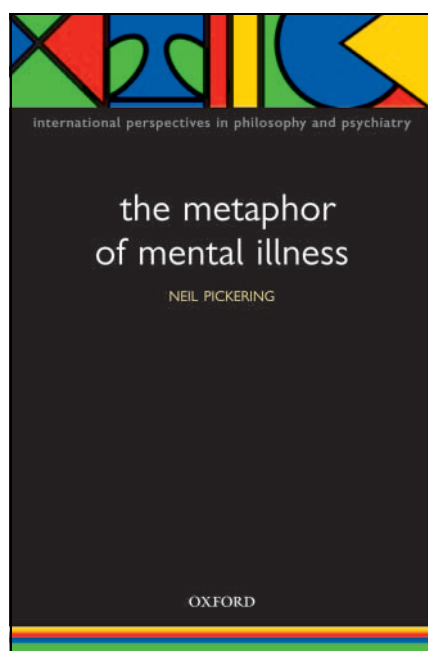


Book reviews

EDITED BY SIDNEY CROWN, FEMI OYEBODE and ROSALIND RAMSAY

The Metaphor of Mental Illness

By Neil Pickering. Oxford University Press.
2006. 194pp. £29.95 (pb). ISBN 0198530889



This book covers various issues concerning the concept of mental illness and its relation to general medical illness. It is a philosophical analysis, not a clinical or scientific one. The author considers the so-called likeness argument, which has various forms in the literature, according to which mental illnesses or disorders really are such because they are sufficiently similar to agreed physical illnesses. He criticises this form of argument on the grounds that the likenesses invoked typically recommend themselves as a result of the assimilation to the physical case, rather than being independent reasons for it. This criticism seems to work better for hypothesised likenesses, such as causation by disease, than evident ones such as distress and impairment of functioning. In any case, the author concludes that the categorisation of psychiatric conditions as illnesses is a matter of metaphor: ‘an imaginative shift into the illness category’.

The invocation of metaphor here explicitly refers to Szasz’s work on the concept of mental illness in the 1960s, specifically the charge that the concept is illegitimate: a metaphor or myth. Influential though this charge may have been, for example in shifting the terminology in the diagnostic manuals from mental illness to mental disorder, one can ask whether this issue of terminology matters much, compared with the clinical phenomena, the services and the science. For this reason, a book which targets this 40-year-old problem invented by Szasz starts somewhat at a disadvantage. The notion of metaphor is no doubt important and interesting, but at the same time it is also somewhat specialist and esoteric. Its value as a key to turn the great locks of problems in clinical practice, the science of psychopathology and the sociology of psychiatry is doubtful – and I’m inclined to think it bends and breaks, unable to withstand the forces. So to this reviewer’s mind this book on the metaphor of mental illness starts in the wrong place and uses the wrong tool. Nevertheless, it is a valuable update on several themes of conceptual analysis that run through the philosophy of psychiatry.

Derek Bolton Institute of Psychiatry,
De Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF, UK.
Email: derek.bolton@iop.kcl.ac.uk
doi: 10.1192/bjp.191.3.271

Mood and Anxiety Disorders in Women

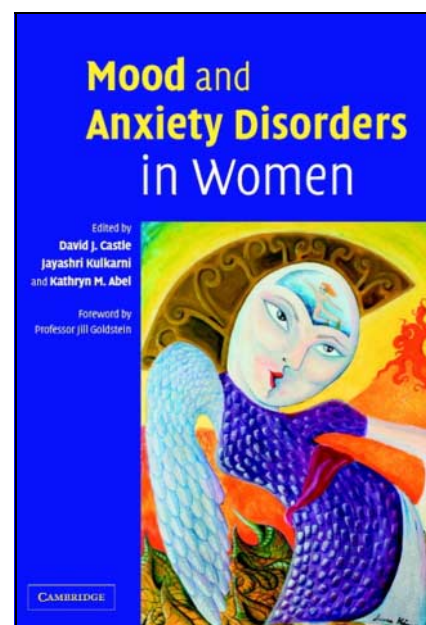
Edited by David J. Castle, Jayashri Kulkarni
& Kathryn M. Abel. Cambridge University
Press. 2006. 290pp. £27.99 (pb)
ISBN 0521547539

Interest in the area of women’s mental health has been slowly gathering pace. Women not surprisingly differ from men in terms of the epidemiology and pathophysiology of certain mental health problems, the treatments they respond to, the services they require and the issues they face. Women are almost twice as likely as men to suffer

from depressive and anxiety disorders. They are less likely than men to misuse alcohol and other substances but, when they do, the impact on the family is profound. Failure to address gender-specific differences in mental health not only burdens women themselves but also families, society in general and the mental health of future generations. In this book, a multinational group of authors crystallises work in this area to create an invaluable resource for all those involved in women’s mental health.

The contributors consider mood, anxiety and related disorders from a broad biopsychosocial perspective, charting gender differences and gender-specific issues through life from before puberty to old age. The volume’s range is wide, covering not only anxiety, depression and bipolar disorder, but also childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence, gender-specific vulnerabilities to personality disorders, substance misuse, premenstrual syndrome, pregnancy, the post-partum period and the menopause. The authors appropriately round off the volume’s excellent collection by challenging clinicians’ *a priori* assumptions that women’s mood disorders in old age represent ‘the inevitable decline of dementia’, making instead a plea to redress that imbalance by challenging the view that a woman ‘has had her innings’.

Despite its attractive cover, the book is not quite coffee-table material. Most chapters are beautifully written while remaining rich in research information, but in some chapters, heavy biological, pharmacological and statistical terms might frustrate the efforts of the well-informed non-medical reader.



