

Book Reviews

sometimes meagre, this is because the descriptions were probably sent to the consultant and were not written by him. Consultants compensated for this by attempting to explain every phenomenon connected with the illness and, when unable to give complete descriptions of diseases, by relying on doctrine and experience. It is the tempering of established doctrine with contemporary developments and personal observation that is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the consultations. For example, iatrophysical and iatrochemical ideas were used to revise Greek concepts of humoral harmony. Likewise, with regard to Albertini, weakness in contemporary physical and supplementary chemical diagnosis was partially made up for by experience gained at autopsy. Also striking is the occasional expression of doubt regarding the efficacy of prescribed remedies and, in one case, the recommended use of a placebo, or "some apparent remedy that is at least harmless if not useful, since God, the weather, and the very nature of things changes matters, as sometimes happens, to our consternation" (p. 26).

This ably translated collection is thus a useful and intriguing work of reference, and Jarcho's introduction, notes, and index are detailed and informative.

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COLIN JONES, *The charitable imperative: hospitals and nursing in ancien régime and Revolutionary France*, The Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine, London and New York, Routledge, 1989, pp. xiii, 317, £35.00 (0-415-02133-2).

In recent years, studies of medicine in *ancien régime* France have presented us with the image of a radical transformation of the role of the hospital. From the late eighteenth century, under the pressure of new ideas about the practice and teaching of medicine and the ambitions of the rising medical profession, the hospital allegedly shifted from a shelter aimed at the relief of various categories of the needy to a medical institution primarily devoted to the treatment of the sick and to the education and training of medical students. A challenge to this unproblematic picture of "medicalization" is the core of Colin Jones's book. Arguing that historians have restricted their analysis to changes at the level of medical ideas and aspirations of medical men, and have assumed that practices in the hospital changed accordingly, Jones focuses on what was actually going on in the hospital. He also points out the exceptionality of the well-worn case of the Parisian *Hôtel-Dieu*, turning instead to the under-explored provincial hospitals. He revises the medicalization argument through a critical reconsideration of the usual variables employed to assess the level of medical identity of the hospital. Jones shows that, despite the establishment of separate institutions for the relief of the poor (the *Hôpitaux Généraux*) in the seventeenth century, the clientele of the *Hôtels-Dieu* continued to be largely constituted by the poor, migrants, and homeless, looking for relief and rest, rather than by the clinically sick. However, this is not presented as a failure of the hospital to perform its medical role, but as a result of a definition of illness which embraced physical exertion deriving from labour, travelling or exposure to harsh weather. In this context the treatment that the religious personnel running the hospital dispensed, based on plenty of food and the opportunity to rest, appears not so unreasonable as doctors tried to suggest. The author is thus well aware of the anachronisms implicit in the distinctions between poverty and disease, or cure and care, on which the notion of medicalization widely relies. Another element, usually regarded as crucial in the transformation of the hospital into a health-factory, is the involvement of medical men in its management. Jones argues, however, that the growth of attendance by surgeons, physicians, and medical apprentices, from the mid-seventeenth century, cannot be taken as evidence for their control over the hospital. The authority of the doctor was challenged above all by the nursing staff (made up of women who had committed their life to the care of the sick under a religious rule), who succeeded in maintaining their formidable grip on hospital administration for most of the nineteenth century. In the central part of the book, Jones brings to light the key role performed by these communities of women within the system of medical provision (they controlled admissions, performed surgery, ran the pharmacy). Usually seen with condescension, and neglected by historians of medicine, the nursing sisters are fully restored,

Book Reviews

here, to the status of medical practitioners they were granted at the time. Sceptical of the claim of doctors to a superior skill, Jones presents the conflict as one of power and gender, rather than as a clash between science and superstition

Beside filling a wide gap in our knowledge of the historical reality of hospitals, the book is a major contribution to the reassessment of prevailing assumptions about the development of medicine in *ancien régime* and Revolutionary France. It shows that the growth of the influence of medical men did not follow a smooth and unbroken path, and it emphasizes, by contrast, the multiple functions embodied in the hospital. As demonstrated in the last part of the book, by the case studies of the institutions for the insane and the prostitute, the hospital was for a long time submitted to the needs of public order, and concerned with the preservation of families' reputations and the obligations of charity. Moreover, views about the status of medical men and state support for the profession did not follow linear trajectories but swung up and down considerably, as the third case study, devoted to military hospital and doctors, clearly indicates. Finally, "external" factors, like the economic crisis of the late eighteenth century and the changing ideas about war, heavily influenced the evolution of the hospital. Jones's ability to link the development of medicine with more general historical trends, and to deal confidently with the changing profile of French society are remarkable features, not always common among historians of medicine, of this book.

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JOHN WILTSHIRE, *Samuel Johnson in the medical world: the doctor and the patient*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. x, 293, £30.00, \$39.50 (0-521-38326-9).

With the current revival of interest in eighteenth-century medicine, and the new accent upon examining medical relations from the sufferer's point of view, one book has clearly demanded to be written—a medical life of that great "dabbler in physick", Samuel Johnson, for surely no Georgian was so deeply immersed in medical matters in such a wide variety of ways. We are fortunate that this task has been undertaken by so shrewd and sympathetic a scholar as the literary historian, John Wiltshire.

Sickness attended the lexicographer from cradle to grave. From the time his mother fetched him to the capital to be touched by Queen Anne for the King's Evil, through his protracted depressions, his gout, his stroke, and the respiratory and dropsical disorders which made his last years so wretched, Johnson's own existence was rarely free of pain and the menace of incapacity, mental or physical. His father's Lichfield home had been full of doctors and medical books. Johnson himself was to install the irregular practitioner, Robert Levet, in his own London household, partly to care for his private hospital of ailing lodgers like the blind Mrs Williams; and he cultivated warm, if not always unruffled, relations with a notable circle of medical friends, early on his fellow Lichfieldian, Robert James (of fever powder fame), and later Thomas Lawrence, William Heberden, and Richard Brocklesby. Johnson moreover published on a wide range of medical subjects, most memorably, as Wiltshire rightly insists, a stinging attack on callous vivisectors and a crushing critique of the theodicy advanced by Soame Jenyns that purported to explain why diseases were all for the best in the best of all possible worlds. Johnson energetically diagnosed and prescribed for such friends as Henry and Hester Thrale—and Boswell too!; and he constantly monitored his own health, physical and mental, debated it with his doctors, and frequently bullied them into accepting his own preferred interpretations and therapeutics. Most of these aspects of his preoccupations with maladies and medicine have, of course, already been the subject of specialized studies: Wiltshire's achievement lies in having produced a measured and convincing portrait of Johnson as both a type—the educated Georgian layman who, according to Nicholas Jewson's account, would expect to be a partner to his physicians and not merely a patient—and as a unique individual, fearful of opiates lest they erode the rational will, constantly anxious lest "the physick of charity" numb the awareness of Christian duty, terrified of death, and possessed of a heroic, even superstitious, faith in desperate remedies.