to pay for what is quite a valuable little book of reference. I enjoyed it.

LINDSAY SYMON

Epilepsy—A Window to Brain Mechanisms. Edited by Joan S Lockard, Arthur A. Ward, Jr. (Pp 300; \$35.36.) New York: Raven Press. 1980.

This excellent volume is the record of a remarkable achievement. It is the fruit of 30 years devoted by Arthur Ward to establishing within the Department of Neurological Surgery of the University of Washington in Seattle, a multidisciplinary group researching into the basic phenomena of epilepsy in man and animals. This has led to highly important advances in our understanding of the abnormal firing patterns of single neurons in and around an epileptic focus, in knowledge of the cellular pathology of human and experimental foci, in the pharmacokinetics and dynamics and anticonvulsant drugs . . . and very much more. Throughout these endeavours Arthur Ward and his colleagues have shown a remarkable ability to dissect out basic mechanisms while never moving far from the everyday clinical problems of epilepsy. They have succeeded by a very skilful choice of animal models and by maintaining the clinical and experimental studies in a state of constant mutual interaction.

Arthur Ward and his thirteen colleagues provide us in the seventeen chapters of this volume a summary of the main lines of research that have originated in the Department in Seattle. The result is an extremely informative and stimulating book. It admirably demonstrates that studying the mechanisms of epilepsy can provide a unique insight into the organisation and pathophysiology of the brain. The achievements of Dr Ward's group make a convincing case for an academic department devoted to research on epilepsy. Neurophysiological, pharmacological, surgical, biochemical and histological techniques are all required to solve the problems of epilepsy—as is expertise in the field of epilepsy.

This volume will advance the time when there are as many University Departments of Epileptology as of Oncology or Radiology.

BS MELDRUM

Brain Failure. By Barry Reisberg. (Pp 198; \$19.95.) New York: The Free Press, 1981.

"Lucid and comprehensive, *Brain Failure* will emerge as *the* (sic) authoritative guide to all facets of senility—from diagnosis to treatment—and will be essential reading for all health care and human service professionals concerned with the needs of our ever-growing aged population."

Any medical book that sets out to achieve these goals in 198 pages is either grandiose or otiose. This book is certainly disappointing and if considered as a scientific statement, extremely disappointing. Where is the detailed historical background from which the concept of brain failure has naturally evolved? Where, indeed, is the proper definition of brain failure that should have heralded the rest of the work? Why devise a new term ("cognitive abulia") for "intellectual weakness" and then present it on page 2 (!)? Does this not merely add confusion to the synonym of senility while claiming support from the prop of severe brain failure? Other questions too numerous to mention also arise but in summary this work appears superficial, discursive, and trivial.

Could the publishers (a division of Macmillan Publishing Company) have helped? Perhaps—by making available to the author a copy of William Strunk's *The Elements of Style* (The Macmillan Company gave this ten printings in New York between 1959 and 1960) and by drawing attention to hint number 9 on page fifty-nine, "Do not affect a breezy manner".

BRIAN LIVESLEY

Advances in Epileptology. XII Epilepsy International Symposium. Edited by Mogens Dam, Lennart Gram and J Kiffin Penry. (Pp 717; \$102.) New York: Raven Press. 1981.

This volume derives from the twelfth Epilepsy International Symposium held in Copenhagen in September 1980. It does not suffer from the major faults frequently shown by preceding volumes. The contributions have been admirably edited and the book is beautifully printed and bound.

The 95 chapters are from 4-11 pages long and represent the principal invited contributions and a few selected volunteer papers. There is thus an effective thematic grouping, with a strong emphasis on drug therapy, especially the preclinical development of new drugs (12 papers), controlled

trials (11 papers), clinical pharmacology (7 papers) and drug side effects (4 papers). Other topics covered by specific symposia include education and rehabilitation (13 papers), differential diagnosis (18 papers), endocrine aspects (7 papers) and folates (7 papers). Broadly, this volume reflects the diversity of problems currently occupying the energies and compassionate concern of physicians and researchers. However, the latter group will probably find that basic science is underrepresented. Personally I would prefer a volume with fewer papers, treating their topics in greater detail.

In summary, the editors and publishers can take pride in the speed and skill with which they have given us this resumé of current activity.

BS MELDRUM

Neuroendocrinology of Reproduction, Physiology and Behavior. Edited by Norman T. Adler. (Pp 555; \$42.00.) New York: Plenum Press, 1981.

With the rise of neuroendocrinology as a scientific discipline, the appearance of monographs devoted to a single aspect of the subject became inevitable. This primer is particularly welcome, for it provides an excellent survey of a topic of great significance in clinical and social medicine, and successfully achieves its aim of leading the interested reader from the chemical and biological foundations of neuroendocrinology, through the evolutionary and embryological development of reproductive systems in animals, to the physiological and biochemical control of reproductive neuroendocrinology in the adult. Considerable effort has been devoted to clarity of exposition and the delineation of principles, as illustrated by the rueful comment of HH Feder that it is unlikely that neuroendocrinologists will derive a sense of excitement from a chapter describing the structure, reactions, synthesis and measurement of steroids, although the material provides a basis for deeper appreciation of currently enthralling work on the influence of steroids upon reproductive physiology and behaviour.

