

Book Reviews

MATTHEW RAMSEY, *Professional and popular medicine in France, 1770–1830. The social world of medical practice*, Cambridge History of Medicine, Cambridge University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. xvii, 406, illus., £35.00, \$49.50.

Between 1770 and 1830, the boundaries of medical practice were redefined as new élitist forms arose and popular methods declined. The rise of official medicine in France, especially its structure and content, has been thoroughly examined; however, the traditional medicine that was challenged and eventually displaced has been ignored. Matthew Ramsey, in this excellent analysis, the first of a two-volume study, has not only supplied abundant information about popular methods, but has shown that each type of practice was informed by the other.

Beginning with a look at official medicine, Ramsey builds on the work of Toby Gelfand and Jacques Léonard to examine the nature of and changes in the activities, income, distribution, and organization of surgeons and physicians. For the second part of the book, a wealth of previously untapped archival material and literary sources is used to describe the world of traditional practitioners. This is a very difficult proposition, since the often silent or illiterate subjects can be traced only when they transgressed the accepted limits of their society or those of the emerging medical profession. The activities of such obscure healers as the mountebank, the *uromante*, and the *rebouteur*, are amply explained and their activities classified. Diseases that were peculiar to traditional understanding, like *les crinons* and *les hunes*, are discussed. A brief closing section is devoted to the overlap between the two forms of medicine as they fought for the same clientele and as they were perceived by their societies. Several maps and tables are provided and 16 illustrations bring the “characters” to life. Tables, in appendices, give the population densities of medical professionals in various parts of France and the names, dates, and locations of individual practitioners of specific popular methods.

This sophisticated study is scholarly and sensitive, but it is also fun. Ramsey apologizes if he has included description that is “more curious than necessary” (p. 6), but the voluminous information on various healers and their techniques delights as much as it lends credibility to his statements. The division of popular medical practitioners into irregular- and folk healers with smaller subdivisions (itinerant, sedentary, etc.) is disarmingly lucid, but sometimes it seems that it is a semantic exercise applicable more to nuances of behaviour than to persons. A few typographic errors in the text cause the reader to wonder how many may have spilled into the notes, spoiling the accuracy of the detailed references. More information about the illustrations, their provenance, and original purpose would have been welcome, as would an explanation for why almost all artists cited, graphic or literary, portrayed their subjects with a certain amount of scorn. Were there no patients who actually liked or admired their medical practitioners? And if not, why?

These complaints are quibbles that come from wanting more. This excellent analysis is a major contribution to social aspects of medical history and we look forward to volume two.

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WILLIAM COLEMAN and FREDERIC L. HOLMES (eds.), *The investigative enterprise: experimental physiology in nineteenth-century medicine*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, 8vo. pp. v, 342, illus., \$39.95.

As the editors of this fine collection of essays stress in their thoughtful introduction, the rise and establishment of experimental physiology in the nineteenth century largely represented a change of scale—a shift from the singular efforts of individual pioneers to the integrated research and teaching activities of purposely-created institutes. The many factors that influence and characterize that shift occupy the authors in different ways. The principal focus of several contributors is the emergence of the Physiological Institute within the decentralized university system of Germany. In Coleman's essay about the young Purkinje in Breslau, a Prussian outpost in Slav territory, the wider politics of pedagogical reform are skilfully interwoven with the