

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

pages). By comparison, the question of how all this enlightenment was to convert Otto van Eck into the sort of politically engaged individual that his father viewed as the ideal citizen of his new state receives only slight attention. This problem is part of a curious juxtaposition throughout much of the work, with contemporary books used to provide context for the diary, but comparatively minimal analysis of one in light of the other. Occasionally this leads to absurdities, such as three and a half pages on Revolutionary catechisms followed by a comment that Otto van Eck never read one. Sometimes it allows platitudinous comments about scientific progress (in relation to inoculation). This compares unfavourably with te Heesen's discussion of how the principle of order in contemporary didactic literature served to allocate children of the German *Bürgertum* to their proper station in life. Ultimately, we gain an understanding of Otto as a child of his time, but no new outlook on the period itself.

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Morten A. Skydsgaard, *Ole Bang og en Brydningstid i Dansk Medicin* (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 2006), pp. 333, Kr348.00, paperback, ISBN: 87-7934-228-0.

Morten Skydsgaard's biography of the Danish physician Ole Bang (1788–1877) is an informative and important book about a period of transition in nineteenth-century Danish medicine. Bang held several of the most significant posts available to physicians in Denmark. He was a professor at the university of Copenhagen, and he was the chief physician at the largest hospital in the capital, Frederik's Hospital. Among the prominent patients in Bang's lucrative private practice were the Danish and Russian royal families. Throughout his career he advocated a medicine grounded on careful observation at the bedside. He reformed medical education,

putting clinical teaching into practice at the medical faculty. His methods of treatment became influential among Danish medical practitioners, and he was famous for his clinical skills. Bang was also engaged in health politics, and played an important role in the formation of a common curriculum for surgeons and physicians, thus putting an end to a long rivalry between the medical faculty and the surgical academy.

During his long and active professional life (he retired in 1874, aged eighty-six), Bang was respected and recognised as one of Denmark's leading medical figures. However, soon after his death he was branded a reactionary and accused of opposing new ideas, thereby hampering progress in Danish medicine – a view which has been generally accepted in Danish historiography until now. In this carefully researched book a more complicated picture is painted.

Skydsgaard confirms that Bang remained faithful throughout his life to the Hippocratic doctrine of *vis medicatrix nature*, or the healing powers of nature. He believed that the organism did not accept disease passively but counteracted it by trying to rectify the disturbed equilibrium. Nature was, therefore, the best physician, but the human physician could help nature to fulfil its goal by removing obstacles to its action, thus assisting in the organism's own attempt to recover. Bang employed traditional remedies like purgatives, emetics, diaphoretic drugs, sialagogues and bloodletting. However, as Skydsgaard shows, he also participated fully in the new medical debates, and, early in his career particularly, he was a proponent of change in many areas. He introduced the stethoscope to Denmark, and studied in the French style pathological changes of the bowels during typhoid fever. He also engaged in medical meteorology, trying to generate new knowledge about epidemics based on an analysis of meteorological data. Furthermore, he advocated the use of statistics in medicine, and regularly published data on morbidity and mortality from Frederik's Hospital. Later in life, however, he became sceptical of the