

Book Reviews

volume by Vincent Barras and Louis-Courvoisier, *La médecine des lumières* (2000), a study of the famous Lausanne physician Samuel-André-Auguste-David Tissot.

The revival of interest in an individual such as Jurine is thus symptomatic of a recent surge of activity in the history of Swiss French medicine. Although contributors acknowledge that Jurine's fame during his lifetime was a product of his surgical expertise, the majority of the papers treat Jurine's natural historical work, ranging from meticulous studies of his collection and the role of systematics in his classificatory work to individual treatments of specific fields of interest, from bats, insects, freshwater crustaceans and fish to the formation of mountains and monsters. Jurine is revealed as a successor to a natural historical tradition of painstaking experimental and observational practice, begun in Geneva by Charles Bonnet, in which the study of animal design and function revealed Providential forethought, economy and harmony. Marc Ratcliff argues that Jurine's model of function was closer to that shared by eighteenth-century medical practitioners than to the new comparative anatomy of Cuvier and Parisian naturalists. René Sigrist and Patrick Bungener show that he differed from such individuals in other ways—rather than adopting the natural method wholeheartedly, he continued to view debates over classification in operational terms, with a pragmatic caution about systems and theories. His diversity as a naturalist was supported both by his skill as a dissector, acquired in surgical training, and by the artistic assistance of his daughter Christine.

The contributors are at pains to remark that their enterprise is not one of restoring Jurine to a rightful place in the history of Swiss medicine. Rather, they ask why Jurine's fame declined so rapidly, and raise the question of how Jurine's different experimental, practical and theoretical enterprises interrelated. Here, however, I felt

that the exclusive focus on Jurine tended to undermine the explicit purpose of the joint project, by allotting insufficient attention to Jurine's dependency on networks of clients, scientific peers, and particular social groups. Jurine's public life during this period, which encompassed intense upheaval and revolution as Geneva's sovereignty shifted during the 1790s and 1800s, is rapidly passed over with the comment that the surgeon was not very politically active. As a result, the dramatic effects that such shifts could have upon the possibilities opening up for someone like Jurine in this period—a *bourgeois* rather than a patrician member of the oligarchy, a surgeon rather than a high-status physician—are under-emphasized. An opportunity is thereby lost of documenting the relations between scientific or medical status, political transformation and the production of the history of medicine and science. The reasons for Jurine's changing reputation should be sought not in his own pronouncements but in a broader story of the respective status of surgery, medicine and natural history. Jurine's transformation of surgical wealth into natural historical specimens, of surgical skill into natural historical expertise and fame, is however only obliquely addressed in the volume. This not insignificant example shows that this book raises unanswered questions in the history of eighteenth-century science and medicine.

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Silvano Montaldo, *Medici e società. Bartolomeo Sella nel Piemonte dell'ottocento*, publication of Comitato di Torini dell'Istituto per la Storia del Risorgimento Italiana, Turin, Carocci Editore, 1998, pp. 360 (paperback 88-430-1091-3).

Bartolomeo Sella (1776–1829) spent his medical career in the commune of Mosso

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Santa Maria, in the province of Biella, an Alpine valley in the Piedmont. But this provincial physician lived at a crossroads, geographically, historically and intellectually. Between Italy and France, between Revolution and Restoration, between Enlightenment and Positivism, Sella fully engaged in all of these currents in his time. The son of a well-known and wealthy local family, Sella's role in the community was more prominent than that of the usual local physician. In this excellent study, Silvano Montaldo exploits a trove of manuscript materials, including letters and local documents, to explore Sella's life and times amid the turbulent setting of Napoleonic Piedmont.

Montaldo investigates four aspects of a medical life in this era. The first section of the book looks at the intellectual setting. From the particulars of Sella's family background, Montaldo moves on to a broader look at the intellectual background of Torino and Pavia, the major intellectual centres of the Piedmont. This corner of Italy, Switzerland and Savoy was a centre of Jansenist thought, and Montaldo explains how Sella's particular intellectual background, which included Jansenism, freemasonry, and Enlightenment science, against the political upheaval of the French Revolution, led him to "scientific Jacobinism". This combined materialism, anticlericalism, political radicalism, and civic engagement with the idea that science—in this case medical science—could be a force for social reform. At the medical faculty in Pavia, Sella encountered the ideas of both John Brown and Johann Peter Frank, as well as a heady mixture of political and philosophical ideas. Montaldo makes two important points: that there were considerable regional differences in scientific thought in this period, and that the ambition of medical science to reform society did not die with the restoration of the monarchy in 1814.

In the second section of his book, Montaldo looks at Sella's particular social

and political life in Mosso. Elected president of the commune in 1808, Sella became a "*notabile*" and used his power and influence—which extended long after the Napoleonic era—to advance reformist goals in public health and sanitation. But his liberal views also led to conflict within his family.

The third and fourth sections of the book deal with Sella's medical practice. Here we see fully the intersection, or maybe collision, between Enlightenment science and traditional culture, the development of the "medicalization" of modern society and the role of the physician in the process of modernization. As an élite physician, Sella's clientele included, as we might expect, the upper classes and the bourgeoisie, but he was also, by custom and by conviction, obligated to care for the poor as well. The manuscript *Cartolario* of Sella's prescriptions is used to give an excellent insight into his everyday practice, and bears comparison with the work of Gianna Pomata, David Gentilcore, and Barbara Duden for an earlier period, as well as to Matthew Ramsey's work on France. The changing role of Christianity and the role of popular and folkloric medicine are well integrated into Montaldo's analysis and his chapter on sexuality and marriage is especially good.

Montaldo's account of Bartolomeo Sella adds some important qualifications to the historiographical model of medical professionalization, which has stressed changes in medical education and theory as the most important factors. Montaldo's close attention to the local setting reveals that the culture and economic system of the community also have much to do with the physician's role and influence at the local level. It is to be hoped that this important book will be translated into English to reach a wider readership.

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