

milder domestic practices of, primarily, the founding mothers shine. Abrams is at some pains to unsuccessfully explain away the many less than enlightened practices and beliefs of the founding parents themselves, including the frequent espousal of Rush's methods. For instance, Abrams pits Jefferson's "astute and forward thinking" against Rush's "frequent use of violent bleeding and purging," yet fails to account for the fact that the only medicine Jefferson sent with the Louis and Clark expedition was Rush's thunderbolts (Rush's patent laxative, a bolus made from jalap and mercury) (170, 174).

On the public health side, Abrams primarily focuses on two innovations: smallpox vaccination and the promotion of public hospitals and medical education. These founding families were all early advocates of smallpox inoculation, as evidenced by Franklin's early print promotions, Washington's command that all the troops receive inoculation during the Revolutionary War, and Jefferson's early advocacy of the Jenner method of cowpox vaccination. In addition, Franklin and Jefferson were both instrumental in promoting medical education in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Abrams makes the case that each founding father's personal experience with disease impacted his administration, but the evidence is largely circumstantial and diffuse. She addresses each family's encounter with the 1793 yellow fever epidemic, but other than the Seaman's Act (1798) and the expansion of quarantine, the impact on public policy is lost in the private experiences. One wishes she had focused more on the public health practices and policies and less on baroque personal detail.

Revolutionary Medicine offers fascinating insight into the personal histories of the founding families as they struggled to maintain health in the constant onslaught of epidemic disease, child mortality, and ineffective medical practices. Although the public health focus gets somewhat lost and the text borders on hagiography, Abrams's account is an engaging read that pieces together an intimate history of America's founding elite.

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Law and Medicine in Revolutionary America: Dissecting the "Rush v. Cobbett" Trial, 1799. By LINDA MYRSIADES. (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press; Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012. 282 pp. Illustrations, bibliography, index. \$80.)

In 1797, Benjamin Rush sued William Cobbett for libel. Rush's decision to address in the courtroom the biting criticism "Porcupine" had leveled at "Sangrado" during the 1797 yellow fever epidemic was a highly risky strategy that ultimately proved a pyrrhic victory for the doctor. In 1798, the Alien and Sedition Acts made it possible for Rush's Republican legal team to turn the tables

on the Federalists by using their law to punish one of their own journalists. Linda Myrsiades “anatomizes” the Rush-Cobbett trial of 1799 as a case study that captures the interrelationship among early party politics, the medical marketplace, debates over freedom of the press, and an emerging uniquely American jurisprudence (3). By contextualizing a rare, published trial transcript, Myrsiades offers a highly compelling reading of *Rush v. Cobbett* as a “crucible for testing critical issues of the times” that explores the mutually constituting narratives of medicine and politics, fever and religion, individual and nation (2).

Before the mid-nineteenth century, it was nearly impossible to bring suit against a medical practitioner for malpractice because malpractice law required plaintiffs to prove not only that the physician had been neglectful but also that the patient had not acted irresponsibly. Therefore, most claims of malpractice were tried in the press, where unhappy patients or critical colleagues would air their grievances; often, medical practitioners would answer in kind. Myrsiades contextualizes Cobbett’s attacks on Rush within this tradition as well as within the rancorous doctors’ wars of the yellow fever epidemics, in which Rush was a lead participant. By establishing that Rush was no stranger to animadversion in print, Myrsiades highlights how extraordinary it was for Rush to sue Cobbett for slander.

Myrsiades examines Cobbett and the state of the scurrilous press in light of Federalist attempts to limit press freedom. “Porcupine” comes alive as Myrsiades recounts his acid pen, his frequent brushes with the law, and his gloating defiance of Chief Justice John Mitchel McKean, who, unfortunately for Cobbett, became governor of Pennsylvania before Rush’s libel suit came to trial. The new chief justice, Edward Shippen, would prove equally hostile to Cobbett, managing the trial and instructing the jury in highly prejudicial ways.

Myrsiades traces the brilliant, if disjointed, legal strategy of Rush’s team, who linked the trial’s outcome to the fate of the nation. Employing the secular jeremiad to great effect, they apparently convinced a jury that finding Cobbett guilty was necessary to preserve America’s freedom. Cobbett’s team, in contrast, was lukewarm in its defense, failing to utilize the truth defense, as the absent Cobbett wanted. With the deck stacked against the defendant, “the jury took only two hours to convict . . . and assign an unprecedented fine of \$5,000,” causing Cobbett to flee the country (190).

Law and Medicine in Revolutionary America offers a brilliant reading of a crucial, if largely overlooked, event in early American law and medicine. Myrsiades’s deft handling of sources and her trenchant analysis of the 1799 Rush-Cobbett trial offer new insight into freedom of the press, the medical marketplace, the legal system, and the politics of the early republic.

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