

tions) is common. Female staff (as in this case) have a higher chance of engaging in sexual violations with prisoners than male staff do.³

The initial slow pace of *Escape at Dannemora* puts the viewer in the prison. It evokes the chronic boredom of the staff as well as the prisoners. The fast sex in Tailor Shop 9 is the only thing that seems to move quickly. The last episode of the series is a cinematic 90 minutes long and some of it feels like it occurs in real time.

Interestingly, the majority of the mini-series is told from the two inmates' point of view. The first several episodes make the viewer feel empathy for the inmates as they are clearly talented, smart, and likable in the prison setting, where they are facing life sentences. The viewer might even (secretly and increasingly) root for the success of their escape plan. Then comes the historical episode 6, which shows the horrific murders for which they were incarcerated. Suddenly the heroes and villains are reversed and it is quite jarring, but this can be likened to reviewing records in a forensic psychiatric case where something initially appears one way and then, with more data, an alternative motive is revealed.

Ms. Mitchell maintains her innocence as long as she can until she is presented with an overwhelming amount of evidence demonstrating her involvement in the escape. At one point, Ms. Mitchell freely offers confessional information to an investigator at the grocery store. (He stops her and lets her know he has to read her *Miranda* rights first.)

Escape at Dannemora has parallels with *Mrs. Soffel*, the 1984 film based on a true story from turn-of-the-century Pittsburgh, starring Mel Gibson and Diane Keaton. Mrs. Soffel, the religious wife of the prison warden, helps the Biddle brothers (who are death row inmates) escape after falling in love with one of them. She brought them a couple of small saws and planned to escape to Canada with them. Mrs. Soffel was eventually punished and shamed for helping the inmates escape, much like Ms. Mitchell is.

Overall, *Escape at Dannemora* is an interesting portrayal of prison dynamics and the cascade of events that can occur when a few rules are broken. The characters are multifaceted because they are based on real people and events, and the intricate narrative would be of interest to many forensic psychiatrists because of the setting (prison system), the complex characterizations, and the boundary and

ethics violations that are well illustrated throughout the series.

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Dying To Be Ill: True Stories of Medical Deception

By Marc D. Feldman and Gregory P. Yates. New York: Routledge. 298 pp. \$33.00.

Dying To Be Ill is a collaborative effort written by Dr. Marc D. Feldman and Gregory Yates about factitious disorder. Over the course of the text, the authors discuss how people afflicted with this condition “fabricate disease and illness to reap the rewards of the sick role” (p 8), which, by their definition, included support from others, exemption from social obligations, and special allowances. In the introduction of the book, the authors note that they hope *Dying To Be Ill* will do for factitious disorder what *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* by Oliver Sacks did for neurologic conditions. They hope to convey the “lived experiences” of the people with this condition and others who are affected by it, whether a spouse, child, friend, religious leader, or caregiver. The book primarily relates information through discussion of multiple case studies, many of which are written by the people involved (e.g., the individual with the disorder, the grown childhood victim of Munchausen by proxy, the family member initially unaware of the deception). The strength of this style of presentation is that one can learn about the condition from the voices of those who experience it.

The reader obtains a sense of how individuals engage in deception and, more importantly, potential insight into what the motivations are for these individuals or how the condition often progresses. A drawback to this approach, however, is that the anecdotes start to blend together and, as noted by Feldman and Yates in the introduction, “these cases don’t make for easy reading” (p 6) given their graphic (e.g., intentionally injecting oneself with feces) and disturbing nature (e.g., a parent intentionally adding salt to infant formula or smothering a child to simulate illness).

The book is broken down into 10 chapters. The first chapter is an overview of the history of medical deception and the development of the current formulation of the condition. Subsequent chapters are devoted to specific aspects or permutations of the condition, such as chapters related to factitious disorder by proxy (Chapter 2. Medical Abuse: When Deception is Maltreatment), factitious disorder by internet (Chapter 8. Cyber-Deception and Munchausen by Internet, e.g., reporting to have an illness in blogs or patient-support websites), and Munchausen by animal proxy (Chapter 10). The book also includes a chapter about the impact of erroneous diagnosis of factitious disorder, as well as what happens when an individual with a past history of factitious disorder really does become ill (Chapter 9. Jumping to Conclusions: False Accusations). Chapter 3, entitled Mental Masquerades, may be of particular interest to forensic practitioners because this chapter discusses individuals with factitious disorder who simulate having psychiatric conditions rather than a more traditional somatic illness. This chapter examines questions forensic experts have to assess, such as the motivation for a faked claim of illness (i.e., is an exaggerated or factitious presentation due to malingering, to assume the sick role, or both).

Readers looking for an in-depth clinical study of factitious disorder will find that this book meets their needs. It is very good at conveying the clinical pathology (e.g., actions taken, responses when discovered, the ways in which individuals tried to avoid detection), significant elements of individual case histories (e.g., important aspects of the person’s history leading to the behavior, what motivated the individual’s behavior, and why it was hard to stop engaging in the behavior), and long-term impact of the condition on the individual’s life and the lives of others. *Dying To*

Be Ill is successful in humanizing those with the condition.

For professionals looking for a deeper forensic appreciation of factitious disorder, this book may or may not serve their needs. Given that the book consists primarily of anecdotal case reviews, there are few data or scientific references for the reader with a forensic focus to utilize. In addition, this book is not designed to be a convenient reference book. The chapters are often very long and dense. Although Dr. Feldman discusses aspects of his forensic experience, many of the anecdotes seem to be solely from his perspective with little to no mention of their legal application (e.g., court case citations, excerpts from judges’ rulings, how to perform a forensic evaluation for someone with the disorder). There was some discussion in Chapter 7 (Conscience, Ethics, and the Law) regarding how a clinician could avoid or respond to potential legal entanglement when treating someone suspected of having factitious disorder.

Overall, this book is well written, though it can be dense and tedious at times. Dr. Feldman’s experience and expertise as a clinician is clearly evident in this work. For a clinician who is looking for a text that provides a deeper understanding of factitious disorder and may allow examination of clinical experiences in a new light, I highly recommend *Dying To Be Ill*. For readers who may be more interested in information on the disorder as it relates to forensic work, this book, although informative, may not be the ideal resource.

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The Act

Created and produced by Nick Antosca, Michelle Dean, Britton Rizzio, Gregory Shephard, and Jan Peter Meyboom; directed by Laure de Clermont-Tonnerre, Adam Arkin, Christina Choe, Steven Piet, and Hannah Fidell. Hulu. First aired March 20, 2019.

In this eight-episode dramatization of real events involving Munchausen syndrome by proxy (MBP) and matricide, viewers learn the story of Gypsy Rose