

In 1774, Petrus Camper, renowned throughout the eighteenth-century Republic of Letters as an anatomist, was involved in short-listing proposals for a new town hall in Groningen. The project would be beset by difficulties: in the declining years of the Dutch Republic's international prestige, Orangist officials struggled to make ends meet. The work was abandoned in 1777. It resumed in 1793, only to halt for a second time when, in 1795, the French invaded. By this time, Camper, a lifelong Orangist supporter, was dead. As the essays in this volume show, both Camper's sympathies for the Orangist regime and the official Reformed Church, and his interests in art and architecture, are relevant to our understanding of his anatomical renown, and *vice versa*.

The book succeeds in grounding Camper in the Dutch world of learning and politics, in decline in the wider European world. Vast personal wealth nevertheless remained a characteristic feature of Dutch patrician families. As the essay by Jensma shows, a good marriage and personal involvement in local politics and improving agendas (agriculture, medical police) tied Camper closely to the province of Friesland and gave him the wherewithal to practise the sciences. This adds to our growing understanding of the importance of personal wealth and connections in brokering entry to the learned community and for achieving international scientific reputation.

If the essays shed much light upon Camper's place in Dutch life, they also underline his cosmopolitanism. Early modern intellectual historians are accustomed to working across borders and in multiple languages. Republicans of Letters were highly mobile, polyglot and committed to a view of knowledge as something produced between nation-states rather than within them. Camper emerges from the pages of the volume under review as typical of that learned mobility. He travelled in England, the German lands and France, cultivating connections and exchanging information at every point; when not travelling, he was corresponding. This picture, however, emerges more from separate glimpses in individual essays than from any one contribution in particular, with the curious effect that contributors are often writing about a man who was trans-European but from a variety of nationally specific perspectives.

The sum of the volume, therefore, is greater than its individual parts. It bears many of the hallmarks of its origins in a 2010 conference on Camper, in that some of the essays are carefully researched and thoroughly documented, while others have a more hasty and superficial air, pieces penned to meet the overall remit of the conference and then published. This is an almost inevitable problem of the genre, but the book is not without utility and merit. It shows well how Camper's intellectual priorities lay in social utility, not scientific specialisation. Here, the volume's particulate structure is advantageous. The essays, which come from very different methodological traditions, offer fascinating glimpses of Camper at work: in London learning from William Smellie how to use forceps to advance the project of man-midwifery; in the Broerkerk at Groningen, using anatomy to bolster Calvinism by declaring that 'we are all black, more or less'. Measurement was central to Camper's programme, whether cranial angles in men or pelvic angles in women; Meijer notes how his attempts to refute or minimise racial difference served 'to calm the anxieties of a shrinking world' (p. 189). But she also subtly reminds us of the epistemological problems of progressing from the fragmented material object that was the collected skull, to geographical-racial generalisations.

The book as a whole suffers from some problematic assumptions about the status of learning and scholarship in this period. Camper is too frequently referred to using the anachronistic term 'scientist', and there remains a strong flavour of hagiography in some

contributions. Ramakers' study of how Camper used print to construct expertise makes a valuable contribution, but as an exploration of his publics and the construction of his expert status, leaves much unaddressed. Individual essays attest to the closeness of the relationship between the arts and sciences for Camper, yet no one contribution reflects directly upon those areas of intersection. One such is praxis. It becomes clear that manual skills were tremendously important to Camper's role as anatomist and also to his worldwide reputation: as several contributors note, he excelled not only as a draughtsman but also in the *Konst* or art of surgery. But that continuity, so well explored by Celina Fox (*The Arts of Industry in the Age of Enlightenment*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), emerges only from fragmentary insights in individual essays, leaving a sense that authors did not really reflect on what 'science' was for Camper himself.

A second area of intersection was taste: the skills required to navigate in polite society around Europe were the same for anatomists, improvers or men of letters. The excellent revisionist biography of Camper, by Miriam Claude Meijer (*Race and Aesthetics in the Anthropology of Petrus Camper (1722-1789)*, Amsterdam and Atlanta, GA: Rodopi, 1999), achieves its most original insights precisely in recognising that the racial debate for Camper was fundamentally about aesthetics. It is somewhat frustrating, therefore, that no essay is devoted to his natural history collection, where aesthetic and scientific concerns converged. The volume is torn between an older Whig history of science and a newer historiography: it does not quite achieve a sustained account of how Camper's social standing shaped his scientific learning and practice, and it never really connects the many isolated insights on Camper's relationship with taste, knowledge and practice into a coherent new analysis of the Dutch anatomist.

But despite some reservations, the volume's very existence is an achievement. It demonstrates the survival of what itself addresses: the existence of trans-European learned communication, a culture of international debate and communication from which its contributors have benefited throughout their working lives. The Dutch, German and English-speaking authors include librarians, historians of art, medicine and architecture, scientists and literary and political scholars. To bring together such a diverse group to produce such a diverse work is in itself a scholarly triumph. It may reflect an historical moment which has passed forever.