century tomb inscription of Sarah Fletcher in Dorchester Abbey, whose "nerves were too delicately spun to bear the rude Shakes and Jostlings which we meet with in this transitory World. Nature gave way; She sunk and died a Martyr to Excessive Sensibility."

The book includes chapters on the biological, psychological and social aspects of anxiety. There is an appendix on assessment scales, and a final chapter on the management of anxiety. Bearing in mind the authors' intention to produce a practical volume, this section is disappointingly brief. However, it does include sections on explanation and motivation for change, relaxation and meditation, exposure to anxiety, restructuring of attitudes, and self-control.

This modest volume could well be recommended to psychiatry trainees on a topic of growing importance for both psychiatrists and general practitioners. I feel that supplementary reading would be required, particularly in the areas of panic disorder and post traumatic stress disorder. Nevertheless, the authors have achieved an admirable summary of this pervasive problem.

R. J. DALY, *Professor of Psychiatry,*
University College Cork, Ireland

Limit Setting in Clinical Practice. By STEPHEN A. GREEN, RICHARD L. GOLDBERG, DAVID M. GOLDSTEIN and ELLEN LEIBENLUFT. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 130 pp. £20.00.

The title of this book is slightly misleading; the book is more specifically about limit setting with difficult patients in psychotherapy (and to a lesser extent in general psychiatry). The authors state, quite rightly, that this subject is often neglected by teachers and supervisors, leaving trainee psychotherapists (and psychiatrists) at times overwhelmed and out-manoeuvred by their most severely disturbed patients, to the detriment of both parties.

There are chapters covering the art and theory of limit setting, limit setting and the transference relationship, limit setting with in-patients, and finally teaching limit setting. Potentially destructive processes such as splitting, acting out, regression, dependency, and self-harm are outlined, and helpful ways of dealing with the more malignant aspects of these phenomena are described with the aid of clinical examples.

The chapter on transference will be particularly useful to trainees, as it includes an honest discussion of counter-transference feelings which can be aroused in the therapist, including hatred, aggression, and sexual arousal. That on limit setting with in-patients looks at both psychodynamic and behavioural aspects of the management of severely disturbed patients and the antitherapeutic responses which can be aroused in staff.

Treatment programmes need to be defined clearly and negotiated with staff and patient alike. Agreement on strategies for dealing with, for example, splitting, collusion, and acting out, whether originating with staff or patient, is essential, and a high level of understanding of unconscious mechanisms is demanded of ward staff.

This is a slim volume, but even so there is some repetition (presumably because the book has four authors). Nevertheless, it offers a clear practical introduction to limit setting, and is a useful source of reference on the subject. I recommend it for inclusion in the psychiatry/psychotherapy library.

STEPHEN P. REILLY, *Consultant Psychiatrist with Special Responsibility for Psychotherapy,*
Bootham Park Hospital, York

Homicide. By MARTIN DALY and MARGO WILSON. New York: Aldine de Gruyter. 1988. 328 pp. DM 72 (pb), DM 128 (hb).

"Why do people kill one another?" the authors ask. A thousand different reasons – we reply – it depends on which conceptual framework you apply. "Ah", say our authors, "we have a theoretical model that accommodates all the others; it is scientifically correct but it has been shamefully neglected for years". Sounds interesting, tell me more. "Well, it's called evolutionary psychology – sit back and this book will tell you all you need to know." Three hundred pages later, the theory remains hazy and its application to contemporary homicide seems tenuous.

Behavioural traits survive where they are valuable in ensuring abundant biological offspring; that, in a nutshell, is evolutionary psychology. Separate chapters cover the various forms of family homicide (e.g. killing of children, parents, and spouse), other types of homicide, and the criminal justice system. In each of them the authors purport to discuss the issues from the perspective of evolutionary psychology; often it is difficult to glimpse anything new in what they say. For example, they discuss the commonest form of urban killing: one drunken man killed by another during what Wolfgang back in 1958 called "an altercation of relatively trivial origin". That it is nothing new and that it is recognisable across different cultures, we already know. For the authors, however, "a capacity for controlled violence has regularly contributed to status" and "status has persistently contributed to reproductive success". Similarly, maternal infanticide is construed as the psychological trade-off between the mother's valuation of her baby and her valuation of her own remaining reproductive potential. Killing of a defective child and killing by a step-parent are analysed in predictable terms.

Although the authors claim to present science, they give us, in their words, a "general theory of human nature". Like most theories of human nature, this one is not written down. It generates no testable hypotheses, and where it doesn't fit properly you can bend it to shape. Books that address a complex subject such as