A small quibble (and only that) is that despite the comprehensive summaries throughout, I missed a satisfying concluding chapter which might have drawn together the excellent material of the preceding chapters. The volume ends abruptly following the chapter on old age, and, as a reader, I felt the need for a eulogy.

Nevertheless, I unequivocally recommend this book. It makes an ambitious contribution to our understanding of gender disparity within the field of women's mental well-being, effectively collating current disparate information into a coherent integrative overview. The result is a collection of meaty essays which should comprehensively satisfy the appetite for an enlightened and broadened perspective.

Jessica Heron Department of Primary Care and General Practice, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT, UK.

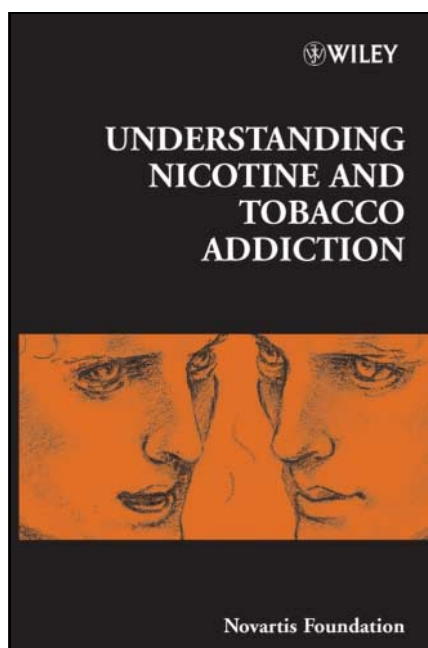
Email: j.c.heron@bham.ac.uk

doi: 10.1192/bjp.191.3.271a

Understanding Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction

Edited by Gregory Bock & Jamie Goode.
John Wiley & Sons. 2006. 284pp. £80.00 (hb).
ISBN 0470016574

This book is an edited collection of talks given by major researchers in nicotine addiction at a symposium funded by Novartis. Nicotine is an unusual addictive drug



because it is not all that hedonic and it is perfectly possible to smoke and perform complex tasks, like driving a car, providing you do not crash while lighting up. It is much more difficult to get rats to self-administer nicotine than it is cocaine, for example. However, humans find it really difficult to stop using cigarettes and the majority of attempts to quit end in failure within a few weeks, even with maximum therapy. How can something so nondescript in its effects get such a grip on us? Unfortunately, no one contributing to this seminar will tell you, but readers will get partial answers to these questions.

The 15 chapters in this book are diverse. Some of them, for example the one on nicotinic acetylcholine receptor functions in the central nervous system, are essentially papers that give the results of one or a series of closely interrelated experiments. I always struggle with such work to understand where it fits in to the picture of smoking we see. Fortunately, many of the chapters are followed by the edited transcript of a discussion, in which, sometimes, clinical researchers try to grapple with the basic science and apply it to humans. In this case, however, the comments are left to the basic scientists alone, which means that less of an integrative perspective is offered. Nevertheless, the questions and comments do put the findings into a somewhat broader context. At times, these discussions are inadvertently amusing.

Chapters such as 'Defining and assessing nicotine dependence in humans' do take an integrative approach and probably offer insights that could not be gained by reading the journals. The author draws on his own recently published theory of addiction, which is not specific to tobacco, to examine how the DSM-IV criteria, and other widely used measures of dependence, apply to smoking, and offers new insights both on smoking and the concept of dependence in general. The fact that these chapters follow one another show the reader that the text leaps around without any linking and does not offer a coherent account of the phenomena of nicotine addiction and smoking.

This is an expensive book aimed at the nicotine researcher. Anyone who has attended conferences of the Society for Research in Nicotine and Tobacco will have heard many of these talks and had more fun than they will reading this book. However, it does summarise some aspects of the rather disparate approaches taken to understanding this most widespread of lethal

addictions. Bringing these into the same symposium is one thing, integrating their insights to explain the tobacco epidemic is quite another.

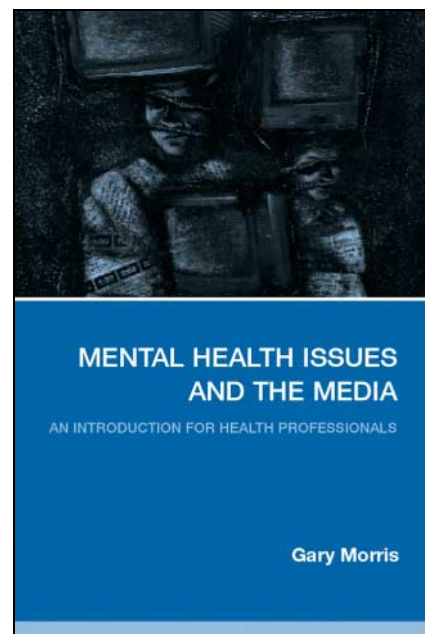
Paul Aveyard Department of Primary Care and General Practice, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston B15 2TT, UK.

Email: p.n.aveyard@bham.ac.uk

doi: 10.1192/bjp.191.3.272

Mental Health Issues in the Media: An Introduction for Health Professionals

By Gary Morris. Routledge. 2006. 272pp.
£19.99 (pb). ISBN 0415325315



This is a timely book given the 10 years since Otto Wahl's *Media Madness* and Greg Philo's *Media and Mental Distress*. Both were landmark publications in tracing the evolution of influential media representations of psychiatric illness in the USA and UK respectively. We continue to battle the same stereotypes but Morris illustrates several victories where media makers have retreated to regroup. It is contemporary in the objects of its gaze, if not in outlook, and should be recommended reading for students and trainees who may need assistance in seeing the wood from the trees.

Quite rightly, he includes a chapter on literature – from trend-setting classics to the *Harry Potter* phenomenon. The breadth of UK television and internet examples