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ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF BABEL

JOHN MATT DORN, M.D.

INTRODUCTION

I admit to a fondness for book lists that began on Wednesdays in the eighth grade, when feet perched imperiously on the table in the corner I would review with inordinate glee the list of recommended reading. What seemed to others an onerous and pedantic exercise was to me a treasure map that dissolved the walls of the school around me.

The truth is my grandfather read to me constantly at the height of my oedipal phase. Then he died. On my eighth birthday I received the complete Tom Swift Jr. adventure series. I consumed them like Oreos®, reading one a day for a month. Later I applied the same zeal to the complete stories of Sherlock Holmes, and then Shakespeare’s tragedies. Of course I became an English major in college. Take that beginning, add a pinch of obsessiveness, and it’s easy to see why I needed to do this study.

Dynamics notwithstanding, I have often wondered why there is no recommended reading list for residents. I am told that other training programs have such lists and I know that in Britain there is an official list for trainees composed by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. There is an outdated copy of this list in the Jefferson library, but if you are interested in obtaining the current one you should write to: Headly Brothers Ltd/Ashford, Kent TN24 8HH. The cost is two pounds (probably more for overseas shipment).

There are probably many reasons why we do not have a reading list, but I think that one of the most important may be the partisan and ever changing nature of psychiatry itself. Analysts read about analysis, behaviorists read about behavioral therapy, and psychopharmacologists read about drugs. We share little common understanding of human behavior, and likewise, no common body of knowledge. On top of this ideas and opinions evolve so rapidly that deciding what is standard and should be read is a precarious matter.

In such an environment is there any use for a reading list? Perhaps not. There are arguments against it. Dr. Howard Field, Director of Consultation and Liaison Psychiatry, wrote to me about his objection to “core” reading lists:

... readings are only apposite in specific clinical situations. Otherwise, reading becomes a pedantic and sterile activity... My own preference is to ask questions and then go to an article or book for answers, to avoid a regular reading list with its implications of med-school examination, and its encouragement of the fantasy that one can master psychiatry by reading all of the books on the list.

Dr. Dorn is a fourth-year resident.
Of course Dr. Field is right. We cannot tilt at windmills. There are enough everyday clinical problems to keep one ferreting out articles for life. All the same, I think there is some value in favorites, in establishing and sharing a list of works that have been meaningful to our mentors. In a way that is what history is: a starting point, a beginning, something to hold on to. In his poem “Master Speed,” Robert Frost wrote:

No speed of wind or water rushing by
But you have speed far greater. You can climb
Back up a stream of radiance to the sky,
And back through history up the stream of time.
And you were given this swiftness, not for haste
Nor chiefly that you may go where you will,
But in the rush of everything to waste,
That you have the power of standing still—

**METHOD AND CONCLUSIONS**

A letter was sent to each psychiatrist in the Department of Psychiatry at Jefferson Medical College, asking them to return a list of the ten works that most influenced their evolution as a psychiatrist. No restrictions were made with regard to the nature of these works; they could include papers, as well as non-psychiatric literature. In a corollary question, I suggested that special mention could be made of any textbook that was recommended for residents. Enclosed with each letter was an answer sheet and a return envelope.

Of 300 requests, there were thirty replies. The results are compiled at the end of this article. The first list consists of the twenty-one most popular works, all of which received at least three separate recommendations. After that the rest of the responses are listed in alphabetical order according to the author. Separate lists follow that include those books with more than one author and then papers. The numbers enclosed in parentheses at the end of some works indicate the number of separate recommendations they received.

In reviewing the responses, it is no surprise that analytic works predominate. This confirms the acknowledged analytic bent of the Department. What did surprise me was the breadth of the responses, including many books and authors I had never heard of. Some of the more esoteric and idiosyncratic responses interested me the most, e.g., *Collected Works of Robert Cruab* and *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* by R. J. Lifton. For the most part, however, the responses were psychiatric in nature. I have the feeling that if I’d asked for more responses, I might have received less standard replies. Dr. Robert Dreyfus, Clinical Assistant Professor, wrote:

It feels much “safer” putting books like Fenichel on the list than books which are controversial—in a longer list I would have included Alan Watts, Ram Dass, Jay Haley, Bandler and Grinder, Stanislow Grof and a number of other people who have influenced me.
Perhaps the most startling of all the replies was a list that included just the *Bible* and *Psychoanalysis and Religion* by Eric Fromm. My first response was to dismiss this list as eccentric, but on second thought I think if I really understood the *Bible* I wouldn’t need the rest of the list.

