

a relative beginner to group work could use this book in order to enable themselves to tackle a wide range of children's problems with confidence. I was particularly pleased to read the helpful section on work with sexually abused younger children.

I found the book a pleasure to read. It is stimulating and helpful at the same time, and I would not hesitate to recommend it to anyone involved in, or contemplating, group work with young children.

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Psychopathology and Differential Diagnosis: A Primer. Volume 1. History of Psychopathology. By HENRY KELLERMAN and ANTHONY BURRY. New York: Columbia University Press. 1988. 270 pp. \$69.00.

This purports to be a history of our concepts of psychopathology. It is in fact 'psychopathology' used in a restricted sense, and 'history' limited to trace a rather narrow path. The book is divided into six parts. The first three – covering antiquity, the middle ages and the Renaissance and the modern world – are all explored with a view to demonstrating the antecedents to subsequent Freudian theory. Parts 4 and 5 are respectively on 'Nosological systems and the appearance of Sigmund Freud' and 'Typologies and followers of Freud'. The sixth part deals with contemporary views: ego psychology and object relations. There is no mention of the origins of psychopathological thinking propounded by Jaspers, Schneider, Husserl, or Sartre, and there is no working through of the immense importance that biological advances have had on the understanding of psychopathology. It is unfortunate that the authors' view of history is restricted by psychoanalytic spectacles which tend to refract ideas explained by ancient writers into shapes which they would hardly recognise themselves. For example, the authors claim that the Old Testament frequently alludes to epilepsy and depression; however, reference to neither could be found in a substantial concordance. This book largely succeeds in its intention of relating ancient concepts to psychoanalytical thinking, and right from the beginning it introduces psychoanalytic concepts to 'explain' earlier theories. It is unfortunate that past cultures are labelled as irrational and unscientific without any apparent attempt by the authors to try and get inside the culture and inside the minds of the proponents of ideas.

There are various important routes to psychopathology that have not received mention in this work. For example, the association made by ancient Greek writers between cerebro-spinal fluid, semen, and the life force would seem essential for the history of psychoanalytic concepts. The point made by Norman Cohn so eloquently in *Europe's Inner Demons* that the persecution of witches only occurred at the end of the middle ages

and in the early Renaissance period is missed by these authors, who ascribe the witch-hunt to medieval thinking. Unfortunately this history is excessively derivative, as there are only 17 references for the historical section and most of these are short historical summaries rather than original works. The history of psychopathology is a fascinating study. Unfortunately, this work will not answer most of the questions one would like to ask.

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Macmillan Dictionary of Psychology. By STUART SUTHERLAND. London: Macmillan. 1989. 491 pp. £29.95.

As Sutherland points out in his preface, psychology has become rife with complex concepts and technical terms. Nor is it free from the great importance of many other disciplines impinging on the science, such as sociology and neurochemistry. Reviewing such a comprehensive dictionary is never easy, because one is clearly limited in one's area of knowledge.

Having said this, I found this volume outstanding. It appears to cover all the major areas from the neurosciences, through mainstream psychology to psychoanalysis. It has a useful appendix providing diagrams of the brain, and throughout the text there are helpful illustrations. The definitions are helpful and clear, and Sutherland succeeds in giving more than definitions indicating also how concepts are used. The attention to detail is superb, and at times I found myself almost reading page for page. The problem here is that one is suddenly made aware of how much one does not know.

Although it is written for psychologists, this volume deserves to be found in any academic library. It will be extremely useful to psychiatrists as well as psychologists, and a paperback edition would certainly be worth personal purchase by students and practitioners alike.

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Psychology For Medicine. Edited by T. W. ROBBINS and P. J. COOPER. London: Edward Arnold. 1988. 310 pp. £11.95.

This book is based on the pre-clinical course in psychology for medical students at Cambridge. Although each chapter is written by a different author, it is carefully constructed and edited to produce a coherent work. Despite being pitched at an elementary level, the book is of the highest critical quality and, particularly in its later chapters which move towards clinical practice, does much to dispel common myths and loose thinking.

