

Although Sobel occasionally attributes to the media a conspiratorial nature and supreme power that would astonish journalists, the bases for his worldview seem sound. His research has been extensive, as befits a history professor whose work has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in the past. But Sobel is not writing only from his ivory tower. He has been a newspaper columnist, written scripts for radio and television, and performed research for a major movie studio.

The book, unlike so many histories, has a story line that is more than chronological. It could even be classed as highly readable, which would perhaps put Sobel in the category of Popularizer except that the theories underlying the book are weighty indeed. Despite its felicitous style, this is not a book to be read in one or even two sittings.

According to Sobel, the power of the audience class was something peculiar to America that was perceptible well before television or even radio. It was noted by French visitor de Tocqueville in the 1830s, who spoke of what has become known as the "tyranny of the majority." Americans from early days were fashioning a mass society—where every man's opinion counted as much as any other man's—in the name of liberty. The character of the society began changing radically in the last decades of the nineteenth century along with the shift from rural to middle-class urban. The shift was accompanied by a trend toward recreation. The amusements that developed to fill leisure time were harbingers of mass culture coming on with a vengeance.

Newspapers were vehicles for transmitting—and in some instances creating—such a culture, and individualistic editor-publishers were gradually replaced by editors and reporters interested in crusades that reflected the desires of the readers. Such editors and reporters, Sobel says, were the forerunners of today's mass intellectuals.

The newspapers, of course, were only the beginning. They were followed by films, radio, and television, and in each of those mediums the entertainment function won out over the educational function.

The rest, as they say, is history.

—Steve Weinberg

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"Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply," Sexual Barriers in the Medical Profession, 1835-1975, by Mary Roth Walsh. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.

Despite innumerable obstacles, women have been a part of America's health care delivery history. As midwives, nurses, and physicians they have performed vital services for numerous patients. But, in so doing, they met with continual hostility from male medical practitioners. From the mid-nineteenth century women, especially those aspiring to become doctors, battled to secure admission to "regular" medical institutions, to medical societies

and to hospital staffs. Mary Roth Walsh, in *"Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply,"* discusses the experiences of these pioneering women and attempts to evaluate their success in becoming a part of the American medical establishment.

Walsh focuses her study upon the struggles of those women seeking access to the regular medical schools, hospitals, and professional societies that comprise the American medical community. In the first half of her study she concentrates on Boston, the arena for the majority of crucial battles waged by women in their attempt to enter medicine during the nineteenth century. By 1900 similar efforts in other cities paralleled the Boston campaigns. Accordingly Walsh shifts her attention to the national scene, using Boston as a case study to highlight her discussion of the twentieth-century female medical practitioner's experience. Within this framework Walsh argues that the medical establishment consciously attempted to restrict the number of women physicians. The force responsible for women's progress in entering the regular medical community, she contends, was feminism, defined loosely as the "efforts of both women and men who have consciously worked to expand opportunities for women in any historical period." It was during periods of "feminist" agitation, such as the late nineteenth century, that the opportunities increased for women in the world of the "Boys in White."

Walsh opens her study with Harriot K. Hunt's attempt to obtain a regular medical education. Denied admission to Harvard Medical School, Hunt became active in an increasingly wider campaign for full status within the medical community. Caught up in the larger struggle for women's rights as the century drew to a close, Hunt and other female medical crusaders received support and companionship in their struggle for professional equity. In such institutions as the New England Hospital for Women and Children founded by Dr. Marie Zakrzewska, women received more than the technical knowledge and skills of their profession. The hospital also provided the emotional support necessary for women to practice in a profession seemingly dedicated to blocking their movement into the mainstream of American medicine. By 1900 women finally began to break some of the barriers. The Massachusetts Medical Society voted to include women members. A few hospitals, such as Johns Hopkins, opened their doors. Women doctors represented 18.2 per cent of the total number of Boston physicians.

But, Walsh argues in the second half of her study, a series of reversals began in the second decade of the twentieth century to overshadow the earlier progress. With the resolution of the suffrage issue, synonymous in many eyes with the larger movement for women's rights, many believed success assured and ceased fighting. At the same time male practitioners found new ways of limiting the number of women in the field, such as the introduction of internships as a mandatory experience for aspiring doctors. Most approved internship hospitals refused to consider seriously applications from women medical students. And, despite an increased need for physicians during the second world war, most of these institutions did not relax their "standards" and so

women failed to enter in significant numbers the nation's medical schools and internship programs.

In spite of increased female participation in the medical profession following the renewed struggle for women's rights in the early 1960s, Walsh concludes her study with a note of caution. She argues that the recent progress could be reversed as easily as that of the nineteenth century's. Stressing that "sexual discrimination is deeply embedded in the fabric of American medicine," Walsh exhorts women physicians to "recognize the debt they owe to the feminist movement." Only through a strong and politically active women's movement can the recent progress be made secure.

Walsh's book, of course, is not without its flaws. Due in large part to the breadth of the time period covered, *"Doctors Wanted"* suffers from an unevenness in its presentation. The first half of the book, the section covering the nineteenth century, is a tight unit. Upon its conclusion the reader feels left with an understanding of aspiring female medical practitioners and their quest for acceptance in the regular medical community. The second half of Walsh's study, however, does not display such cohesiveness. Walsh's treatment of the twentieth century, with her shifts in focus from the national to the local scene, is somewhat diffuse. As a result, it leaves the reader with a sense, but not necessarily an understanding, of women, medicine, and the American medical establishment.

This reservation aside, *"Doctors Wanted: No Women Need Apply"* is an important contribution to our understanding of the American past. Well researched and well written, this study provides solid information about the experiences of an emergent professional group. Anyone interested in the evolution of medical education, women in the professions, and the quest for male-female equity can benefit from a careful reading of this book.

—Patricia Mooney Melvin
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The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835,
by Nancy F. Cott. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977. pp. 237.
\$12.50.

Nancy F. Cott tells us that she began *The Bonds of Womanhood* as a study of the social derivation of the concept of womanhood. What she ends up with is an in-depth report from the silent majority of women who endorsed the cult of domesticity in New England from 1785 to 1835.

Rather than relying on the didactic literature and feminist tracts that dot the 1830's, Cott's focal period, she studies hundreds of women's unpublished diaries and letters and scores of ministers' sermons that were written over the fifty-year period between the American Revolution and the 1830's.

As the economy shifted during this period from an agricultural and household-production base to a commercial and then incipiently industrial

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