Part of the fun of writing this article was trying to solve a few technical problems, such as seeking out the correct title of a book that’s out of print by an author who’s dead. I was humbled by the number of responses for which no author was listed, as if the work was so essential I must know who wrote it. “You mean, you haven’t read Penis Envy in the Aborigine? Tut, tut.”

To tie up some loose ends I would like to mention that some of the responses did not refer to specific works, but simply authors (Erickson, Horney, Piaget, and Mahler) or periodicals (*Audiodigest, The American Journal of Psychiatry, Psychiatric Clinics of North America, and Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*). These responses are not included in the list. With regard to my question concerning a recommended textbook, there was no contest. The *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry III* was not only the most recommended textbook, but the most popular response as well. Finally, Dr. M. L. Bluitt was kind enough to send me a reading list he developed for residents three years ago. If you are interested in seeing this list, please contact Dr. Bluitt at the Coatesville VA Medical Center, Coatesville, Pennsylvania.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time and energy to respond to my questionnaire. It is my own definition that a professional is someone who attains an advanced state of knowledge for the benefits of others. I am indebted to all of my colleagues who have shared theirs with me.

**THE TWENTY-ONE MOST POPULAR WORKS**

2) *Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis* by O. Fenichel (7)
3) *Interpretation of Dreams* by S. Freud (7)
4) *Ego and Mechanisms of Defense* by A. Freud (5)
5) *Neurotic Styles* by D. Shapiro (5)
6) *Mourning and Melancholia* by S. Freud (4)
7) *The Book of the It* by G. Groddeck (4)
8) *The Psychiatric Interview in Clinical Practice* by R. Michaels and R.A. MacKinnon (4)
9) *Interpretation of Schizophrenia* by S. Arieti
10) *Childhood and Society* by E. Erickson
11) *Persuasion and Healing* by J. Frank
12) *Collected Papers of S. Freud* (5 Volume edition)
14) *Asylums* by E. Goffman
15) *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism* by O. Kernberg
16) *Textbook of Psychiatry* by L. Kolb and A. Noyes
17) *The Divided Self* by R.D. Laing  
18) *The Collected Papers of E. Sharpe*  
19) *The First Year of Life* by R. Spitz  
20) *Adaptation to Life* by G. Valliant  
21) *Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy* by I. Yalom.

