

to highlight the few 'gems' to be found. In doing so, Crone is honest in pointing out how some of his supposedly great innovations were either entirely unoriginal or simply incidental, in other words, nowhere near as important to their author as people may believe. Crone cogently concludes that the one unquestionably valuable contribution of Paracelsus was his stimulation of an atmosphere of inquiry. He may not have converted the scientific world to his own position, but at least he made it consider where it wanted to go.

Miranda Siemienowicz
University of Melbourne

Blood Matters: A Social History of the Victorian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service. By Matthew Klugman (Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2004, \$39.95, ISBN: 1-74097-066-7) 236 pp.

BLOOD, AS MATTHEW KLUGMAN TELLS US, IS BOTH VITAL TO LIFE AND INFUSED with notions of risk, danger and death. Growing up in the 1960s we mimicked Native Americans and played at becoming blood brothers (but never blood sisters). Now we reach for the latex gloves before willingly coming into contact with a stranger's blood. Prior to the 1980s, and the identification of HIV in the Australian blood supply, the Victorian Red Cross Blood Service was constructed as a triumph of volunteerism and community service. Now a more business-like, State-regulated, national blood service manufactures a range of 'therapeutic goods' from blood donated by a more restricted and closely monitored group of donors.

Blood Matters charts a history of the Victorian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service from its inception in 1929 to the formation of a national service in 1996. It is a social history of the first major Australian blood transfusion service, and who better to write this narrative than Matthew Klugman, who has, for some time, written and spoken engagingly and informatively on the social history and philosophy of blood and blood donation for both academic and general audiences. The verso of the title page declares that the book is 'an independent history of the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service'. But maintaining good relationships with past and present blood bank personnel was clearly essential to the writing of this history. If there were tensions between historian and blood bank staff, readers are not privy to them. *Blood Matters* maintains a critical, investigative edge but is a measured, well-mannered and sympathetic history. Klugman has written a supply side history that focused on the public good, the social

capital if you will, that has resulted from the generosity of generations of Victorian volunteer blood donors who gave the 'gift of life' to unknown but overwhelmingly grateful recipients.

The early years of the Victorian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service were dominated by women's stories. In the late 1920s Dr Lucy Bryce sought volunteer donors to turn out at all hours of the day and night to provide blood donations directly to sick people in hospital wards. These direct transfusions are vividly described and illustrated in the book. As the service grew and developed we hear about women—often migrant women, women doctors, scientists, nurses and laywomen taking a key role in a marginalised area of medicine. These capable and inspiring women ran a blood service situated within a charitable agency led by influential men that, like most other health-related charities, depended on government support to survive.

Technological developments that enabled blood to be stored for longer periods changed the nature of donations and the organisation of the blood 'bank'. The Spanish Civil War and the impending second world war advanced the development of manufactured blood products that would enable blood to be shipped overseas to military hospitals and the front. The war provided the incentive and the need for larger scale, more professional blood services across Australia. After the war, the Red Cross offered the blood service to the Commonwealth Government. This offer provided political leaders with the opportunity for many wonderful jokes about taxes and blood-suckers but resulted in a polite refusal to take on the governance of the blood service. The peace brought financial problems for the service and repeated requests for Commonwealth financial assistance.

Klugman has not forgotten the rural and regional history of the blood service. His chapter 'Country Blood' reflects on the extension of mobile and then local community blood banking services to rural Victoria. Had the book extended beyond the formation of the national blood service in 1996, Klugman could have recorded the protests of many rural people at the proposed closure of community blood collection centres and the mooted return to mobile collection vehicles.

Post-war surgery, transplantation technology, blood product treatments and the increase in the number and speed of motor vehicles massively increased the need for a reliable blood supply. As demand increased, blood banking slowly became a core medical activity. At this point in the story men took over the leadership roles, bigger buildings were required and a more secure funding environment was sought and eventually won. Despite fears that doctors were starting to regard 'the gift of life' as just another therapeutic commodity to be bought or sold, the volunteer donor system was retained and continues to meet needs for blood and blood products.

Although medical practitioners using blood products were aware of health dangers to recipients it was the health and safety of donors that principally concerned blood service staff. Klugman could find no record of blood recipients claiming compensation before the 1980s. A small number of donors experienced mishaps, such as falls after donating, and others claimed donation had impaired their health. Some sought and received compensation. Litigation by blood recipients in the aftermath of the HIV and Hepatitis crises reportedly came as a shock to a blood service that had a 'special and personal relationship' with its donors, volunteers, the medical community and the wider Victorian community.

Klugman's chapters entitled 'Tragedy of the Gift' and 'Risky Products' provide an insider's view of the HIV and Hepatitis scares. This will be a new perspective for many readers who have relied to date on press and media versions of these major cultural events. HIV was the initial concern, then Hepatitis and other blood-borne infectious conditions such as the so-called 'mad cow disease' have become the source of folk scares and media hysteria. Public confidence in the safety of receiving blood has been severely challenged. Klugman describes the scientific, institutional and political responses to these challenges. It is a fascinating story not to be missed. Insiders already knew the dangers associated with blood transfusions and the problems associated with designing and implementing blood-screening tests. But they also were able to weigh the value of blood transfusions against these risks.

The final events described in the book come as no surprise. The service environment shifted towards both external and internal risk management, regulation and establishing a national blood service. While blood tests were developed, implemented and refined, donor screening questionnaires and processes were tightened. The close relationship between the blood service and its donors—the very basis of the Red Cross run service—changed, with many categories of donors excluded. The impact of this important cultural change on donations is only briefly discussed in *Blood Matters*. These cultural impacts on the supply side of blood services will surely have an effect on the demand for blood and blood products by medical practitioners. The demand side story of blood use awaits an historian of Klugman's ability and insight.

Blood Matters is a must read for anyone interested in the history, science, economics and philosophy of blood donation and blood services. Well produced and generously illustrated, it also makes a very strong contribution to the small field of social histories of health institutions other than public hospitals.

Janice Chesters
Monash University