

[Review of the book *Charcot: Constructing Neurology*]

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them. In 1837 50 percent of all school-age girls were enrolled; by 1869 the figure was 75 percent. Parents were more likely to pay for girls than boys; from 1848 an increasing proportion of girls went to schools run by the religious orders. In summarizing both the statistical evidence and the research notably of Françoise Mayeur, Linda Clark, and Laura Struminger, the authors maintain their conviction that there was widespread support for women's education. By 1900 women's literacy was higher than men's. In 1837 67 percent of primary teachers were men; by 1900 57 percent were women, a decreasing number of whom were in religious orders and a rapidly increasing proportion of whom were graduates of an *ecole normale*. After 1873 more than twice as many women as men gained the *brevet*, the teacher's certificate, each year. Training in an *ecole normale* committed the teacher to state education; in 1837 90 percent of boys thus in training were on state scholarships, many of them sons of peasants or artisans, facilitating modest social mobility.

In addition to its vast panoply of tables, the numerous footnotes give the reader an excellent summary of recent research in two continents. Nearly seventy pages of tables buttress the conclusions. They are organized to correspond to the chapters, but an indication in the tables themselves to which chapter each belongs would help. The authors approach their figures with a leavening of skepticism; figures do not tell us what constituted a school, a teacher's *brevet*, or enrollment, and there were substantial regional variations. I confess to losing track among "octiles," "regressions," and "perfect negative correlation" and had to take even more on trust than when confronted with the contextual assumptions of inspectors' reports. The absence of a bibliography is deplorable, forcing one to reread unpredictable quantities of footnotes to track down a reference.

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Charcot: Constructing Neurology. By *Christopher G. Goetz, Michel Bonduelle, and Toby Gelfand.*

New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Pp. xx+392. \$55.00.

Multiauthored books are not unusual in historical scholarship. Many topics may be satisfactorily compartmentalized in ways that reflect both natural divisions in the subject matter and authorial expertise. But collaborative biographies are rare because the logic of compartmentalization can undermine the unity of the life and the interpretation made of it and can, moreover, fragment the emotional currents flowing between author and subject that sometimes elevate biography into humane meditation. The usual dangers are magnified further in the present case since two of the three authors are neurologists, not historians. However, though the seams between the authors are occasionally apparent in this scholarly biography of the celebrated French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot, they are relatively minor blemishes in a volume that fills such large gaps in our understanding of the man, his science, and his times.

In light of the extraordinary attention scholars have given in the last decade or so to medicine and culture in fin-de-siecle France, particularly to hysteria and the gendering of illness, it is mildly surprising that this is the first modern biography of a doctor who was at the center of these developments. Charcot was a consultant to princes, founder of a famous school of neurology closely identified with the scientific study of hysteria, and a name to reckon with in Parisian society of the belle epoque. The authors make use of a wide variety of family, institutional, scientific, and public archives to follow

Charcot through his life and career. Aware of the worshipful character of much medical hagiography, they have written a critical biography emphasizing the many detours and blind alleys in his career and the weaknesses of his character.

In some incisive central chapters the authors allot Charcot his place in the medical pantheon. Charcot pioneered a systematic approach to the clinical analysis of neurological illnesses by applying to them a method developed earlier for anatomical pathology. This method entailed correlating a careful clinical observation of the symptoms and phases of a disease syndrome with anatomical lesions discovered in autopsy or in microscopic examination of nerve or brain tissue. Working with the huge number of “incurable” female patients at the Salpêtrière hospice in Paris, where he served in various medical capacities from 1862 to his death in 1893, Charcot was responsible for describing and identifying full pathologies for a number of important neuromuscular disorders, including locomotor ataxia (*tabes dorsalis*), amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (Lou Gehrig’s disease), multiple sclerosis, and, less completely, Parkinson’s disease. This exhaustive clinical analysis also allowed Charcot to advance medical knowledge about neural pathways and the localization of neural function in the brain and spinal cord.

It was this clinical genius, his prodigious memory of disease etiology and eye for relevant symptoms, that was the foundation of Charcot’s contemporary reputation. The problem for his biographers is to explain how a man who was essentially an antitheoretical and rather cautious clinician achieved a reputation and influence usually reserved for doctors who are also great discoverers, therapists, or laboratory scientists. Charcot discovered nothing new, developed no effective cure or therapy, and did no systematic experimentation. Yet he was sought out by patients from the entire world, heaped with academic honors and recognition, and his famous lessons at the Salpêtrière were attended by medical, scientific, and literary figures from all over Europe.

