

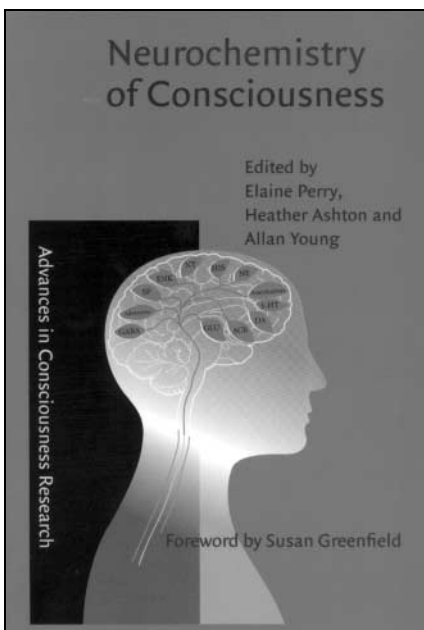
## Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

### 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

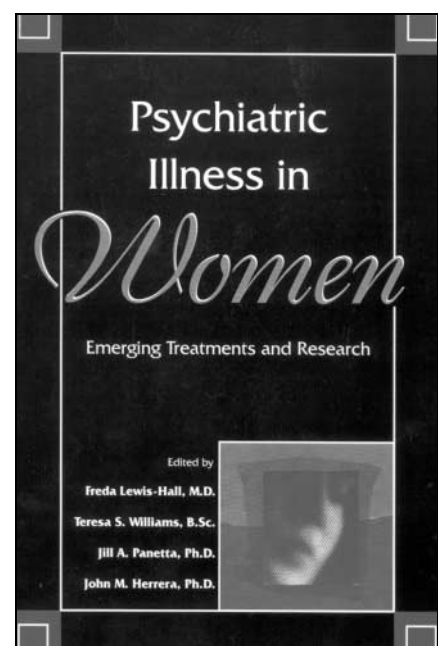
This book addresses many of the clinical and management problems and research

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



psychopharmacology. The emphasis on the unique role of hormones as determinants of gender-specific variations in psychopharmacological response and its clinical implications could not be more timely.

This book is a comprehensive summary of women's psychiatric problems, new understanding of biological findings, emerging therapeutic changes and research issues. It gives a useful overview of established information, summarises hypotheses that need further research and discloses false dichotomies that have misled the management of women with psychiatric illnesses in the past. It is a timely addition to the literature on women's mental health and deserves to be widely read.

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### **Psychiatry in Society**

Edited by Norman Sartorius, Wolfgang Gaebel, Juan José López-Ibor & Mario Maj. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2002. 292 pp. £60.00 (hb). ISBN 0 471 49682 0

Any reader who has attended a large international meeting on psychiatry will

know that only a small percentage of presentations, even those selected carefully, remain in the mind after the jet lag has subsided. Thus, one approaches a book based on presentations at the 11th World Congress of Psychiatry with a certain degree of trepidation. The overarching theme is given by the title of the book, but is broad enough to include almost anything other than brain scans and biochemistry. In fact, the first half of the book (the first 5 of the 11 chapters, plus Chapter 7) deals with general issues in psychiatry and is far more wide-ranging than the presentations can have been. I was pleasantly surprised by how much I was engaged by these chapters. Even though they deal with relatively familiar material, the broad contexts in which this is embedded are enlightening. Furthermore, in each chapter there is the sense of the author's individual voice conveying a wealth of experience and mature judgement.

To give the prospective reader a feel for the content, Eisenberg briefly presents the evidence for the impact of economic and cultural conditions on the health status of populations, and Häfner offers a wide-ranging review of the development of state and privately funded health care systems. A number of points that he makes struck me forcibly: 'Whether and to what extent the mentally ill are disadvantaged, is primarily a question of a political decision in a

centralized health care system'; 'The consequence of integrating mental health care into general health care is that it is subject to the same attempts to contain costs'. Lewis & Araya, addressing issues of globalisation, develop Eisenberg's theme further by exploring the links between socio-economic status and the prevalence of common mental disorders. They conclude that financial strain appears to be more pathogenic than absolute socio-economic status and that the evidence that poverty causes common mental disorders is still not convincing enough to support changes in social and economic policy. Bertolote and colleagues use examples from three countries to illustrate the complex relations between legislation and mental health policy, and Okasha contributes a thoughtful piece on ethics. A chapter on quality of life contains a useful review of current thinking by Katschnig & Krautgartner. The other contributions are more pedestrian, although those unfamiliar with ways to introduce positive messages into the media will gain useful tips from the last chapter, by Cuenca. Overall, this is a book to be dipped into selectively by readers following their particular interests.

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