

in gold). Brock has tracked down sources with a scrupulousness that goes far to compensate for the systematic destruction of many of Crookes's private papers. Parts of the book make demands on the reader as Brock takes us to the research front on many of Crookes's lines of investigation. The book's organization is broadly chronological, but Crookes's life does not lend itself to neat compartmentalization: though there are periods of concentrated activity, his major interests were long lasting.

The person behind the busy-ness is less clear. As well as lost sources, this reflects Crookes's lack of interest in contemporary culture and politics. He paid attention to public affairs impinging on technology (and contemplated standing for Parliament) but was not political; he was sociable but uninterested in the arts. Many have been struck by his credulity regarding spiritualism. This rigorous experimenter was unduly receptive to (or besotted by?) young ladies of uncommon sensitivity—so much so that he was marked as an easy target. But there was a burden of proof issue: he was sure that unknown forces existed and were expressed in psychic phenomena; the failings of individual mediums did not change that.

To link Crookes to the "commercialization of science" may mislead. His continuing interest in turning new knowledge to profit does distinguish him from independently wealthy Victorian scientists and from those who made livings teaching or in public service. In general, commercial success subsidized Crookes's research without compromising his reputation—matters of water and sewage are partial exceptions. But "commercialization" catches only one side of Crookes's role as midwife to new technology. From his bully pulpit as *Chemical News* editor Crookes opened or closed doors; it would be interesting to discover how far his technical visions affected home and colonial investment in Victorian hi-tech.

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Jan Golinski, *British weather and the climate of Enlightenment*. Chicago and London, University of Chicago Press, 2007, pp. xv, 284, illus., £22.50, \$35.00 (hardback 978-0-226-30205-8).

This superbly researched volume contains a lesson on how to make sense of the extraordinary importance of climate in modern history. With a new kind of climatological determinism embedded in global political agendas, a work of this kind performs a public service in reminding us about the social origins of "climate" and our infatuation with it. For example, early in the book, Golinski explains why thoughts about climate cannot be dissociated from thoughts about national character when, as was the case during the eighteenth century, Britons came to perceive themselves as polite, commercial and enlightened people. The previously disabling variability of maritime weather was recast in a language in which a mutable but temperate weather was a precondition of economic progress and the population's well-being. Central to the development of this new attitude were the activities of British weather observers, diarists, writers, and medical practitioners, who acknowledged the presence of environmental agency within social, psychological and biological levels of everyday life.

For example, the appearance of weather diaries in the late seventeenth century reflected the ways in which the educated classes reflected upon their identity within a providential and secular culture marked by a growing awareness of public time. For some of these individuals, the weather record testified the workings of God's hand; others used daily entries as a self-effacing means of personal development. But they all worked within the framework of temporal linearity which Golinski identifies as the precondition of our own understanding of the weather as an entity that can be observed at any time and any place.

The triumph of the barometer strengthened this notion. But the barometer (and other meteorological instruments) were only marginally about the quantification of the weather. They moved from polite conversation and status aspiration to gendered psychology and literary metaphors. Thus rather than being a method of collecting “scientific” data, the eighteenth-century “instrumental” meteorology was a complex field of human interactions characterized by conflicting ideas about reason’s capacity to grasp and foretell atmospheric contingency.

Nowhere was this contingency more vitally relevant than in the debates on the influence of atmospheric conditions on the body’s constitution and epidemic disease. Following Sydenham’s Hippocratic model approach to seasonality and the progress of disease, physicians employed diaristic methods to spell out a correlation between acute disorders and weather patterns. The results were inconclusive and remedies not agreed upon. What most, however, did agree upon was the pathology of the increasingly “un-natural” lifestyles. For many, the widely acknowledged susceptibility to atmospheric change had less to do with an inborn infirmity or the extremes of climate than with the artificial culture of sensibility and affectation. Moralists argued that the abuse of the non-naturals and dietary excess, led to a hypersensitivity to external stress that enfeebled the body and blemished the mind. In this context, Golinski sees the eighteenth-century’s claims about climatic vulnerability as claims about social change and moral “decline”.

It is not entirely clear whether the charges mounted against sensibility reflected social reality or ethical norms. It is a question whether this can be decided on textual grounds only. In political theory, Golinski explains in the last chapter, much thought went into how much, if at all, the rise of (European) civilization owed to its environmental idiosyncrasy. As colonial rule expanded the knowledge of “the other”, climate provided a tool to account for the observed differences in racial, moral and legal customs of world

peoples. In some instances, such explanations were self-serving but in others they dramatically reconceptualized the notion of the political, moving it away from an emphasis on protocolar forms of rule to material conditions of life. In particular, the manner in which contemporary scholars negotiated these issues on anthropological, physiological, and psychological grounds makes the weather and climate elements in the Enlightenment’s preoccupation with the definition of the individual, progress, nature, and plasticity of character.

More generally, argues Golinski, eighteenth-century reflections on the atmospheric environment mirrored a belief that human actions and identities remained entwined with the environment. Golinski wisely uses this premise as a corrective to readings of the Enlightenment as the source of today’s exploitation of nature. Even as modernity brought nature under limited control, he maintains, societies remained fragile in the face of environmental stress, the point which defines our own twenty-first-century predicament.

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Michelle Allen, *Cleansing the city: sanitary geographies in Victorian London*, Athens, Ohio University Press, 2008, pp. x, 225, illus., £34.50, \$49.95 (hardback 978-0-8214-1770-6), £17.50, \$24.95 (paperback 978-0-8214-1771-3).

With *Cleansing the city*, Michelle Allen contributes to the growing body of recent scholarship on the nineteenth-century sanitary movement in London and Victorian literature. Although much has been done over the last decades on this topic, Allen emphasizes the important and provocative point that sanitary reforms were fraught with ambivalence, not merely from those property owners resisting government interference in their affairs, as historians have long made clear, but also from