

unillustrated opus on the geology of Tuscany. Corsi now helps us by providing rich context to aid our understanding of d'Orbigny as a historical object and contemporary figure (his rather controversial position in French scientific life remains contested). It is here that the real value of this introduction is revealed, for Corsi—uniquely, I believe, among present-day historians of geology—effortlessly moves his interpretations between the cultures of Italy, France and England and never once gives a sense that he is writing about a foreign country, whereas for most cultural historians of science (as in other disciplines) border-crossing has generally resulted in a weakening of argument. How interesting it is, then, to see the lack of respect for d'Orbigny, the 'joker and miracle worker' (p. 21), in his native Paris and compare this with Meneghini's reception of him in Pisa as a bold and respected scientific worker known only through his publications. Meneghini felt sympathy for d'Orbigny, perhaps even empathy, but was also shaken by the assault on one of his main intellectual props as Meneghini attempted to grapple with the geology of Sardinia and Tuscany. I was particularly interested to read how late fossils came to the science in Italy; in England, recognition of the significance of the fossil was key to a revolution that took place in the science and it was this that permitted the definition of the peculiar fossil-based development that Sedgwick sold to the world as 'English geology'. *Fossils and Reputations* is certainly worth picking up for this introduction as it provides wonderful insights on the impact of culture on the doing of science. The book as a whole is also something of a personal triumph for Corsi for it is the result of an arduous voyage of discovery, rescue, interpretation (of appalling handwriting) and transcription. But it is Corsi's sophisticated and highly readable interpretation of what these letters tell us about three quite different cultures of production that makes this book especially valuable.

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SANDER GLIBOFF, **H.G. Bronn, Ernst Haeckel, and the Origins of German Darwinism: A Study in Translation and Transformation**. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2008. Pp. xii + 259. ISBN 978-0-262-07293-9. £25.95 (hardback).

ROBERT J. RICHARDS, **The Tragic Sense of Life: Ernst Haeckel and the Struggle over Evolutionary Thought**. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008. Pp. xx + 551. ISBN 978-0-226-71214-7. £27.00 (hardback).

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Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) remains one of the most controversial and divisive figures in the history of biology. Haeckel's influence is indisputable; he became an early convert to Charles Darwin's teachings and subsequently styled himself into the role of the Messiah of Darwinism. In this role he proved to be particularly successful; far more people learned of descent with modification through Haeckel than through any other person, including through Darwin himself. Haeckel also combined the realm of the aesthetic with science; he skilfully, but maybe not always truthfully, documented the endless creativity of natural forms and influenced the aesthetic sense of an entire era. Haeckel also, however, represents to many scientists and historians the ugly side of evolutionary speculation—he had, for example, apparently no reservations about arranging different groups of extant humans by their distance from an ape ancestor and he has again and again been seen as an key intellectual forefather of Nazi ideology. Historians who do not support this assertion still often suspect that Haeckel was not a 'real' Darwinist because he allegedly stuck all his life to the outdated doctrines of idealist morphology. In the single person of Haeckel we thus find damning judgements both on pre-Darwinian biology and on alleged scientific and political deviations from orthodox Darwinism, and this unsatisfying state of affairs calls for a fundamental re-examination. The two books under review take on this task, but employ radically different strategies. Sander Gliboff's concise and demanding, but nonetheless elegant and persuasive, book

offers a refreshingly revisionist perspective on pre-Darwinian German biology, on Heinrich Georg Bronn's notorious first translation of Darwin and on Haeckel's attempts to reconcile ontogeny and phylogeny. In contrast, Robert J. Richards, in his characteristically exuberant prose, offers a full picture of Haeckel's charismatic personality and his passionate and tragic private and professional life. In political history, the thesis of the German *Sonderweg* has long been in decline – both Gliboff and Richards manage to make German biology in the nineteenth century appear far less peculiar than usually is the case.

Gliboff challenges a historiographical tradition that portrays pre-Darwinian German biology as following a strictly typological, linear recapitulationism that is wholly incompatible with Darwinism. Gliboff's close reading of the works of Johann Friedrich Meckel and Carl Friedrich Kiemeyer shows, however, that these scientists were far less rigid and typological than influential historians such as E.S. Russell, Erik Nordenskiöld or Stephen Jay Gould have maintained. These early biologists endeavoured to account both for law-like patterns and for the undeniable variability of nature. The naive linear recapitulationism ascribed to them is, according to Gliboff, a caricature instigated by Karl Ernst von Baer and later uncritically adopted by many historians and biologists. Gliboff clarifies that recapitulation and the type concept as employed by German biologists were not straitjackets, but were able to account for variation and adaptation. The bridge between the old and new biology was H.G. Bronn, Darwin's first translator. He was a very practically oriented palaeontologist and geologist, who could appreciate both the German tradition in biology and Darwin's revolutionary new ideas. Bronn had to translate a work that was steeped in Victorian culture and did not conform at all to the rhetoric and form of German *Wissenschaft*, a science organized around systematic, universal laws. Gliboff shows convincingly that Bronn's translation of 'selection' with *Züchtung* was an attempt to translate the ambiguities he found in Darwin's work and that *Vervollkommnung* – a perfectly legitimate translation of Darwin's 'perfection' – was meant as a relative term describing a better adaptation to the environment. In his last chapter Gliboff describes Haeckel as a serious scientist who tried to understand the relationship between heredity and variation and thus contributed to the – still ongoing – transformation of Darwinism. The early twentieth century was characterized by a broad landscape of Darwinian theories and to label Haeckel un-Darwinian is Whiggish and unjust. Gliboff's study is without doubt one of those rare events that will stimulate many readers to fundamentally reassess their stance towards a major episode in the history of science.

