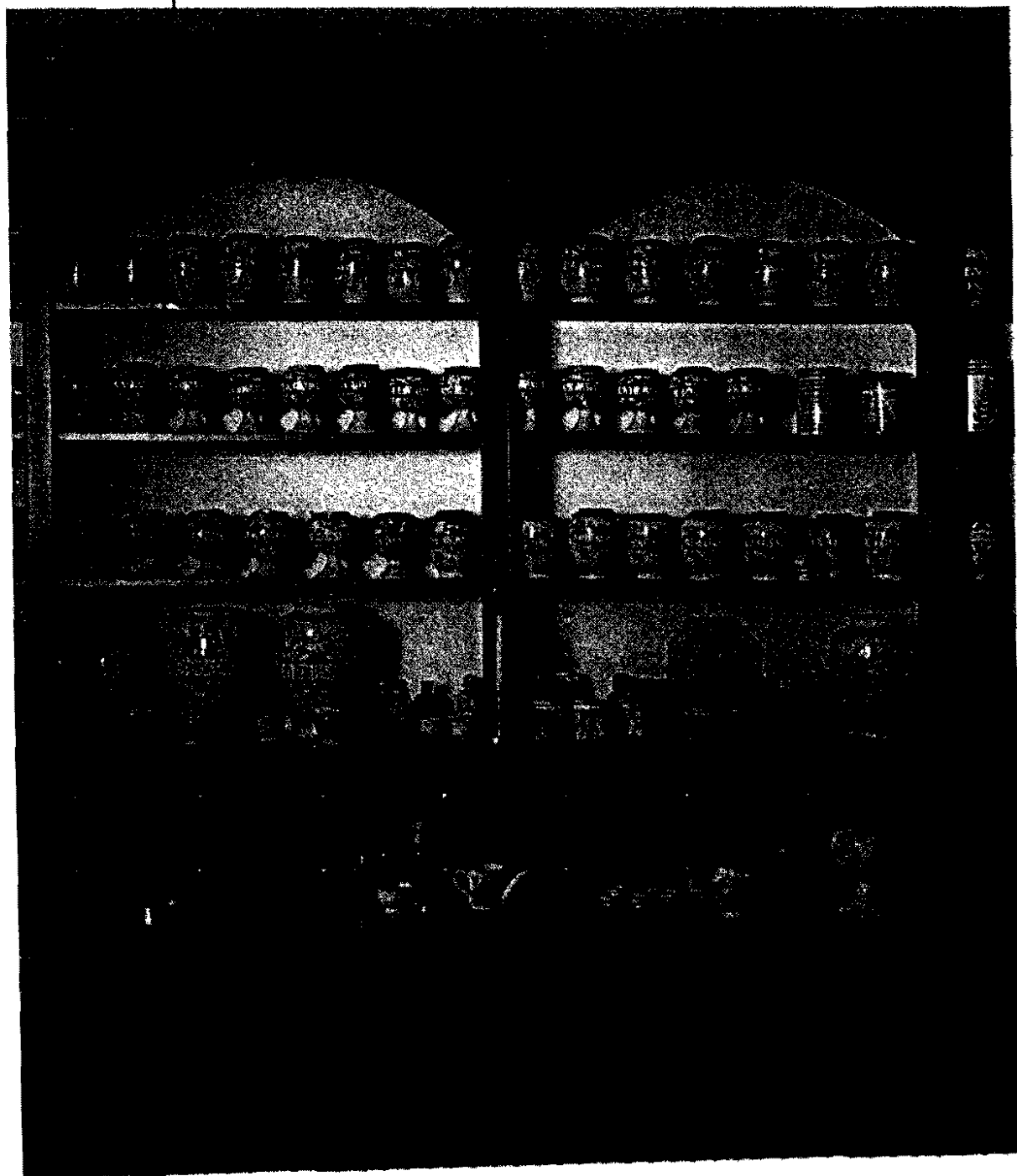


Review: Patton's *Physicians*  
Winter 1997 / Volume 71 / Number 4

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# Bulletin of the History of Medicine

The American Association for the History of Medicine  
The Johns Hopkins Institute of the History of Medicine



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*Cover:* Interior of the Pasteur and Galt Apothecary Shop (neg. #C92-9). William Pasteur, a surgeon, opened the shop in 1769. In 1775 he was joined by John M. Galt, who had diplomas in surgery, anatomy, general medicine, and midwifery. They operated the shop as partners for three years, from 1778 to 1808, Galt remained as sole proprietor. Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia.

