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miserable Christmas Day, 1941. The Canadian force of 1900 men had arrived just over a month before. The day of capitulation was also marked by especially grim precursors of things to come—most notoriously the summary murder of staff and patients and rape of nurses at the temporary hospital of St Stephen's College.

In later chapters, Roland describes POW camps and life, and POW hospital and medical care under difficult circumstances. Two major chapters deal with the more specifically medical matters of 'Trying to cope with too little food', and 'In sickness, rarely in health'. Then follow accounts of transportation of many of the POWs to Japan, and life in the Japanese POW camps until the end of the war in August 1945. There are two final chapters; first an examination of the reasons for the maltreatment of POWs by Japanese soldiers. This appears related mainly to cultural and ethical factors in Japanese society (notably the code of "bushido"), and to the inherent violent discipline in the Imperial Japanese Army (where IJA soldiers were often beaten in ways not dissimilar to POWs). Finally, the last chapter discusses the effects and aftermath of the experience. A total of 557 of the original 1975 Canadian soldiers (28 per cent) died in captivity. Evidence suggests that the survivors suffered ongoing and more long-term physical and psychological ill health.

As well as using interviews with surviving POWs, Roland has drawn on the little-known but freely available primary source records which detail camp routine and organization, dietary patterns, and medical illness and death statistics. Considering the extraordinarily difficult circumstances in which these men lived, these records are a tribute to their fortitude and determination.

In summary, this is an excellent book. A minor quibble is that some mention of the long-term medical sequelae of the Far East POW experience would have been useful. Tropical worm infestations, neuropathic

syndromes, and what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder, continue to plague the lives of some surviving POWs. This is a minor problem, and is anyway not part of the major purpose of the book. Medical and military historians in particular, but modern historians in general also, will be pleased to have a copy on their shelves.

A parting hope is that this work may stimulate other historians to examine other lesser known locations of Far East imprisonment—for example the Formosa copper mines, the Burmese end of the Thai-Burma Railway, and the Sumatra Railway (which was so remote that work continued three weeks after the end of the war, when news finally reached the camps).

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Jeff Wheelwright, *The irritable heart: the medical mystery of the Gulf War*, New York and London, W W Norton, 2001, pp. 427, £21.00 (hardback 0-393-01956-X).

When the problem of "Gulf War Syndrome" arose in the 1990s, it was soon apparent that more than one gulf was involved. Geography apart, there was a chasm between the media's reporting of the problem and medicine's response to it. The media dealt in heart-rending individual cases and conspiracies in Washington and Whitehall, while the medical literature was almost entirely epidemiological, in line with current orthodoxy, with no sign of the individual patient. The sort of paper that neurologists routinely wrote a century ago, combining lucid discussion of the clinical issues with brief case histories, was nowhere to be seen.

It has fallen instead to the journalist Jeff Wheelwright to try to bridge the gap. *The irritable heart* explores five cases in detail, weaving in some of the socio-political background and a discussion of the

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explanations which medicine offered for the Gulf veterans' strange symptoms—fatigue, headaches, diarrhoea, shortness of breath, and impaired memory. As Wheelwright explains, two main schools of thought soon emerged—the stress hypothesis and the toxic exposure hypothesis; and, although he pretends for a while to be even-handed between them, it is soon apparent that his money is on stress.

Elaine Showalter's *Hystories* (New York, 1997) argued forcefully that Gulf War Syndrome was just another of the hysterical epidemics to which *fin-de-siècle* America is prone; and that its seemingly novel symptoms were actually much the same as those of Soldiers' Heart and Effort Syndrome, albeit fanned and framed by modern culture. Wheelwright comes to roughly the same conclusion, though he takes an awful long time getting there. (Despite the title, Da Costa and Sir Thomas Lewis do not show up till page 280). It is unclear whether the author, whose background is in environmental science not medicine, is genuinely unaware of the historical continuities until he is told to read Edward Shorter (on p. 257) or is artfully withholding information to sustain the "mystery" and hold his readers. He never mentions the "psychosomatic" literature of the 1930s, though the line he ultimately takes is not all that different.

The irritable heart has been critically mauled and it is not hard to see why. As objective journalism, it does not begin. The five cases are arbitrarily chosen—presumably because they were available; the arguments for the toxic hypothesis get short shrift; and the possible role of the vaccines given to soldiers in the Gulf—regarded by some as the likeliest culprit—is ignored. Wheelwright skirts nervously around the issue of intelligence, usually important with suggestible people (once, doctors spoke plainly of "weakness of will and of intellect"). And, despite some shrewd insights, he never properly examines the part played by the media—or the

Internet—in the vectoring of Gulf War Syndrome.

Added to which, *The irritable heart* is a very irritating read. The narrative-fuels-analysis formula misfires here because rapid inter-cutting obscures the outline of the medical debate and makes the case histories seem interminable. Wheelwright has a maddeningly folksy style, records his subjects' lives with tiresome detail and, worst of all, likes to share irrelevant personal information; the final paragraph is about his *own* depression.

Yet, inside *The irritable heart* a much better book is struggling to emerge. Amid the dross, there is some good reporting and the book conveys very well how America's doctors, having over-medicalized their patients, are now finding ways to wean them off their dependency. For that alone, I suspect future medical historians will be grateful to Jeff Wheelwright.

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Christoph Kopke (ed.), *Medizin und Verbrechen. Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag von Walter Wuttke*, Ulm, Klemm & Oelschläger, 2001, pp. 320, DM 49.80 (paperback 3-932577-32-9).

This is a commemorative volume of a peculiar sort: whereas such books usually assemble contributions by pupils of more or less eminent scholars, *Medizin und Verbrechen* is—on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday—dedicated to Walter Wuttke, a medical historian who does not enjoy a position at a university, let alone leadership in an established school. Wuttke, however, has been a pioneer in the history of medicine under National Socialism at times when engagement in such studies could well put a career at risk. Wuttke himself had to experience this after the publication of his powerful and highly