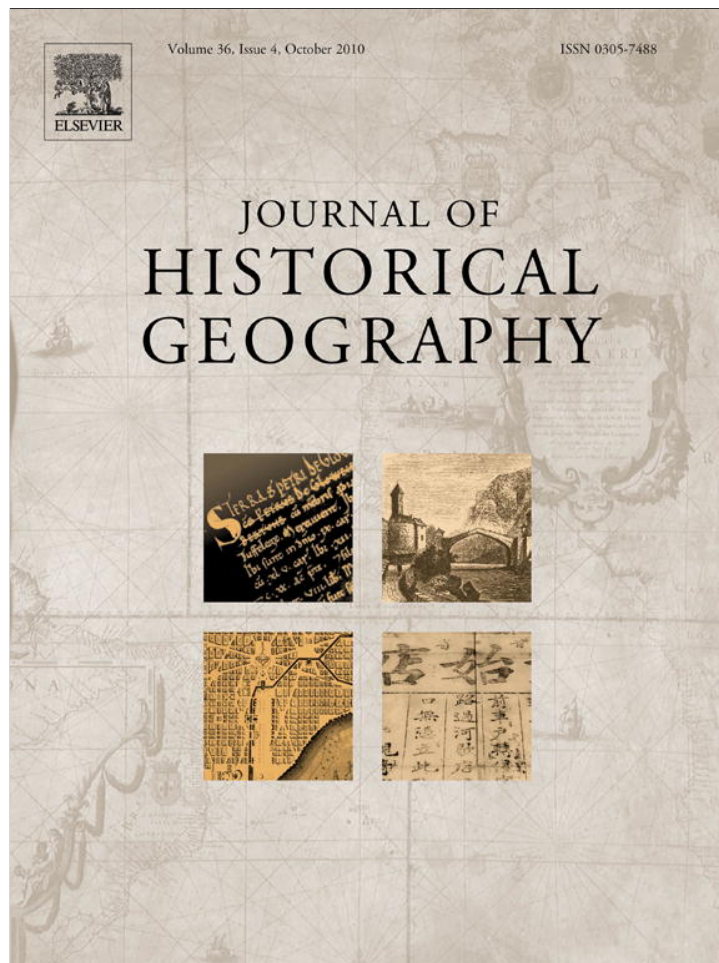


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and on the economic activities and social problems of Lyon at that time. It is true that much supplementary information is conveyed in 55 pages of notes, but their volume strikes me as excessive when compared with the 163 pages of the main body of the text.

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Craig A. Hanson, *The English Virtuoso: Art, Medicine, and Antiquarianism in the Age of Empiricism*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009, 344 pages, US\$50 hardcover.

*The English Virtuoso* is an ambitious attempt to rework our understanding of the landscape of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English intellectual life. Craig Hanson argues that we have overly compartmentalised our understanding of English scholarship in this era, notably around a binary between 'relevant' work driven by the Baconian dictates of the new science and 'eccentric' inquiries conducted by antiquarians trading in the currency of a debased form of humanism. Hanson starts by making the point (p. 21) that 'science' in this era retained a close kinship with the broader concept of 'scientia' or all knowledge. This translated into the Royal Society's sponsoring and publishing material that was not restricted to experimental natural philosophy but which extended to travel accounts, early archaeology, and the principles of painting and connoisseurship.

Pursuing this insight, Hanson pays particular attention to a neglected but recurrent nexus between medicine, antiquarianism, art and science. He points out that the largest single group of members of the seventeenth-century Royal Society were physicians by training and profession, who comprised some one in five members of the Society (p. 69). Their interests, however, were not restricted to matters modern scholars would deem medical. Rather physicians engaged with classical scholarship, seeking not to overturn ancient medical authorities in the light of the new science, but to reconcile the two. Thus the Galenic belief in the influence of celestial motion on human health, for example, was reworked under the influence of Newtonian thought in the eighteenth century by the influential Dr Richard Mead. The reason for this reconciliation was the broader need of physicians to prove their credibility as practitioners of an art more elevated than mere quackery by attaching it to knowledge structures such as reverence for the ancients which functioned as cultural capital in the era. As Hanson shows, medical practitioners had to tread a fine line between embracing the 'empiricism' of the new science and being castigated as mere 'empirics', that is, those who practised medicine without a theoretical and scientific basis through observation alone. Another strategy physicians used to secure their credibility was to show a gentlemanly or virtuosic skill in other forms of inquiry, notably in art theory, connoisseurship, and antiquarianism. Hanson shows that many of the most important treatises in these areas were penned by physicians, and that inquiries in both art and antiquarianism saw a similar need to balance a belief in empiricism with a theoretical overview to those experienced by medical practitioners, such that physicians working across these (to our eyes) diverse inquiries experienced similar tensions in the construction of their scholarly personae. Like physicians, antiquarians struggled to be seen as elevated in their speculations about the past rather than, as satirical stereotypes suggested, mere crazed collectors of detritus from it. Criticism of scholarly credentials in one area, such as medicine, for a failure to tread the correct

path to empiricism without being an empiric could easily translate into criticism of skills as an antiquarian and vice versa.

