

Shapin, Simon Schaffer, Bruno Latour and Michel Foucault, among others — her account treats natural history as a set of inter-related practices that must be understood within their larger historical context. Her complex argument intertwines three major lines of analysis: nature, politics and society.

First, Spary describes the garden's place within the patronage system of the Old Regime (pre-revolutionary France). The superintendent owed his authority and resources to the favour of crown and court; his subordinates, in turn, were in a sense his personal dependants. Buffon was both a recipient and a dispenser of patronage, and his success as an institution-builder hinged on his mastery of these complementary roles. Spary then recounts the garden's transformation under the revolutionary Republic, at a time when claims to authority required a new, democratic foundation. The garden's survival and rebirth are a rare success story — the revolutionaries condemned the old scientific and learned institutions as bastions of privilege, and abolished nearly all of them.

Secondly, Spary emphasizes the place of humans in eighteenth-century natural history. Man was at the very centre of the natural world, not set apart from it. The boundary between nature and society became blurred, as did the distinction between the natural and social sciences. Spary is particularly good at describing the ramifications of their shared vocabulary: constitution, economy, culture, degeneration, regeneration, naturalization, *mœurs* (a hard-to-translate French term meaning morals, manners, customs). Nature could serve to justify or criticize social and political institutions; conversely, our understanding of society could illuminate natural phenomena. A key example is Buffon's conception of liberty. In nature, a species cannot flourish unless it is free to choose favourable conditions, including a suitable climate with adequate food sources. This principle had its social parallel in the idea of liberty as a fundamental human right. But nature imposes limits. Not all climates and conditions are hospitable to life, and so, Buffon argued, species tend to degenerate rather than improve.

Here mankind does have a unique role to play. Our skilled intervention can benefit both non-human species and our own — the first through horticulture and animal husbandry, the second through economic and social management. This was Rousseau turned upside-down. Whereas, for Rousseau, civilization warped human nature, the naturalists maintained that civilization, enlightenment and scientific expertise would serve to perfect all species, including our own. "Utopia's Garden" is neither an Eden from which we have been expelled, nor a primal state of nature that we have left behind. Rather, it is a work of art and science that we must construct; the Jardin des Plantes was the microcosm of a much larger practical enter-

prise. This confident promise had a powerful appeal for revolutionaries bent on regenerating the French nation.

There is much more to be gleaned from this erudite, wide-ranging and perceptive study than any brief account can possibly convey. It may take some patience to harvest its riches, particularly for readers unfamiliar with the contributions of science or the events of the French Revolution, which are not systematically explained. Specialists may carp at the sometimes less than rigorous use of theoretical constructs, certain simplifications (of revolutionary ideology, for example), or the occasional historical inaccuracy, as in a muddled paragraph on the collapse of the monarchy in August 1792. But these are minor concerns. Those who persevere will be handsomely rewarded. ■

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## When it came to naming names

### Neurological Eponyms

edited by Peter J. Koehler, George W. Bruyn & John M. S. Pearce  
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Those familiar with Barry Firkin and Judith Whitworth's huge *Dictionary of Medical Eponyms* (Parthenon, 1989) will be aware that some branches of medical science gather more eponyms than others, and neurology is one that gathers a lot of them. This is for the same reason that so many capes and creeks in Africa are named after Victorian explorers. Around the time that eponym-conferral was the done thing, discoveries aplenty were still there for the making in neuroanatomy and neuropathology, as they were in the geography of the Tropics. Cynics might add that neurology in those days was such a recondite, marginal and arduous field of inquiry that prodigality in naming helped the neurological community to keep its spirits up.

Certainly, one suspects that, insofar as figures such as Froment, Moro, Adie and Chiari are remembered at all these days, it is by the good fortune of having had (respectively) a sign, reflex, syndrome and malformation named in their honour, if honour it be. And this well-researched and well-organized volume, written by an international team of experts, will tell you all you need to know about those six figures and about some 50 others commemorated in the neurological pantheon through a named disease, structure, process or symptom. (William John Adie, in case you are as ignorant as I was until recently,

was a "Geelong boy", who did heroic service in the Great War, carried out research in London, and is immortalized through his investigations into abnormal kinds of pupil dilation and the underlying paralysis of the iris sphincter that causes them.)

Alongside the relatively unsung, this book quite properly celebrates the top neurologists and their signs and syndromes. This begins, appropriately enough, with Adamkiewicz's artery. There follow the circle of Willis, Head's areas, Alzheimer's disease, Down's syndrome, Huntingdon's chorea, Parkinson's disease, and many more.

Embedded in accomplished analyses of their education, research careers and scientific reputation, less familiar facts are often to be found. The eponymous James Parkinson was, of course, a London general practitioner active during the reign of King George III, and a pioneer of the infant science of palaeontology. Not all will know, however, that he was also a political activist and pamphleteer. And he was a member of the London Corresponding Society, a radical club dedicated to furthering the rights of man. Parkinson is perhaps the only contributor to neuropathology to have been arrested for alleged involvement in a plot to murder a reigning monarch.

What is disappointing in this book is that so few of the essayists chose to explain precisely how proper names got attached to the various parts, processes and pathologies. Frank Clifford Rose tells us, for example, that it was the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot who called Parkinson's 'shaking palsy' *la maladie de Parkinson* — although it may be added that Charcot then went on to stake his own claim to be the definitive codifier of the disorder.

But in most cases we are left in the dark. Was it mainly disciples who affixed the label? What was in it, we might ask, for the nominator? And did not endless priority and property disputes then flare up, which would have made fascinatingly unedifying reading?

We are told in passing, for instance, that the "notoriously chauvinistic French" (another eponym, incidentally, from Nicolas Chauvin, an old Napoleonic soldier) talked about the Claude Bernard syndrome, instead of Horner's. We also find out that a French professor of neurology, Jean Barré, coined the term 'Adie's syndrome' for the same syndrome, but then, perfidiously "running true to French style", changed his mind and proposed 'Weill-Reys syndrome'. Worse still, the Germans used the "blatantly false eponym" Kehrler-Adie syndrome. Poor old Horner!

But all this comes in scraps. What a shame that the machiavellian workings of linguistic imperialism in medical science are not addressed head-on in a book that, for all its merits, fails to see the historical wood for the trees. ■

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