The effects of hormones upon the brain are of particular interest to the neurologist and psychiatrist and the effect of steroids on the organisation of sexual behaviour, and its neurochemical control are very well covered. The cellular

Book reviews

biochemistry of hormone action and the electrophysiological effects of steroid hormone also receive attention. The neural pathways through which pituitary function may be influenced are reviewed in general terms, and an interesting feature of the book is the inclusion of a guide to the peripheral reproductive neuroanatomy of the rat. Perhaps this foreshadows renewed interest in the direct neural control of genital function. By comparison with the space devoted to the female the male receives short shrift, but this is a minor quibble and the book is enthusiastically recommended. Indeed, the good news is that a paperback version is available at the very reasonable cost of \$18.95. It deserves wide circulation.

B DONOVAN

Year Book of Psychiatry and Applied Mental Health 1981. Edited by Daniel X Freedman, Arnold J Friedhoff, Lawrence C Kolb, Reginald S Lourie, John C Nemiah, and John Romano. (Pp 374; £31.00.) London: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1981.

Yearbooks are valuable reference works for many people involved in a particular discipline. They provide brief reviews of the most relevant papers from the past 18 months, and cover a wide range of subsections such that specialists with individual interests are able to discover papers from journals that deal with related subjects that they are not able regularly to read. The 1981 Year Book of Psychiatry and Applied Mental Health, with six editors, provides such a useful compendium. Sections cover most of the wide spectrum that psychiatry today embraces from biochemistry to neurophysiology to child psychiatry and mental retardation to drug abuse and alcoholism. Prior to the précis of relevant papers, a brief introduction to progress in the field and reasons for the choice of papers is given by one of the editors. Some of these are of more interest and relevance than others, although for reasons unknown some sections appear without editorial comment.

The problem with this sort of book is that the papers reflect the editor's choice, and the interpretation of research findings may therefore be made to fit his Procrustean bed. Overall, however, this is a good book for dippers, reviewers and potential examination students. The cost

is quite prohibitive, and it will therefore probably find an outlet only in libraries. Publishers of such books should give thought to reproduction of a cheaper text that would be purchased and used by those who would get the most from it.

MICHAEL TRIMBLE

Central Nervous System Mechanisms in Hypertension (Perspectives in Cardiovascular Research, Volume 6). Edited by Joseph P Buckley and Carlos M Ferrario. (Pp 434; \$53.72.) New York: Raven Press, 1981.

This compilation of 34 contributions is published following a symposium at Houston, Texas, in May 1980, and adds up to an excellent account of many of the recent advances and current problems in the role of the central nervous system in the control of blood pressure. Progress on the anatomy physiology and pharmacology of brainstem and higher reflex pathways is reviewed and much apparently new experimental evidence presented. Most of the papers are quite short, and full of experimental detail such that in some areas the reader has to work hard to gain a wider view. Interesting advances such as the evidence for peripheral presynaptic modulation of noradrenaline release from sympathetic terminals, or the continuing saga of the evidence for a separate brain renin-angiotensin system are covered, although their treatment is scattered amongst a number of contributors.

In a book like this, dealing with central nervous control of a variable that is subject to many influences, I would have liked to see a contribution or two devoted to a systems approach. There are aspects of hypertension in which it might be particularly valuable; for example, in the analysis of the complex actions of clonidine, affecting as it does both the set-point and the gain of the baroreflex, as well as the efficacy of the sympathetic nerves (by a presynaptic agonist action). Again, the contrasting functions of the brain renin-angiotensin system and the renal renin-angiotensin system could reward a systems approach.

The book is well-produced and well-illustrated, with full references at the end of each contribution. There is a 10-page subject index.

D RUSHTON

The Neuropsychiatric Mental Status Examination. By Michael Alan Taylor. (Pp 508; £8.95.) Lancaster: MTP Press Ltd, 1981.

For various reasons examination of the neuropsychiatric mental state of patients is often poorly covered in the training of both psychiatrists and neurologists. Although there are many available books which cover this topic, a satisfactory teaching manual has still to be developed. The author of this book has produced "a programmed text" as one attempt to fill this gap. It is composed of 474 separate paragraphs, each numbered, some of which ask a question, although most leave key words missing from the text which are then to be filled in by the reader. The paragraphs are presented on the left-hand page and the answers on the right, and it is expected that the blanks will be filled in, and that on making an error the reader will return in the text to the items that have already explained the correct response.

The emphasis of the presentation is on exact descriptions of phenomenology, drawing particularly from the writings of Jaspers, Schneider, and Fish, although disorders of memory, speech, and separate considerations of frontal lobe and parietal lobe dysfunction are considered. In the second part of the text, differential diagnosis is covered which includes the presentation of a number of brief case histories from which the key diagnostic features have to be selected. Course brain disease, anxiety state, hysteria, obsessional disorders, alcoholism and personality disorders are also covered, the diagnostic framework for these being taken from the new DSM-III classification. In the final section case histories are once again given in order that the reader can test diagnostic skills that he has gleaned in the preceding pages.

Although inevitably in a book of this sort there will be individual criticisms of the content, for example such comments as "staccato speech if often a sign of psychomotor epilepsy", it is an instructive manual for those in training who wish to improve their knowledge and technique of the mental status examination, and the interested will find in it the meaning of such terms as "veraguth folds, mitmachen, and apophany".

MICHAEL TRIMBLE