But these are small and peripheral blemishes which are partly influenced by the degree to which a surgeon has narrowed and refined his interests. This book covers the broad body of surgical practice admirably and is neither too radical nor too timid in its approach.

For those individuals or librarians who wish to enhance their shelves with an excellent survey of modern colorectal/anal surgery, this book is a very good buy.

C V MANN

Brush border membranes. Ciba Foundation Symposium 95 Edited by Ruth Porter and GERALYN COLLINS. (Pp. 340; illustrated; £25.) London: Pitman, 1983.

To many, including gastroenterologists, the brush border membrane may be considered as the digestive/absorptive surface lining the lumen of the small intestine. This volume, reporting the proceedings of an international symposium held in June 1982, reminds us that microvilli are found on many cell types and that the regular array of such protrusions of the cell surface to form a true 'brush border' is found in non-gastrointestinal epithelia such as the renal proximal tubule and placental chorionic villus. This raises the question of the function of this particular cellular specialisation: in this volume A J Kenny suggests that the *raison d'être* of the microvillus relates to the function of its membrane proteins – the hydrolases, transport proteins, receptors – and this book testifies to the impact of modern molecular biology on our understanding of some but not all (the transport proteins being conspicuous by their absence) of these molecules. An additional topic considered here is that structure which lies deep to the microvillus surface membrane, the cytoskeleton. All cells have such a cytoplasmic scaffolding of structural proteins but that which supports the brush border membrane is not only exquisite in its geometrical precision but also is isolated easily and in large quantities and for this reason the small intestine has become the model system used by those who are interested in its chemical composition. Although the dominant protein of the microvillus core is actin the current view is that microvilli are non-motile: nevertheless, calcium binding proteins (calmodulin and villin) are present in substantial amounts and may be involved in the assembly and disassembly of microvilli, a process that may be regulated physiologically and which also may be of considerable importance pathologically – for example, in intestinal secretory states of unknown aetiology which are briefly discussed by Schmitz. Of particular interest to those

whose only love is the healthy intestine will be the discussion by M W Smith of his observations on microvillus assembly as related to the development of digestive and absorptive function; that the expression of the former precedes the latter may serve to remind us that even when the molecular detail of membrane macromolecules has been unravelled using the marvellous techniques of gene cloning which are now available, in considering the role of such macromolecules we must always consider the physiological problems with which the intestinal epithelium is confronted. This volume, which will interest many cell biologists, should be of especial significance to those interested in the biochemical and ultrastructural basis of small intestinal function: it will cost them £25.

C A R BOYD

Cope's early diagnosis of the acute abdomen Revised by William Silen. (Pp. 284; illustrated; £7.95.) New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

It still seems a bit odd that a book produced by a British surgeon should be updated by an American, though no one would quibble about the choice of Bill Silen. Every student should read this book, though whether he will be prepared to pay the fairly modest £8 for such a small book is another matter. The book is certainly a good guide to the acute abdomen for students at a very early stage. It provides a logical method of looking at the problems of abdominal pain, but I am afraid I still have rooted objections to the inclusion of hyperaesthesia as something important. I have yet to meet a surgeon who uses it routinely and personally, I have never found it of much assistance.

While the brevity of the book is admirable for very junior students it really does not satisfy their needs as tested by a small uncontrolled trial. There are several other books where the student can read about the problem in greater depth and most of those that I have consulted want to do so. Perhaps a few references might be advisable though this goes against the credo of Zachari Cope's initial preface. As a book it is a good read, but if I were a student I would invest my money elsewhere.

CHARLES CLARK

News

International Symposium on Technical Progress in Endoscopy

This symposium will be held on 29 June 1984 in Erlangen. Further details from Priv Doz Dr J R