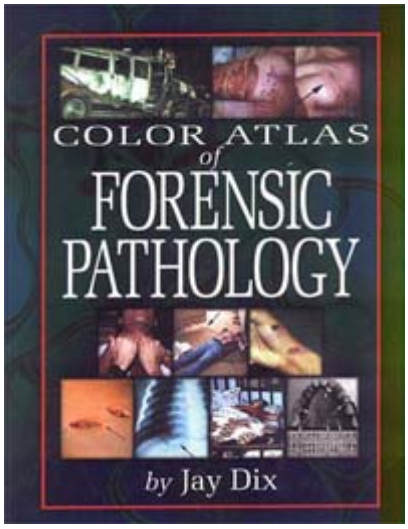
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Book Reviews

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Color Atlas of Forensic Pathology, First Edition, 2000 *by* Jay Dix
CRC Press LLC, 2000 Corporate Blvd., N.W., Boca Raton, Florida 33431; ISBN 0-8493-0278-1; Pages 184; Hardcover, Price DM 390



Forensic Pathology is essentially a visual science. No amount of rote learning can be enough for the student, if he does not actually see the cases. The best way to learn forensic pathology of course is to do post-mortems daily and see and visualize the pathological changes first hand. A beginner however can not hope to see even a representative number of cases, in the short time that is available to him.

View this book on Amazon

Figure 2.4: The skin on the ends of the fingers can be removed for printing



One of the best ways to get over this problem is to go through atlases of forensic pathology. One of the earliest and best atlases in forensic pathology was by a Japanese, Watanabe, which unfortunately is not available now. Another very good atlas is by Choei Wakasugi, Yoshitsugu Tatsuno and Tohru Kohjima, but unfortunately this is in Japanese, and not of much use to an English speaking pathologist.

An extremely good forensic medicine atlas in English language came in early nineties. This was by J.K. Mason and was called "Forensic Medicine - An Illustrated Reference". The quality of photographs in this atlas were superb. Unfortunately this atlas is also not available now.

In this scenario, the atlas under review comes as a succor. A vast number of good quality photographs are arranged in fifteen sections, such as Time of Death, Blunt Trauma, Asphyxia, Thermal Injuries, cutting and stabbing and motor vehicle injuries.

Figure 2.5: This skin can easily be printed



Some of the photographs are quite illustrative. In the second chapter on Identification, we are informed that fingerprints can be taken from the "gloves", which come off a person's hand in prolonged drowning. The pathologist can actually "don" these gloves rather like a thimble and take fingerprints. The photographs on the left and right show just how to do this.

We all know that age of bruises can often be determined by observing the color changes. But this notion has been challenged time and again. In fact in this very issue, there is a paper with excellent

photographs, which shows how unreliable the visual appearance of a bruise can be. In the third chapter on blunt trauma, Dix gives us yet another good photograph.

Figure 3.3: Different colors in the same bruise. The bruise is exactly one week old.

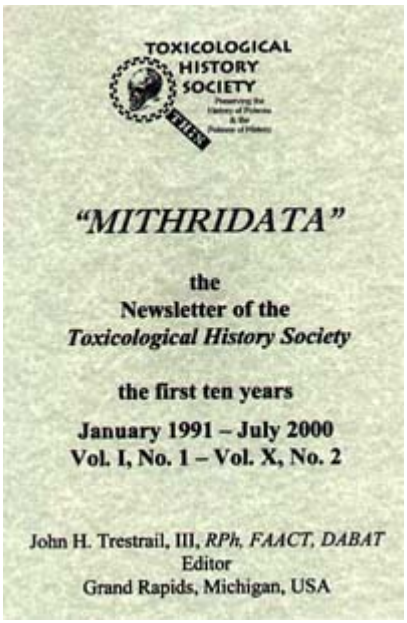


The bruise seen on the right has been reproduced from that. This is a single bruise which is exactly one week old. But clearly different areas show different colorations. There is yellow coloration on the periphery giving the impression as if this were about two weeks old or so. But in the center the color is quite reddish, with slight blackening, giving the impression as if it were about 4-5 days old. Had the caption not been given, this reviewer would have thought that this was the case of a more recent bruise superimposed on an older one!

All in all a good book. Persons most likely to benefit from this interesting book are beginners just entering the profession of forensic pathology, but the book can serve as a useful review material for more senior forensic practitioners too.

