Seizures precipitated by defined stimuli are relatively rare. However, as several authors of this monograph emphasize, these seizure types offer unique opportunities to study basic mechanisms of epilepsy. This small volume is derived from a 2001 meeting on the reflex epilepsies held at the 12th International Bethel-Cleveland Epilepsy Symposium in Bielefeld, Germany. The book contains 14 chapters, many written by authors well known for their contributions in this field. The major topics include seizures induced by photic stimulation, praxis and thinking, music, reading, hot-water immersion, touch or movement, eating, and emotion.

The reader seeking a review article on each of these varieties of reflex epilepsies will probably be disappointed. The first chapter, by Binnie, presents an interesting discussion on how specific activities can selectively activate localized regions of brain in the idiopathic generalized epilepsies, as exemplified by photosensitive seizures. As a clinician, I did not find the chapters on photosensitivity in different species or the prevention of photosensitive seizures with optical filters to be particularly stimulating. Inoue and Zifkin provide a thoughtful chapter on theoretical concepts and potential mechanisms of so-called “praxis” and “thinking.”

Wieser’s chapter on muscigenic seizures and Satishchandra et al’s chapter on hot-water epilepsy summarize what there is to say about these entities but provide relatively little new information that has not been previously published. Mayer and Wolf review perioral reflex myoclonias in juvenile myoclonic epilepsy and reading epilepsy; this chapter might have been better suited to a journal article rather than a book chapter. Similarly, the chapters on functional imaging in reading epilepsy, eating seizures in a family, and seizures induced by touch and movement might have been more appropriately published in journals as small series case reports. I do not know whether the section on reflex seizures in infancy would be useful to the pediatric epileptologist or not.

This is decidedly not a book for the general adult or pediatric neurologist. Clinicians and neurophysiologists with a major interest in epilepsy will be pleased to know that this book exists and will find it occasionally useful if they can obtain it from a library. The “value added” for the price (nearby one Canadian dollar per page) does not warrant its purchase for an individual’s book collection. Much of the information in this book can be found quickly with an electronic literature search that will disclose the pertinent original publications of these authors.

R. Mark Sadler
Halifax, Nova Scotia