Medicine Man: The Forgotten Museum of Henry Wellcome. Ken Arnold and Danielle Olsen, eds. London: The British Museum Press, 2003. 416 pp.

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Beautifully designed and printed on thick stock, *Medicine Man* is an exhibition catalog masquerading as an essay collection. It was published in conjunction with a British Museum display of artifacts collected by Henry Wellcome (1853–1936), which was mounted 150 years after his birth. The child of a clergyman, American-born and educated, Wellcome became fabulously wealthy after moving to London and founding a pharmaceutical company in partnership with Silas Mainville Burroughs (1846–1895). Burroughs-Wellcome prospered on the basis of such innovations as the "tabloid," the company's term for a drug pellet that standardized a dose of a given medicine. Wellcome's fortune gave him the means to collect a congeries of objects in quantities that are literally beyond measure, as well as to establish the Wellcome Trust, which, to this day, supports scientific research and scholarship in the history of medicine, as well as exhibition of material culture.

Wellcome acquired objects that were related to his three main intellectual interests—the history of medicine, anthropology, and archaeology. Presiding over archaeological excavations in the Sudan from 1910 to 1914, he was a direct participant in the accumulation of some of them. The range of his collection may be suggested by only a few examples: a Peruvian mummy, dating from around the 13th century; one of the Latin versions of the 15th century Nuremberg Chronicle of the history of the world; a 17th century birthing chair; a preserved fragment of skin taken from the body of Jeremy Bentham; Yoruba sculptures of twins; a photograph of pretty, conjoined twins who became entertainers in the early 20th century; a 19th century oil painting of no evident artistic merit by an unidentified Italian artist, showing a man being hit on the head by a flowerpot; diverse paintings portraying medical procedures; and many artificial body parts, including eyeballs, teeth, and limbs.

Like Wellcome's own collection, *Medicine Man* is not a thoroughly consistent product. Its six essays were not written to fit a standard scheme. In Ghislaine Lawrence's, probably the one of greatest

interest to readers of this journal, we are given the clearest (if not the only) of the book's descriptions of Wellcome's organizing principle for exhibition of anthropological artifacts: they were to be arranged to show how evolution progressed inexorably but very slowly. At any given time, modifications made in any given type of object were so slight as to be practically imperceptible, and museum displays designed to demonstrate this (following the model defined by Augustus Pitt Rivers in the mid-19th century) conveyed moral lessons about nature and culture.

Ruth Richardson's essay bemoans the lack of provenance of many of the items Wellcome collected. By way of compensation for her inability to explain what specific objects meant to their producers, Richardson reports how she herself reacts to them: a clay figurine from Roman Britain evokes "[t]he tenderness of pregnancy" (p. 330), for example, and "poignant evidences of sufferers' discomfort" are revealed in general design features and personal modifications of artificial limbs (p. 338f) Chris Gosden describes how contemporary archaeologists think before turning to Wellcome's own practices in the field. These included running his Sudanese archaeological digs as welfare schemes, in which every local person who wished to work was hired on the condition that he abstain from alcohol. Moreover, Wellcome prized ordinary objects, routinely used, more than those of extraordinary beauty (as he consistently did, while acquiring all manner of things). And John Pickstone contributes a broad survey of the history of science, technology and medicine, which merely uses Wellcome's holdings as its source of illustrations.

Its cover copy reports that *Medicine Man* has "more than 500 illustrations." Viewed in the aggregate, they suit one of Wellcome's objectives (although they are not arranged to convey the evolutionary views to which he subscribed); to us, they are curiosities, but they are for the most part tokens of ordinary lives. Thus, they allow us to see that "the past is a foreign country," as L.P. Hartley famously observed. But the authors of the book's essays are not joined in a common purpose; no single reader is likely to find all of the essays equally congenial in style or substance.

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