

Book Reviews

LOVERS, KILLERS, HUSBANDS AND WIVES. By M Blinder. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985. xi + 175 pp. \$12.95.

Reviewed by Marilyn L. Halpern, PhD

Although this book has certain nuggets of interest, it will not appeal to the AAPL member. Readers will find the unsophisticated approach rather bland. The technique of the book has merit. Unfortunately, the narrative of the cases is too simplistic and weak to support the structure between the textbook-like chapter introductions and the jury summaries. The interchanges between Dr. Blinder and members of the court are naive and self-serving for a physician who notes he has been consulted in nearly 300 murder cases. There are some questionable statements, such as, "In America, the bedroom is second only to the highway as the scene of slaughter," that make conclusions without any proof. In diagramming Dan White, his best case, he omits fundamentals that would allow the reader to follow his line of reasoning. He did skillfully weave the course of his three interviews with White into an interesting story of political machinations. This book will appeal to the lay public and to some paraprofessionals who do not look for more than a modicum of insider's detail in a few publicized cases.

ATTACKS ON THE INSANITY DEFENSE. By CR Jeffery. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas, 1985. xiii + 238 pp. \$29.75

Reviewed by Abraham L. Halpern, M.D.

The title of this book is misleading because the volume has nothing to do with attacks on the insanity defense. I recognize that the "Insanity Defense" is a big seller these days and might suggest that the author and his collaborators (R. V. del Carmen and J. D. White) be forgiven for this piece of deception if the chapters (eight of the book's nine) that deal with subjects other than the insanity defense (for example, crime prevention, civil liabilities of government psychotherapists, scientific criminology, biological psychiatry) offered the reader something of value. Regrettably, this work contains no new findings or ideas, nor does it present old material better. What we have is a hodgepodge of unsupported assertions concerning the medical profession's ability to diagnose psychopathy and other mental disorders associated with criminal conduct by means of "the CAT scan, PETT scan, NMR test, EEG readings, evoked potential readings, or hair analysis." Simplistic solutions to the enormous problems of crime in America are presented with a mind-boggling certitude. For example, "We must have a criminal justice system and political policy which allows us to use medical centers in place of prisons,

and scientific research in place of court decisions and political opinions,” and “The new behavioral sciences can furnish the basis for a program to treat and prevent criminal behavior through biochemistry, neurology and learning theory. . . . we are now able to scientifically treat behavioral disorders if we use the scientific knowledge and technology now available.” *Bulletin* readers will not want to waste their time on this balder-

dash. If, however, in spite of this caveat and perhaps tempted by the subtitle, “Biological Psychiatry and New Perspectives in Criminal Behavior,” anyone reads the book in the hope that something thought provoking might be discovered, he will be distracted to the point of agony by the abundance of typographical errors (no fewer than 196 in a book of 238 pages!).