

Book Reviews

NICHOLAS RUSSELL, *Like engend'ring like: heredity and animal breeding in early modern England*, Cambridge University Press, 1986, 8vo, pp. ix, 271, £27.50.

Productivity is a difficult thing to evaluate in any walk of life or national context, but there is nevertheless some kind of agreed consensus among historians that the agrarian revolution in the British Isles turned upon a dramatic increase in production and an efflorescence of ways and means by which to make the most out of the countryside. How great this increase was, its precise timing, or the nature of the technical and economic forces which persuaded it to appear are, however, still matters of great controversy, even rumbling through the pages of our most recent authoritative source, *The agrarian history of England and Wales* (C.U.P., 1981-). So it is good to see among the wealth of available statistics a new book with a new angle which explores an area of farming history previously sadly neglected, and brings together information on the breeding of animals that few people would have the patience to seek out for themselves. Nicholas Russell has approached the agrarian revolution from underneath, as it were, and attempts to document the actual alterations wrought by farmers and others in their commercial animals with a view to better breeding results, increased numbers of offspring, fatter fatstock, and so forth. Horses, cows, and sheep were big business here, and these are the three kinds of stock that Russell deals with in an extended way. He then turns the story to address the question, did any significant change in the economic performance of these domestic animals occur during the years 1600-1800 and by what means did the changes take place? His overall supposition is that the animal "breeders", such as they were, were not proceeding along lines laid down by then-current theories of inheritance but rather that they followed traditional ideas and techniques that only occasionally impinged on the world of high science, and which, very broadly speaking, were not always guided by the notion of "selection". Farmers are seen as pursuing subsistence breeding—they activated a process that Russell calls a negative breeding strategy, in which the *worst* stock is used for reproducing the breed while the best (of a bad bunch, perhaps) was sold or otherwise used to realize the maximum profit. Alternatively, selective mating was introduced as a procedure to offset deterioration, not—as we understand it—as a device to effect improvements. Only with Robert Bakewell, where this book ends, did breeders take up the idea of an efficient conversion of fodder into meat, and thence into cash, by exercising rigid selection in the modern, Darwinian sense. A nice aside here is the list of names that Bakewell gave to his rams: Bosom, Shoulders, Carcass, and Hock must have been blithely unaware of their place in the scheme of things, but their owner evidently knew exactly what he was after. All in all, this is a good, unassuming reconstruction of a notoriously difficult area of practical history.

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BETTINA WAHRIG-SCHMIDT, *Der junge Wilhelm Griesinger im Spannungsfeld zwischen Philosophie und Physiologie*, Tübingen, Gunter Narr, 1986, 8vo, pp. 231, DM.48.00 (paperback).

There is little agreement on Griesinger's intellectual legacy. His obituaries show that opinion was already divided at the time of his untimely death from a perforated appendix in 1868. Westphal (his successor at Berlin) hailed him as a great reformer; K. F. Flemming, the asylum psychiatrist, considered him as an empty theoretician. In fact, Griesinger's work provides something for everyone. He borrowed freely and hence his writings are complex and often contradictory; they exhibit the mechanical tidiness of Herbart, the enthusiasm of Broussais, and the anti-romanticism of Roser and Wunderlich.

The fact that Griesinger's name is often quoted tends to give the impression that Griesingerian scholarship is a thriving industry. This is not so. Apart from a handful of good essays and the classical 1944 monograph by Joachim Bodamer, there has, until recently, been no adequate intellectual biography. This neglect, one is happy to say, has been partially corrected by Dr Wahrig-Schmidt. In about 230 pages of tidy prose she covers the early period of Griesinger's life.

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The first section deals with his life from the cradle to 1845, the year he published the first edition of his *Die Pathologie und Therapie* . . . Griesinger grew intellectually in the Germany of the turbulent 1840s, and his political involvement in Tübingen led to his forced departure to Zurich. Soon after completing his medical studies, he spent a period in Paris and this seems to have kindled a love for travelling that took him repeatedly to Vienna, London, and even to exotic places like Egypt, where he worked for a time after 1850.

Physiology was his main preoccupation during these earlier years, and his first six publications are in general medicine. His first psychiatric paper, on 'Psychische Reflexactionen', appeared in 1843, and his magnificent book of 1845 was published after another eight medical and neurological publications. In this long first section, Dr Warhig-Schmidt analyses Griesinger's views on physiology, philosophy, and his opposition to *Naturphilosophie*.

The second half of the book is dedicated to Griesinger's psychiatry. It starts with a penetrating analysis of the state of alienism in the Germany of the 1840s and of its uneasy relationship to brain physiology. A glimpse is also offered of the early process that led to the divergence between asylum and academic psychiatry, which was to hamper so much the progress of both during the second half of the century. It ends with a fifteen-page study of Griesinger's 1845 *Textbook*, which, on account of its freshness and depth, merits separate English publication. Dr Warhig-Schmidt fails to explain, however, one of the running mysteries in the history of psychiatry, to wit, how did Griesinger manage to write such a comprehensive textbook, which, apart from the usual theorizing, contains a great deal of clinical material, when in fact he had had a meagre experience with the mentally ill?

But it would be wrong to begrudge this oversight. Like all good historical books, this one includes over forty pages of notes, a list of Griesinger's writings, and a good bibliography. One hopes that the author may want to regale us with a second instalment, in which the later Griesinger, the founder of the *Archiv für Psychiatrie*, the fierce critic of the therapeutic pessimism of asylum psychiatrists and the champion of acute psychiatric units and psychiatric education, is considered with similar care.

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PAUL U. UNSCHULD, *Medicine in China. A history of ideas*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, University of California Press, 1985, 8vo, pp. x, 423, £33.95.

In complex societies such as that of China an enormous variety of differently conceptualized systems of therapy is encountered, all of which are representative of Chinese culture. The author's intention is to contribute to an understanding of plurality and change in health care concepts. China, with a long established literacy from the fifteenth century BC to the present time, provides the necessary historical sources. During this period of nearly 3500 years, the following types of medicine were practised: (1) oracular therapy from the cracks in sheep's shoulder bones; (2) demonic medicine ascribing the source of the disease to demons; (3) Buddhist and Taoist religious healing; (4) pragmatic drug therapy; (5) the medicine of systematic correspondences including acupuncture; and (6) modern western medicine. The author distinguishes Buddhist medicine from religious (presumably Taoist) healing, thus dividing the process into seven systems. Item (4), for reasons given later in this review, would be better named "empirical plant therapy". Many of these systems overlap most of the time, and it is a matter of the preponderancy of one or the other at a given time.

This excellent presentation of a vast panorama is marred by the author and his two translators being insufficiently acquainted with English usage. He consistently translates the word "patient" as "victim", uses the word "gall" indiscriminately for "gall bladder" and "bile", speaks of illnesses instead of diseases, and refers to Chinese *yao* as "drugs" rather than "remedies" or "materia medica". This goes so far that he calls *Ts'ai-yao* "the gathering of drugs" rather than "herbs" or "plants". The word *ch'i* is consistently translated as "influences"—admittedly, there