**OTHER RECOMMENDED WORKS**

1) *Selected Papers of K. Abraham*  
2) *The Prisoners of Family Life* by N. Ackerman  
3) *Wayward Youth* by A. Aichhorn  
4) *Dynamic Psychiatry* by F. Alexander  
5) *Psychosomatic Medicine* by F. Alexander  
6) *Personality* by G. Allport  
7) *Nervousness, Indigestion and Pain* by W. Alvarez  
8) *The Magic Skin* by H. Balzac  
9) *Doing Psychotherapy* by M. Basch  
10) *Pericival’s Narrative* by G. Bateson  
11) *Cognitive Therapy of Depression* by A. Beck  
12) *The Denial of Death* by E. Becker  
13) *The Mind that Found Itself* by C. Beers (2)  
14) *The Structure and Dynamics of Organizations and Groups* by E. Berne  
15) *The Bible*  
16) *The Case of Allen West* by K. Binswanger (in *Existence*, ed. by R. May)  
17) *Experience in Groups* by W. Bion  
18) *Seven Servants* by W. Bion  
19) *Talking with Patients* by B. Bird (2)  
20) *Kinesics and Context: Essays on Body Motion Communication* by R.L. Birdwhistle  
21) *Dementia Praecox* by E. Bleuler  
22) *Textbook of Psychiatry* by E. Bleuler  
23) *On Adolescence* by P. Blos  
24) *The Basic Fault* by M. Bolint (2)  
25) *Attachment and Loss* by J. Bowlby  
26) *An Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis* by C. Brenner  
27) *Psychoanalytic Technique and Psychic Conflict* by C. Brenner  
28) *Learning Psychotherapy* by H. Bruch  
29) *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by J. Campbell  
30) *Tales of Power* by C. Castenada  
31) *The Mask of Sanity* by H. Clocckly  
32) *Primer for Psychotherapists* by K. Colby  
33) *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life* by J.C. Coleman  
34) *Collected Works of R. Cruab*  
35) *Psychotherapy A Dynamic Approach* by P. DeWald  
36) *Treatment in Psychiatry* by A. Diethelm  
37) *Notes from the Underground* by F. Dostoyevsky  
38) *The Alexandria Quartet* by L. Durrell  
39) *Selected Papers of S. Ferenczi*
40) Collected Papers of O. Fenichel
41) The Circle of Dr. Lao by C. Finney
42) The Magic Years by S. Fraiberg
43) Thaís by A. France
44) Normality and Pathology in Childhood by A. Freud
45) The Writings of A. Freud
46) Analysis Terminable and Interminable by S. Freud
47) Ego and Its Defenses by S. Freud
48) Four Case Histories: Little Hans, Rat Man, Wolf Man, and the Schreber Case by S. Freud
49) Remembering, Repeating, and Working Through by S. Freud
50) The Psychopathology of Everyday Life by S. Freud
51) Three Contributions to a Theory of Sexuality by S. Freud
52) Psychoanalysis and Religion by E. Fromm
53) The Escape from Freedom by E. Fromm
54) Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy Selected Papers of F. Fromm-Reichman
55) Principles of Intensive Psychotherapy by F. Fromm-Reichman (2)
56) In a Different Voice by C. Gilligan
57) Emotional Growth: Psychiatric Studies for the Gifted and a Great Variety of Other Individuals by P. Greenacre
58) Meaning of Illness by G. Groddeck
59) Projective Identification and Envy by J. Grolstein
60) Personality Structure and Human Interaction by H. Guntrip
61) Analysis of Dreams by E. Guthiel
62) Uncommon Therapy by J. Haley (2)
63) Strategy by Sir B.L. Hart
64) Participant Observation by L. Havens
65) Language in Action by S.I. Hayakawa
66) Computer Power and Human Reasoning by J. Heizenbaus
67) Pharmacology of Psychotherapeutic Drugs by L.E. Hollister
68) The Neurotic Personality in Our Time by K. Horney (2)
69) Lithium Encyclopedia for Clinical Practice by J. Jefferson
70) The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud by E. Jones (2)
71) The Therapeutic Community by M. Jones
72) Memories, Dreams, and Reflections by C.G. Jung
73) Psyche and Symbol by C.G. Jung
74) Psychoanalytic Theory An Explanation of Essentials by G.S. Klein
75) The Search for the Self: Selected Writings of H. Kohut
76) The Restoration of the Self by H. Kohut (2)
77) Manic Depressive Insanity and Paranoia by E. Kraepelin
78) Massive Psychic Trauma by H. Krystal
79) The Function and Field of Speech in Psychoanalysis by J. Lacan
80) Sanity, Madness, and the Family by R.D. Laing
81) The Divided Self by R.D. Laing (2)
82) Psychotherapy a Basic Text by R. Langs
83) Technique in Transition by R. Langs
84) The Therapeutic Interaction by R. Langs
85) The EarthSea Trilogy by U. LeGuin
86) *The Left Hand of Darkness* by U. LeGuin
87) *Neurolgy for the House Officer* by W. Levitt
88) *Resolving Social Conflicts* by K. Lewin
89) *The Person* by T. Lidz
90) *Death in Life: Survivors of Hiroshima* by R.J. Lifton
91) *The Fifty Minute Hour* by R. Lindner
92) *Organic Psychiatry* by W. Lishman
93) *Mental Health Through Will Training* by A. Low
94) *Bioenergetics* by A. Lowen
95) *Selected Papers of M. Mahler*
96) *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant* by M. Mahler (2)
97) *Psychoanalysis: The Impossible Profession* by J. Malcolm
98) *Time Limited Psychotherapy* by J. Mann
99) *Bemoaning the Lost Dream* by E. Marcovitz
101) *Clinical Psychiatry* by W. Mayer-Gross
102) *The Vital Balance* by K. Menninger
103) *Commonsense Psychiatry* by A. Meyer
104) *Psychobiology* by A. Meyer
105) *Families and Family Therapy* by S. Minuchin
106) *Families of the Slums* by S. Minuchin
107) *Foundations of Psychopathology* by J. Nemiah
109) *Schreber Case: Psychoanalytic Profile of a Paranoid Personality* by W.G. Niederland
110) *Collected Papers of H. Nunberg*
111) *Principles of Psychoanalysis: Their Application to the Neurosis* by H. Nunberg
112) *Psychoanalysis and Personality* by F. Nuttine
113) *Management by Objectives* by G.S. Odione
114) *In Search of the Miraculous* by P.D. Ouspensky
115) *Community Mental Health* by A.F. Panzetta
116) *Management Theory* by T.T. Paterson
117) *Gestalt Therapy Verbatim* by F. Perls
118) *Organization and Pathology of Thought* by D. Rappaport
119) *The Structure of Psychoanalytic Theory and Psychological Issues* by D. Rapppport
120) *Character Analysis* by W. Reich
121) *Therapeutic Communication* by J. Reusch
122) *Listening with the Third Ear* by T. Reik
123) *Nonspecific Factors in Drug Therapy* by T. Rickels
124) *Counseling and Psychotherapy* by C. Rogers
125) *The Disease of Melancholia* by T. Rogers
126) *The Scientific Foundation of Developmental Psychiatry* by M. Rutter
127) *The Little Prince* by A. de Saint-Exupery
128) *The Obsessive Personality* by L. Salzman
129) *Collected Papers on Schizophrenia* by H. Searles
130) *Short Term Dynamic Psychotherapy* by P. Sifneos
131) *Contemporary Psychiatry* by L.H. Snow
132) *Third Revolution* by K. Stern
133) *The Mental Status Examination in Neurology* by R. Strub
134) *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* by H.S. Sullivan
135) *The Psychiatric Interview* by H.S. Sullivan (2)
136) *An Introduction to Psychotherapy* by S. Tarachow
137) *Oedipus and Akhnaton* by I. Velikovsky
138) *General Systems Theory* by von Bertalanffy
139) *Psychoanalysis and Behavior Therapy* by P. Wachtel
140) *The Basic Theory of Psychoanalysis* by R. Waelder
141) *Agoraphobia* by E. Weiss
142) *The Maturational Process and the Facilitating Environment* by D.W. Winnicott
143) *The Technique of Psychotherapy* by L. Wolberg
144) *Existential Psychotherapy* by I. Yalom
145) *A History of Medical Psychology* by G. Zilboorg

