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Against Vivisection and Colonisation: Lab Animals and Interstellar Travel in Anglo-Latin Poetry of Oxford Students

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Filippo Morghen, *Land of the Moon*, Plate 3 (1764)

1660 marked the birth of modern science in England. The foundation of the Royal Society of London for the Improvement of Natural Knowledge by Experiment announced a new era, in which all of Nature's secrets would be revealed and explained. The chambers of the Royal Society, together with those of both universities, soon became sites for animal laboratory testing. However, the scientists' curiosity extended far beyond the inner workings of living organisms: the invention of the telescope sparked an intense interest in the habitability of other planets and prospects for future colonisation. University students were quick to seize on the poetical possibilities of such subjects. My talk will focus on two prize-winning poems by Oxford students, Nicholas L'Estrange and Francis Harding, whose verses embody the unease and scepticism with which these grand ambitions of science were received in certain quarters.