

[Review of the book *Who Killed the Great Auk?*]

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in *Plurality*. Ruse's presentation of the argument is particularly useful insofar as it calls attention to examples of Whewell's rhetorical power of argumentation, something that is not always obvious from reading some of his other works. One hopes that the publication of Ruse's volume will draw further and much-deserved attention to this and Whewell's other philosophical and historical writings.

MARGARET MORRISON

D. Graham Burnett. *Masters of All They Surveyed: Exploration, Geography, and a British El Dorado*. xvi + 298 pp., frontis., illus., bibl., index. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2000. \$45.

During the nineteenth century, European powers grappled with the problem of how to define and demarcate their colonial territories. They employed naturalists—explorers, cartographers, and geographers—to transform these *terrae incognitae* into mapped and bounded territories. Although these colonial maps appear to be authoritative, D. Graham Burnett argues that they—and the process of mapmaking itself—were in fact fraught with ambiguities. Burnett focuses on the work of the Prussian naturalist Robert Schomburgk in British Guiana. The colony, supposed home of the legendary city of El Dorado, had been visited by such eminent explorers as Sir Walter Raleigh and Alexander von Humboldt. Nonetheless, when the British acquired the colony from the Dutch in 1803, Europeans still knew little about its interior or its boundaries, which were contested by neighboring Venezuela, Brazil, and Dutch Guiana. Drawing on archival sources in both Britain and Guyana, as well as on Schomburgk's extensive published works, Burnett vividly reconstructs his mapping expeditions through British Guiana's dense jungles during the 1830s and 1840s.

Burnett uses the story of Schomburgk to explore the rhetorical strategies that European explorers, mapmakers, and colonial officials used to construct geographical authority. The key problem they faced was reconciling the uncertainty inherent in geographical fieldwork with the certainty required on political maps. To map remote areas, nineteenth-century explorers such as Schomburgk used the traverse (or route) survey, which involved a combination of dead reckoning and astronomical sightings. Such traverse surveys were much less accurate than the trigonometric surveys then being carried out in Britain and the United States. Astronomical sightings could fix one's point on the globe. To make

a map, however, it was also necessary to connect such fixed points with particular locations on the ground. Constructing these fixed points proved to be a complex process, involving a variety of rhetorical strategies. Burnett devotes most of his study to analyzing the rhetorical strategies Schomburgk and others used to construct cartographic authority. The underlying rhetorical strategy in colonial mapmaking was "consummatio," in which many arguments and strategies are deployed to make a single point. Schomburgk, for example, invoked the historical authority of Raleigh and Humboldt by depicting their routes on his maps. At the same time, however, Schomburgk's maps rejected many of Raleigh's and Humboldt's findings. Burnett describes this rhetorical process of simultaneous appropriation and erasure as "metalepsis." Schomburgk bolstered the authority of his observations by making precise measurements using scientific instruments, thereby drawing on the cultural authority of Humboldtianism. He also used images of important landmarks, such as the flat-topped mount Roraima, to "make the empire visible" and to define key boundary points. Burnett uses the same strategies himself. His book includes thirty-three maps and lithographs and eighteen color illustrations, which reproduce the most important images of Guyana. The sum of these traverse surveys, astronomical observations, paintings, and maps would—ideally—fix points that constituted British Guiana. In spite of the certainty depicted in these representations, however, Schomburgk and his successors found it difficult to demarcate boundaries on the ground. These remained ambiguous and unclear, and Burnett concludes that, ultimately, the unified boundary line we see on maps is a "fib" (p. 206).

In addition to introducing readers to the fascinating life of Schomburgk, *Masters of All They Surveyed* is, more broadly, an innovative study in the rhetorical construction of geographical and scientific knowledge. It would be a valuable text in courses on the history of cartography, the history of science, and imperial history.

STUART MCCOOK

Jeremy Gaskell. *Who Killed the Great Auk?* [xii] + 227 pp., frontis., illus., figs., apps., bibl., index. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. \$25.