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS WITH MORE THAN ONE AUTHOR**

146) *A Psychoanalytic Model of Psychological Structure* by S. Joffe and J. Sandler
147) *Biological Basis of Psychiatric Disorders* by A. Frazer and A. Winokur
149) *Frontiers of Infant Psychiatry* by J.D. Call and E. Galenson
150) *Intensive Family Therapy* by I. Boszormenyi-Nagy and J.L. Frano
151) *Introduction to Contemporary Psychoanalysis* by A.E. Bernstein and G. Warner
152) *Massachusetts General Hospital Handbook of General Hospital Psychiatry* by N.H. Cassem and T.P. Hackett
153) *Psychiatric Treatment: Crisis/Clinic/Consultation* by J.E. Beebe and C.P. Rosenbaum
154) *Psychoanalytic Concepts and the Structural Theory* by J.A. Arlow and C. Brenner
155) *Psychoanalytic Therapies* by F. Alexander and T.M. French
156) *Psychology* by R. Brown and R. Herrnstein
157) *Psychosomatic Medicine* by O.S. English and E. Weiss
158) *Practical Clinical Psychiatry* by F. Ebaugh, J. Ewalt, and E. Strecker
159) *Specialized Technique in Psychotherapy* by G. Bychowski and J.L. Despert
160) *The Family Crucible* by A. Napier and C. Whitaker (2)
161) *The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics* by L. Goodman and A. Gilman
162) *The Roots of Psychotherapy* by T.P. Malone and C.A. Whitaker
163) *Therapy and Practice of Psychiatry* by D. Freedman and F.C. Reidlich

**RECOMMENDED PAPERS**