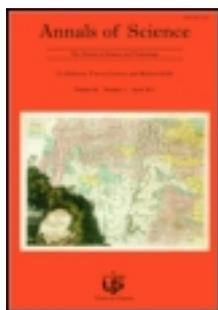


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Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe

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career, prefaced by an essay on his reputation and influence and prepared to mark both the 350th anniversary of his death and the international year of physics in 2005.

Anthony Turner's account of the extensive influence of Gassendi in the international republic of letters, and then the changing fortunes of his reputation in France and Provence, is thoroughly researched and written with sensitivity to the social and political uses of an intellectual hero. The point is not lost at the local museum, founded as the Musée de Digne in 1889, but changing its name to Musée Gassendi in 2003. In fact, the foundation of 1889 was the realization of a long-held ambition of local naturalists and collectors. Also, during the nineteenth century, local educational needs at the Collège de Digne (in 1887 the 'Lycée de Digne', and in 1897 the 'Lycée Gassendi') created a scientific collection in the form of a cabinet of physics. A further collection was formed at the 'Petit Séminaire', active in Digne from 1854, at a time when the bishop, Julien Meirieu, was an enthusiast for science, especially astronomy. The book has a wonderful photograph of the cabinet of physics and natural history at the Petit Séminaire around 1885, and on top of a range of cabinets, close to the ceiling, and in the manner of collections at the time of Gassendi himself, are two crocodiles. There are a few others, but these are the principal sources for the present collection, whose catalogue occupies the major portion of the book.

Curators are familiar with the tendency of experimental scientists to 'cannibalize' redundant instruments, but it still comes as a shock to see that the first item in the catalogue is a brass plate from a seventeenth-century astrolabe cut out into a component for a heliostat. Thanks to the unusually well-preserved provenance for this collection, we are able to say that this happened at the Petit Séminaire. Other highlights in the 196-entry catalogue are an Atwood machine by Oscar Hempel of Paris (not unlike an unsigned example in the Whipple Museum), a Foucault-type equatorial Newtonian reflector by Secretan, Melloni's apparatus for studying radiant heat by Salleron, and electric generators by Ruhmkorff (Clarke type), Ducretet (Gramme type), and Breguet. There is a good coverage of the different branches of experimental physics established in the nineteenth century.

It is good to have this material recorded in an authoritative catalogue, the more valuable because the provenance and so the links to the context of use are secure.

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Natural History

ALIX COOPER, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xi + 218 pp. \$80.00/£45.00. ISBN 0-52-187087-9.

In the early summer of 1725, Johann Bartholomäus Adam Beringer stared at a treasure-trove of worms, sunrays and letters of the Hebrew alphabet that had somehow been captured in the rocks from a nearby hill. As Beringer diligently worked to collect more specimens and tried to make sense of his stony bestiary, he began compiling a regional mineralogy intended to showcase the petrified lizards and

other wonders of his local Würtzburg to the wider world. Although Beringer's treasure proved ultimately to be a hoax planted by embittered colleagues, the stones helped lay the foundation of Alix Cooper's fascinating story of the emergence of a notion of 'local knowledge' in early modern Europe and its broad ramifications for the history of natural history.

Cooper weaves similarly engaging case studies into an elegantly written and carefully documented map of the idea of the 'indigenous' from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The journey itself seems deceptively simple: *Inventing the Indigenous* charts the emergence of an emphasis on local knowledge *within* Europe itself in the wake of early colonial exploration and a market for exotic imports. Cooper argues that the domestic countryside became an exotic frontier as early modern European doctors and naturalists self-consciously reoriented their attention from foreign nature to the natural objects found in local soil. Cooper traces a shift from the dismissal of home-grown products as 'viler than seaweed' to the denouncing of exotic teas from far-away lands as 'slow poison', while new textual genres, terms, and ways of looking and writing about nature marked a new way of conceptualizing the very notion of 'locality'.

