

describe interesting results, but it should be remembered that these are two selective examples of work within a wide-ranging field of neurobiological investigation.

For those seeking a systematic overview of the tangled wood that is the genetics of affective disorders, it would perhaps be better to start with, for example, *The Genetics of Mood Disorders* by Tsuang & Faraone, and to reserve this book for the further examination of certain topically interesting trees. But bear in mind that some trees may not be quite as solid as they appear here.

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The Book of Psychiatric Books. Edited by SIDNEY CROWN and HUGH FREEMAN. Northvale, NJ: Aronson. 1994. 427 pp. US \$45.00 (hb).

This volume contains 37 of the essays which appeared in the *British Journal of Psychiatry* under the title "Books Reconsidered" between 1982 and 1992. The idea of this series proved to be a good one, as most of the authors were reviewing books well known to them. In addition, this compilation includes excerpts of each book to give the reader a taste of what is being reviewed.

The choice and the subjects of the books are wide, as is their time span – from Emil Durkheim (1897) to Alice Coleman (1985). A few of the essays are too brief, and a few others too adulatory, but the majority are substantial, original and enlightening. John Cutting, for instance, is a persuasive advocate of Eugene Minkowski, who had most 'modern' views of the nature of schizophrenia. Most of his work remains unread over here, as little has been translated from the French. John Birtchnell provides a thoughtful and unaggressive critique of Thomas Szasz, and Patrick Pietroni gives a balanced account of the achievements of Michael Balint. Some 20 psychological therapists of all persuasions receive careful consideration, from the Freuds and Otto Fenichel to Joseph Wolpe, Hans Eysenck, Aaron Beck and Isaac Marks. Jerome Frank (my favourite) is well covered by Mark Aveline.

Eugen Bleuler is reconsidered by his son and grandson, with an enlightening account of his early career. He was the first director of the Burgholzli Clinic to speak and to understand the language used by its patients, coming as he did from a local family and having spent 12 formative years (from 29 to 40) as director of the small clinic at Rheinau, where, on its land in the Rhine Valley, Bleuler lived and worked among the patients.

Such revealing biographical details are to be found in many of the essays. I read once more Michael

Shepherd's powerful advocacy of Karl Jasper's great and difficult book: "the most important single book to have been published on the aims and logic of psychological medicine". It is, after all, a valedictory work, Jasper's farewell to psychiatry, but I reckon that Eugen Bleuler learnt more on his land in Rheinau.

Even autobiographical details are not entirely absent. You will discover, for instance – but I will not reveal – what happened when Sidney Crown found himself in a urinal in Edinburgh with Cattell on one side of him and Thurston on the other. This is a book which could provide many happy hours of continuing medical education for any psychiatrist who can still find some spare time and money for solitary reading.

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Feminist Perspectives on Eating Disorders. Edited by PATRICIA FALLON, MELANIE KATZMAN and SUSAN WOOLEY. New York: Guilford Press. 1994. 465 pp. £25.00 (hb).

Eating disorders are a feminist issue. They indicate the price paid by women, just as they are becoming increasingly liberated, in submitting to today's "beauty myth" injunction not to be fat. Contributors to Fallon's collection observe that children as young as three years of age are "weightist"; that teenage girls worry about being too big (whereas boys want to be bigger); and that over 50% of middle-aged women, asked what they would most like to change about their lives, say they want to lose weight.

Others document weightism's individual effects. Brigman describes her mother's bulimic attempt to regain the celebrated good looks of her youth in the hope of thereby relieving her depression at being beaten by her husband and losing her father to Parkinson's disease. Thompson recounts instances of women resorting to starving or bingeing to offset the injuries done them by sexual abuse, or by homophobic, racial, or class discrimination. Others make do with statistical generality: Perlick & Silverstein, for instance, adduce epidemiological data about eating disorders, depression, and somatic symptoms (e.g. headaches) in claiming that these ills constitute a syndrome affecting adolescent girls as a result of the "gender ambivalence" induced by increased educational opportunity.

A few describe individual therapy: the impact of the therapist's pregnancy on eating-disordered patients; the use of antidepressant drugs; helping patients understand and reconnect with, rather than blame, their mothers; male and female therapists' different attitudes toward physical and emotional closeness; therapy's effects in getting bulimic patients to recognise their feelings of, say, anger. Again, however, detail is sacrificed to generalisation, with many contributors recommending treatment of women's self-hatred through