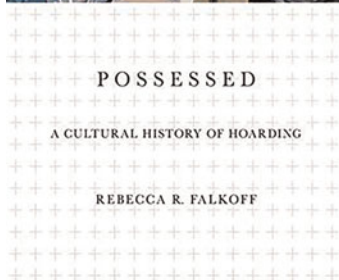


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge and Femi Oyeboode

**Possessed: A Cultural History of Hoarding**By Rebecca R. Falkoff
Cornell University Press. 2021.
£14.99 (pb). 270 pp.
ISBN 9781501752803

This is a masterly and authoritative exposition of the social history and popular culture of hoarding behaviour. Falkoff has personal investment in the subject matter, as both her paternal grandmother and father are hoarders. When her grandmother, Fontaine, died, there was need to lease a 40-yard garbage lorry to clear out the detritus of her life. The family found 'a rattlesnake's rattle and 17th century ecclesiastical books; stacks indiscriminate with junk mail and stock certificates; decomposing vermin and rotting food buried under creaky antiques'.

The opening chapter introduces the Collyers, brothers Langley and Homer, who lived on Fifth Avenue, New York. On their death in 1947, 140 tons of combustible material had to be removed from their mansion, including 14 pianos, rugs, furniture, clocks, toys, musical instruments, pictures, linen and clothing. Their story has inspired several accounts, including E. L. Doctorow's *Homer and Langley*. The Collyers showed what will be recognised by psychiatrists as Diogenes syndrome and described in DSM-5 as hoarding disorder. What Falkoff does, and does superbly well, is to widen the ambit of hoarding to include not merely the recognisable behaviour, but also the relationships of hoarding to the extraordinary personal collection of books (bibliomania), the rise of flea markets and the use of the symbolism of hoarding in, for example, Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories. She also deals with the centrality of notions of waste in modern society and the natural response to conserve and to collect. Here, Falkoff identifies newspapers as objects that are ubiquitous in hoards and psychiatrists who have seen cases will testify to this too. The paradox is that newspapers are true examples of ephemera. They have negligible exchange value despite being material objects with text and are easily discarded yet they feature in hoards.

I had not fully grasped the relationship between hoarding behaviour and the collection of books. I suppose because I had associated hoarding with the collection of useless objects that are often dirty if not decomposing organic matter. But the example of Antoine-Marie-Henri Boulard, who collected

600 000 volumes in his six-storey Paris home, and for whom collecting became a daily habit of wandering to bookstalls and stores and never returning without buying a book, opened my eyes. His collection of books became indistinguishable from one another and were piled in precarious towers like building blocks.

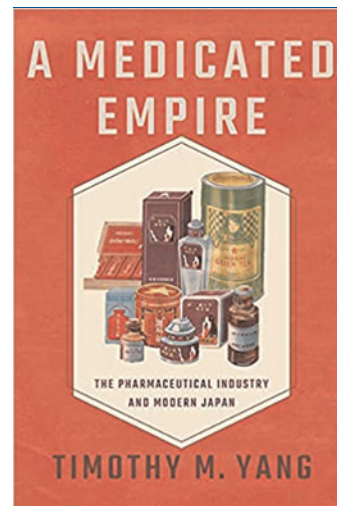
Falkoff appeals to Freud and psychoanalysis, to Foucault and Derrida, but ignores the role of organic brain disease in causation. So, there is no mention of the role of behavioural variant frontotemporal dementia, or of how decline in self-care and self-awareness are mediated by impairments of frontal activity nor of the place of impairment of disgust recognition and processing in hoarding behaviour. Nonetheless, this is a major scholarly achievement that deals with an important subject in a thoughtful and thorough manner.

Declaration of interest

None.

Femi Oyeboode , University of Birmingham, UK. Email: femi_oyeboode@msn.com

doi:10.1192/bjp.2022.70

**A Medicated Empire: The Pharmaceutical Industry and Modern Japan**By Timothy M. Yang
Cornell University Press. 2021.
£44 (hb). 354 pp.
ISBN 9781501756252

Timothy M. Yang's *Medicated Empire: The Pharmaceutical Industry and Modern Japan* offers a history of opium in the Japanese Empire in the first half of the twentieth century. Opium in this book is regarded more as a business opportunity, and the book explores the politics of the modern pharmaceutical industry in Japan. Medicine and pharmacy were strongly connected with politics and the market in a quickly modernising country.

An introduction, epilogue and eight chapters make this book historically solid, and references to cultural theories provide inspiration. It is also visually interesting, with more than 20 figures from the advertisements of newspapers, journals and posters in Japan, Taiwan, Korea and Manchukuo. The most important material comes from the archives of Hoshi Pharmaceuticals, which was created by Hoshi Hajime (1873–1951) in 1906. Drugs were not merely medicine; they were commodities which were important in the modernisation of Japan and international trade based in East Asia, Peru, the Dutch East Indies, the USA and other areas. The commodities created images in the market that shaped modern bodies; the point here is that they worked without