Mithridata: The Newsletter of the Toxicological History Society - The first ten years (Jan 1991- July 2000), First published as a bound edition, 2000 *by* John H. Trestrail III
Center for the Study of Criminal Poisoning, 1840 Wealthy, S.E., Grand Rapids, MI 49506, USA,
Price $15
Contact John H. Trestrail

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The book under review is actually a collection of first twenty issues of Mithridata, a highly interesting newsletter brought out every six months by the Toxicological History Society. This society, often known by the Acronym THiS, was founded in October 1990, by John Harris Trestrail III, an avowed lover of poisons and their histories.

It has been his mission to uncover the mists surrounding ancient and mysterious poisons. He has collected a vast amount of literature on poisons, which is mind boggling (over 900 volumes at last count!). This reviewer has been in touch with Mr. Trestrail, and was amazed when told that he had in his possession even such ancient books as the first edition of Orfila (1814), and Mead (1702).

The first newsletter of this society came out in January 1991, and since then it has been coming regularly at six monthly intervals. Quite often some astounding articles have appeared in these newsletters. Well, make a decision yourself. Here are some choicest plums: Poisons used by Agatha Christie, Historical baseball deaths by poisoning, History of poisons is Opera, Patron Saints and Poisoning, Poisons in the Bible...

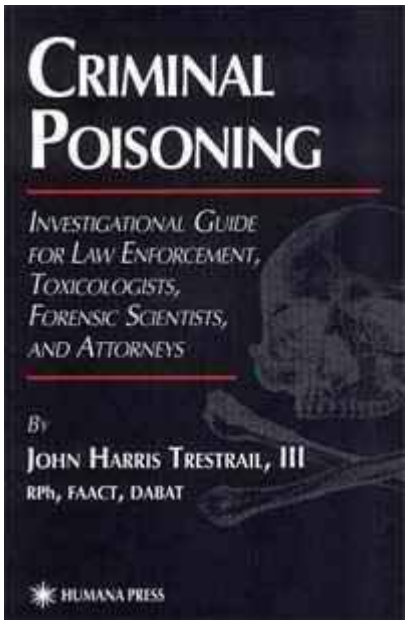
Well, we could go on and on. Perhaps the best way to explore this book is to acquire one. It is available for a very reasonable cost. For fifteen dollars it is really a bargain, and is well recommended.

Criminal poisoning, *by* John H. Trestrail III
Humana Press, 2000, Pages 164. ISBN 0-89603-592-1 (alk. paper)
Price $59.50

Contact John H. Trestrail

Visit Humana Press site

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999 Riverview Drive, Suite 208
Totowa, New Jersey 07512



There are many poison books in print today, but very few cater to the criminal aspects so passionately and so extensively as the book under review. We have the excellent Goldfrank's *Toxicologic Emergencies* (now in its 6th edition), and Haddad and Winchester's *Clinical Management of poisoning and drug overdose*, but probably none of these books highlight the criminal aspects of poisoning so well. So if you are after this interesting feature of poisoning, this book is for you.

Each chapter opens with interesting poison quotes, which the author has collected painstakingly over the last 30 years. Sample some of these juicy ones: *When you consider what a chance women have to poison their husbands, it's a wonder there isn't more of it done* (Kim Hubbard), *Poison is a chemical bomb, Poison is a silent weapon*, and *If all those buried in our cemeteries who were poisoned could raise their hand, we would probably be shocked by the numbers*! (the last three of them by John Harris Trestrail III). As you can see, most of these juicy ones are by Trestrail himself.

The book is replete with rare and interesting information on criminal poisoning. And much of the information comes in tables. In table 2.6 for instance the author lists 679 KNOWN cases of poisons, which to this reviewer's knowledge is the first such compilation. Reading this table, we come to know that insulin has been used as many as 11 times for poisoning, strychnine 40 times and thallium 10 times. The author doesn't stop here. He goes on and in the next table classifies each poisoning by the country where this poisoning occurred!

In Chapter 3, we read a very interesting classification of poisoners. There are class **S** poisoners, who choose a **S**pecific target, and a class **R** poisoners, who chose a **R**andom target. Each of these subgroups has further interesting subgroups depending on whether they plan their poisonings quickly or slowly.