Robert J. Richards's long-awaited biography of Haeckel is revisionist as well, but in a very different sense than is Gliboff's study. Richards adeptly interweaves Haeckel's life as a private person, polemicist and scientist with cultural history and politics. One single fateful day in Haeckel's life offers Richards the means to bring together the disparate elements of the protagonist's personality. On 16 February 1864 Haeckel turned thirty, he was awarded the Cothenius-Medal of the Leopoldina, and his beloved wife Anna Sethe died. From then on Haeckel only found solace and distraction in the compulsive study of nature, where he saw lack of meaning, violence and transience, but also a source of unimaginable beauty. Like Gliboff, Richards stresses Haeckel's scientific accomplishments, but he devotes considerable space to his artistic achievements and his public persona. Richards succeeds in painting a full and compelling picture of all aspects of Haeckel's life and expends considerable energy in trying to absolve Haeckel from all the charges laid against him.

Given the excessive condemnation that Haeckel has suffered in the history of biology, the sometimes hagiographic undercurrents in Richards's account can perhaps be understood, but at some points more critical distance could have been wished for. Haeckel certainly was not a direct source of the racial ideology of the Nazis. In political history, however, such direct and clearly identifiable causal influences do not carry as much weight as they used to. Haeckel participated in, and scientifically legitimized, a discourse that supported racist and anti-Semitic ideas. He was

certainly not unique in that respect, but any critical history has to confront this fact. Furthermore, Haeckel's fanatical anti-Catholicism is mainly explained through his personal experience, while the bitter fight of Bismarck against the influence of the Catholic Church – the *Kulturkampf* – remains tangential. In Richards's account Haeckel becomes the true heir of Goethe's legacy, while he actually might be better understood as one of the contradictory intellectual figures who are so characteristic of imperial Germany. But despite these reservations, Robert Richards has also written a book that no historian of biology can afford to ignore.

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MARK S. MICALÉ, *Hysterical Men: the Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. xiv + 366. ISBN 978-0-674-03166-1. £22.95 (hardback).

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'This is a book about something that did not happen in history, a thought experiment resisted over the generations, a reality of human behavior that was rarely observed by the observational science par excellence' (p. 7). With this intriguing declaration, historian of psychiatry Mark Micale launches his book *Hysterical Men*.

His title, of course, explains all: over the centuries, medicine has defined hysteria as a disease of women, not men. Some years ago, feminist historians like Elaine Showalter pursued a project that lay bare the various patriarchal assumptions and projects that had made hysteria a 'female malady.' It took two world wars, an epidemic of shell-shocked young soldiers, the rise of new feminist critical psychologies, and the emergence in the 1970s and 1980s of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) before hysteria ceased to be seen by medicine as a 'female malady', and men were finally given equal time and space for their experiences of emotional suffering expressed in the language of bodily distress.

All this is well established in the literature. But, for Micale, it raises a question: if we assume that in fact hysteria was never really a female malady, and that in fact European culture always really had its fair share of hysterical men as well as hysterical women, then how was the experience of such men recorded, denied and otherwise managed during the long years before space was created to give expression to such suffering? This is the question that drives Micale's study – a study, as he sees it, of a history of silence, resistance, evasion and sidelong glances.

How does one write such a history? In a prefatory note, Micale insists that his strategy is a textual one – that he is actually not interested in what such male patients really suffered from: 'It is physicians and their diagnostic behavior, rather than patients and what ailed them, that remain center stage in my account' (p. xiv). But if that were really all he was doing, then his whole project would make little sense. What clearly drives Micale in this book is his belief that, over and over, the physicians he is studying failed to acknowledge the objective reality of experiences that could have been and should have been – but generally were not – recognized as examples of male hysteria.

And there is a great deal at stake for Micale because he believes that the denial of male hysteria has functioned as part and parcel of a larger historical tendency to deny and stigmatize the emotional experience of men, and especially male 'psychological travails' (p. 47). His sense of grievance over this situation makes for a historical narrative that is marked by a strong normative sensibility – certain historical actors are commended for their more or less forward-looking ideas, and others are criticized for their inflexibility, contemptuous attitude to patients, or reactionary tendencies.

But Micale does not just want to criticize the past for not meeting the standards of the present. He also wants to understand. In particular, he points out that the late eighteenth century – with its cults of sensibility – in fact saw a brief flowering of engaged attention in both medical and literary culture to the reality of male hysteria and related syndromes (especially in Georgian Britain). Around