

## Book Reviews

On one view Ledger was nothing but a smuggler, robbing a Third World country of its natural inheritance on behalf of a rapacious imperialism. On another view he and his like brought benefit to a far greater part of mankind, which it would not have acquired otherwise—or not, at any rate, until a much later period. Villain or hero, however, his achievement is surely as undeniable as his life was ultimately a tragedy.

A book with two parallel themes poses structural problems and the author has solved these not altogether satisfactorily. Like many biographers, too, he has been reluctant to jettison any of his hard-won facts and has produced a narrative that is over-detailed. More seriously, and eccentrically for a scholarly work, the references are not keyed to individual statements, even in the case of manuscript material. A fold-out family tree and fifteen pages of colour plates, reproductions of watercolours by Santiago Savage in Ledger's diary of his alpaca enterprise, now in the Mitchell Library at Sydney, help to justify the very high price, which all the same seems excessive for a book which is capable of attracting a by no means narrow readership.

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LEONARD ZUSNE, *Eponyms in psychology: a dictionary and biographical source book*, New York, Westport, Conn., and London, Greenwood Press, 1987, 8vo, pp.xxi, 339, £46.95.

Zusne is best known to British psychologists for his *Biographical dictionary of psychology* (1984) which has become a standard reference work, though not without competitors. Although the present book clearly involves a certain amount of recycling of his earlier material, it is unique in focusing on eponyms. But such a work must have more than mere novelty value if it is to serve a useful purpose. In the event Zusne has succeeded admirably and produced one of those reference works which fill a gap of which few are aware until it is plugged, after which they find it indispensable. Perhaps more than most other disciplines (excepting medicine itself), psychology has been a fertile source of eponymic terms for tests, laws, equipment, and phenomena. Zusne spreads his net wide, including a number of medical terms (e.g. 'Abadie's sign', his first entry) which psychologists are likely to encounter. Each entry is followed by a brief biographical sketch of its progenitor, plus, where available, biographical sources. The apparently straightforward task of compiling such a work involved formidable research in most European languages—the index of journal title and book abbreviations takes up nigh on eleven pages, incorporating sources as diverse as the *Journal of the Institute of Electrical Engineers* and the *Prager medizinische Wochenschrift*.

Few will find a leisurely browse unrewarding; I for one did not know of 'Capgras' syndrome' ('A delusion marked by the belief that familiar persons have been replaced by doubles') and had only a remote recollection of the 'Mignon delusion' ('that one is not the real child of one's parents but the child of a distinguished family'). Occasionally one is less than happy with a definition; the Whorfian hypothesis is not simply that "language directly affects perception" and that "what is perceived depends on the availability of appropriate linguistic categories", but that what is actually *thinkable* is determined by the grammatical structure of one's language. Defining 'Machian positivism' in three lines is also rather pushing it! These are exceptions, however, and in general the definitions are clear and concise with enough additional information for the reader to be able to locate more expansive sources if needed. The eponyms fall into a wide range of categories: statistical tests ('Duncan's multiple range test'), "laws" ('Ribot's Law'), perceptual and auditory phenomena (the 'Hess effect'), schools of thought and therapies (the 'Decroly method'), equipment ('Schaffhautl phonometer'), physiology ('Oppenheim's reflex'), psychiatric syndromes ('Jehovah complex'), and psychological tests (the 'Wartegg Drawing Completion Form') comprise the bulk of the entries, though some, like 'Pavlovian Wednesdays' elude such classification. However, doubts are not entirely dispelled about the underlying rationale. Whether or not a psychological test, syndrome, or phenomenon acquires an eponymic title is to some extent arbitrary and thus Zusne does not provide a comprehensive dictionary for any specific category—in principle I remain unconvinced that this is really a sensible basis for an academic work. Nonetheless, it must be admitted that Zusne has managed to pull it off and

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although the price unfortunately places it beyond the average purse (a paperback edition would be very welcome), this must be a compulsory acquisition for every institutional library serving psychologists.

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W. J. O'CONNOR, *Founders of British physiology: a biographical dictionary, 1820–1885*, Manchester University Press, 1988, 8vo, pp. ix, 278, £27.50.

Obituaries make compelling reading and anyone with an interest in the history of physiology will welcome the appearance of Dr O'Connor's collection of 135 brief lives. He has selected them on the basis of their connection with physiology between 1820 and 1885, during which time physiology was established as a discipline. At the start of the period, physiology consisted of a few lectures on function tagged on to an extensive course of anatomy, usually given by a surgeon waiting for a clinical appointment. By the end of this period, it had become the equal of anatomy in medical examinations taught by full-time staff in properly equipped, independent departments, and had its own Society and Journal.

The sources of these obituaries are mainly the *British Medical Journal*, *Lancet*, *Proceedings of the Royal Society* and the *Dictionary of National Biography*. They are set out in a very readable manner, and often provide fascinating glimpses into the non-scientific life of the subjects, for example, Langley's love of ice skating, or Sir Michael Foster's passion for iris breeding.

The lives are not listed alphabetically or chronologically, but are classified by geographical location (corresponding roughly to London, Midland and Scottish) within each of three periods (1820–35, 1835–70 and 1870–85). In addition there are paragraphs, with references, which describe the state of physiology at the relevant time or place. It is all very readable, and Dr O'Connor has performed a very useful service in bringing together information about people and places which is widely scattered.

But it is not, nor was intended to be, a history of British physiology. There is no critical evaluation of the importance of these founders in the development of the subject and its institutions; its use to historians will be mainly as an additional source of secondary material. Its originality lies in the record it provides of the *teachers* of physiology, who often had little or no connection with physiology as an experimental science. Many names must have been as unmemorable in their time as they are today, and to include, for example, Sir William Gull, a fashionable physician who "made no contribution to physiology", or C. J. Wright, who had "no training as a physiologist and no experience of experimental work", as "founders" of British physiology is perhaps to stretch the term unduly. Some of the subjects undoubtedly promoted physiology without being teachers, research workers, or members of the Physiological Society: J. J. Lister, the microscope maker; the anatomists Grainger and Humphrey; and George Eliot, the novelist, and only woman represented.

There are a number of misprints and mistakes, and specialists may find fault with the treatment of their favourite biographical subject. For example, A. D. Waller became FRS in 1891, not 1882; the date is important since the award was made after his work on cardiac electrophysiology, which culminated in his recording of the human ECG in 1887. Again, it is more than academic pedantry to refer correctly to the most important piece of legislation concerning physiologists the Cruelty to Animals Act (1876), not the "Vivisection Act (1877)".

The author does not aim for comprehensiveness in his biographical sources, and the serious student will want to consult other bibliographies, for example J. S. Fruton's *Bio-bibliography of the history of the biochemical sciences since 1800* (1982), which lists 45 of the subjects, often in greater detail. This will not, however, lessen the value of the book for general readers and physiologists for whom a knowledge of the past brings enjoyment and understanding of the present.

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