

By drawing attention to some of these new developments in the practice of RET, this book will be of particular value to those interested in RET and the cognitive behavioural approach in general.

DUNCAN CRAMER, *Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology, Department of Social Sciences, Loughborough University, Loughborough*

Violent Attachments. By J. REID MELOY. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson. 1992. 365 pp. US \$42.50.

As the book-jacket tells us, "... Dr Meloy begins with a simple but profound question: why does most human violence occur between those who are emotionally involved or, more technically, within an attachment paradigm?" In fact, the book goes on from this rather philosophical question to explore many aspects of violent behaviour and attachment. The first section of the book deals with theoretical issues. Topics include the relationship between erotomania and violence, public figures as a focus for pathological attachments and assassination attempts, and the ways in which normal individuals come to form attachments to psychopathic individuals.

The framework is psychoanalytical, mixing attachment theory derived from Bowlby with object relations theory in the tradition of Klein and Kernberg. Non-analysts should not be alienated, however, as the author also discusses empirical work from a variety of sources, including research on various scales for the assessment of personality disorder. Early chapters provide a useful, critical review of American research in the field of psychopathy and sexual offending. The empirical work often seems thin and inadequate in comparison to the ambitious psychological theories. There are few satisfying answers but many thought-provoking suggestions and pointers to further inquiry.

The second section of the book is more problematic. Under the heading "Clinical Diagnosis and Treatment", it presents case histories drawn from the author's clinical practice, with the emphasis on pre-trial evaluation. The cases are those of individuals charged with horrific acts of violence. Criteria for selection appear to include notoriety and the extremity of the behaviour concerned. Descriptions are graphic. Thus, in the chapter "Revisiting the Rorschach of Sirhan Sirhan" (p. 271), we are told: "The first and fatal Mini-Mag hollow-point bullet shattered his right mastoid bone and lodged in the right hemisphere of his cerebellum. The second and third bullets entered his back right armpit". The book contains worse examples, more relevant to the surgeon than the psychiatrist. Detail of this sort is highly relevant to the police trying to catch a killer and to the court trying the case but I remain unconvinced that it contributes towards

psychiatrists' understanding. In the same way, less notorious or newsworthy cases could have been used to illustrate many of the author's arguments. These faults illustrate the problems which arise when a branch of medicine becomes dominated by the demands of the legal system and the lure of 'the big case'.

T. MADEN, *Senior Lecturer, Department of Forensic Psychiatry, Institute of Psychiatry, London*

The Biology of the Autistic Syndromes (2nd edn). By CHRISTOPHER GILLBERG and MARY COLEMAN. London: MacKeith Press. 1992. 317 pp. £37.50.

The first edition of this book was published in 1985 and the present volume updates the subjects covered in the first. The contents are organised in five parts.

The first is concerned with diagnosis, the clinical course and prognosis, and includes a chapter on Asperger's syndrome, which was touched on only briefly in the first edition.

The second part is a review of the literature on prevalence and on the different types of pathology that have been studied in relation to autistic spectrum disorders. These include, among others, genetic, pre-, peri- and post-natal factors, biochemistry, neuropathology and neuropsychology.

In the third part, the authors consider those chromosomal aberrations and diseases that have been reported to be sometimes associated with autistic disorders. They also discuss the relationship of auditory and visual impairments to autism.

Part four deals with pharmacological, dietary and other possible medical treatments that are under investigation. They do not touch on the many non-medical approaches for which claims, mostly untested, currently abound.

Part five includes a theoretical discussion of central nervous system mechanisms that may underlie the abnormal behaviour in autistic conditions.

The authors strongly recommend a complete medical and neurological investigation for all those presenting with autistic spectrum conditions, including cerebrospinal fluid examination and brain imaging.

They report a high proportion of abnormal findings in their own clinical practices. Even though it is rare to find any treatable cause, they point to the value for research and the need parents have for an explanation of their child's disabilities and behaviour. Different clinicians have different views on how far invasive (and expensive) investigations are justified. But, even if not all the suggested procedures are followed, the authors' checklist for neuropsychiatric assessment is helpful for ensuring a systematic approach.