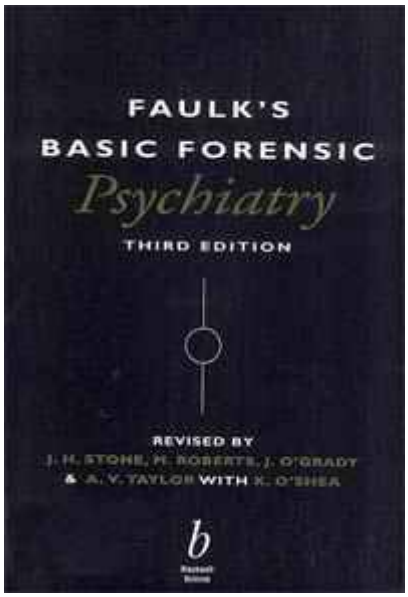
Chapter 9 on "Poisoning in Fiction" is another chapter which catches attention at once. Here the author reviews 187 works of fiction where poison was used in some or the other way and gives us the information in a very interesting table.

Trestrail tops up the effort with two very fine pieces in the end - an appendix which gives good and useful information about common homicidal poisons, and a very extensive bibliography of criminal poisonings. The bibliography itself runs into 36 pages - from page 121 to page 156!

All in all, an extremely interesting book. This reviewer would recommend this book to everyone interested in poisoning. Fortunately Trestrail has kept the technical jargon at a minimum level, so even an ordinary educated person would have no trouble following this book.

Faulk's Basic Forensic Psychiatry *Revised by* J.H. Stone, M. Roberts, J. O'Grady & A.V. Taylor with K. O'Shea
Blackwell Science, 3rd Edition, 2000, ISBN: 0-632-05019-5, Price: Not mentioned

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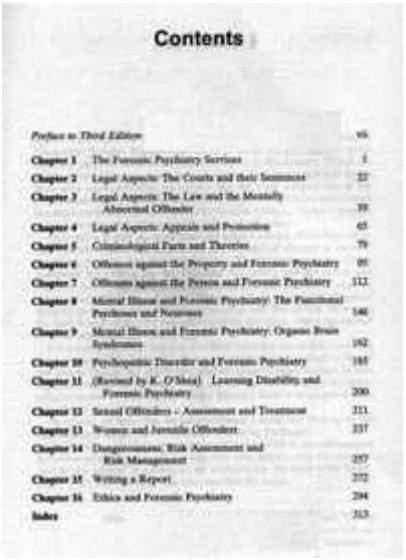
Modern Forensic Psychiatry began with the famous McNaughten trial way back in 1843, when quite arguably the most famous insane person in history - Daniel McNaughten - attempted to kill the then British Prime Minister Robert Peel under an insane delusion, but instead killed his secretary Edward Drummond by mistake. The whole episode gave rise to a lot of hue and cry, and what distilled out of it were the so-called McNaughten Rules, still the backbone of the criminal liability laws in most countries. Much water has flown down the Ganges since then and Forensic Psychiatry has come a long way.

The book under review attempts to encompass all matters of importance pertaining to forensic psychiatry since the time of McNaughten. It is an immensely valuable book for a practicing forensic psychiatrist. Readers for whom the name Faulk doesn't ring a bell, Dr. Malcolm Faulk was appointed a Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist (in Great Britain) way back in 1971, and was one of the first to be so appointed. He later wrote the first and, for some time, the only text book of Forensic Psychiatry in Britain. The book under review is the third edition of that book.

The book is truly up-to-date in the sense that it includes all the latest statues, namely the *Crime Sentences Act* (1997), the *Sex Offender Act* (1997) and the *Crime and Disorder Act* (1998).

The book opens with a description of the various Forensic Psychiatry services, the penal system, health services in prisons and the incidence of psychiatric disorder amongst prisoners. A description of various courts and their sentences form the basis of the next chapter. The rest of the book is full of practical and useful information. Take for example chapter 7, which among other things, tells us how to assess a psychiatric offender. Various questions which the psychiatrist should strive to answer are given with instructions on how to answer them.

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Generally no book on forensic psychiatry addresses the issues pertaining to women offenders. In the book under review there is a full chapter (chapter 13), which caters to such questions. Among other things, it describes the incidence of criminal behavior in women and of mental abnormality amongst female offenders, describes relevant etiological factors associated with criminality in women, and also describes some special types of offences seen in women and the medico legal problems that they present. For instances, offences like prostitution and child stealing are specific to women offenders. The editors go on to describe interesting medico legal issues arising out of these crimes.

Other parts of the book elaborate on such things as medico legal aspects of neurotic illness, mood disorders, delusional disorders, schizophrenia and so on. Chapter 15 gives in detail how to write the report for the courts, what questions can be asked in the courts, and how best to answer them. There is even a chapter on ethics and forensic psychiatry.

Those readers who want to go through the table of contents in detail may want to click the image on the right.

All in all, a very useful book for a practicing forensic psychiatrist and can be heartily recommended.