

mystery' (p. 147). It is commendable that the author seeks to impose some sense of order and structure onto what is a difficult group of texts. Chapter iv explores Vaughan's reputation amongst different critics and readers, which Willard argues forms 'an instructive chapter in the history of taste'. Indeed, the author shows that Vaughan's writings can give important insight into the Restoration revolt against enthusiasm, the radical Enlightenment, the magical revival in Victorian England and 'the occult establishment of more recent years'. As a result, Vaughan's position as a secretive and obscure writer is challenged, although Willard admits that the exploration 'tells us more about Vaughan's readers than about Vaughan himself' (p. 216).

The book's being based on Willard's PhD does, however, come with some drawbacks which, while not taking away from the important contribution of the book, do detract slightly. Most of the book is confined to four large chapters, some of which feel overly long, including the first which spans almost seventy pages and condenses what were the first several chapters of the original thesis. Some readers may also be alarmed at the statement in the acknowledgements that while the author had 'updated scholarly references throughout, this remains in many ways a book of the days in the last century when I formed my basic understanding of Thomas Vaughan ... the older references often precede the newer ones as acknowledgement of the scholars who helped shape my first views' (p. xiii). While such an update to the scholarly references has undoubtedly been undertaken, the author is perhaps selling his work short by suggesting that his fundamental position on Vaughan has not changed in almost four decades in light of this new scholarship.

Nevertheless, this monograph will undoubtedly stand as the definitive reference work on the life and writings of Thomas Vaughan and will be of interest to scholars and students of early modern religion, philosophy, science and culture. Overall, the volume is well produced and contains few errors. It includes ten figures, many of which are in colour. Four short appendices on various annotations and excerpts relating to Vaughan will also be of use to future scholars. The volume features a substantial bibliography and thorough indexes of names, subjects and biblical citations.

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LIAM TEMPLE

Music, nature and divine knowledge in England, 1650–1750. Between the rational and the mystical. By Tom Dixon (edited by Penelope Gouk, Chloë Dixon and Philippe Sarasin Robichaud). (Music in Society and Culture.) Pp. xxii + 343 incl. 3 ills. Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2023. £85. 978 1 78327 767 4
JEH (75) 2024; doi:10.1017/S0022046924000095

Tom Dixon's posthumously published monograph offers an original insight into the intellectual world of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. Dixon's work is situated to cut through what historians have traditionally thought of as key marker points in early modern history. As he makes clear in his introduction, despite the title, Dixon wishes his book to be viewed not as situated in the sixteenth, seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, nor is it defined by key and easily defined dates. Instead, the book provides a useful and timely

reminder that early modern individuals, and in Dixon's case the educated elite did not define their lifetimes as bookmarked or bookended by certain dates and events.

Additionally, Dixon argues that his subjects swam in a sea of merging and competing ideas, and a vocabulary which they drew on when terms were beneficial to them. The philosophers Dixon is interested in were truly those who loved knowledge, drawing on any discipline or tradition which they found relevant or useful in their pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Readers will, I imagine, be particularly surprised that Dixon includes chapters on Druidism and millenarianism (or 'the restoration of all things' in Dixon's phrasing), alongside discussion of natural philosophy, the emerging scientific method and detailed exposition of ancient and contemporary philosophy.

Dixon's work merges well the two realms in which his subjects explored the world and the divine. He makes a distinction between 'rational' and 'mystical', exploring these in their own terms, but is constantly alert to the ways in which these two areas interacted, which enabled contemporaries to understand more thoroughly their world, music and divine knowledge.

The individuals upon whom Dixon focuses are Peter Sterry, David Hartley, Richard Roach, William Stukeley and Isaac Newton. He explores their writings and the shared musical and intellectual frameworks within which they operated, but also draws out their distinct contributions, both to their individual fields, but also to this shared realm of thinking. Each of these is dealt with well, and Dixon demonstrates a full understanding of their relevant writing and ideas. While the prose is in some places dense, occasionally almost impenetrable, Dixon's key ideas do run throughout the book.

His work should also be commended for the way in which he cuts through the all too pervasive division between 'rational' and 'mystical' which scholars sloppily fall into. He demonstrates instead that important scholars merged and blurred the boundaries of these categories. Far from a narrative in which the world of rational discussion and enquiry forced out the mystical, Dixon demonstrates how a network of scholars shared their ideas between one another, drawing on a vast array of philosophical and theological thinking, to pursue ideas that were not easily defined by modern categories.

Dixon's work is, ultimately, a book of ideas, both in the sense that the author himself offers original ways of approaching his subject matter, but also because, while the stated aim is to explore 'the role of music in the early modern subject's sensory experience of divinity', the book tends towards exploring what contemporary philosophers and scholars wrote and argued about music and the experience of the divine, rather than an exploration of what was actually experienced, corporally, emotionally or through the senses (p. 1).

Additionally, Dixon's concern with educated elites is interesting and important, but it leaves one without a clear indication of how or if these ideas moved beyond their immediate circle. Thus, it is not clear whether these discussions had a bearing on how individuals in wider society viewed the interaction between music, nature and the divine, and whether their thinking was shaped by or reflected in these important writers. It would have been interesting for this line of enquiry to have

been followed, particularly some thoughts on how or if these ideas permeated the rest of society, as has been discussed by historians working on other periods.

While Dixon's work does represent an excellent example of interdisciplinarity, I suspect the reader will be left wanting more music from the book. Although discussion of ideas is central to the work, it would have been enlightening to find more musicological discussion, outlining and expanding musical examples which demonstrate the ways in which contemporaries encountered the divine through music, but also a fuller discussion of the musicological foundations upon which the period and those Dixon studies sat. Chapter i's brief discussion of music in sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, and the mention of musical division between elite and common elements (and different forms of Protestantism) is a good starting point, but it makes no mention of, for example, metrical psalmody. This practice in particular, far from a niche example, stood as the most prominent and widespread way in which people from across society encountered the divine through music, both in church and outside it. Thus, while discussions of the divine encountered through music is a core element of Dixon's book, the reader is left with a greater understanding of how a group of thinkers outlined this idea in their writings, but only a limited indication of any musicological or historical evidence of how this interaction (between music, nature and the divine) was actually experienced by contemporaries. More of this would have reinforced Dixon's position that there was no intellectual or experiential division between the rational and the mystical and offered further confirmation of the interdisciplinarity of his work. It may also have shown just how pervasive musical discussion was in the period, one of Dixon's underlying arguments.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, Tom Dixon has left behind a piece of scholarship which should be read by historians working in the early modern period, but also beyond. It reminds us that those we study were not located within hermetically sealed boxes of ideas but drew on what modern scholars tend to think of as competing and complementary positions. He also, very commendably, reminds us throughout the work that subjects such as music, which have been given their own, clearly defined academic fields in modern scholarship, were usually encompassed as part of a larger realm of enquiry. As such, historians must take subjects such as music (both contemporary and modern understandings of it) into consideration when studying their own periods, recognising the renewed vibrancy that can be found when we allow these other disciplines space within historical enquiry.

The editors should be commended for leaving behind a well-ordered, thorough account of the topic. Tom Dixon's voice and historical interests shine through, and the rest is a work that will stand as a vital touchpoint in scholars' understandings of this period especially. It is a shame that his scholarship ends here, but it is an end point which his family and colleagues will be exceptional proud of, and glad to see in print for scholars and interested readers to enjoy and learn from. I have no doubt it will spark plenty of interesting, useful and, following Dixon, thoroughly original scholarship in the future.

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