Chapter 2

Genre Trouble on the Battlefield: Pharmaceutical, Medical, and Literary Accounts of Napoleonic Campaigns

Larry Duffy

The nineteenth century sees a proliferation of medical narratives, made possible at least in part by the same technological developments that enable the wide dissemination of literary narratives. These medical and literary narratives in fact share many stylistic features, in particular their privileging of dispassionate observation. In this sense, the realist novel — the ‘clinical’ aspects of which are frequently highlighted by critics — is, along with the medical treatise containing case studies, the archetype of objective, detached narrative. It is thus unsurprising, for example, that an archetype of realist literary discourse such as *Madame Bovary* should have strongly medical themes, or rather, engage with medical discourse, borrowing from contemporary medical treatises and more generally articulating the discursive development of health professions in the nineteenth century. Flaubert’s novel — this chapter’s key point of canonical literary reference — collapses distinctions between literary and other discourses, including medicine and, notably, pharmacy. At the same time, *Madame Bovary* practises what might be termed a ‘pharmaceutical’ operation in orchestrating this collapse. While medicine and pharmacy become professionally aligned in the early nineteenth century, pharmacy is distinctive in its representativity of expanding disciplines precisely because of its disciplinarily hybrid nature. Moreover, whereas medical narratives might well be objective, clinical, and dispassionate, pharmaceutical narratives are in many ways reflective of the polyvalency of pharmacy. One of pharmacy’s key professional and discursive concerns is to express that polyvalency. A significant context for its expression is an area of nineteenth-century life represented

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variously in literary, medical, and pharmaceutical narratives: the military campaign.

This chapter argues that there is a clear distinction between pharmaceutical and medical narratives of war, and that the former participate wholeheartedly in pharmacy’s wider assertion of its discursive polyvalency. While medical memoirs contain gruesome details of battlefield injuries and treatments, their pharmaceutical counterparts do not dwell excessively on horror and suffering, instead taking the form of eclectic *récits de voyage* by learned men of leisure, rather than purely of *récits de guerre* by the high-ranking soldiers that the *pharmacains de l'Empereur* effectively were. The distinction between what are effectively two genres may be seen in accounts of the Napoleonic campaigns by a senior military surgeon, Dominique de Larrey, and two senior military pharmacists: Charles-Louis Cadet de Gassicourt and Pierre-Irénée Jacob. The medical, or rather more specifically surgical, accounts are *mémoires* in a double sense. They contain some, albeit minimal, elements of the travel diary and provide a record of major events in Napoleon’s campaigns. These, however, are mere intercalations in what consist largely of documentary and didactic *mémoires chirurgicales*: Dominique de Larrey’s account of his campaign is to all intents and purposes a compendium of medical case histories and recommended treatments — usually amputation — derived from the theatre of war as an ideal ground for experimentation. Larrey’s intended audience consists of medical students and practitioners, specialist rather than general readers: as he states in a preface, he has been ‘sollicité par des chirurgiens militaires’ to provide accounts of the campaigns, and has set himself a ‘but’, ‘celui de contribuer à l'instruction de jeunes chirurgiens’. The *mémoires* of the pharmacists, on the other hand, rather than simply being the jottings of detached, or at least semi-detached, *dilettantes*, while on the surface resembling contemporary travel narratives, are at the same time very much in keeping with what might be termed a contemporary ideology of pharmacy.

*L’idéologie pharmaceutique française*

This ideology is shaped by institutional changes early in the Empire (including an alignment of pharmaceutical and medical training), and by pharmacy’s

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