

disorders includes useful methodology of visual analogue scales and other self-rating schemes. The authors also discuss in detail how premenstrual depression may be mimicked by many of the affective disorders that can occur episodically. The interaction between affective disorders and premenstrual depression is further explored. As a gynaecologist, I am sure that my management of patients who complain of menstrually-related depression will be considerably improved by my reading this chapter.

The evaluation of premenstrual syndrome, together with general advice on treatment of less severe forms of the disease, is clearly described in a good and well-balanced central chapter. The management of more severe forms of the syndrome is also fully reviewed, together with the treatment of any other co-existing psychiatric disease. It is pointed out that few controlled studies are available, and that there is scant evidence for the existence of any therapy of proven value for premenstrual disease. The volume concludes with a chapter concerned with cognitive approaches to the treatment of premenstrual depression and a chapter on research techniques used to study the premenstrual syndrome.

This is a very interesting and valuable little book. Although it is written exclusively by psychiatrists, it will be of considerable value to gynaecologists who probably see as much of this disorder as anyone. It was a pleasure to read such a concise and objective review of this difficult problem.

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**Masters of Madness: Social Origins of the American Psychiatric Profession.** By CONSTANCE M. MCGOVERN. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England. 1986. Pp 262. £18.00.

Reading this book I experienced a strange feeling of déjà vu: it all seemed so familiar. And then it dawned on me that this was because the history of American psychiatry is essentially the history of English psychiatry told with an American accent.

The Association of Medical Officers of Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane was founded in England in 1841, whereas the American analogue, the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane (now the American Psychiatric Association), was founded three years later in 1844. The origins of these associations in both countries lay in the expressed wish of well-intentioned men to pool their experience with the earnest desire of improving the treatment of the insane.

There were differences in emphasis, of course, but the rise and the fall of the asylum systems in England and America ran roughly parallel courses, although it is in

the context of the demise that the closest approximation can be seen. What is most remarkable is the sharp division of opinion which has arisen in both countries as to the desirability of closing the mental hospitals.

This division could not be better illustrated than in the quotations given at the beginning of Chapter 7, which are the declared views of two Presidents of the American Psychiatric Association. In 1958, Harry C. Soloman opined, "I do not see how any reasonable objective view of our mental hospitals can fail to conclude that they are bankrupt beyond remedy . . . [they] should be liquidated as rapidly as can be done". However, in 1984 John A. Talbott had occasion to write, "Our public facilities are deteriorating physically, clinically, and economically: our chronically ill are either 'transinstitutionalised' to nursing homes or deinstitutionalised to our cities' streets".

It seems a pity that this most readable and informative book should be marred by occasional lapses in scholarship. For example, there is not and never has been a "British Association of Medical Officers of Lunatic Asylums". Again, the author alleges that at the trial of Daniel M'Naghten (*sic*) the court decided that a person was insane if he could not distinguish right from wrong. The court decided no such thing; the so-called right/wrong test was incorporated in the McNaughton Rules which were formulated after the trial.

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**What is Epilepsy? The Clinical and Scientific Basis of Epilepsy.** Edited by M. R. TRIMBLE and E. H. REYNOLDS, Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. 1986. Pp 350. £40.00.

There have been many books on epilepsy in recent years, including several involving one or other of the editors of this book. It is easy to justify the production of these volumes on the basis that epilepsy is a common problem, but non-specialists may be forgiven for wondering whether there is really sufficient new information to require the use of so much paper. The present volume has arisen from the symposium which took place in July 1985, "To review the present state of knowledge and to discuss its relationship to the larger, central question; what is epilepsy?". The latter is a question of philosophical interest, but is not of much importance in clinical practice, in which an entirely empirical approach is taken to all such questions. This book has, in fact, much to commend it. It consists of 24 review chapters, each well-written and representing an authoritative view. Even hoary old classics such as the classification of seizure disorders make interesting reading. The scope of the book ranges from a historical introduction, through discussions of problems of epilepsy in children, differential diagnosis from other paroxysmal neurological disorders, EEG, seizure monitoring and depth electrode