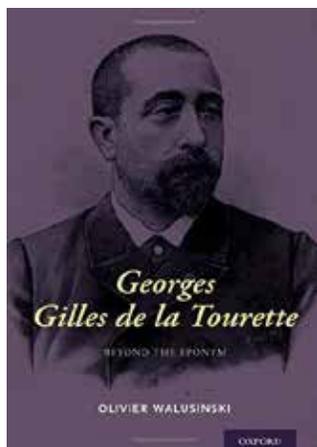


Book Review: Georges Gilles de la Tourette. Beyond the Eponym, by Olivier Walusinski, MD

— Christos Ganos, MD, Department of Neurology, Charité University Medicine Berlin, Berlin, Germany

Only recently was I informed that a new work was published on Georges Gilles de la Tourette's life and works by Dr. Olivier Walusinski, an expert medical historian with incredible knowledge on J.M. Charcot's legacy in neurology. Although I immediately placed my order for *George Gilles de la Tourette. Beyond the Eponym* (Walusinski, 2019), I was uncertain whether I would be able to distill new information both on the syndrome, but also on the person whose name it bears. Indeed, and until this publication, most of the historical knowledge I had acquired on the syndrome of Gilles de la Tourette sourced from Howard I. Kushner's remarkable *A Cursing Brain* (Kushner, 1999).



Already from the first pages, I realized that my hesitations had been ungrounded. I was fascinated by the meticulousness of historical information that Dr. Walusinski graciously offers and felt abundantly ignorant on numerous facts. The book begins, for example, by presenting the genealogy of Georges Gilles de la Tourette, to make a point that the original family name is actually "Gilles", with the toponymic reference of "de la Tourette" being added on the 18th century. On this note, Dr. Walusinski poignantly adds that if a simplification is needed, "Gilles" instead of "Tourette" would be the historically preferable one. The book continues by documenting Gilles de la Tourette's education and early career, the academic struggles of the time – to be noted, not very

different from the ones in place today – and his successful medical path earning him the Legion of Honor rank. Special mention is made with regard to the assassination attempt against his life in 1883 by Rose Kemper - who did not have tics -, and also on the historical circumstances that lead to the publication of his work on the syndrome that now bears his name. A large segment of the book also focuses on the incredible productivity and diversity of Georges Gilles de la Tourette's scientific interests, including his doctoral thesis on gait studies, the development and practical usage of new medical devices to treat disorders such as "locomotor ataxia", and his works on hypnosis and hysteria. A detailed account is also provided on his interest in writing and communicating different aspects of human behavior and life to the public. Finally, a chapter focuses on his "Sad End" following the diagnosis of neurosyphillis and his incarceration in the Bois-de-Cery asylum in Lucerne until his death on May 22, 1904.

The depth and meticulousness of Dr. Walusinski's *George Gilles de la Tourette. Beyond the Eponym* urges me to recommend it to any contemporary clinician-scientist interested in disorders of human behavior. It does not only serve as an archive of the past both for tic disorders and the entire Parisian school of neurology, but also as an important reference point, which allows to place contemporary practice within the wider context of clinico-scientific progress in modernity.

References:

1. Kushner, H. I. (1999). *A Cursing Brain?: The Histories of Tourette Syndrome*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
2. Walusinski, O. (2019). *Georges Gille de la Tourette: Beyond the Eponym*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.