

these will need to face and overcome the consequences.

How this can be done in a variety of stressful situations is the major contribution of this work, and it should thus be helpful to all kinds of people who have to do with children. The work seems to be written at different levels of sophistication, and one hopes that the layman will not be deterred by patches of psychoanalytic and research jargon nor the professional by the more homely patches. There is something for both. The book perpetrates one serious error: that separations from the mother before the age of six months do not matter. There is in fact good evidence that separations even in the first days have an adverse effect on relationship formation and development.

CHRISTOPHER WARDLE.

#### ABORTION

**Experience with Abortion: A Case Study of North East Scotland.** Edited by GORDON HOROBIN. Cambridge University Press. 1973. Pp. xiv+373. Index 5 pp. Price £7.00.

This book details in a most comprehensive way a five-year study of abortions in the Aberdeen area. The period of survey spans the introduction of the Abortion Act and gives interesting information about attitudes towards termination of pregnancy in the Aberdeen area before the passing of that Act. Determined efforts were made to include information about all the women who underwent abortion during the period of study. Local circumstances gave a high success rate in tracing patients and this adds greatly to the value of the information presented. Separate chapters are provided by the sociologists, gynaecologists and psychiatrists who participated, making the book an important factual study for a variety of specialists in this field.

A final chapter by the co-ordinator of the study raises the issues which will be in the minds of everyone, namely whether one can rely on the information provided by the patients who participate in a study such as this involving so many emotive features, and also how far the findings may be applicable in other areas.

As far as the first point is concerned, the team have obviously been aware of the difficulties and have set out clearly the ways they have tried to overcome them. For the second point each reader must, of course, make his own judgement. It does seem likely that important general lessons can be drawn, but inevitably where human beings are concerned human considerations must be taken into account. I personally have no doubt that this study is an important contribution to a field in which there are many opinions and relatively few facts. I suppose the only

somewhat paradoxical comment is that this book is now of less interest to the practising psychiatrist in that he is now much less often invited to offer opinions about termination of pregnancy than he was in the immediate post-Abortion-Act days. This does not imply that this book is not highly recommended.

C. P. SEAGER.

#### CULTURAL ASPECTS

**The Mind Possessed.** By WILLIAM SARGANT. Heinemann. 1973. Pp. xii+212. Index 8 pp. Illustrations 16 pp. Price £1.75.

The publishers describe this new book as running parallel to *Battle for the Mind*. It does indeed, although somewhat more concerned with religious experience, but clearly the same ideas are there amidst the new examples.

In the first half Dr. Sargant—our own psychiatric shaman—gives us a mixture of Pavlov, abreaction, historical background and many a personal anecdote. Part Two is referred to by the author as his 'research' but is really a world travelogue at lightning speed. He attends a conference, and then a distinguished acquaintance takes him off for a few hours' observation of some religious spectacle. Occasionally he borrows a private plane, sometimes he hands out an antidepressant to an unhappy ecstatic, always his camera is at the ready. Hazards abound; his camera fails, ceremonies are held when the light is bad, a voodoo ritual is halted whilst more money is demanded from him, but he and his wife keep on filming and keep on travelling.

This new book is characteristically personal and idiosyncratic, ignoring the vast amount of published anthropological work on possession and mysticism. However, we should at least be grateful to Dr. Sargant for so robustly publicising an area which most psychiatrists neglect. The photographs are splendid.

RICHARD MAYOU.

**The Psychology of Aboriginal Australians.**

Edited by G. E. KEARNEY, P. R. DE LACEY and G. R. DAVIDSON. Sydney, New York, London, Toronto: John Wiley and Sons. 1973. Pp. xii+437 incl. biographical notes on the contributors. Index 8 pp. Price £6.50 (cloth); £4.40 (paper).

This book consists of a series of articles (some previously published) contributed by over thirty workers, mostly psychologists, some medical practitioners (four of them psychiatrists), several educationists, anthropologists (four with a formal training in addition to considerable field experience) and one sociologist. Generally, their academic background is impressive. The articles cover various aspects of aboriginal life and behaviour, psychology (including