The second section focuses on some of the “darker psychiatric treatments” such as lobotomy and insulin coma therapy. The authors question how a “treatment” with no scientific basis such as lobotomy could have occurred in the twentieth century and incurred brain injury in people suffering from mental disorders. Witztum and Margolin emphasize that the treatments were performed in the United States, in the mainstream of medicine, and conclude that to a large extent, this is a warning that should serve as a lesson for all physicians.

In the third section, the authors describe various cultural phenomena, some of which have a long history, such as the dance craze – tarantism and their relationships to mass hysteria. Some of the described phenomena such as Dybbuk, Zaar and Voodoo death are related to the mental mechanism of dissociation. The scientific, literary, folkloristic and psychiatric aspects of the occurrences of werewolves, vampirism and moon disease are also presented.

The combination of the three sections of the book comprise fascinating variety and a wealth of extraordinary detailed information that represent many components of psychiatry that are off the beaten path. The book is definitely a “good read,” often riveting and hard to put down. The technical presentation, the clarity of the typeset, the unique illustrations throughout the book, and precise documentation, references and indices contribute to the comprehensive and enjoyable thorough reading experience.

The book is not a standard medical textbook, rather it provides historical, social and cultural issues related to psychiatry, some of which are not generally emphasized in traditional psychiatry texts, and thus extend the study of the history of psychiatry for those who are interested in the broader picture. As the medical profession closest to the social sciences and humanities, the authors succeeded in presenting the history of selected unique chapters of psychiatry within the social and cultural context.

When finishing the book the reader is left with the question – what will be written a few decades from now about contemporary psychiatric therapies?

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