

## Book Reviews

The book is, however, far more than a psychological study of the tuberculous. It is a meticulously conceived work about tuberculosis in France, with intriguing sidelights on the differing experiences of other European countries. Whereas in Spain and Italy, and elsewhere in Southern Europe, the disease was considered contagious and its victims treated as lepers, ideas were more ambiguous in France and Northern Europe. The observation in the later eighteenth century that tuberculosis was plainly not contagious in the same way as smallpox and other acute infectious diseases, produced the theory of hereditary transmission or hereditary susceptibility, and with it a medical conspiracy of vagueness, whose primary purpose was to protect the victim and enable him to enjoy the protection of society. As a result, the researches of Villemin and Koch (here clearly and beautifully expounded) produced little but an ethical dilemma lasting nearly a hundred years in France. In spite of the intervention of the Rockefeller Mission in 1917, tuberculosis mortality remained higher than that of any other industrialized country until 1949, and the disease was made compulsorily notifiable only in 1963.

Most aspects of tuberculosis, from despair in the eighteenth century to salvation in the twentieth, are examined here. The attitude of the victims to their own suffering; the ideas of the medical profession on causation and treatment, and the real nature of the doctors' function; the social and physical geography of the disease; attempts at control and prevention in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the claustrophobic world of the sanatorium, and its reluctant disappearance (ninety per cent of French sanatorium physicians were themselves former tuberculosis victims, and identified totally with the world of the *sana*) before the power of streptomycin; all these are illuminated by Guillaume. The only dimension to the story which escapes detailed examination is the attitude of the healthy to the sick: although Guillaume repeatedly stresses the horror which the disease aroused in French society, he quotes no instances of, for example, local resistance to the siting of sanatoria, such as occurred in Britain. Added excitement comes from Guillaume's sensitive use of historical, and especially literary, sources to illuminate the experience of the tuberculous; his handling of this tricky method is exemplary.

The book itself is very nicely produced, clearly printed, with a splendid cover picture. Like many French works, it is rather under-footnoted, and it is a pity that English spellings in the bibliography were not checked more carefully. Quibbles apart, Pierre Guillaume set out to restore the image of tuberculosis as the most feared of killers before our own age, in which it was replaced by cancer, and now more fittingly perhaps by AIDS, and he has succeeded. *Du désespoir au salut* deserves to become a classic of both medical and social history, and should be read by all with any interest in the world we have lost, and in the problems of our present.

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JEAN-FRANÇOIS BRAUNSTEIN, *Broussais et le matérialisme. Médecine et philosophie au XIXe siècle*, Paris, Méridiens Klincksieck, 1986, 8vo, pp. 326, Fr.130.00 (paperback).

Braunstein sees the phenomenon of Broussais largely as a by-product of the French Revolution. Certainly, Broussais the man was shaped by the political events of his youth. The son of parents who paid for their republican sympathies with their lives, Broussais served in the armies and navy of the Republic, and later followed Napoleon on his campaigns in the Low Countries, Austria, and Italy. Throughout his life, he retained a seemingly paradoxical—but not uncommon—loyalty to both the tricolour and the imperial eagle. Of the two, however, it was the ideals of the republic to which Broussais owed ultimate allegiance.

Braunstein wishes to go further and to maintain that Broussais' *thought* needs to be seen as the—or at least a—"medicine of the French Revolution" (p. 263). He finds echoes of the revolutionary ethos in the utopian, heroic, and simplistic aspirations of "physiological medicine". This is a tendentious claim: it is at least arguable that the true *nidus* of Broussais' system is to be found not in the legacy of the Revolution, but in the tradition of grandiose eighteenth-century speculative medical systems, of which Brunonianism is the outstanding

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example. Moreover, the astringent empiricism of the Parisian clinical school and the “analytic” approach of Pinel could also, with some plausibility, be advanced as contenders for the title of “medicine of the Revolution”.

What gives Braunstein’s claim greater weight is the recognition of the essentially *polemical* nature of Broussais’ system, which developed out of a series of encounters with other strands of contemporary medical and philosophical thought. Braunstein provides, for example, a lucid account of the contrasts between Broussaism and such competing schools as the pathological anatomists, organicists, and experimental physiologists.

The principal antagonist of Broussais’ system, however, was the medicine and philosophy of the Restoration. This is most obvious in Broussais’ polemic in *De l’irritation et de la folie* against Cousin’s vapid, but seductive, spiritualism. However, Broussaism was not merely a set of texts: it was a political movement. Students of medicine, in particular, flocked to it because they saw a barely-veiled political statement in Broussais’ propositions. Physiological medicine became a standard of resistance to the efforts made during the Restoration to negate the consequences of the Revolution, and to impose a new orthodoxy upon the university and ultimately upon society. Medicine bore the brunt of these attacks upon what was seen as a vicious cultural inheritance. In as much as it developed in opposition to such assaults, Broussais’ system was, indeed, the medicine of the Revolution.

The scope of this book goes beyond Broussais’ own lifetime. In the discussion of the “heritage of Broussais”, later responses to him are considered, including those of Comte and the Positivist school. As Broussais’ individuality receded into the past, his name survived in the later nineteenth century as the archetypal representative of an ill-defined, but potent, complex of ideas called “Medical Materialism”. One of the most informative sections of the work deals with the extent to which this outlook remained associated under the Second Empire (and, it should be added, under the Third Republic) with republican and anticlerical sentiment. Indeed, when French medical students attended the socialist International Congress of Students in Liège in 1865, they helped to forge a link between Medical Materialism and revolutions still to come.

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GRETA JONES, *Social hygiene in twentieth-century Britain*, London, Croom Helm, 1986, 8vo, pp. 180, £25.00.

Do not be misled by the title of this book. Dr Jones is not using the word “social hygiene” in the specialized sense it acquired during the 1920s to denote the problems of venereal disease. She is concerned with its wider meaning of population improvement through the regulation of the biological laws governing human reproduction and development. So her book is about the eugenics movement, but it also covers industrial psychology, “scientific” nutrition, and health education. Her reason for taking this approach is that, as this book amply documents, “there was a remarkable amount of peregrination through various areas of health reform by individuals and groups and a high degree of interchangeability between the memberships of different health organisations.”

By brooding over the implications of this situation, Greta Jones has written a slightly untidy, but stimulating book, which usefully undermines the prevalent belief that eugenics should be treated in isolation or viewed as antithetical to other reform movements that sought an alteration to the social environment or in people’s habits. In practice, the claims of “Nature” were not opposed to those of “Nuture” in the simple way that is commonly supposed. Most of Greta Jones’s “social hygienists” were indeed “hereditarians”, but what united them at a more fundamental level was their confidence in the possibility of achieving social progress through the application of “science”.

But, especially during the inter-war years, the purpose behind all the interest in “scientific breeding, living and eating” was “to adjust the poor to the current economic conditions of