

## Book Reviews

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

informative book *Medizin im Nationalsozialismus. Ein Arbeitsbuch* in 1980, when the subsequent years saw him being driven out of the profession and into private scholarship.

Not surprisingly, despite its bold title, *Medizin und Verbrechen* is not really about medicine and crimes in general, but on the peculiar entanglement of the two during the years of National Socialism. It is not a Festschrift in the usual sense either, but rather a homage of friends, currently active scholars, and people who have been witnesses of East and West Germany's reluctance to find out about, face and prosecute medical crimes committed under National Socialism.

An objection to the volume could be that an assessment under the heading of "crimes" sets a fairly narrow frame for the history of medicine in the National Socialist period: it leaves aside questions about the transformation of "normal" science and medicine in the era that are quite essential, for example, in the recent re-evaluation of the history of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gesellschaft. Still, the editor Christoph Kopke has assembled an interesting and well rounded volume. An opening essay on Wuttke's career by the Ulm psychiatrist Friedemann Pfäfflin is followed by a series of papers that mostly document recent or almost recent research. Heinz Faulstich gives a shorter version of his work on starvation in German psychiatric asylums, Thomas Oleschläger writes on the relationship between racial hygiene and abortions, Susanne Hahn on geriatric care, Annette Schäfer on conscript labour, Achim Thom on National Socialist science policy and cancer research, Günther Grau on medical evaluations of homosexuality, Christoph Kopke provides a biographical sketch of the Nazi-physician Ernst Günther Schenck, Klaus Drobisch writes on medical crimes in early (pre-1937) concentration camps, Claudia Schoppmann on lesbian women in concentration camps, the editor Kopke and Gerhardt Schultz on criminal

experimentation with chemical weapons (Lost), and finally Karl-Heinz Roth and Angelika Ebbinghaus on surgical experiments in the camps.

The volume closes with two remarkable contributions on the post-war prosecution of medical crimes in East and West Germany. Both are written by two formerly active prosecuting attorneys from both states, Willi Dressen and Günther Wieland. They offer a fascinating combination of historical expertise and witness account. Dressen's contribution in particular gives a truly chilling picture of the 1960s and 1970s when, in the West, attempts at legal prosecution met with stiff resistance from medical and political élites.

Even if not all the research presented in the volume is entirely new, most of the contributions are research based and many of them display a high awareness not only for Nazi doctors, but for their victims. What is equally remarkable is that the still very different research traditions of East and West Germany are present. Completed with a select bibliography of Wuttke's works and an index, the volume does certainly live up to the occasion.

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**Jonathan D Moreno,** *Undue risk: secret state experiments on humans*, New York and London, Routledge, 2001, pp. xx, 371, £11.95 (paperback 0-415-92835-4).

Tensions between science and ethics have bedevilled twentieth-century clinical research. Jonathan Moreno has mustered crucial evidence in a thought-provoking account. He re-appraises classic instances, such as Walter Reed's yellow fever experiments, in the light of recently revealed episodes, and the malaria experiments on Jewish refugees in Australia. He takes us right up to the Gulf war and weapons