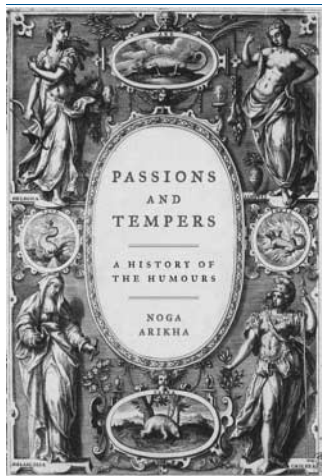


Book reviews

Edited by Sidney Crown, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



Passions and Tempers: A History of the Humours

By Noga Arikha.
Ecco (Harper Collins). 2007.
376pp. US\$27.95 (hb).
ISBN 9780060731168

The 'theory of the humours', says this author, 'remained an inexact but powerful tool for centuries, surviving scientific changes and offering clarity to physicians'. Whether that clarity ever led to real understanding, though, is a question to which there is still no simple answer. Dr Arikha, an historian with polymathic interests, is described here as intertwining 'the histories of medicine, science, psychology, and philosophy' – which seems a good way of starting this exploration.

The story is important to psychiatrists because, as Arikha well describes, for well over 2000 years, humoral theory was used to portray most aspects of a person's character, psychology, medical history, tastes, appearance, and behaviour. Though Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood is said to have started undermining the theoretical credibility of the humours in the 17th century, some medical manuals were still recommending treatments on this basis in the early 1900s. If one extends the concept, it is suggested here, today's hormones, neurotransmitters and other particles can be seen as multiplications of the humours, though losing the overall simplicity of the four originals.

Successive sections of the book deal with antiquity (from Hippocrates and Galen), the Eastern middle ages, the Western (with apothecaries and alchemists), the Renaissance, the first scientific revolution, early modernity (including the birth of psychiatry) and from the early 20th century to today. There are 30 illustrations, not all of high quality, as well as primary and secondary references for each chapter and a reasonable number of explanatory endnotes. Psychiatrists will no doubt find more interest in the later chapters, though a longer historical view seems enough to encourage medical humility: 'it was not much more comfortable to fall ill [in the later 18th century] than it had been in the fifteenth'.

Hippocrates had been the first to set out a 'regimen for health', based on the principle of humoral balance, whose advice on diet, purging, bathing, bleeding, alcohol and sexual relations was to remain influential for immense periods ahead. It can still be seen in the programmes of expensive health resorts.

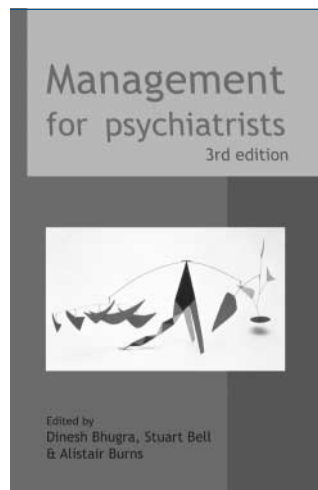
It is admitted that a history of the humours 'is not a history of the modern neurosciences', but the author claims that recent psychiatry was borne on the back of concepts strongly influenced by humoral theory, notably the melancholic and phlegmatic

temperaments, which reappeared in Eysenck's dimensions of personality. Arikha sees neurotic depression as the 'closest modern incarnation of the natural sort of melancholy described by Burton' in his classic work. She identifies a 'constancy in the structure of intuitive explanation', whereby the way people represent health and illness to themselves still shows evidence of humoral thinking.

Not every reader, though, will be fully convinced that there has been as much consistency as this view of medical history promotes. There are also some simplistic judgements which some would wish to qualify. The book's most useful place is as a companion to more systematic treatments of the history of psychiatry.

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doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.107.044867



Management for Psychiatrists (3rd edn)

Edited by Dinesh Bhugra,
Stuart Bell and Alistair Burns.
Royal College of Psychiatrists. 2007.
438pp. £30.00 (hb).
ISBN 9781904671497

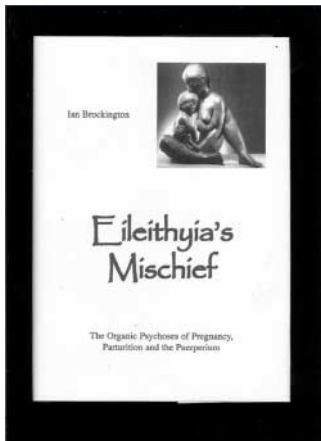
This is an ambitious book that tries to cover both the theory and practice of management. The target audience is psychiatrists, psychiatrists in training and other mental health professionals who wish to learn more about management, and managers who want to learn more about the interface with clinicians. Reaching a third edition is testimony to its usefulness. The gap between the second and third editions is, however, long and has seen massive (and continuing) change in the way in which the National Health Service is managed. This change inevitably causes major problems for any book seeking to deal with the details of health service management and, appropriately, a whole section of the book (Part II) is devoted to 'Changes and conflicts'. In fact, the first part of the book ('Theoretical overview') also contains a great deal about change, for example the chapters devoted to planning the medical workforce and the National Service Framework for Mental Health.

