

## Book Reviews

**Louis J Acierno, MD, *The history of cardiology***, London and New York, Parthenon Publishing Group, 1994, pp. ix, 758, illus., £65.00 (1-85070-339-6).

If histories of medical specialities were to be weighted, cardiology and neurology might turn out to be the joint heaviest, perhaps separated by a scruple or two: or at least until the publication of this weighty tome. Into the scales would go the countless papers in journals on Galen, Harvey, Laennec and their "contribution" to cardiology, also the always welcome reprints and republications of landmarks (including the ever useful *Classics of cardiology* by Willis and Keys). Then there would be the numerous definitive books chronicling the history of cardiology. Someone has yet to write a history of cardiology which is about cardiology: a twentieth-century, technologically-sophisticated, professionalized, institutionalized, highly invasive medical discipline. Histories of cardiology are usually written by cardiologists. Conventionally such works trace the roots of the subject to Hippocrates and beyond. They very often repeat material easily accessible in other secondary literature. They often contain errors and anachronisms when dealing with the earlier period. When they reach the twentieth century they either fall silent or become richly informative because of the author's direct or relatively direct acquaintance with the subject.

Louis Acierno obviously knows this genre. Thematically arranged (anatomy, diagnosis, etc.) the various sections in this book start with "myth" and end with modernity. There is the obligatory trek through Claudius [*sic*] Galen. The plate which pictures what Professor Acierno describes as Galen's "formidable features" (p. 9) is an undated print by an artist who could not possibly have known what Galen looked like. Such casualness suggests the possible dubiety of Acierno's sources for his history of pre-twentieth century investigations of the heart which compose such a large part of this volume. Further on it was intriguing to discover Harvey had apparently written "But damn it, no such pores exist nor

can they be demonstrated" (p. 198). This quote is cited as appearing at p. 597 of volume 10 of the 1847 translation of Harvey by Willis. The Willis translation is in a single volume and p. 597 reveals no such quote, although there is an account of inflating the right heart with water. In addition to such errors, as other reviewers have noted, Acierno misspells the names of numerous figures, Bechat for Bichat, for example. All this is most unfortunate since it makes the work impossible to trust as a reference book. It is doubly unfortunate because there is a great deal of recent twentieth-century history chronicled here which is not accessible in this form anywhere else. As far as I can tell this seems scrupulously accurate.

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**David S Barnes, *The making of a social disease: tuberculosis in nineteenth-century France***, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995, pp. xiv, 305, illus., \$42.00 (0-520-08772-0).

Tuberculosis in nineteenth-century France was, as elsewhere in the West, the great killer. Despite the lack of national mortality statistics, French doctors, public health officials and politicians were well aware not only of tuberculosis as a great killer, but as a killer which especially affected France. Whereas death-rates from the disease were apparently declining in Britain and Germany by the 1870s, mortality in France seems to have peaked about 1890. Defeat in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 made France sensitive to the physical condition of her people. As with "physical deterioration" in England after the Boer War, so tuberculosis became identified as the source of France's national weakness, the actual and potential cause of her overshadowing by Germany. As French political anxieties mounted, so a rhetoric of hysteria built up around the subject of