For historians of geographical thought, *The English Virtuoso* offers some interesting points of departure. It allows them to build on David Livingstone's insights about the interconnections of geography with religion, science, and astrology during the scientific revolution and their alterity to our present day expectations, and to see that similarly wide-ranging and unfamiliar interconnections can be found in a later age, the age of the virtuosi of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For whilst it is not Hanson's quarry, cultures of geographical learning crop up frequently in his book. Medical men such as William Aglionby composed travel narratives as part of their construction of a scholarly persona (pp. 95–6). Furthermore, amongst the items with which physicians were depicted in portraiture were globes, part of the more general accoutrements of learning through which they imagined their personae (figure 8, p. 30). Likewise, Hanson's analysis of William Salmon's influential treatise on painting, *Polygraphice* (1672), shows that the frontispiece includes an image of an artist drawing a geographical map (figure 35, p. 112), something which reminds us of the close filiations between geography, art, and the craft of limning in this era. Further, Hanson's discussion of Salmon's career as a hackwriter of medical and artistic treatises (pp. 108–21) bears close scrutiny by those who study English geographical writers in the same era, many of the contours of their lives in publishing bearing close similarities. This also opens up the rather neglected question of the intersections between cultures of geographical and medical writing in this era. Hanson points out that many of the medical virtuosi he studies drew topographical prints and penned chorographies and county histories. Clearly, there were intersections in English print culture between geography and medicine and they would repay further study in the light of the vistas Hanson's work opens up.

For Hanson, we can recover the rationale of scholarly debates in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England only once we acknowledge that the culture of the virtuosi depended on intellectual connections quite alien to present compartmentalised divisions of knowledge, and that this led to different circuits of praise and censure. In this culture geography tangentially keeps making its appearance both in text and image. Perhaps, to start to think through English geographical writing in this era as part of the culture of the virtuosi that Hanson depicts so convincingly would be to open new angles on the history of geography, ones which, like Hanson's study, would dissolve our received ideas about what counted as geography and where one should look for cultures of geographical writing in early-modern England.

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Denis Cosgrove and William L. Fox, *Photography and Flight*. London, Reaktion Books, 2010, 144 pages, £13.56 paperback.

When *Keyhole, Inc.*, a small US software company specializing in geospatial data visualization applications, was bought by Google in 2004, few could have imagined the huge impact of its 'EarthViewer 3D' geographic information programme. Re-released as 'Google Earth' in 2005, the web-based mapping site soared in popularity. Within twelve months it ranked among the ten 'most searched for' websites in the United Kingdom, with searches increasing twenty-fold within months. Nearly a quarter of new viewers were 'silver

surfers' aged fifty-five or older who were drawn to the internet (perhaps for the first time) to scan distant continents, zoom in on peaks and plateaux, or merely check which car was parked in the drive when the photograph was taken. The blanketing of our planet with remote sensors that now provide almost continuous real-time coverage from all-seeing eyes has had a profound effect on our understanding of the world. The ubiquity of such images, argue Cosgrove and Fox, has not dented our fascination with aerial imagery, but has rather stimulated an almost insatiable demand for it (p. 89).

In *Photography and Flight* the late Denis Cosgrove, widely-revered professor of geography at the University of California, Los Angeles, and William L. Fox, Director of the Center for Art + Entertainment at the Nevada Museum of Art, explore the origins of our fascination with all things overhead and aerial. The volume is part of the 'Exposures' series that explores the rich history of photography from diverse thematic perspectives. *Exposures* promises engaging, accessible text, intriguing insights, and some 80 images in each book in the series. On each score, Cosgrove and Fox deliver: this beautifully produced book contains some of the most stunning photographs of the planet seen from varying heights overhead and at oblique angles.

