



# The Phantom Museum: And Henry Wellcome's Collection of Medical Curiosities

*Peter Blegvad, A. S. Byatt, Helen Cleary*

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Businessman and philanthropist Sir Henry Wellcome—co-founder of Burroughs Wellcome & Co., one of the first giant pharmaceutical companies—was fascinated by anthropology and the history of medicine. His great ambition was to trace the story of the human body, in sickness and in health, through the entire sweep of history. By the time he died in 1936, he had built up one of the largest and most extraordinary museum collections in the world. Estimated to be five times the size of the Louvre, his collection is now scattered among a hundred institutions, including the Wellcome Trust, the British Museum, and the Science Museum in London. Beautiful, mysterious, and often disturbing, the objects Wellcome collected range from the ancient to the magical, the religious to the scientific. *The Phantom Museum* offers some personal responses to this vast but little-known collection. Playful and thought-provoking contributions combine text and images, fact and fiction, to consider how objects can be read depending on who views them and when.

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