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# Bulletin of the History of Medicine

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anyone interested in the history of public health, state medicine, or the social history of disease.

Carol Benedict  
Georgetown University

Adell Patton, Jr. *Physicians, Colonial Racism, and Diaspora in West Africa*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996. xx + 343 pp. Ill. \$49.95.

Historians of Africa have long been aware of the racial discrimination faced by African physicians in colonial medical institutions, but Adell Patton, Jr., has done the field a major service with this massively researched inquiry. Using archives from four countries and a number of interviews, he follows the consequences of colonial arrangements in the life histories of a number of sub-Saharan West African physicians. Patton's study is restricted to Anglophone countries, and one hopes that his example will inspire similar studies of physicians in the Francophone colonies.

Patton convincingly demonstrates several major patterns. By the mid-nineteenth century, fledgling European colonial enterprises faced a shortage of medical personnel and therefore encouraged Africans to seek medical training in Europe. In the late decades of the century, with the concurrent rise of formal colonialism and scientific racism, new policies restricting the authority of African physicians were enacted. The reaction was in full swing by the turn of the century, when Africans were formally prohibited from being employed in the new West African Medical Staff—a service that was paid for by taxes on West Africans. African physicians trained in Western countries increasingly faced a number of other affronts. For example, they were not permitted to give orders to a European physician, even one with lesser educational attainment. Patton shows that many African physicians therefore became politicized upon their return to the colony. Medicine was one of the few professions that provided an independent livelihood, and this further allowed physicians to channel their political discontent into leadership in anticolonial activities. In the final chapter, Patton traces the careers of a number of African physicians trained in the Soviet Union after World War II: the Soviet Union fostered a medical education that was more strictly specialized than that of Western Europe, and as a result these Africans practiced with an outlook different from that of many of their earlier-trained compatriots.

Patton's occasional discussions of indigenous African medical systems are less compelling. The early chapters contain some description, based on secondary sources, of ancient Egyptian medicine, but the relevance of this material is unclear given his claim that this tradition had no impact south of the Sahara (p. 48). Traditional healers have an important background role in this study, since their practices have been a continual source of competition for Western-trained

physicians; Patton dismisses traditional healers throughout as "unscientific," without engaging the literature on the efficacy of traditional medicines. But these are minor thienes. As a study of Western-trained African physicians, *Physicians, Colonial Racism, and Diaspora* is a much-needed contribution to African medical history and to the comparative study of professions.

Jonathan Sadowsky  
Case Western Reserve University

Anne Harrington. *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. xxiv + 309 pp. Ill. \$39.50; £29.95.

Over the past decade scholarly focus on Nazi atrocities, medical and otherwise, has reached a consensus that at the core of this racist madness lay the concept of a "biocracy." That is, to the Nazis the ideal state and society was one governed by and for the "German master race."

Implicit to this scholarship has been a shared assumption that part of the blame for these Nazi attitudes must be borne by the doctrine of holism and the role it played in the German life sciences. Holism itself was the notion that life was more than a mere interplay between physical and chemical forces—that in the capacity of damaged organs and organisms to regenerate, or at least partially resume function, or in the color and variety that constituted life, there was more than mere mechanism at work. More, holism had a history that went back to Plato and a method that had been reinforced by Germany's greatest literary figure, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who in his day had been an ardent participant in scientific investigation and speculation. Finally, the fact that during the Nazi era holistic approaches to medicine and health enjoyed support from some of the Nazi party's more notorious paladins—Rudolf Hess, Julius Streicher, and Gerhard Wagner, the head of the German Physicians League—helped reinforce the sentiment that holism bore a disproportionate share of the cultural guilt for some of the worst excesses of Hitler's racial state.

It is the merit of Professor Harrington's sophisticated, challenging, superbly researched, and well-written monograph to call this assumption into question. Holism, she notes, was not proto-Nazism. That holism would persist throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth despite a mechanist takeover of German medicine, she attributes to frustrated yearnings for German unity and to the fact that the more holists railed against "the Machine," the more powerful it seemed to grow. Thus German unity would end in the machine politics of Otto von Bismarck, which thrived on fragmentation; while the initial oneness with which the nation entered World War I would end in the takeover of German society by the military machine's technocrats.