Cosgrove and Fox consider the early history of photography from hot-air balloons and fixed platforms to hand-held camera technology and powered flight in the early twentieth century. As expected, military demands lay behind innovative forms of surveillance. Lincoln's army sent up tethered air balloons in 1862, although the practice ended when Confederate sharpshooters peppered the billowing targets with fire. Nonetheless, the military value to commanders on the ground of a synoptic aerial view of the battlefield was demonstrable and, by the time of the Great War, film speeds and camera shutters had so improved that aerial reconnaissance became a novel and deadly weapon of war. In the early days pilots dangled hand-held cameras over the cockpit, but the resultant shaky images were of limited tactical value, and such Heath-Robinson approaches were soon abandoned in favour of innovative techniques such as stereoscopic cameras that relied on gravity-fed film magazines mounted on the fuselage of aeroplanes.

In successive leaps, Cosgrove and Fox move from the camera at war to the evolution of aerial photography in archaeology. An odd conflation perhaps, but the British military alone produced 6.5 million photographs in the last year of the First World War, and many of those taken over ancient Mesopotamia or Macedonia revealed cities and sites long-unnoticed on the ground. In a fascinating elision between archaeology and surveillance, Cosgrove and Fox explain how military reconnaissance and government projects were instrumental in catalysing these and other photographic innovations in the field. Through engaging narrative and stunning photographs they explore pivotal historical moments in which aerial photography began to establish itself as an essential tool, building to the apotheosis of high-altitude photography taken from rockets and spy planes during the Cold War and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

However, the book ranges over more than the political landscape. In addition to providing valuable insights into the use of aerial imagery for mapping, planning, and mining, the final section explores aerial photography's impact on landscape design and its value as art. Here the pivotal role of Terry Evans is noted. She graduated from photographing virgin prairie ecosystems to taking air-borne photos that revealed the vast, emptied landscapes of the Great Plains. Not only interested in the varied beauty of their natural and anthropogenic abstract patterns, Terry was also captivated by the interrelations that occur at the boundary between the abstract and the specific, where some of the most stunning artworks can be found. Ever since the Vorticists in England and the

Futurists in Italy (p. 33) took to the air, artists have found inspiration through spatial liberation. Their creative works stretch from the sublime to the quixotic; the latter neatly exemplified by Ed Ruscha's typology of overhead images of Los Angeles parking lots. Striking a blow against the Ansel Adams school of heroicised mountainscapes, Ruscha's poetically bleak shots of the horizontal sprawl of the American city became the foundational aesthetic in the 'New Topographics' (p. 126).

The permissive explorations of such photographic artists as David Maisel, Michael Light, and Laura Kurgan conclude this study. Following in the aerial footsteps of Ruscha, Maisel takes photographs of the Los Angeles topography from 10,000 feet, reversing its opalescent light by printing his images in negative so that the pale sky becomes ominously black, buildings appear white – 'hollowed out as if by bombs' (p. 134) – and the freeways become winding arteries, lending an overall impression of apocalypse summarized in the title of Maisel's series *Oblivion*. As Cosgrove and Fox point out, their 'sunshine and noir' iconography pays no homage to the convention of mapping. They refuse to offer conciliatory means of orientation. Instead they decouple us from the familiar and force us to approach the urban on new, if uncannily familiar, terms.

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John R. Bockstoce, *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North: The Contest among Native and Foreign Nations for the Bering Strait Fur Trade*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009, xxi + 472 pages, US \$35.00 hardcover.

In the mid-1990s a traveling exhibit called 'Crossroads Alaska' was circulating around Alaska. It was an abbreviated version of a massive Smithsonian Institution exhibition called 'Crossroads of Continents' which represented the history and culture of Siberian, Aleut, Yupik, and Inupiat people around the Bering Sea. Major newspapers had covered the Smithsonian project as geopolitical theatre: considerable international cooperation had been required to assemble 550 artefacts from museums in the Soviet Union, Canada, and the US. But for Alaskans it carried other significance as well. The exhibit showed that, until the twentieth century, the Bering Strait had served as a point of connection rather than a line of division. It demonstrated that Alaska had been a nodal point in global trade routes, not the periphery that many perceived it to be over the last century. It was as if Alaska had been moved close to center-stage in the annals of world history.

This monograph by John Bockstoce builds on that theme, revealing how the Bering Strait carried a great deal of traffic between North America and Asia in recent centuries. Indeed the author had contributed to the volume that had accompanied the exhibit, *Crossroads of Continents*, edited by William Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell (Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988). Bockstoce is an independent scholar with a DPhil from the University of Oxford. Sometime curator of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, he has written a number of titles drawing on four decades of fieldwork and research about the region. Few if any scholars are more familiar with English-language journals from early exploratory and commercial vessels that passed through the Bering Strait.

Bockstoce new book, *Furs and Frontiers in the Far North*, is written and marketed as the first comprehensive history of the fur trade around the Bering Strait. Throughout the text Bockstoce