

the outset of his monograph to indicate that, while it is probably true that 'Milton did not really care about women's *oppression*, he did care about women's *suffering*' (p. 2). This suffering, Schwartz claims, linked directly to Milton's interest in theodicy, a subject that would preoccupy him for much of his writing life and become one of the central concerns of his great Christian epic, *Paradise Lost*. Though all forms of human suffering, Schwartz suggests, could be seen within Milton's religious worldview as just punishment for mankind's sins, he convincingly argues that childbed suffering and its all too frequent result in maternal mortality particularly troubled Milton. That women suffered so much more than men in the fulfilment of God's commandment to 'be fruitful and multiply', even considering Eve's role in the Fall, was difficult for the writer to understand and accept.

Such unease, Schwartz claims, emerged both from Milton's intellectual engagement with theological questions, as well as from his more personal experience of maternal death. Two of his wives, Mary Powell and Katherine Woodcock, died after complications in childbirth, with their children dying in quick succession after them (in the case of Katherine, the child to which she had just given birth died shortly after her, while Mary's new baby survived, but her one-year-old son John did not, allegedly as a result of being placed with a negligent nurse; Schwartz suggests that John's death would also have been seen as a consequence of his mother's passing, albeit indirectly). Such experiences, Schwartz argues, exposed Milton to the sorrows of childbed suffering as well as to the world of female medicine and obstetrics, all of which he maintains feature centrally in several key passages of Milton's poetry.

Schwartz contends that Milton was unusual in making childbirth and maternal mortality a subject for poetry, and, in his analysis of this literature, he identifies a distinctive shift from Milton's early writing to his later literary endeavours; while works like 'On Shakespear' and 'An Epitaph on the Marchioness of

Winchester' in some ways idealise maternal suffering, reading it as powerful metaphor for the act of creativity and corporeal transcendence, later treatments, including Sonnet 23 and *Paradise Lost*, offer more ambiguous conclusions. Such works, Schwartz frequently emphasises, were written after the deaths of Milton's wives, and he argues that grief as well as guilt shape the scope and vision of these later literary efforts. Here poetry and childbirth are not presented as quite so similar: though both are creative, generative activities, which may very well move the human subject towards the divine, the dangers associated with writing are understood to be far less immediate and persistent than those linked to maternity (a realisation that Schwartz argues resulted in 'guilt-laden relief' for Milton [p. 193]).

Such conclusions are of interest not only to Milton scholars, but also to those working more generally on early modern gender relations, reproduction, life cycles, and the relationship between literary, medical, and religious practices. Historians may find some of Schwartz's close readings a bit ponderous (he is heavy on detailed philological analysis), but they should also find his integrated study of medical and religious beliefs highly informative and carefully argued. Though centrally interested in Milton and his literary output, Schwartz's book highlights both the worldly and spiritual crises maternal mortality posed for all early modern families, helping readers understand how the presence of suffering in life both reinforced religious explanations as well as resisted them.

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Craig Ashley Hanson, *The English Virtuoso: Art, Medicine, and Antiquarianism in the Age of Empiricism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009), pp. xv + 316, \$50.00/£34.50, hardback, ISBN: 978-0-226-31587-4.

Craig Hanson's stimulating book tackles a range of historical issues that are both fascinating and challenging. All the nouns in his title refer to difficult concepts and highly charged ideas. His goal is to provide a new account of the 'virtuoso' in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England. These were 'erudite individuals with solid grounding in the classics, deep appreciation for the arts, and sincere curiosity for the natural world', according to the book's cover. Many of them were medical men. Thus a range of individuals from William Harvey to Richard Mead are discussed in order to assess their ideas about, for example, the classics, antiquities, collecting, the visual arts both in theory and in practice, and the human body in health and disease.

There have been a number of studies of this broad terrain, but this one is distinctive in a number of respects. For instance, it covers a long period of time from the early Stuart court to the 1750s – Richard Mead died in 1754, and the last chapter is devoted to him. However, Hanson presents not one continuous narrative but three historical moments. It is true that the chapters and even the parts of chapters have an episodic character, but *The English Virtuoso*, covers a lot of ground and mentions many of the key medical figures of the period. Yet, arguably the volume's hero is the Royal Society, with its commitment to 'empiricism', and above all its History of Trades project. This project is a figure for questions and relationships that run through the book as a whole. They include attempts to think about the production of knowledge and artefacts, and those who make them. Hanson is particularly interested in what would now be called art theory: early accounts in English of how painting, engraving, drawing and so are done, how these activities relate to others, such as the practice of medicine, and the ways in which works of art are to be judged.

