

## Book Reviews

crucial point made by Park, however, is that it was not the professionalization of medicine that led to “a system of medical practice sophisticated enough to meet the needs of the population as a whole”, but “At least in northern Italy, the institutional order of medical practice seems to have constituted itself more quickly than the profession and to have been less disrupted by the Black Death (p. 239).

The Guild of Doctors, Apothecaries and Grocers is central to the book. Park perhaps relies too much on the model of modern professions (from old-fashioned functionalist sociology) but, nevertheless, she demonstrates how the Florentine doctor was organized within a group that had much looser boundaries and greater inclusiveness than later North European counterparts. Empirics, bone-setters, poultice doctors, surgeons, as well as apothecaries and physicians, were included in the Guild. The work of Webster, Pelling, Porter, and others has indicated that in Britain the majority of medical practice lay outside of the regulatory reach of bodies such as the Royal College of Physicians. Park’s detailed and lucid account of the Guild shows that it incorporated in itself what British historians have described as “regular” and “irregular” practitioners. Clearly, some of the generalizations of proto-professionalization based on English and French examples will have to be drastically modified.

Park charts changes within the community of doctors. The Black Death and the perceived failure of medicine lowered its attraction as a career for the Florentine citizen. Immigrants from the Florentine countryside or from farther afield came to make up the numbers. This meant that fewer doctors had political influence within the Guild and the city. On the other hand, the apothecaries, who often employed doctors in their shops to prescribe their remedies, formed part of Florence’s oligarchic élite.

This book is much more than a history of an occupational group. Park brings constantly to her discussion of the employment, wealth, poverty, and geographical and social origins of doctors, a string of graphic examples drawn from the lives of individuals. She also looks for motivation and shows how references to *utile* and *onore*, *denari* and *fama*—money and reputation—were used by fathers to spur on sons and how, visions of today, a university career could bring in *onore* but seldom *denari*.

The book has some weaknesses, Park was perhaps too tied in to the Florentine research enterprise to free herself from the oldish view of social structure that seems to be the norm amongst her fellow historians; there should have been more comparisons with the rest of Italy and Europe, and more attention could have been paid to empirics. However, these are minor points. The book is outstanding in throwing light on a hidden area of medical history. It is also important because it shows how many different types of history can be effortlessly integrated: social, political, economic, individual, and also intellectual. Park’s account of the liveliness of scholastic medicine and of the intellectual and literary interests of Florentine doctors should be studied by some social and intellectual historians of medicine who see their respective approaches as having no common ground.

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OLIVER R. IMPEY and A. G. MACGREGOR, *The origins of museums*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985, 4to, pp. xiii, illus., £60.00.

Taking issue with Voltaire, Lynn White once concluded that history was a bag of tricks which the dead had played upon historians. White was appealing for more use to be made of non-literary sources—of so-called “material culture”—to avoid the writing of history only “as it was viewed by the small and specialized segments of our race who had the habit of scribbling”. But the material culture that formed the subject of the Ashmolean Museum’s tercentenary symposium in 1983—the curiosity cabinets, *Kunstkammern*, and *studioli* of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe—which were put together by small and specialized segments of our race who had the habit of collecting, scarcely provide us with a more egalitarian account of the past. And some of the cabinet collections would indeed seem to be veritable bags of tricks, defying the historian’s efforts in the manner of the best practical jokes.

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Material things are now the *raison d'être* of museology, but its practitioners, and general historians, find it hard to extract "history" from "things". The authors of the thirty-three papers in this volume only occasionally draw conclusions from those rarities that survive from the curiosity cabinets. Most use literary sources—inventories, catalogues, and contemporary descriptions—to compile accounts of major cabinets at their peak, and of major areas of collecting interest. These papers chronicle a fascinating record of collecting and display—a record of selective acquisition and rejection, which ought to be amenable to historical analysis and contextualization. Unfortunately, however, some authors offer no context at all for the delineation of collections, or of collecting interests. They are content with description and narrative. Most of those who do attempt analysis are concerned, not surprisingly in the face of such a diversity of artefacts, with elucidating an organizing principle. There is thus much discussion as to whether various cabinets were primarily "scientific" or aesthetic, were intended for artificialia or naturalia, were *Schatzkammern* or *Wunderkammern*.

The collections—the bags of tricks—however, repeatedly sabotage these attempts. Satisfied of the truly "scientific" nature of Peter the Great's intentions in forming a cabinet, Oleg Neverov is then at a loss to explain why it included his wife's executed lover's head in a bottle. Similarly, taxonomic characters subsequently discarded by disciplines which now have well-established classificatory systems get short shrift in some accounts. John Dixon Hunt, for instance, sees hints of "unscientific motives" in the division of a botanical garden into twelve plots named after the apostles. Elisabeth Scheicher considers that Archduke Ferdinand II's adherence to classification by material at Schloss Ambrass resulted in "the collapse of the cosmological scale of the whole", since it "inevitably ignored the evolution of the universe", and she finds the inclusion of both turned ivory objects and the arm-bone of an ancestor under "bone" anomalous. Inevitably, authors taking this approach have most difficulty in explaining the inclusion of the miraculous and the monstrous in collections. William Schupbach circumvents the problem by sympathetically allowing the collectors a fascination with "the old, the fragmentary and the enigmatic".

There are relatively few attempts in this volume, apart from the now customary interpretation of the cabinet collection as a world-mirroring device, to relate the phenomenon to wider currents of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century thought. Michael Hunter's treatment of the Royal Society's collection is an exception, suggesting links not only with the Society's classificatory efforts for the natural world but with their intended construction of a new, rational language.

The history of collections and collecting lacks a context. This volume, the most exhaustive study of the curiosity cabinet since von Schlosser's in 1908, will undoubtedly begin to create one. But, as the varied approach of the authors, and the wide-ranging bibliography indicate, the enterprise hovers uneasily between art history, whose main analytical traditions remain stylistic or iconographical, and the history of science, and the varied traditions which that subject now embraces. The interdisciplinary approach of this book is to be welcomed, but it is to be hoped that newer perspectives within the disciplines involved will not be ignored. There remains much work to be done on the order of things.

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WALTER PAGEL, *From Paracelsus to Van Helmont. Studies in Renaissance medicine and science*, edited by Marianne Winder, London, Variorum Reprints, 1986, 8vo, pp. xi, 350, illus., £32.00.

This is the second collection of essays by Walter Pagel collected into a volume of Variorum Reprints (the first being, *Religion and Neoplatonism in Renaissance medicine*, 1985). Like the earlier volume, it is edited by Marianne Winder and includes papers dating from the whole of Pagel's long career as a historian of medicine, specifically from 1931 to 1981. It includes two essay reviews and three articles which Pagel wrote in collaboration with other scholars: P. M. Rattansi, Marianne Winder, and J. J. Bylebyl. All of these pieces have a great deal to offer the historian of Renaissance and early-modern medical thinking but perhaps the most important are his essay on 'The reaction to Aristotle in seventeenth-century biological thought', his