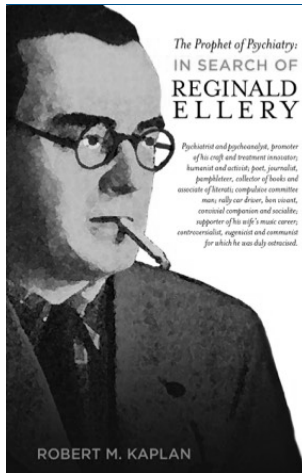


## Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode  
and Rosalind Ramsay



### The Prophet of Psychiatry: In Search of Reginald Ellery

By Robert M. Kaplan  
Robert Kaplan Pty Limited. 2015.  
£21.95 (pb). 356 pp.  
ISBN 9780992457914

Dr Reginald ('Reg') Spencer Ellery (1897–1955), a largely forgotten figure in Australian psychiatry, was a remarkable polymath. He was an innovator, a polemicist and an epitome of the 'public intellectual' in the period between the two World Wars. His biography by Robert M. Kaplan, a forensic psychiatrist and historian, makes for captivating reading. It brings to life a complex personality against the background of a society in transition from a colonial 'Anglo' mentality to assertive self-identity. With its 535 references, Dr Kaplan's book is an amazing feat of thorough research and documentation.

Ellery was born in Adelaide, the son of a high public servant of stern character, but he spent most of his life in Melbourne. Nicknamed the 'Athens of the South', Melbourne was a hotbed of the Australian avant-garde in the first half of the 20th century. It was a city infatuated with modernism, expressionism, symbolism, surrealism and 'psychoanalysis running in lockstep with communism' (p.146). After a rather lacklustre graduation from medical school, Ellery's earliest exposure to mental illness was at the notorious Kew Asylum, housing 'inmates' with intellectual disability alongside people with chronic psychotic disorders, in an environment of neglect, infestation and mindless regimentation. Ellery's compassion for the sufferers was a defining experience which never left him. His radical stance against these degrading conditions brought him into conflict with the unionised guild of attendants and nurses, who petitioned the government against him. Thus, in 1924, Ellery became the first psychiatrist who had to answer for his activities before a Royal Commission. Thanks to support from the medical profession, and a brilliant defence by his barrister Robert Menzies (who later became Australia's longest serving Prime Minister), Ellery was exonerated and transferred to a post at the Sunbury State Mental Hospital.

It was at Sunbury that Ellery initiated his serial experimentation with novel treatments inspired by European practice. These started in 1925 with Julius Wagner-Jauregg's malariotherapy for general paresis (Ellery's results: 90 patients treated, 42% discharged 'in remission'). This was followed by the introduction of Ladislav Meduna's cardiazol shock treatment and Manfred Sake's insulin coma treatment for schizophrenia. Ellery also became increasingly interested in psychoanalysis, and in 1931 he left the state hospital system to open Australia's first private psychiatric clinic (later

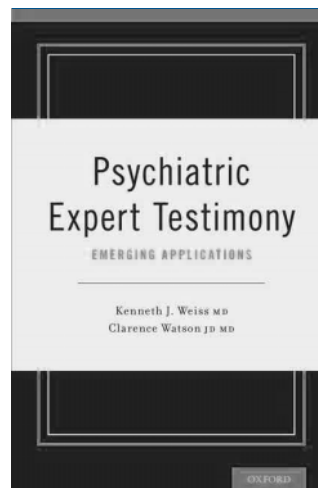
amalgamated with the Melbourne Institute of Psychoanalysis). During this period he also espoused eugenics, which was regarded at the time as a 'progressive' ideology whose members were sympathetic to feminism, rationalism, psychoanalysis and the peace movement, despite its advocacy of the compulsory sterilisation of the 'intellectually deficient'. Interestingly, Ellery was also an enthusiastic (though non-card carrying) communist and, despite his adoption of biological treatments, interpreted mental disorders as products of a dysfunctional society which itself was in need of therapy along psychoanalytical lines.

He was a tireless, compulsive writer and lecturer whose views evoked either effusive approval or flat rejection. In 1937 he and his wife made a six-month 'pilgrimage' to Europe, visiting some 40 hospitals and academic departments in Munich, Vienna, London, Edinburgh, Berne, Warsaw and Moscow. Curiously enough, Ellery remained totally unaware of the ongoing Stalinist purges and show trials of old Bolsheviks, and came back with glorifying tales about the 'workers' paradise' and its healthcare system.

The last ten years of Ellery's life were marred by the onset of rheumatoid arthritis complicated by the rare, multisystem Felty syndrome. He bore this stoically and continued reading and writing until his death in 1955. Ellery left a legacy of several books – including *Schizophrenia: The Cinderella of Psychiatry* (1941), *Health in the Soviet Union* (1943) and *Psychiatric Aspects of Modern Warfare* (1945) – as well as numerous articles in professional journals and the press, and a personal memoir entitled *The Cow That Jumped Over the Moon: Private Papers of a Psychiatrist* (1956). As Kaplan writes in the concluding chapter of this biography, Ellery 'retained a deep sense of worship that transcended all the trappings and constraints . . . and was a gadfly of spectacular dimensions' (p. 321).

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### Psychiatric Expert Testimony: Emerging Applications

By Kenneth J. Weiss  
& Clarence Watson  
Oxford University Press. 2015.  
£40.49 (hb). 208 pp.  
ISBN 9780199346592

The value of this book is revealed by its subtitle: *Emerging Applications*. This is a book about the cutting edge of expert psychiatric testimony and could not have been written 20 years ago. Its relevance is a consequence of a burgeoning of knowledge and the extent to which this has given rise to complicated legal issues, some of which have gone all the way up the appeal process.

The topics covered in *Psychiatric Expert Testimony* fall into two broad categories – human development and its deviations,