In the introduction, the authors outline the story of the development of the concept of autism by Leo

Kanner, the initial psychogenic theories of aetiology, and the gradual shift towards the current view that autistic behaviour is the result of neuropathology due to a variety of physical causes. Kanner believed the syndrome of 'early childhood autism' was unique and separate from all other childhood conditions. Although he fluctuated in his view of aetiology between psychogenic and genetic hypotheses, he is best known for his descriptions of 'refrigerator parents'. It is, perhaps, surprising that he did not recognise the similarities between the behaviour of the children he saw and that found in many of those with tuberous sclerosis and untreated phenylketonuria. These conditions, discussed in the present book, had been described in the literature before Kanner published his first paper on autism.

If he had made the connection, he might not have been so easily persuaded to implicate the parents as the cause of their children's problems. This would have saved many families from experiencing long-lasting guilt and distress.

Nearly 50 years after Kanner's first publication on the subject, Gillberg & Coleman's book highlights both the remarkable advances in knowledge of aetiology and the major gaps still remaining. They emphasise the fact that Kanner's early infantile autism is part of a spectrum of syndromes that have in common severe impairment of the ability to engage in reciprocal social interaction. The physical basis of these syndromes is no longer in doubt, although the precise nature of the neuropathology produced by the range of original biological causes is still being investigated. The authors differentiate between established facts and hypotheses and note directions for future research.

This book will be of particular interest to clinicians who see children or adults with autistic conditions, but also to any other professionals and parents who are interested in the relationship between biological causes and autistic behaviour.

LORNA WING, *Consultant Psychiatrist, National Autistic Society, Centre for Social and Communication Disorders, Elliot House, Bromley, Kent*

Developing Minds: Challenge and Continuity Across the Life Span. By MICHAEL RUTTER and MARJORIE RUTTER. London: Penguin Books. 1993. 416 pp. £7.99.

Michael Rutter's interest in development has formed the backbone of his large research output and writing for child psychiatrists: now he brings this material to a wider audience in this joint work with his wife Marjorie. Her work has been more with regard to adulthood, and so together they aim to look across the lifespan, extending the search for evidence of continuities, and trying to identify the transitional and mutative factors.

The early chapters introduce the subject of development and the different processes and dimensions within it. The next section looks in detail at three broad areas of development – social, emotional and behavioural, and cognitive. The last third of the book examines three age-bands – adolescence, adulthood, and later life – with reference to the especially challenging and formative aspects and experiences of each. As the earlier part of the book is necessarily largely about childhood, this balances out. Carefully examining evidence point by point across the dimensions of development, the authors look not only for material that is valid, but for connectedness across these dimensions and for continuity into the future.

Ideas of a staged childhood leading to a fixed adult personality are found wanting, while there is confirmation of individual differences from birth shaped by, and shaping, relationships and experiences; and continuing so throughout life.

The authors' aims were to not only integrate developmental and clinical arenas but be less technical for a wider audience than in Rutter's previous books in this field. References are made by number only, which aids the flow of the text; many works in the reference list are themselves reviews.

It must be said, however, that the text is still often a rich diet, with sometimes too much information in the short passage for easy digestion. This applies especially to the earlier necessarily technical chapters: as the book itself develops, like life, it does settle into adulthood and old age somewhat, and there is good reference then to already learnt information to develop new points. This gives a cohesion to the book, in keeping with the thesis of cohesion of the individual across life even while there is continuation of development and change.

For the sophisticated layperson, here is the answer to "Nature versus Nurture", and this nicely produced book would be worth a much greater cover price. As it is, it becomes available to all. I would recommend it to trainees and students who thereby would have library book information in one stimulating package. For the psychiatrist (for any age group) it is an integrating account of the developmental issues behind mental illness and its presentation – and very persuasive of just how much can be understood in these terms. For the child psychiatrist, however, is there anything new beyond being an update? The success of the project to look across the lifespan is indeed to bring considerable new insight into what the areas of childhood are that merit investment of professional time and resources. Many more questions are asked than answered perhaps, but things certainly are not what they have always seemed.

HUGH BARNES, *Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Bristol Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Bristol*