The serious attention he pays to authors on the visual arts such as William Aglionby and William Salmon, both medical practitioners, if of markedly different kinds, is extremely valuable. When Hanson examines Christopher

Wren and John Evelyn, he traces their medical preoccupations. Although he necessarily spends a significant amount of time tracing biographical connections and teasing out the implications of acts of patronage, he also offers close textual readings. The section on 'Medical Texts and Art Metaphors' (pp. 121–5) is a case in point, as is chapter four, which concerns 'Antiquarianism and the Empirical Legacy of Don Quixote', where Hanson also considers English illustrations to the book. Yet, on the whole, there is surprisingly little close and sustained interpretation of visual materials. Not only would more have been useful for readers, demonstrating the value of a rigorous art-historical perspective to those in other fields, but it would also have been helpful to have the illustrations more fully integrated into the text. Thus, Alexander Pope is mentioned a few times, but his portrait by Charles Jervas, reproduced on page 14, is not made to earn its keep.

The English Virtuoso is a nicely produced book, good value for money, and containing some valuable materials and ideas. For example, Hanson usefully brings together a great deal of what is known about Richard Mead. But it does have some shortcomings. I am certainly persuaded that there is much to explore in the relationships between medical practitioners and artists, and between their respective domains of activity, which also drew in collectors, patrons and natural philosophers. But I wonder whether it is now important to consider, in a comparative spirit, the role of other domains, such as lawyers and law, in the hope of revealing what is, or perhaps is not, special about medics and medicine with respect to the visual arts. Furthermore, I am not convinced by the approach to 'empiricism' adopted here. On the final page, Joseph Wright's paintings are invoked as 'perhaps the most compelling examples of this virtuosic tradition in the second half of the [eighteenth] century' (p. 197). The brief account that follows misleads in claiming that in Wright's work 'the natural philosopher and the antiquary are presented as heroes, and erudition is elevated

to epic proportions'. This area of scholarship has recently been transformed by interdisciplinary work so it is disappointing to find Hanson repeating uncritically an unsatisfactory account of the relations between the visual arts and natural knowledge when his own work is striving to promote fresh perspectives.

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Arianne Baggerman and Rudolf Dekker,
Child of the Enlightenment: Revolutionary Europe Reflected in a Boyhood Diary,
Egodocuments and History Series (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. xii + 555, €99.00/\$158.00, hardback, ISBN: 978-90-04-17269-2.

This book is by turns fascinating and frustrating. It offers a very extended analysis (484 pages of text) of a diary written by a boy between the ages of ten and sixteen, on a country estate near Delft. The fact that this child, Otto van Eck, was also the eldest son of a leading Dutch patriot who contributed both to the failed revolution of 1788 and to the 1790s Republican government adds historical relevance to the story; the fact that Otto died at the age of seventeen adds poignancy, but also throws doubt on the way his diary is presented here. The effects of revolution on Otto's life were slight; the van Eck family, deeply embedded in the network of kinship and post-holding typical of Dutch Regents, continued to be thus embedded all through the political events of their time. Otto never reached an age to participate in political life, and died shortly after his father was imprisoned for his political views.

The main title more accurately describes the book. Baggerman and Dekker are at their strongest when discussing the didactic literature available to children in 1790s Holland. Through the lens of education, they address a series of themes, including reading, mapping, self-analysis, time, gardening, animal husbandry, and travel. Some

interesting aperçus include accounts of a household map as a display of family power, and of the significance of Otto's watch in inducting the child into enlightened forms of self-regulation. A good proportion of the book, however, addresses events in Revolutionary Paris and Amsterdam, in which only Otto's father, not the boy himself, played any part. The book's narrative thus moves between father and son in a manner which sometimes means that its ostensible subject is neglected for long periods.

Unlike the van Eck family, which embraced the literature and politics of a wider Europe, Baggerman and Dekker's secondary references (there is no bibliography) primarily include work on the Netherlands. This means that some highly relevant studies have been overlooked, most notably Anke te Heesen's *The World in a Box* (Chicago, 2002), but also a substantial secondary literature on agricultural and horticultural history and their political significance in this period, on the history and theory of reading, and more sophisticated analytical studies of biography as a genre. Even with a child author, the perils of reading diaries as expressions of one narrative voice are apparent here: while acknowledging that Otto's diary was specifically written for his parents to read, Baggerman and Dekker still take his expressions of feeling (about his parents, siblings, friends and teachers) as unreconstructed displays of personal authenticity. The assumption of authorial integrity also serves as a device for evoking emotions in the reader, so that we are induced to sympathise with, rather than analyse, Otto's peccadilloes, to regret his parents' often cold treatment of him, and finally to mourn his untimely death.

The book is more successful in tackling the principles, assumptions and aids that a new educational movement across Europe, beginning in the 1760s, offered literate parents. The authors are prone to digress, sometimes extensively (an account of a Dutch landscape garden, completely unrelated to the van Eck family or to the diary, receives four