Williams and David Mostofsky (Psychogenic seizures in childhood and adolescence). Roy's chapter commences with a striking understatement: "The management of patients with hysterical seizures may be difficult". No-one who practises neurology or psychiatry would deny this! It is here that we seek guidance, but I am afraid that we are thrown back to that idealised, but rarely achieved concept of "such patients to be investigated and treated in a neuropsychiatric ward, jointly staffed by neurologists and psychiatrists, where the nursing staff over time manage many such patients and become experienced in the necessary diagnostic and therapeutic skills". The team approach is then advocated, and the rest of this chapter reads like a brief exposition of standard general psychiatric practice. It would take another reviewer to adjudicate on the merits of the many forms of treatment discussed in this and the subsequent chapter by Williams and Mostofsky. The role of drugs, psychotherapy, marital therapy, behavioural psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, vocational rehabilitation, seven different types of conditioning techniques, relaxing and hypnosis, biofeedback, and a variety of other methods all are discussed. The fact that there are so many different approaches to this problem suggests that it is difficult to treat, but surprisingly, there is virtually no information on the outcome of such patients. Indeed, what is known about prognosis at present is summarised in less than a page.

It will be seen, so far, that the majority of this book is concerned with the historical background and diagnosis of "pseudoseizures", "hysterical epilepsy" or whatever one chooses to call this condition. But the diagnosis of other conditions is given a very large, perhaps disproportionate, amount of space. No less than a third of the book is taken up with discussion of Syncope and Hyperventilation (Terrence Riley), Narcolepsy (David Parkes), and other Episodic Behaviours (Michael Alexander). Each of these chapters is interesting and informative, but much of the information presented is not strictly relevant to the main theme of the volume. However, it is useful to have authoritative comment on the differential diagnosis of "fit versus fake", of the frequently mis-diagnosed "hyperventilation syndrome", of the variety of sleep disorders that occasionally may be mistaken for epilepsy, and the various causes of episodic amnesia.

The last two chapters make compelling reading. Ernst Rodin discusses "Aggres-

sion and Epilepsy", and Thomas Gutheil and Mark Mills guide the tyro through the complexities of "Legal Aspects of Pseudoseizures". As in his previous writings on, for example, prognosis of epilepsy, Rodin's chapter is full of sense. "The overwhelming majority of serious criminal acts attributed to epilepsy occur in individuals who have a history of "spells", or "seizures" which do not fit into any of the currently recognised forms of epilepsy".

"In critically assessing the literature as presented up to now, it is evident that there are basically two schools of thought: epileptic patients could, but as a rule do not, injure someone as part of the ictal or post-ictal state, and any bodily harm that may be done by the patient in the inter-ictal state is either a result of associated personality difficulties or concomitant psychosis of the inter-ictal or post-ictal variety. The other school holds that the classical forms of epilepsy, as recognised by neurologists today, do not encompass the entire spectrum of epileptic manifestations and there exists a certain population which does not have recognised or recognisable epileptic seizures but suffers from "equivalents" which takes the form of autonomic symptoms, headaches, behaviour disorders, or even criminal acts". The latter view "might have been discarded for lack of substantive evidence, but it keeps reappearing as a result of the use, as well as abuse, of electroencephalography". Rodin then goes on to review the published evidence on the prevalence and significance of aggressive behaviour in relation to epilepsy, as well as his own personal experience in the field, and concludes that such events are exceedingly rare. However, he then gives the weight of his opinion to perpetuating the concept of the "epileptic equivalents", which he considers to be the result of brief and limited paroxysmal discharges. He goes on to suggest that such events can occur in patients with such high thresholds for more extensive spread of abnormal excitation that clinically recognizable epileptic seizures do not result. Not everyone will agree with this view, nor with the suggestion that depth electrode recordings in prisoners are justified to shed scientific light into the existing confusion.

The final chapter on legal aspects of "pseudoseizures" is written by two American physicians, so necessarily deals with the problem in the light of American law. However, the discussion deals with the problems to be faced by any legal system.

In conclusion, I enjoyed reading this book and I know of no other written in

English that deals with the same material. Inevitably there are unsatisfactory aspects, but mostly these concern the present state of lack of knowledge rather than its presentation. Indeed, one general theme throughout the book illustrates the lack of hard data in this difficult field. Many of the chapters are put together around illustrative case reports which then lead to expressions of personal opinions, rather than being built upon the more solid framework of mathematical fact. I hope that this book will go to a second edition, and that extra data may be available to fill in the gaps all too evident at the present time. Meanwhile, I would advise every neurologist and psychiatrist to browse through its contents at some stage, and to have ready access to it when called to assess such patients or give evidence in a court of law.

CD MARSDEN

The Biochemical Basis of Neuropharmacology. 4th ed. By Jack R Cooper, Floyd E Bloom and Robert H Roth. (Pp 367; Hardback £18.50; Paperback £7.95.) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.

The fourth edition of Cooper, Bloom & Roth leaves little to say. As a continuation of the three previous highly praised editions of this book I think the most appropriate comment would be "I wish I had written it". This is a book which is accepted as a classic of its kind. It is standard reading for a wide variety of students and post-graduate research workers. The reasons for this are obvious. The text is readable and concise, while providing a detailed insight into the neuropharmacology of acetylcholine, catecholamines, serotonin, amino acids and neuropeptides. The present edition differs from the previous editions in the omission of the chapter on memory and learning, and the appropriate addition of a separate chapter on opioid peptides due to the immense interest in this particular field. I like, in particular, the critical approach which the authors have taken in the text and manner in which they provide thought for further research. I strongly recommend this volume to all those interested in this area whether they be unfamiliar with the area or even if they are experts in this field, as a model of precision and concise presentation of the complex area of neuropharmacology.

PG JENNER