

Book Reviews

The standard of scholarly accuracy is high, although it is a pity that the biographical entries do not attempt substantial listings of authors' publications, and that the amount of reference to modern scholarship in the little bibliographies appended to the articles is rather slight. Thus (to take one example) the entry on the York Retreat—a perfectly sensible summary—refers us to Samuel Tuke's *Description of the Retreat* (1813) but to nothing more recent.

The first yardstick of success in a volume of this kind is inevitably: does one find what one is looking for? Here, some areas of the subject are notably better covered than others. People seem better served than concepts. Thus there is a good paragraph on Morel, another on Moreau de Tours, and one even on Thomas More, whose observations on Bethlem are nicely discussed. Yet there is no entry at all on Moral Therapy—surely one of the cardinal concepts of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century psychiatry—and the insertion on Moral Insanity is oddly perfunctory. But even with people the balance can be rather hit and miss. When Simon Forman gets half a page and George Fordyce a substantial paragraph, it is hard to see how David Ferrier can with justice be dismissed in four lines.

The second criterion may be: does one find what one isn't looking for but which is valuable and stimulating all the same? Here these volumes really score. This is precisely the kind of reference work which it is a pleasure to browse because it contains the unexpected (the feeling is, on occasion, not unlike the delight of coming up against quaint lore in Burton). Above all, these volumes constitute a gallery of the great abnormals. The authors have filled their pages with mad geniuses, depressives, self-mortifying saints, and the like. Arthur Schnitzler occupies the same spread as Arthur Schopenhauer and Daniel Schreber, just as the Wild Boy of Salvador is to be found on top of Oscar Wilde. If this enterprise is little concerned with recent trends in interpreting the history of abnormal psychology, it remains a mine of information nevertheless.

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JOHN WILDS, *Ochsner's. An informal history of the South's largest private medical center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and London, Louisiana State University Press, 1985, pp. x, 256, illus., £22.50.*

In 1942, four Tulane medical professors joined Alton Ochsner in founding the Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans. The Mayo, Cleveland, and Lahey Clinics were already well-established but most American medical practice was organized (especially in the South) on a solo basis. Ochsner and his colleagues were immediately opposed by local practitioners who rightly feared that they would drain custom. Two years later the group established the Ochsner Foundation, as a charity to run a hospital, support research and teaching, but above all to be a vehicle for fund-raising.

The expansion of health insurance as a fringe benefit of collective labour bargaining after the Second World War, followed in the 1960s by the introduction of Medicare and Medicaid, stimulated the growth of the Ochsner Medical Center. Power and recompense were at first concentrated in the hands of the founders. In each successive decade, staff doctors fought for an expansion of control, and the partnership widened. This never extended to include lay administrators and a significant level of lay/professional distrust always existed.

The levels of service at Ochsner's were not uniform: charity patients could not expect quite the same as fee-paying patients. Nor did the Center actively seek black patients, segregating them before Civil Rights legislation. It was not until 1978 that there was a black doctor on the staff. There were few women on the staff, and, in fact, in 1955 one of the founders (when trying to strengthen the Clinic's reputation) urged that women staff doctors should only see female patients.

John Wilds, a New Orleans journalist, does not aim at academic historical analysis. He gives no footnotes and he often sees the medicine in a rather heroic light. However, his journalist's eye for politics, personality, and power is acute, and his story—largely based on interviews—is well told. He successfully explains why the Center prospered—relating little of it to actual medical practice—and portrays its uneasy relationship with the rest of New Orleans medical life.

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