The reader will be disabused, for example, of any notion that "stress can be responsible for most things" or that "because we understand rather little about psychology, anything which we don't understand must be psychological in origin". The distinction between factors which predispose to disease and those which exacerbate pre-existing conditions is made very clearly, while the section on intelligence also unties some old knots. The topics covered are wide-ranging, but do leave some gaps: perception and memory are covered, but the control of movement is mentioned only in passing; neuropsychology is described from a clinical viewpoint, despite the rarity of some of the conditions, but psychosis is scarcely mentioned, presumably because it is regarded as too clinical. What I find odd, though, is not so much the content of the book, which is excellent, as the presumed ignorance of the people for whom it is written. The topics covered in the book are all essential reading not only for doctors, but also for anyone who will have professional dealings with people as individuals, but the subject matter which is covered is by no means common knowledge. Psychology is, sadly, not a part of our education in the way that history or literature is. If this book goes some way to putting across a scientific approach at a simple level in a subject beset with easy answers then it will be a step in the right direction.

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The Comforts of Madness. By PAUL SAYER. London: Constable. 1988. 128 pp. £9.95.

This short novel, in 22 terse sections, is an extraordinary achievement. More of a parable than a wholly realistic account, it charts the withdrawal of its young narrator from all human activities. The actions of those around him, relatives and professional carers, are recorded with painful precision.

At least, I hope it's a parable. The treatments he receives include the unorthodox and almost certainly the unethical. At one point he is told, "No-one can exist like you . . . there are no known cases". Yet he acts as a silent spokesman for many whose views on their 'illness' do not correspond with those who are 'treating' it. Reality is only just out of focus.

Despite its obvious qualities – craft, suspense, humour, and economy, to name just a few – it is surprising that such an offbeat novel should pick up major prizes like the Constable and the Whitbread. This success has resulted in much publicity for the author, a psychiatric nurse. There are similarities between the central figure of this novel and another fictional idiot savant, Dustin Hoffman's character in the Oscar-winning film *Rain Man*.

Why should such exotic manifestations of mental illness be given such a high profile? One answer could be

that such characters are particularly intelligent and perceptive. Another might be that they keep the public mind off the closer reality of mental illness in its more mundane forms.

Sayer has written a splendid book. I hope we will hear much more from him, whether he chooses to express himself through fiction or by continuing to work for the mentally ill.

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Psychopathology and Psychotherapy in Homosexuality. Edited by MICHAEL W. ROSS. New York: Haworth Press. 1988. 212 pp. \$29.95.

Psychiatry, indeed society as a whole, divides into those who regard homosexuality as a pathology and those who regard it as a variant of normality. In recent years AIDS has brought this dilemma very much into focus. This book, published in America although with an Australian editor, represents the output of a growing number of psychotherapists and psychiatrists who regard homosexuality as a normal variation. The papers were originally published as two volumes of the *Journal of Homosexuality*, and many of the authors identify themselves with gay activist groups or groups of gay professionals.

The central message of the book is that the problem for the homosexual is not his sexual orientation but arises as a result of "society-wide process of stigmatisation that has negative social, economic, and emotional effects on its victims." The view is clearly expressed that, "the gay man or lesbian who is in psychotherapy may be at significant risk if they work with a psychotherapist who believes that homosexuality is an expression of abnormality or mental illness".

Given this basic point of view, what does the book achieve? Although many of the authors devote an excessive amount of space to proving that homosexuality should not be regarded as pathology (clearly the decisions in 1973 and 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association have not resolved the matter), it succeeds in giving a clear view of the problems of the homosexual as perceived by these therapists and presumably by a large number of the gay community. The perspective is psychosocial, not psychoanalytic. Psychotherapy is seen largely as helping the person to come to terms with his or her homosexuality, to regard it as normal, and to counteract the effects of homophobia.

The techniques advocated are supportive psychotherapy, counselling, and a mixture of behavioural approaches. Specific psychiatric disorders are seen as basically the same as those occurring in heterosexuals, but with the added problems of social isolation and