

Book Reviews

demonstration of transmissibility of a chicken sarcoma via cell-free filtrates, and his later work on the concept of carcinogenesis as a two-stage mechanism. But Saunders has already disarmingly apologized for any omissions which may have accidentally occurred; and we can only congratulate him on the vast amount of information he has single-handedly accumulated for the benefit of present and future historians.

Lise Wilkinson, Wellcome Institute

W F Bynum (ed.), *Gastroenterology in Britain: historical essays*, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine Occasional Publications No. 3, London, The Wellcome Trust, 1997, pp. 138, £8.00 (1-869835-64-6).

An engaging slim compilation of 138 pages, small enough to slip into a jacket pocket, this book offers diverse accounts of British contributions to gastroenterology that run the gamut from panegyric to paean. The most delightful is by Roy Porter, that most prolific of current historians, on 'Biliousness', followed closely by that of Denis Gibbs who, an American notes with pleasure, is the "Apothecaries Lecturer in the History of Medicine". His essay is entitled: 'The demon of dyspepsia'. Other essays are more personal reminiscences about the development of gastroenterology, hepatology, and the like, which will entertain those named and their acolytes, but may prove of lesser value to those outside the original select circle of British gastroenterology. In reviewing the "British" contributions to the discussions about gastric acid, Hugh Baron manages a political syncretism which gives British citizenship to Paracelsus, Spallanzani and Tiedemann, to name only a few, a feat that leaves those from William Beaumont's home state grateful that he too was not Anglicized for a place in the pantheon, although Gibbs states, on what grounds I do not know, that Beaumont was born a British subject.

All in all, this is a most engaging read.

Editor W F Bynum says it all in his introduction, "If psychiatry is half of medicine, then gastroenterology might lay fair claim to much of the remaining territory". Gastroenterologists who do no endoscopy will certainly agree.

Those who have slogged through more than a few contributions about American gastroenterologists and parallel developments in the States, however, may wonder whether parochial histories like this one are of sufficient archival value to deserve a book form. Even before the advent of general gastroenterology journals, not to mention the jet plane, fax, and e-mail, the medical world had become so very interrelated that, for example, it can be very difficult to isolate the influence of Johns Hopkins Hospital on Yale Medical School without considering the influences of that genial Canadian William Osler on both, even after he had found a home in Oxford. The essays would have been of greater interest outside the UK if all authors had followed the lead of the first two.

Howard Spiro, Yale University

Arthur Hollman, *Sir Thomas Lewis: pioneer cardiologist and clinical scientist*, London, Springer-Verlag, 1996, pp. xx, 300, illus., DM 89.00, SFr 78.50 (3-540-76049-0).

Thomas Lewis (1881–1945) was one of the most important and interesting British physicians of his day. After initial studies in Wales, he went on to study at University College, London, the institution where he was to spend most of his career. Lewis focused his early investigations on the cardiovascular system. At first he analysed pulse tracings obtained by the polygraph, but starting in 1909 he turned to the investigation of the heartbeat using electrical records created by the newly-invented electrocardiograph (ECG). Lewis went on to apply this tool to great effect in the analysis of all manner of abnormal cardiac rhythms, but most notably to the irregularly irregular pulse known as atrial fibrillation.