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Peter Miller. *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000. xvi + 234 pp. $40.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-08252-4.

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Academics facing the harsh discipline of "publish or perish" may be amused to learn that in Europe during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries there lived a scholar whose reputation for learning and accomplishment spanned the continent, even though he never published a thing. The fame of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580-1637) was built on a substantial written correspondence, a few long and very sociable voyages to northern and southern Europe, and frequent personal contacts at his home, conveniently located in the Rhone valley along popular trade routes. It also helped that he was a lawyer by training and held important posts in the Parlement of Provence, in keeping with the Peiresc family tradition. Gassendi, his first biographer, dubbed Peiresc "Prince of the Republic of Letters." Fifty years later, Bayle preferred an unmixed metaphor: "Attorney General of the Republic of Letters." Peter Miller's book is neither a biography of Peiresc nor a study of the many fields of knowledge in which he toiled, though it covers much material that would be found in either one of those types of work. For Miller, Peiresc is the presumptive dean of the late Humanist antiquaries, scholars dedicated to the recovery and systematic description of the full range of artifacts of past human societies. In Miller's very capable hands, Peiresc's life's work is a window into an important phase in European learned culture, a phase which peaked just as Peiresc was growing old, and which passed into oblivion soon after his death.

Peiresc's interests spanned the divide between natural philosophy and "book learning." Peiresc aspired toward a science that was universal, very much like his intellectual hero Francis Bacon. In pursuit of his vision of a universal science, Peiresc, like his friends Guillaume du Vair and Jacques-August de Thou, strove to amass a collection of physical and empirical data on the past that was truly staggering in size and breadth. Peiresc studied numismatics, epigraphy, musicology, classical philology, zoology, astronomy, and many other fields. He was also a tireless and expert collector; Peiresc's "Treasury and Shop of Antiquities" was the envy of all Europe and a magnet for visitors to his home. But Peiresc's capacious learning and immense collection were no gentleman's eccentricities. In fact, he fought hard against the vulgar-

ization of antiquarianism that by the early seventeenth century was propelling hordes of fashionable gentlemen south to Italy on buying sprees. Peiresc sought a less tangible goal than those dilettantes. According to Miller, Peiresc was trying to live a life in which learning and virtue were fully integrated and mutually reinforcing, a life dedicated to the advancement of knowledge for the social good.

At the heart of that life vision was the fusion of a model of scholarly excellence with a practice of sociability, both elements rooted in neo-Stoicism. The vision was given one of its most loving treatments by Gassendi in his *Life of Peiresc* (Latin edition, 1641). Gassendi praised Peiresc above all for his beneficence, his unwavering and bountiful generosity towards other scholars. He gave freely of his time in answering questions and following up on fellow scholars' inquiries. He gave freely of his possessions as well, sending archeological and other types of objects from his collection to destinations all over Europe and beyond, often simply to provide someone with the opportunity to have a look. For Gassendi, as for Miller, Peiresc's beneficence was a quality intrinsically linked to his scholarship and learning. The Perieskean project was the acquisition of knowledge to build a more perfectly ordered society and a more informed conception of self and friends. What strikes the contemporary reader as so strange about this vision is not its goal (for that seems remarkably modern), but that it impelled its practitioners toward the acquisition of mind-numbingly immense quantities of historical fact of every variety. Along the way to describing the contours of Peiresc's world, Miller offers some valuable insights into this most perplexing phase in European intellectual history.

There are five chapters to Miller's book, each one focused on a different aspect of Peiresc's relation to the learned community and to the scholarly disciplines he followed. For example, in one chapter Peiresc's life is set against the models of excellence he inherited from literary sources like Cicero and Montaigne, and sources more direct, such as Guillaume de Vair, Peiresc's personal mentor and life-long friend. In another, Miller explores one of the principal goals of Peiresc's antiquarian research: the legitimating of the French constitution through a perfected history of the Gauls and Franks. In a third, Miller surveys Peiresc's theological identity, placing him in relation to the great conflict between Stoic and Augustinian anthropologies. By organizing his material this way, Miller strikes a delicate balance between a traditional history of ideas and the more up-to-date methods of contextualized intellectual history. His method enables him to tie together copious amounts of cultural detail into a coherent whole, with Peiresc keeping always at the center. The works (though not the lives) of figures as diverse as the ecclesiastical historian Paolo Sarpi, the missionary Matteo Ricci, and the salonniere-turned-Christian booster Guez de Balzac all receive sympathetic, deft, and informative treatments. Miller is well versed in the best scholarship on each of the themes he treats, and is especially indebted to Arnaldo Momigliano, Marc Fumaroli, and Anthony Grafton. His treatment of works by those historians, and others, is in the laudatory, not the critical mode; rather than question other scholars' interpretations he extends or enriches them.

Miller's synthesis of the biographical and monographical forms has its price, of course, in terms of the depth he is able to go in exploring any one of the many issues he addresses, but it is an honest and deliberate trade-off. In a sense, Miller takes on some of the attributes of his subject: he recreates the lost world of Peiresc's antiquaries by amassing details from diverse areas of their activity and presenting these details in the form of a systematic description. His relation to fellow scholars is also Peireskean, and perhaps excessively so. The host of historians who appear in Miller's text and its voluminous footnotes are borrowed from, referred to, duly noted, and sincerely praised, but never challenged. The reader who looks for scholarly disagreements and sees them as means of sharpening interpretations will be disappointed here.

According to Miller, the goals of Peiresc's antiquarian science were (1) to provide France and Europe with a perfected history and thus facilitate a stable and just peace between conflicting institutions; (2) to encourage cooperation, communication, and mutual respect through shared intellectual pursuit, (3) to humble the pride of contemporaries by putting them face-to-face with the immensity of human accomplishment, the vast destructive power of time, and the unfathomable power of God.

This last element is perhaps the most striking theme of Miller's book and of Peiresc's conception of learning. The antiquarians' ultimate purpose in learning so much, evidently, was to remind themselves how little they truly knew. The sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were tumultuous and confusing times to be alive in Europe. The upheaval in religion, and the breakdown of political order and civil society in so many countries, pushed many sensitive souls to turn inward and seek peace and stability in domains, like learning, where con-

tinuity was more easily discerned. Peiresc and his fellow antiquaries did not abandon the public roles which many of them were born to play, but neither did they seem to have anything but modest rehabilitative, remedial political goals. In Miller's reading, the antiquaries' heroic effort at collection, categorization and description ultimately justified itself as a warning to present and future generations: halt the trend of social disintegration and political conflict or you shall become like countless past peoples, overwhelmed by their enemies, by the force of natural decay, by time itself. Later historians such as Voltaire and Gibbon derided the antiquaries for their mania for facts and their lack of ideas and analysis, but Miller shows how those Enlightenment historians owed a debt to the antiquaries for having expanded the range of useful sources. More importantly, Miller shows us how we in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, historicist all to some extent, owe the antiquaries our passion for recovering, in thought at least, the past "as it really was."

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