

In spite of some outstanding contributions, this is not a book to be strongly recommended to the *Journal's* readers.

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Fantasy, Myth, and Reality: Essays in Honor of Jacob A. Arlow, MD. Edited by HAROLD P. BLUME, YALE KRAMER, ARLENE K. RICHARDS and ARNOLD D. RICHARDS. Madison: International University Press. 1988. 538 pp. \$55.00.

This book is a collection of papers written in honour of Jacob Arlow, an eminent North American psychoanalyst. His particular interests were in unconscious fantasy, mythology, 'modernisation' of the structural theory, and matters of psychoanalytic technique. The contributors are training analysts, professors of psychiatry or psychology and others. The writings are of the highest standard and should appeal particularly to those working within the framework of ego-psychology. There are 28 papers, all of which take as their starting point one or other of Arlow's areas of interest.

I found a number of the papers of interest, mainly in the clinical area; three particularly. The paper titled "Self-mutilation and father-daughter incest" describes a young woman's conflicts over an incestuous relationship, which are acted out in self-mutilating behaviour. "Dynamic aspects of homosexual cruising" gives a vivid and lively account of the analysis of a bisexual patient. "Unconscious fantasies: the hidden agenda in treatment" illustrates most clearly just why unconscious fantasy is so important and needs to become explicit in therapy.

TOM MURPHY, *Consultant Psychotherapist, Royal Edinburgh Hospital*

Melatonin: Clinical Perspectives. Edited by ANDREW MILES, DAVID R. S. PHILBRICK and CHRISTOPHER THOMPSON. Oxford: Oxford Medical Publications. 1988. 288 pp. £40.00.

This book is unusual in that its title belies its actual usefulness in practice. All the psychiatrist contributors, except one, conclude that there is little evidence for the involvement of melatonin in the major psychiatric disorders. It is also unusually catholic in approach, including chapters on ageing, reproduction, sleep, seasonal affective disorder, thyroid disease, and a host of other topics. In fact, only four of the fourteen chapters deal directly with issues of interest to psychiatrists.

This book is not for the fainthearted. One of the difficulties is the detail with which the major experiments leading to the current "state of the art" are

described. Many of these are of relevance to veterinary rather than human clinical practice. The style of writing varies enormously; some of the chapters, mainly those dealing with non-psychiatric disturbances, are somewhat turgid, while others are more easily comprehended. The chapter on 'Melatonin and the human circadian rhythm' is easily absorbed and makes the reader aware of the complexity of this intriguing hormone. The chapters on seasonal affective disorder and schizophrenia are also models of clarity and succinctness. The authors themselves are obviously perspicacious in nature and frequently pose questions of their own, thereby pointing out directions for future research. The book is also well referenced.

It is striking that this book should draw so much from so little, since in the authors' final words, "No investigators have yet been able to positively identify a clinical syndrome clearly caused by disordered pineal function." Inevitably, the financially constrained library will not consider this book, nor will general psychiatrists derive much by way of clinical acumen from it. However, those who have an interest in neuropsychiatry will find it engrossing, but will in a few years be forced to dig into their pockets again for the second edition if the pace of research into this hormone continues as it has started.

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Selective 5-HT Reuptake Inhibitors: Novel or Common-place Agents? Edited by M. GASTPAR and J. S. WAKELIN. Basle: Karger. 1988. 108 pp. £44.60.

The new generation of selective inhibitors of 5-HT uptake represent a significant addition to our therapeutic armamentarium, and a clinically-orientated book on the subject would be a useful addition to any psychiatric library. Unfortunately, this book does not provide what the clinician needs.

It does contain one excellent review by Bech of the available evidence on the therapeutic efficacy of these drugs. He makes the point that although there are some studies in which the new drugs are inferior to the reference compounds, there are none in which they are superior in efficacy. He concludes from this that the case for therapeutic equivalence of new and old drugs has yet to be established. The efficacy of the new ones is not in doubt – the question is whether they are worth the price.

The other jewel in this collection of papers is an account of the action of the drugs on the electrophysiology of 5-HT neurones. Two adaptive processes are described which lead to increased 5-HT neurotransmission. Down-regulation at cell body 5-HT autoreceptors keeps the cells firing in the presence of high 5-HT levels, and down-regulation at 5-HT autoreceptors on nerve terminals keeps the terminals releasing 5-HT even in the presence of high intrasynaptic 5-HT concentration.