

transplantation. All are written by authors who have in some way or other participated in that history. Since organ transplantation is a multi-disciplinary endeavour, the authors' professional affiliations range from immunology to paediatrics. Historians or social scientists are absent.

Topics covered vary from the transplantation of specific organs and tissues, like the kidney or pancreatic islets, to overarching themes such as the history of HLA and transplantation immunity and the history of ethical issues in transplantation. The individual papers have the character of survey papers on the existing scientific literature about their respective topics (though most not extending further back than the 1950s). Some of them contain respectable numbers of references, up to several hundred. There is no mention of any secondary literature from history or social science in any of the articles. The papers in many respects much resemble the introductory passages of scientific papers. They survey all the previous efforts at a procedure, for example, kidney transplantation or the identification of HLA tissue types, and interpret the literature on the background to the present state of the art on kidney transplants and HLA typing. There is not much information that has not been published elsewhere, either in other books of the same character or in articles (except maybe the chapter on the history of arm transplants, which is a very recent innovation). Some of the articles seem to be recycled. The advantage for the reader is having all the contributions conveniently gathered in one volume.

For historians of medicine the present book is less a contribution to the history of transplantation than a collection of sources. Because of their technical character the articles come in handy for the purpose of establishing a time-line of what was done when. The multitude of references alone is a goldmine for further research. Some articles also contain snippets of personal recollections, which could be useful starting points of oral history accounts. Some of the contributions, for example the one on brain death, are also interesting since they reflect the ideological commitments of leading transplant

experts today. As a whole, the volume gives a good picture of how surgeons and scientists currently view the technical history of transplantation. A point of criticism is that there is no instruction as to the origin and possible interpretation of the intriguing title picture. It shows a crouched female figure in black metal. She seems to be offering her internal organs, in red, taken from her hollow abdomen, to the heavens. In the background are six drawings of different personalities, one of them probably Peter Medawar, another seems to depict Alexis Carrel. Here some more information would have been useful.

This book is an interesting starting point for anybody who wants to do research on the history of organ and cell transplantation.

Thomas Schlich,
McGill University, Montreal

H J Klasen, *History of burns*, Nieuwe Nederlandse Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis der Geneeskunde en der Natuurwetenschappen, No. 62, Rotterdam, Erasmus Publishing, 2004, pp. 632, illus., €80.00, US\$120.00 (hardback 90-5235-168-6).

My only real encounter with modern medicine was in 1962 when, after reinventing the Molotov cocktail, I spent a month in hospital with a badly burnt leg. Eventually, with a degree of insouciance, I was able to munch my morning toast as the nurses ripped off the foul-smelling pus-encrusted bandages, inspected for granulation, applied ointments, and re-wrapped me in gauze. Except for the antibiotics to counter the gangrene, the experience might have been medieval. How could I have guessed that my burnt leg was the repository of advanced pathological and molecular biomedical wisdom? Precisely around this time, apparently, the complex physiology of burns was becoming a subject of laboratory investigation. Although the strange effects of my burns on my internal organs had been the subject of intermittent debate since antiquity, it was also only in the 1960s that burns experts began to

question the basis of their long attachment to the notion that those internal effects were the consequence of toxins released from deep burns. Of some things I'm glad I had no inkling, such as the well-established technique of cutting off the foreskin to use as a skin graft. A xenograph of foetal calf skin I would have welcomed as an alternative to stripping a slice of my skin from elsewhere on my body by means of a "dermatome", a mechanical lancet-like tool available in various forms from the turn of the twentieth century (illustrations pp. 343ff). Of course it was beyond even my nurses' imagination that in twenty years' time synthetic skin would be available (prototyped in Boston in 1981), and I doubt they could have foreseen the extensive use of allografts from viable cadavers, as robustly pursued in China—also since the 1980s. And did my carers know, I wonder, that behind their treatment of my burns was knowledge accumulated from countless scaldings of rabbits' ears, and from the relentless searing by Bunsen burners of the sides of cats, rats, dogs and sheep? Unwitting, too, were the human subjects of burns research, especially those who entered hospital in statistically significant numbers, like the victims of the famous fire at the Cocoanut Grove in November 1942.

Unflinchingly, and in minute technical detail, Professor Klasen records the progress of acute burn care since antiquity, weighting his study to the present and dividing it more or less evenly between research and therapeutics. Chapters on shock, the removal of necrotic tissue, the use of silver nitrate (re-popularized in the 1960s), hydropathic treatment, and mortality data are among his concerns. Despite Klasen's dismissal of historical accounts of body shock from burns "based on present-day views, neglecting the fact that in the past symptoms were often regarded as belonging to other clinical pictures, and were thus placed in a different context" (p. 167), contextualization is singularly lacking in this volume, even of the narrowest clinical sort. Why conceptual paradigms (like toxins) reigned at various times is never explained. Nor is there any accounting for professional interest in the subject of burns at particular places and in

particular times. Instead, page after page of the pioneers, the technician heroes behind the progress of burn treatment, all of whom are presented in the guise of disinterested pursuers of knowledge. We hear nothing of the growth of professional bodies, nor discover the motives behind such specialist institutions as the Shriners Burn Institute in Galveston, Texas. East Grinstead, famous for its work on the burned airmen of the RAF, and the burns unit at the Birmingham Accident Hospital are mentioned only in passing. For the most part, the *History of burns* is no history at all, but an extensive literature search, replete with photographs of, and lavish biographical footnotes on, the great and good. Like the Nazis, whose interventions in this field go unmentioned, so too do patients. Commissioned by the Dutch Burns Foundation on the occasion of its thirtieth anniversary, this is primarily a text by and for burns specialists.

Roger Cooter,

The Wellcome Trust Centre for
the History of Medicine at UCL

Frank Huisman and John Harley Warner
(eds), *Locating medical history: the stories and their meanings*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004, pp. x, 507, £32.00 (hardback 0-8018-7861-6).

Many, shall we say, mature readers of this journal will recall the excitement that surrounded a series of conferences in Cambridge and London in the early and mid-1970s which appeared to herald the stirrings of a sub-discipline. As this ambitious but flawed collection of essays attests, some hopes were fulfilled but others may have diverted practitioners into ill-lit *culs-de-sac*. "Society", however that unhelpfully vague term is defined, certainly began to come in from the cold. But, as several down-beat contributors show, more may have been promised than would be delivered. (One should perhaps remember that the beginnings of sub-disciplinary reshaping coincided with the final era of commitment to the position that there were strong interconnections between historical research and writing and the