

discussed, and this new edition, with its updated research, is welcome.

I find it paradoxical that male rape has long been a cultural reality, for example, in prison dramas such as Pasolini's film, *Salò* (1975). Based on de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* and set in fascist Italy, the film recounts the story of a group of young women and men imprisoned in a chateau and abused by four male 'libertines' with the help of female accomplices. Thus, Pasolini combines sexual and political aspects of assault, both of which are addressed in this volume (e.g. in Turner's chapter 'Surviving sexual assault and sexual torture' and Coxell & King's 'The sexual assault of men in custodial environments').

Among the other issues that are highlighted, relevant to both female and male sexual abuse, is the question of what is meant when an attack is described as sexual or political. The authors conclude that the definitions depend on context, either in particular, such as in a prison, or in a wider sociocultural environment, such as a culture of homophobia.

Of particular interest is the chapter on sexual assault in prisons: research describes apparently low incidence and prevalence levels, and the discussion here addresses whether or not this is actual or a result of underreporting. What seems clear is that the *threat* of rape is in itself very important and the authors ask whether rape in prison is an institutional myth whose function is to control inmates. This is a topic I would like to see explored more fully.

The volume is impressive in its collation of the current literature on male victims of sexual abuse in a variety of contexts, but I thought there to be some thinness of discussion around understanding why men, in particular, sexually attack other men. There is a difficulty in divorcing this entirely from homosexuality, which this book does at several points, as if sexual desire plays no part at all. It is important to emphasise, as some chapters do, that homosexuality in itself does not make someone more likely to commit a sexual crime, but that sexuality plays some part in what occurs. This topic is always difficult, and of help was West's chapter on homophobia; this explores men's fear of homosexuality (an explanation for some attacks), which appears to be more powerful than women's fear of it. From an anecdotal point of view, working in a secure unit, I have noticed that men who suffer from schizophrenia often have delusions about

being sodomised by other men, when particularly paranoid.

The authors do not explore the nature of gender and of male (*v.* female) sexuality, and their relation to violence, as extensively as I would have liked. It is noted that far fewer girls than boys become sexual abusers after having been sexually abused themselves in childhood, and that research suggests that males report feeling less damaged by their experience of abuse than do females. However, the paradox is not examined in depth. I am either being unfair to the authors and editors or paying them a tribute by saying that they left me wishing for more.

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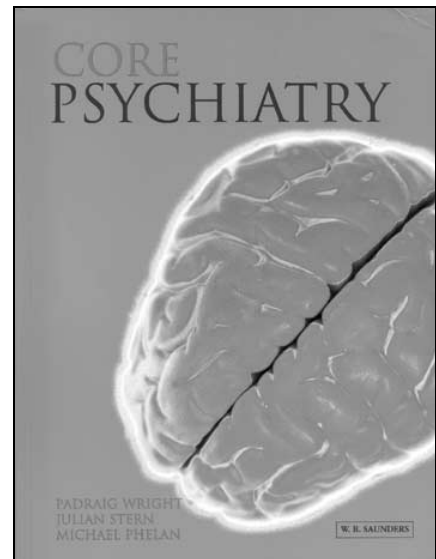
### Core Psychiatry

By Padraig Wright, Julian Stern & Michael Phelan. London: W.B. Saunders. 2000. 652 pp. £49.95 (pb). ISBN 0 7020 2490 2

Although an obituary has been written for textbooks more than once, they have proven to be a hardy breed which has survived despite being frequently criticised and even at times unloved. Indeed, rather than dying out new textbooks continue to appear and this is true in psychiatry no less than in other branches of medicine.

*Core Psychiatry* is one such volume. In the preface the authors tell us that, like many other textbooks, it has arisen from a teaching course, in this case one oriented towards individuals sitting Parts 1 and 2 of the MRCPsych examination. In line with this, the book is divided into three parts: Part 1 concentrates on the foundations of psychiatry, Part 2 on clinical psychiatry and Part 3 on diagnosis, investigation and treatment. The curriculum for the membership examination is wide-ranging, to say the least, and to attempt to cover the full range of knowledge in a single volume is ambitious. The authors do not claim to have produced a textbook for psychiatry *per se*; rather, they offer one specifically for exam candidates. They do, however, claim that it will be a reference volume for those who have passed the MRCPsych and others in medicine and related professions.

By and large, the authors have succeeded in their aim of producing a core textbook that is particularly useful to those who are required to absorb large amounts of information over a short period of time



for the purpose of passing examinations. Nevertheless, there are deficiencies. The foundations of psychiatry are inadequately covered (although this must be almost inevitable given that psychiatry draws from so many different disciplines). However, I would think that no trainee psychiatrist, even one cramming for exams, would go through psychiatric training without reading about fundamental issues such as diagnosis and classification, adumbrated so well by Robert Kendell in the *Companion to Psychiatric Studies* (Kendell & Zealley, 1993). Other parts of the book are perhaps weaker than rival volumes such as the *Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* (Gelder *et al.*, 1996), and I found the coverage of neuropharmacology particularly disappointing, as was the coverage of affective disorders and psychopharmacology. It is notable that the other textbooks mentioned above deal with these particular areas much more completely.

Upon taking a straw poll of the few local trainees who have attended the course and used the textbook, I found that the direct consumers were very positive about both the course and the textbook. Nevertheless, any potential purchaser will have to consider very seriously whether they will spend their limited amount of cash on this or would prefer one of the more established textbooks.

**Gelder, M., Gath, D., Mayou, R., et al (1996)** *Oxford Textbook of Psychiatry* (3rd edn). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Kendell, R. & Zealley, A. K. (1993)** *Companion to Psychiatric Studies* (5th edn). Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone.

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