Book reviews

as mechanisms for reducing psychic tension and aiding wish fulfilment, a possible right hemisphere origin for dreams, and the effect of proteins and catecholamines on sleep. Altogether Fishbein argues convincingly for some memory function of sleep, and the book will be of considerable interest to psychologists and psychobiologists involved in sleep research.

JD PARKES

Narcolepsy and Hypersomnia. By B Roth. Translated by Margaret Schierlova. Revised and edited by R Broughton. (Pp 304; SFr. 98, DM 117, US \$58.75.) Basel: S Karger, 1980.

Narcolepsy is common but less well described than both myasthenia gravis and disseminated sclerosis. Since narcolepsy usually starts in adolescence and lasts a life-time, it forms a major medical problem. Despite this, I know of only one other previous book in English devoted to narcolepsy, a published conference report of 1976. This account of the clinical experience of Roth working at the Neurology Clinic of the Charles University in Prague and well edited by Roger Broughton in Ottawa is, therefore, timely. The text is founded on 360 patients with narcolepsy and 260 with hypersomnia seen since 1949. The method of classification of narcolepsy and hypersomnia proposed by Roth is excellent, with a fundamental clinical division between brief attacks of narcolepsy occurring under unusual circumstances and prolonged sleep with monotony in hypersomnolence. This is further subdivided into short-cycle and long-cycle variants depending on the frequency of attacks.

The introduction and historical section complement the brilliant review by Passouant in the Montpellier proceedings of 1976, and include reference to the post-mortem finding by Bright in 1836 of bleeding into the thalamus and striatum in a man with narcolepsy and cataplexy. The main strength of this book lies in detailed clinical accounts of narcolepsy, the hypersomnias and subjects as diverse as menstrual sleep disorders, status cataplecticus and atypical Kleine-Levin variants. Apparently, the ecstasy of reading Czechoslovak lyric poetry may cause cataplexy. There is a critical review of the possible association of headache, obesity, hypotension, endocrine and autonomic disturbances with narcolepsy, and of the frequent but usually irrelevant bio-

chemical abnormalities often described. Sleep laboratory findings in different disorders are described in some detail.

Criticisms are minor. The discussion of the pharmacology of central stimulant drugs is somewhat limited, and no adequate direct comparison of different stimulant phenylethylamines has ever been done. There has also never been a critical trial of monoamine oxidase inhibitors in narcolepsy. The text is occasionally repetitive and not always sufficiently critical, particularly of some of the findings of east European authors whose conclusions about narcolepsy are somewhat different from western European and American experience. Despite these minor problems, this book forms an excellent and personal account of disorders of excessive day-time sleep and is based on a huge experience. It should become the standard monograph on narcolepsy and hypersomnia.

JD PARKES

Iconography of Sensory Nerve Endings. By A Abraham. (Pp 393; \$68.00.) Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1981.

This is a beautiful and illuminating book on sensory nerve endings. It contains nearly 200 plates, some in colours, of drawings, photomicrographs and electron micrographs. Most illustrations are, however, reproductions of the original drawings made from the author's own histological preparations collected during decades of research. The technique most frequently applied for the demonstration of nerve endings in this atlas is the silver impregnation method of Bielschowsky which has been successfully modified by Professor Abraham. In addition, some sections have been stained by his own method, the description of which has been provided for enterprising neuro-histologists.

The material covers a striking variety of species from the grasshopper and woodlouse to man and deals with various types of sensory endings, both exteroceptors and interoceptors. Each plate is accompanied by a brief, explanatory text with comments on neurohistology and neuroanatomy: these are of considerable help to the reader in gaining a perspective of evolution by comparing different species.

The book concludes with an epilogue which itself is both a moving account of Professor Abraham's pursuit of knowledge and the credo of a distinguished scientist.

P LANTOS

Disorders of the Nervous System. By Alexander G Reeves. (Pp 240; £19.00.) London: Year Book Medical Publishers, 1981.

This rather expensive little book, paper bound, is intended as a preliminary clinical text in neurology for medical students. It is based on neurology teaching to the medical students at Dartmouth College in the USA. Although the text itself consists of only 232 pages the first 100 pages are taken up by descriptions of neurological syndromes, and by a discussion of the technique of the clinical examination. Curiously the book begins with a discussion of the clinical examination. Nothing at all is said about history taking yet to most neurologists this is the more important. The text itself consists of chapters by various authors. The choice of topics is somewhat idiosyncratic and important diseases are given surprisingly little space. For example, multiple sclerosis is discussed in only two pages and no attempt is made to describe the principles of management of this disabling disease. The chapter on stroke is, likewise, somewhat unsatisfactory. Transient ischaemic attacks are defined as "a reversible episode of neurologic deficit caused by vascular insufficiency usually lasting no longer than minutes, but occasionally persisting for 24 hours and rarely several days". This is a description which must satisfy every one to some degree but which can teach nobody anything and can only lead to confusion in the mind of the student. Certainly, it seems clear that the author does not know what a TIA is.

Despite these general and particular criticisms there are some aspects of this book which are well done. The chapter on mass lesions, for example, gives a clear and coherent account of the problems of diagnosis and management in a concise form. Likewise, headaches are discussed in a sensible fashion. An attempt to describe briefly all the tests and investigations used in neurological practice is very unsatisfactory largely because of the brevity inherent in such a chapter. Despite these criticisms it must be recognised that it is a very difficult task indeed to write a concise text book of neurology, retain an overall view within a small compass, and yet provide sufficient detail to survive the scrutiny of neurologists used to longer and more complete accounts of the subject. There are good points in this book which will appeal to many students