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it argues, lay at the heart of the political, religious, and cultural storm that reshaped Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century. After reading Mazzotti's book, it is very hard to disagree.

Amir Alexander

Amir Alexander is a historian of science at UCLA, working on the interconnections between mathematics and broader culture. His fifth book, Liberty's Grid (Chicago, 2024), relates how gridded mathematical space was key to the conception of America as a land of freedom.

Modern

Martin P. M. Weiss. *Showcasing Science: A History of Teylers Museum in the Nineteenth Century.* (History of Science and Scholarship in the Netherlands.) 368 pp., bibl., index. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019. €129 (cloth); ISBN 9789462982246. E-book available.

Teylers Museum in Haarlem, the Netherlands, is a remarkable establishment, having been in existence since 1784 and boasting a unique amalgam of collections, including a library, art, coinage, scientific instruments, geology, and paleontology. The museum was founded by the executors of the will of Pieter Teyler van der Hulst, a wealthy cloth salesman who bequeathed most of his money to the founding of two scientific societies and a home for the elderly. Over the course of the next century and a half, the museum was expanded significantly, though unfortunate investments in Russian railways led to a period of financial hardship after World War I. In the early 1980s, the Dutch state took over the museum, and it has since operated as both a “museum of a museum,” largely preserving the status quo of the 1930s, and as a venue for prominently marketed “blockbuster” art exhibitions featuring its own art collection and pieces borrowed from elsewhere.

More recently, the museum has begun to investigate its own past, and *Showcasing Science* is a result of that effort. Martin P. M. Weiss originally wrote it as a Ph.D. thesis about the museum's collection of scientific instruments and has managed to turn it into a comprehensive, yet highly readable, publication. Weiss largely focuses on the museum's years of wealth, ending at the death of the instrument collection's last dedicated curator, Nobel laureate Hendrik Antoon Lorentz, in 1928. However, it is impossible to describe part of Teyler's collections without also including the whole, particularly in the early years when an encyclopedic approach to knowledge was such an important tenet of the museum's philosophy. As a result, this book presents the most comprehensive history of the whole museum during its first century and a half.

Regarding the general development of the museum, a few threads stand out in Weiss's book. First is the development from a study hall in Teyler's old house to a museum concept, pushed by Martinus van Marum, the first director of the museum. Second is the development from the aforementioned integrative approach of the “Konsten” (a contemporary Dutch word encompassing both knowledge and art) toward greater specialization, albeit hesitatingly. Typically, the numerous extensions to the museum that were constructed throughout the nineteenth century were all dedicated to specific branches of knowledge or to art.

As a consequence, the art collection became something of an odd element in an otherwise science-oriented institution. Weiss explains how over time that art collection was what came to attract the largest number of visitors, and what this meant for other collections, in particular the instrument collection. Purchased by van Marum, but perennially underused, the museum took something of a gamble when it chose to preserve the collection as a historical artifact, “musealizing” it early in the nineteenth century, at a time when most similar institutions sold their instruments for scrap. This had far-reaching consequences for the way in which science was presented within the museum and caused an evolution from a social gathering

place of active participants of science to a location set up for a more passive public dissemination of scientific knowledge.

Weiss's narrative centers around three central figures: the museum's founder, van Marum (active years: 1784–1837); the curator who historicized the instrument collection, Volkert Simon Maarten van der Willigen (1865–1878); and the director during its waning years of scientific relevance, Hendrik Antoon Lorentz (1912–1928). Such a biographical approach is really mandated by the lack of institutional curatorial tradition at Teylers Museum. Curators tended to remain in office for long periods, usually up to their deaths, and consequently there was hardly any handover to the following generation. That led to some fairly abrupt changes of direction, the more so because Teylers remained mostly a museum of amateurs who gradually grew into their positions. A fairly typical example is that of Tiberius Winkler, a medical doctor who became the museum's curator of geology and paleontology despite no training in the subject and remained so for over forty years.

However, these three individuals were not the only ones that determined the fate of the museum's instrument collection. What Weiss excels at is the analysis of the interplay of this patchwork of savants and the way it determined shifting priorities throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One aspect that could use more attention is the performative side of the museum: how was the exhibition presented and why, and how did it attempt to "sell" itself to the public? Weiss's excellent book is by far the most extensive work dedicated to the early history of this remarkable museum, but it only serves to whet the appetite for more.

Ilja Nieuwland

Ilja Nieuwland (1970) is a researcher at the Huygens Institute, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, in Amsterdam. The author of American Dinosaur Abroad: A Cultural History of Carnegie's Plaster Diplodocus (Pittsburgh, 2019), he is mainly interested in the cultural history of science and the history of the representation of science.

Eric Herschthal. *The Science of Abolition: How Slaveholders Became the Enemies of Progress.* 344 pp., illus., notes, index. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2021. \$32.50 (cloth); ISBN 9780300236804. E-book available.

In *The Science of Abolition* Eric Herschthal critically examines the role men of science and their scientific ideas played in the anti-slavery movement before and during the antebellum period. Men of science argued that science, which was viewed as new technological inventions and agricultural tools that could alleviate the need for human labor, would make slavery obsolete. This narrative was conducted particularly by white abolitionists. Indeed, many white abolitionists depicted slavery and science as at odds with each other and the contradictions between the two as irreconcilable. They argued that when enslaved men became educated, they would no longer accept their conditions of servitude. They also hoped that the acquisition of knowledge would bring the masters and the slaves closer together. Later joined by their Black counterparts, white abolitionists intentionally and strategically portrayed slave owners as backward and opposed to modernity. Herschthal's underlying claim in this book is that the abolitionists' narrative was mainly an anti-slavery political strategy.

Herschthal analyzes a wide range of scientific knowledge, literary production, and political discourse, disseminated through the writings of many abolitionists before and during the antebellum period, to demonstrate the extent to which the abolitionists used science to legitimize their anti-slavery movement. He compellingly calls this "the science of abolition." Yet the promise that modern technologies of the time would make slavery obsolete often did not turn into reality. For example, the abolitionists argued that the invention of the plow would negate the need for slave labor or at least require significantly fewer slaves to accomplish the work. It was proven that a single plow could complete the work of more than forty enslaved