

Book Review

A PORTRAIT OF THE BRAIN

edited by Adam Zeman, 256 pp., Yale University Press, 2009, \$27.50

While cognitive neuroscience continues to evolve as more evidence emerges to connect neuronal mechanisms to the ways in which we interact with our environment, few have ventured to associate neuroanatomy with the psyche and the soul. Adam Zeman's *A Portrait of the Brain* explores both of these in an easily read narrative format supplemented by a well-researched historical backdrop.

Dr. Zeman is a clinical neurologist and Professor of Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology at Peninsula Medical School, Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry. His latest book, *A Portrait of the Brain*, seems a natural follow-up to *Consciousness: A User's Guide*, published in 2004, in which he explored the neuronal connections involved in the creation of consciousness. *A Portrait of the Brain* intermixes basic neuroscience and neuroanatomy with case histories reminiscent of Oliver Sacks or Andrew Kertesz. The book is organized within the basic framework of the brain and begins with the most elementary building block, the atom, progressing to genes, proteins, organelles, neurons, synapses, neural networks, the lobes of the brain, and finally the psyche and the

soul. For example, in the first chapter, titled "Atom, I am fatigued," a case is presented of a woman with chronic fatigue, who is eventually diagnosed with hypoventilation secondary to multicore myopathy. The anatomic level of the atom is connected to the disease by explaining that CO₂ accumulation can account for her symptoms. In a later chapter exploring the psyche and psychogenic symptoms, Dr. Zeman examines the connections between the body and the mind, mostly through historical examples and anecdotes.

The chapters focus more on the case history and the history of the disease diagnosed and less so on the neuroanatomic level that gives each chapter its title. This may be a strength for those interested in medical history but may be unfulfilling for those looking for a more scientific discussion. The book does contain a supplemental section with suggested further readings, however. There are some basic illustrations that those with a medical or science background will recognize from their training but are not very informative for the neurologist.

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Disclosure: Dr. Ridel serves on the Neurology[®] Resident & Fellow Section Team.

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