

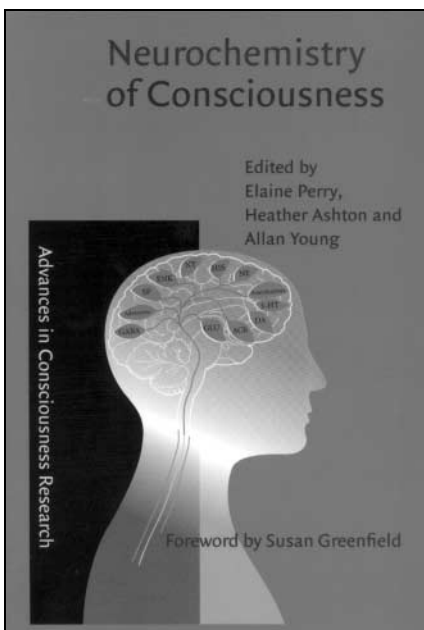
Book reviews

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Neurochemistry of Consciousness.

Neurotransmitters in Mind

Edited by Elaine Perry, Heather Ashton & Allan Young. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing. 2002. 344 pp. £65.00 (pb). ISBN 90 272 5156 8



If this book were untitled, I would conclude that it was one of the best available textbooks on basic and clinical neuropharmacology. Part 1 is an up-to-date and comprehensive review of neurotransmitter systems and Part 2 is one of the best sets of reviews of psychophysiology and cognitive neurochemistry at this level of publication. Part 3 includes excellent reviews of the clinical pharmacology of hypnotics and neuroleptics. Part 4 is an exceptionally comprehensive text on the clinical neurochemistry of most neuropsychiatric disorders. I would unreservedly recommend it to all my clinical and scientific trainees.

What, then, is wrong with it? Mainly the title, the part headings and the foreword. The title and the foreword (by Susan Greenfield) promise great insights into the neurochemistry of consciousness, as do the part headings, but the flow of the book is about mainstream neuropharmacology.

The chapters that get close to examining the neurochemistry of consciousness are the weakest, because of the paucity of the experimental data, and they do not fulfil the promise of the foreword. This is not a criticism but a pity, as the book could be a best-seller competing with other major textbooks of psychopharmacology. The student browsing the lists of suitable texts would not pick up the value of this book from its title.

The foreword is interesting for its loquaciousness: 'We are now looking beyond the stumbling block of causality: the water of neuronal signalling, translated into the wine of subjective experience'. Great! But what does it mean? Professor Greenfield says that this is the biggest and most exciting question and she castigates mainstream scientists for getting bogged down in the 'hurly-burly of peer review papers and grant writing'. But this 'hurly-burly' is presumably in activities that will benefit patients within a professional lifetime. I am not sure that this 'hard problem' is of particular use to either current or future generations of patients.

The book is part of a series on advances in consciousness research, including cognitive psychology, linguistics and neurophilosophy. If these are of the same quality this would be a mouth-wateringly interesting series of books on the neurosciences. Let us hope that they have subtitles that indicate the broader values of the books.

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Psychiatric Illness in Women. Emerging Treatment and Research

Edited by Freda Lewis-Hall, Teresa S. Williams, Jill A. Panetta & John M. Herrera. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Publishing. 2002. 680 pp. US\$65.00 (pb). ISBN 1 58562 003 3

This book addresses many of the clinical and management problems and research

dilemmas that a psychiatrist faces today. It consists of 25 chapters grouped in five sections. The first two sections include seven chapters on anxiety, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression, respectively. These chapters summarise the classic, well-established textbook information as well as presenting contentious questions such as treatment approaches during pregnancy, breast-feeding and comorbidity with endocrine disorders. They all contain a balanced discussion of biological factors *v.* experiential differences in social roles between the genders in the emergence of anxiety and depressive disorders.

The third section has eight chapters on schizophrenia. Topics range from the well-established information on gender differences in the origin, symptomatology and progression of the illness to more hypothetical issues regarding the role of oestrogens, the menopause and limitations of anti-psychotics. All chapters contain information on recent developments and well-referenced up-to-date summaries.

Section 4 consists of four chapters on dementia and related disorders. There is a sound summary on Alzheimer's disease as it relates to both men and women, two accounts of the basic neurobiology of oestrogen and gonadal steroids and their possible role in the prevention of dementia.

Section 5 covers a range of topics: victimisation and PTSD, gender differences in substance misuse, and dissociative and eating disorders. Further chapters examine the effects of gender and ethnicity on