Cooper maps early modern Europe's 'fascination with the indigenous' in a series of chapters that illustrate the widening scope of early modern European concepts of locality. The early part of the book features examples that introduce and explain Cooper's subject, ranging from Paracelsus' *Herbarius* on native German botanicals, to Dutch prescriptions of locally derived medicines that maintained the harmony between the body and its native environment. By the middle of the book, the notion of the 'native' becomes more far-reaching as the idea of locality is used to describe ever widening territories. The description of the 'local nature' of small towns like Altdorf was joined by natural histories of entire territories, and the idea of 'locality' itself took on ever more encompassing and ambitious resonances.

This new emphasis on the indigenous was not only marked by a focus on domestic plants, animals, and stones, but also manifest in local ways of conceptualizing how to do natural history. Concepts of how to write a natural history differed even within territories of Europe, and Cooper contrasts a seventeenth century 'English style' of natural history that focused on Baconian particulars with a German approach to the natural history of fragmented territories and finally with a 'distinctively Swiss' natural history rooted in an unusually broad scope of topics that was appropriate for a project whose great size and intended audience were comparable (at least in the eyes of its Swiss author) to the very Alps themselves.

A tension developed, however, between 'national styles' of natural history and an emerging transnationalism that led naturalists to market their local stories to an increasingly global audience. Cooper's story ultimately resolves into an important loss of local knowledge by the early nineteenth century, as regional floras and mineralogies were rewritten to accord with the global map of nature drawn by Linnaeus and his followers. Local knowledge of nature in all of its frustrating variety was disciplined to fit the new order of the natural world with its emphasis on standardization. Cooper argues convincingly that despite the lip service Linnaeus paid to the importance of the wealth of 'curious objects' growing in one's native soil, he did his best to tame local knowledge and knowers in his project to universalize nature (p. 167).

Inventing the Indigenous holds a deeper lesson for historians of science and medicine. Cooper invites us to take language seriously as a force that both shaped and reflected approaches to early modern natural history. Cooper is precise in her

writing, and takes great care to guide readers through her own use of language, reminding us for example that concepts like ‘European’ or ‘local’ were themselves being created in the period under study and should not be taken for granted as categories of analysis. New textual genres like the local flora helped bring new kinds of identity into being in the early modern world, and Cooper succinctly and convincingly leads the reader through the roles of mapping, naming, and networks of communication in generating new ways of conceiving and narrating the ‘native’ in the German territories and beyond.

This was not a straightforward process—as the source of Beringer’s fake fossils was ultimately revealed to be a more mundane workshop than that of God, so the early modern proliferation of ‘local’ floras masked a practical concern for acceptance by international scholarly networks. In the end, Cooper’s book reminds us that the very notion of the ‘local’ is meaningful only in the context of a larger global whole, and she leads us through the key historical moments during which this germinal tension between the local and the global helped create new forms of knowledge. *Inventing the Indigenous* is an important book that should be required reading for anyone interested in the history of science and medicine or the early modern world.

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Editions and Selections

MARC ROTHENBERG, editor, *The Papers of Joseph Henry*. Volume 10. Washington, DC: Science History Publications, 2004. lvii + 613 pp. \$89.95. ISBN 0-88-135358-2

MARC ROTHENBERG, editor, *The Papers of Joseph Henry*. Volume 11. Washington, DC: Science History Publications, 2007. lxvi + 726 pp. \$110.00. ISBN 0-88-135390-6

The publication of these two volumes brings to a close the Smithsonian Institution’s long-running programme to publish the papers of the Smithsonian’s first secretary, Joseph Henry. This ambitious project commenced as long ago as 1966 when the American Philosophical Society, the National Academy of Sciences, and the Smithsonian Institution agreed to jointly sponsor the publication of the papers of the man widely recognized as one of the key founding fathers of American science. In 1960s America, science looked like the best way of providing a secure road to the future. Celebrating the career of the man who had played such an important role in first setting the nation’s feet on that road to glory must have seemed the obvious thing to do. The first volume of papers was published in 1972, and since then, directed first by Nathan Reingold and then by his successor Marc Rothenberg, new volumes have appeared on a regular basis, casting fresh light not only on the career of an individual man of science but on the whole complex institutional structure of science in America as it developed during the course of the nineteenth century.

Joseph Henry was probably the main North American representative of a new breed of natural philosopher that emerged during the second half of the nineteenth