The great auk became extinct during the mid-nineteenth century. Until then, it had been a regular visitor to northern Britain and a commercially valuable bird of Newfoundland. Since it

depended on a small number of islands as breeding grounds, and because it was a flightless bird, the great auk found itself particularly vulnerable to human encroachment and succumbed to it before our sensitivity to environmental destruction and loss of diversity began to reverse the trends that had led to so many modern extinctions.

Evidence for a history of the great auk remains sketchy at best. Early naturalists, such as Buffon, wrote accounts of the great auk drawn from a varied set of imperfect sources: travel accounts, descriptions of museum specimens, and encyclopedias. Jeremy Gaskell has carefully surveyed all the literature on the great auk and has attempted to reconstruct what we know of its range, behavior, and ultimate demise. He has produced an enthusiast's book that makes good use of the great figures familiar to those interested in the history of ornithology. Buffon, Brisson, Faber, Temminck, Gould, and Newton all make cameo appearances in his book, along with a few obscure egg collectors and colonial administrators. Gaskell intelligently mines the record in order to reconstruct the shifting picture Europeans had of the great auk. Although his volume makes use of the history of science, his interest centers on the fate of the great auk, not the context in which it played out.

Given the paucity of the record concerning the great auk, one cannot be surprised that *Who Killed the Great Auk?* is correspondingly thin fare. Gaskell elucidates the range of the bird and some of its natural history, documents its steady decline during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and concludes with an environmental warning. Although he states that the destruction of the great auk served as a catalyst for legislation protecting seabirds, he fails to demonstrate any strong link. Nor does he tie his story significantly to any of the larger narratives in the history of ornithology. The bibliography, while quite good in recording citations of great auks in the early literature, tellingly contains no references to any of the literature in the history of ornithology. For those who know something of that history, this book provides enjoyable reading (albeit on a narrow but neglected topic), and environmentalists will find in it another cautionary tale. Other *Isis* readers might find it too specialized to be of much interest.

PAUL LAWRENCE FARBER

L. S. Jacyna. *Lost Words: Narratives of Language and the Brain, 1825–1926.* x + 241 pp., illus., index. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000. \$45, £28.50.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jules Soury published a “critical history of theories and doctrines” of the central nervous system. Comparison between Soury’s work and L. S. Jacyna’s new study reveals obvious as well as deeper contrasts suggesting how historical writing on the neurosciences and, more broadly, historiography of science have changed over the intervening century.

Soury’s work is immense (easily ten times the length of Jacyna’s), encyclopedic in its chronological reach—extending from classical antiquity to virtually the date of publication—and aims at comprehensive coverage. Jacyna limits his focus to one century—terminating well short of the present—to material in English, French, and German, and to a single neurological disorder. Both authors, accomplished historians rather than practicing neuroscientists, draw on insights from philosophers—in Soury’s case from Descartes, Kant, and Haeckel, in Jacyna’s from Nietzsche and Foucault, with a dash of Derrida and a large dose of recent social studies of science and literary theory. While Soury is resolutely materialist and triumphalist in surveying advances in what one contemporary reviewer termed “the great epic of modern brain science,” Jacyna presents an in-depth reading of the texts of aphasia as narratives whose medical authors to a greater or, more rarely, lesser degree reduced the complexities of language loss to brain localization and their afflicted patients to pathological objects. The “lost words” of the title thus refer to the silencing of the aphasic patient’s persona in medical discourse as well as the impairment of language owing to brain damage.

Jacyna sets the scene by contrasting two “distinct genres” (p. 25) of case history in the earliest medical discourse on aphasia, those of Jacques Lordat and J.-B. Bouillaud. Lordat, in part because he had personally experienced an episode of aphasia, wrote sympathetic accounts of patients with language impairment, taking note of their individuality and his own responses to them. Bouillaud, on the other hand, a leader of the postrevolutionary Paris clinical-anatomical school, focused on objective physical signs to the exclusion of the patient’s voice and distinctive self.

Bouillaud’s model of the single impersonal narrator prevailed during the classical period ushered in by Paul Broca’s localization of the speech center in 1861 and dominated the literature of aphasia until the end of the century. Jacyna draws on a rich array of medical discourse that he deconstructs persuasively to show how formulaic case histories accompanied by abstract