and often reads as German in English words. Only six of the thirteen abstracts are written in passable English (Bischoff, Knappe, Wilhelmi, Frick, Schwindt and Zimmermann-Homeyer), but even these contain numerous problems. The other seven are written in non-idiomatic English and include very awkward constructions and even grammatical mistakes. For example, the opening line of the abstract for Hans-Jürgen Becker's essay reads: 'Sebastian Brant had two souls in his breast' (p. 179). This is simply a direct translation of a German idiom used earlier in the volume (p. 3). The nature of the translations indicate that the abstracts were never properly translated or reviewed. This is confusing because De Gruyter is perfectly capable of contacting individuals who command English and can proofread such material.

¹ 'Brants [*sic*-Brant] dürfte ihn und die Örtlichkeit kurz danach persönlich in Augenschein genommen haben' (p. 94); 'Sébastien': French spelling of Sebastian in the English abstract (p. 111); 'anshließend' instead of 'anschließend' (p. 437).

Despite the poor quality of the English abstracts, this volume accomplishes each of its goals. It is a worthy addition not simply to studies on Sebastian Brant, but also on late medieval and early modern culture in the German lands. The volume is all the more welcome because it helps to address great imbalances in research about individual German humanists. Outside of very famous humanists like Philip Melanchthon, German humanism is a very unevenly researched field and many of the most famous humanists suffer from such imbalances, such as Hartmann Schedel, Sebastian Münster, Conrad Celtis and Beatus Rhenanus. Brant is just one of the first to receive this necessary rebalancing.

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Johannes Leo Africanus (Al-Hasan Ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan). The cosmography and geography of Africa. Edited and translated by Anthony Ossa-Richardson and Richard J. Oosterhoff. (Penguin Classics.) Pp. xiii + 511 incl. 7 ills and 5 maps. London: Penguin, 2023. £14.99 (paper). 978 0 241 54393 1

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The author of this book – as he refers to himself throughout – was a diplomat who travelled through the northern part of the African continent from Marrakesh to Timbuktu to Cairo, over a period of around fifteen years. He describes the places he visited and shares his experiences. The main part of the account is an exhaustive and comprehensive survey of the various regions, listing the towns and also villages, agriculture, mountains, deserts and other features of the landscape. There are the histories of the area, descriptions of the buildings, including the mosques and madrassas, accounts of the way of life, including lively and racy descriptions of the less moral aspects of life. Interspersed are anecdotes of his personal experiences – for example the intriguing comment in his description of the animals of Africa that ‘he has twice escaped being eaten by lions, but he won’t tell the story here to avoid being too long-winded’. This is not only a travelogue, but also a unique record of the discovery of a continent. The writer, Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Wazzan, was in the service of the sultan of Fez and made these journeys in the early fifteenth century. He was captured by Christian pirates in 1518 and taken to Rome, where he became Catholic and was given the new name of Johannes Leo Africanus. In the years that followed he recorded his experiences, drawing on other geographical texts and presumably embellishing the account with his own imagination. It was completed by 1526 and was published in 1550. It was the first book describing the African continent to be printed. The account was widely read and shaped perceptions of the continent and ideas about Africa in the Renaissance and after, until the colonial explorations of the nineteenth century brought new ideas of what Africa was. John Pory, an English geographer, translated the book in 1600 but there have been no further English translations until this version, which uses an earlier and more reliable Latin text, a lively and engaging style of translation and adds an introduction and notes. It makes this unique work once again available in a style which is both scholarly and accessible.

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