Charcot was no revolutionary, but he was certainly ambitious. Son of a Parisian carriage maker, he advanced through the educational hierarchy and the system of medical patronage in good order, married well, cultivated writers like Alphonse Daudet and politicians like Leon Gambetta, and seized the main chances when they came. In telling this story, the authors provide here the most extensive account available of how medical training, specialization, and patronage functioned in post-Napoleonic France, and an especially detailed story of the transformation of the Salpêtrière from a place where impoverished women came to die to an important center for neurological research and clinical training. They skillfully relate the way that Charcot used medical publishing and patronage to build neurology as a medical specialty—and his own reputation in the bargain.

The chapters of greatest interest to nonspecialists are likely to be those by Toby Gelfand on Charcot’s later career, when he began his public presentation of patients contorted by hypnotically induced symptoms of hysteria. As Gelfand explains, Charcot was merely applying to hysteria the same anatomoclinical method he had learned to apply to other nervous diseases, including dissecting his patients after death in search of telltale lesions. But for the lay public, Charcot’s hysterics were dramatic exemplars of the contemporary fascination with human and social pathology, and Charcot himself was a kind of secular priest who treated these suffering beings like a latter-day exorcist. Gelfand is a reliable and sensitive guide through the historiographic literature on the wider cultural and political meanings of hysteria, and he adds some original insights of his own based on new archival material. His efforts effectively reveal the remarkable value of a medical biography in a society whose culture was saturated with medical discourse.

The book ends with a whimper, not a climax. Even before his death, Charcot’s hereditarian, fatalistic, and noninterventionist outlook was losing ground to native Pasteur-

ian and especially German laboratory-based medical science. The neurological breakthroughs of the following generation lay with advances in virology and immunology. Psychiatrists and psychoanalysts, including men like Sigmund Freud and Joseph Babinski who had once admired Charcot's charismatic power and scientific authority, either transformed or exploded the remnants of his findings on hysteria. The precipitous decline in Charcot's medical reputation helps explain why he has had to wait so long for his biographers, but the wait has been well worth it.

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The Jews of the Republic: A Political History of State Jews in France from Gambetta to Vichy. By *Pierre Birnbaum*. Translated by *Jane Marie Todd*. Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture. Edited by *Aron Rodrigue* and *Steven J. Zipperstein*.

Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1996. Pp. 449. \$55.00.

There has been surprisingly little social history of the integration of Jews in various European societies in the modern period. Most assessments of the status of Jews have relied on anecdotal information and impressionistic evaluation of the pervasiveness of antisemitism in a particular society, allowing for much speculation about the comparative situation of Jews in different countries. Pierre Birnbaum's book on the people he calls the "State Jews of the Republic" is a pioneering study that makes use of archival documentation to investigate the nature and extent of the political integration of Jews in the Third Republic, that is, from 1870 until 1940. Birnbaum illuminates not only the status and achievements of Jews in France but also the political culture of its Republican institutions.

Birnbaum has identified 171 Jews who served the French state during the Third Republic as deputies, senators, ministers, army generals, prefects, and magistrates. Tracing their careers through personal dossiers and other documents deposited in national, regional, and local archives, he has provided a collective biography of Jewish men who made their careers at the highest levels of state service. Alfred Dreyfus was merely one of a cadre of Jews who climbed the ladder to success in their chosen field of governmental service. In the military, which was often not perceived as a sector open to them even in those European countries where Jews were citizens, French Jews could be found in the highest ranks, with twenty-five serving as generals during the Third Republic.

Birnbaum enlivens his statistical data with portraits of individual figures and what can only be called "dynasties" of State Jews. The most striking example of an elite Jewish military family, for example, the Brisacs, originally from Metz, boasted a general in each generation from the last third of the nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth. Historians may miss the chronological and causal narrative structure that characterizes most history writing but takes second place in this sprawling book to a focus on case studies of individuals and families who participated in different areas of state service.

Birnbaum demonstrates that the career open to talent was not a Republican myth. Not only did Jews enjoy access to all levels of the civil service and take their seats as well in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate but also they seem to have experienced no significant obstacles to advancement in their careers. Although their Jewishness was noted in official dossiers, as was that of their wives, it did not figure prominently in decisions about promotion. Their Jewishness could result in their being deemed inap-