The entire book is (potentially, at least) useful, some of it is interesting, and several chapters are stimulating and even entertaining. Outstanding in this respect is Mark Salter's sometimes contentious but always lively advice on 'Surviving as a junior consultant'. I also found the chapters on planning for the medical workforce (Sally Pidd) and managing the psychiatrist's performance (David Roy) particularly interesting. Least readable was the chapter on developing community care policies, the second part of which consists largely of a list of documents and websites that would have been better relegated to an appendix.

The book attempts to be fairly comprehensive, even including chapters on special issues in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. References vary from chapter to chapter and sources are not always acknowledged; in the case of Sir John Whitmore's 'GROW' model this is a shame because the original work is such a gem. Another issue with respect to comprehensiveness (despite Alistair Burns as co-editor) is its over-emphasis on working age adult (general) psychiatry as compared with old age or child and adolescent work. A little more on the major specialties would have been welcome. Minor criticisms aside, this is a useful work. I can think of no other introduction to management for psychiatrists that is so wide in its scope. Inevitably, in a multi-author book dealing with such a complex and fast-changing situation, it is patchy. Nevertheless, for the final-year trainee, the consultant new to management or the 'old hand' wanting to brush up on areas that have changed in the past few years, it is a welcome and useful 'bench-book'.

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doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.107.047084



**Eileithyia's Mischief:
The Organic Psychoses
of Pregnancy, Parturition
and the Puerperium**

By Ian Brockington. Eyr. 2006.
£100.00 (hb). 329pp.
ISBN 9780954063320

Before reading this book I had not heard of Eileithyia, divine midwife of the Greeks, never mind her mischief. This may be an indictment of the comprehensive school system but it is not just in relation to the Greek Gods that it provides an important education.

Professor Brockington takes as his subject a group of conditions that, although now rare in the West, represent a major source of morbidity in many parts of the world – the organic psychoses of pregnancy and childbirth. His dedication is to those mothers in Africa, Asia, South and Central America and the Middle East who still suffer from these forgotten diseases.

It is a limited edition of just 100 copies, beautifully hand-bound, self-published and, to borrow a phrase from the lager advert, 'reassuringly expensive'. It is unlikely, therefore, to be a book you will read or even stumble across in your medical bookshop or library. This, I believe, is a shame, as despite the specialised subject area and weight of scholarship it is a surprisingly good read. In addition to chapters considering expected conditions such as infective and eclamptic psychoses, within its covers are fascinating accounts of women with the unusual and sometimes bizarre – unconscious labour, parturient rage and even delivery after death (*Sarggeburt* – coffin birth).

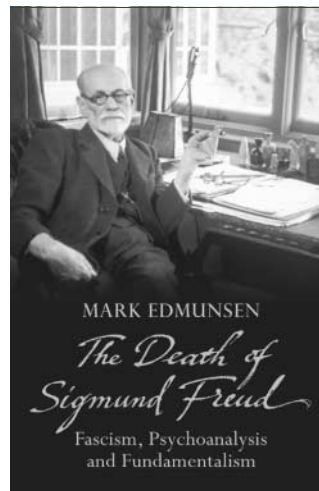
What is most impressive about this book is the depth of research. The author visited 20 countries across 4 continents to consult literature from the past 300 years. On a number of occasions he was the first to cut the pages of important historical publications – one example from 250 years ago. This approach to scholarship has become unusual in the age of internet searches and online publication. It serves as a reminder that 'the literature' is more than what has been published in English in the past dozen years, and of what can still be learnt from carefully documented clinical observations, whenever published.

A vital message is the large number of causes of unusual symptoms or behaviour occurring in relation to childbirth, and the importance of not automatically labelling them as psychological or psychiatric. This lesson is particularly true for those with a psychiatric history and is reinforced by the confidential enquiries into maternal deaths that described a number of deaths where serious medical problems following labour were misdiagnosed as psychiatric problems. It reminds us that, as doctors, a primary task is to make accurate diagnoses.

The author subscribes to the view of M. Paul Bar (1904) whom he quotes in the introduction: 'puerperal mental disorders must be rigorously classified if they are to be studied effectively'. Nosological confusion has led to serious problems in perinatal psychiatry research and must be a priority for the field to address with ICD-11 and DSM-V currently under consideration. Detailed scholarship, such as that evidenced here, can only help us along that road and I look forward to the author's forthcoming book on the puerperal psychoses.

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doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.107.042838



**The Death
of Sigmund Freud:
Fascism, Psychoanalysis
and Fundamentalism**

Mark Edmunsen. Bloomsbury.
2007. 276pp. £18.99 (hb).
ISBN 9870747586074

When Freud died in September 1939 from a tremendous 20-year battle with cancer and with more than a little help from his family doctor's generous injections of morphine, Londoners were busy preparing for the bombing that would inevitably follow the recent declaration of war with Germany. It is interesting that Mark Edmunsen chooses to highlight Freud's contemporary relevance through a narrative of his death, when so many commentators and psychologists today would gladly have left him buried.

The book is divided in two, telling the story of Freud and Hitler in Vienna in 1938, and then focusing on Freud's last days in exile in London in 1939. Edmunsen's central premise, that