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Gordon McOuat and Larry Stewart, eds., *Spaces of Enlightenment Science*. Leiden: Brill, 2022. x, 219 pp. illus. ISBN: 9789004501218.

This book consists of a collection of 8 essays devoted to a variety of sites where 18th century naturalists, scientists, technicians and scholars performed their work. In the introduction the editors justify their choice of very different case studies by emphasizing the importance of focusing on the local circumstances of scientific practice. All the essays are almost exclusively dealing with French and English case studies.

The first essay, by Rob Iliffe, explores the whereabouts of the scholarly activities of the antiquary William Stukeley and the complex set of relationships existing “between the values associated with urban, monastic and rural localities.” The aspiration to live an active scientific life and social recognition was permanently counterbalanced by the need of a retreat where Stukeley could cultivate the *otium* which he associated with a true academic life. But it was a delicate balance as solitary retirement deprived scholars of the social benefits of conversation and in the long run could lead them to depression and even madness. Iliffe follows Stukeley’s career during the first half of the 18th century through a rich set of sources illustrating in detail the circumstances leading to his choices of the places where he intended to pursue his research.

The second essay by Margaret Carlyle and Victor D. Boantza deals with the medical and chemical debate on nature and the origin of putrefaction with special attention to the work of Marie Thiroux d’Arconville. In a commented translation of John Pringle’s work on the subject, Madame d’Arconville extended the experimental program to an unprecedented depth and in 1766 she published the 600 pages long *Essai pour servir à l’histoire de la putrefaction* which was destined to remain the standard work on the subject for several decades. The investigation of putrefaction was here combined with experimental analysis of antiseptic substances. Madame d’Arconville, who studied chemistry with the most authoritative French chemist Pierre-Joseph Macquer, made some 300 experiments performed in two different domestic laboratories, one in Paris and the other in her chateau at Crosne. Working in a domestic environment did not allow her to make experiments with living flesh and to test the medical virtues of her antiseptics in the treatment of the human maladies as the Scottish surgeon David MacBride had done with his applications of fixed air on living bodies. By an attentive reconstruction of the different contexts where 18th century research on putrefaction was made, Carlyle and Boantza have shown that chemical laboratories “were perfect for testing inanimate animal substances” but only the hospitals and battlefield offered living patients and real solutions to test antiseptics effectively.

In the subsequent essay, Jasmine Kilburn-Toppin explores the working and commercial spaces of 18th century instrument makers living in London. To do so she has explored an original source, the Old Bailey proceedings of testimonies from court cases concerning robberies of shops. These reports often provided detailed descriptions of the workshops and working practice of the instrument makers thus giving us valuable information on their daily routines. In the following essay, Alice Marples illustrates the interesting interaction between Hans Sloane's collection and correspondence. "Materials from Sloane's extensive collections were requested specifically to test theories, advance experiments, or develop publications, and individuals would offer all sorts of information, ideas and objects in exchange, hoping to connect with whatever related material he held in his collections or activities he might be privy to through his correspondence" (p. 95). This interaction created an "imagined space" where local and global knowledge could meet.

Trevor H. Levere, developing earlier essays published elsewhere, explores the appropriation of the iconic instruments of the chemical revolution, Lavoisier's gasometer in particular, in different contexts and spaces. He begins with the Teylers Museum in Haarlem where Van Marum, thanks to the assistance of the instrument makers Friedrich Wilhelm Friest and J.H. Canzius, made a cheaper version of Lavoisier's costly pneumatic apparatus. Levere also illustrates Georg Friedrich Parrot's cabinet in the newly built university of Dorpat (now Tartu) and Adam Wilhelm Hauch's private research laboratory which was sold to the King of Denmark in 1815 and eventually was used for teaching. These case studies are extremely useful to learn how local circumstances determined different approaches to the making of the same instrument.

In her essay Marie Thébaud-Sorger focuses on "the materialization of cutting-edge knowledge performed in various public spaces in France in the 1770–1780s" and in particular on the experience of ballooning during the period 1783–1784. This case study is extremely interesting because it involved a great variety of public spaces, academic and artisanal experts and the public opinion at large. The increasing participation of crowds and audience to experimental and technical demonstration marked "the emergence of new spaces of mixed sociability such as public classes, *musées*, and societies founded by subscription" (p. 147).

Larry Stewart reconstructs in the following essay the fascinating career of James Dinwiddie (b. 1746), mathematical teacher and instruments maker in the small market town of Dumfries. In 1793 Dinwiddie took part in Lord George Macartney's embassy "sent to convince the Chinese of the benefits of permitting British trade beyond the limits of the existing foreigners' factory in Canton" (p. 162). The Scottish teacher was in charge of the mathematical instruments

brought with the cargo. Contrary to the expectations, these apparatuses, aimed at showing the superiority of the British achievements in the field, did not conquer the attention of the Chinese court and according to the Emperor they were only good “to amuse children.” The instruments remained then in the hands of Dinwiddie who was sent, on his way back, to a mission to Calcutta where he made several public demonstrations which gained some attention.

In the last essay Simon Werrett explores a little-known chapter in the history of longitude. In 1713 the natural philosophers William Whiston and Humphrey Ditton proposed a new method for discovering the longitude both by sea and by land. The method was based on the use of balls of fire and rockets which served as means of determining the distance from known points. The proposal was immediately dismissed and found impractical for the purpose it had been designed. However, with the introduction of new techniques, the method of using flashes and rockets was explored again during the second half of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries. Werrett’s essay is concluded by a comment on Turner’s painting *Rockets and Blue Lights* which raised perplexities among contemporary art critics but aptly visualizes the background on this fascinating story.

As a whole this book is a very fine collection of essays, providing the reader with significant and original case studies on the changing role of spaces in the eighteenth century scientific and technical research.

Marco Beretta

Alma Mater Studiorum University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

marco.beretta@unibo.it