

as an independent variable for the most part, despite complex breakdown coding, may reassure both those who feel deprived by want of facilities of the secrets locked away in electroencephalography and those well placed in terms of hardware who feel wanting in their powers of interpretation. Perhaps the late prognosis is not the right question to ask the EEG.

Last but not least, the Appendices to this book should save other researchers hours of hard work in their coding procedures.

DAVID C. TAYLOR.

ONE HAND CLAPPING

Black Suicide. By HERBERT HENDIN. London: Allen Lane. The Penguin Press. 1970. Pp. 147 + 29. Price 36s.

The central thesis advanced here is that suicide among blacks in the United States differs qualitatively—i.e. 'in meanings and significance'—from suicide among whites. Negro suicidal behaviour is said to be characterized by 'murderous rage and self-hatred' which stem from maternal rejection and paternal abandonment in childhood. 'The rage and self-hatred that are an integral part of the black family situation are inseparable from the rage and self-hatred that are the out-growth of racial discrimination; . . . in the black's attempt to cope with frustration and rage, his feelings of impotence and self-hatred often cause his anger to turn against himself.'

The thesis is an attractive one. Dr. Hendin's sympathies are obvious and admirable. Moreover, it is refreshing to find a psychoanalyst who stresses that current environmental influences—no less than supposed happenings in infancy—are important determinants of human behaviour. Unfortunately, the author's social concern is not matched, apparently, by any regard for the scientific method. In the first place, his basic proposition is so vaguely formulated as to preclude verification. Does the hypothesis refer to actual suicide or to a very different phenomenon, namely so-called attempted suicide? Then again, if the suicidal acts of blacks and whites differ 'qualitatively', is it postulated that rage and self-hatred (and, for that matter, parental deprivation in childhood) precede suicide invariably among negroes but never among whites? These and similar questions which will occur to critical readers are not clarified. But if Dr. Hendin is too reticent about the precise implications of his thesis, he is unduly forthcoming in his conclusions. On the basis, essentially, of a few private uncontrolled observations, the author presents what is at best an unverified hypothesis as the revealed truth.

Dr. Hendin begins by citing some homicide and suicide statistics for New York City. The figures purport to show that both homicide and suicide rates reach their peak among negroes between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. Since, however, the homicide figures refer not to murderers but to the victims of murder, the relevance of these data to the present hypothesis is doubtful. But the main burden of his proof consists of brief, selected extracts from psychoanalytic interviews with twenty-five negroes who made suicidal attempts. These patients were seen for seven or eight sessions; a number of projective tests, the W.A.I.S., and a hostility inventory were also administered. High scores on the hostility inventory were taken to support the hypothesis; but so were low scores, because it is argued that the low scorers were simply denying their unconscious hostility. Such *ex post facto* explanations are, of course, unacceptable in a scientific sense since they make the hypothesis irrefutable. It will come as no surprise that the author's psychoanalytic findings similarly confirm his hypothesis in every case.

The final and most serious criticism of this study concerns the absence of any white controls. To investigate postulated differences with regard to suicide between whites and blacks by examining negroes only seems not unlike listening for the proverbial sound of one hand clapping. Dr. Hendin does scant justice to his thesis. His study, I regret to say, proves nothing, except, perhaps, the boundless capacity of investigators, when unfettered by the restraints of the scientific method, to find what they seek.

S. GREER.

QUITE BARREN

Family Dynamics and Female Sexual Delinquency. Edited by OTTO POLLAK and ALFRED S. FRIEDMAN. Science and Behaviour Books, California. Pp. 210. Price \$6.95.

This paperback is based on a series of lectures which formed part of the training programme in family counselling for sexual behaviour problems of adolescent girls, run jointly by the Philadelphia Psychiatric Centre and the Office of Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development. The contributors are mainly psychiatrists or psychologists.

The idea of the book apparently came after the lectures had been given, and in order to provide a more comprehensive coverage of the subject some additional unpublished papers were included.

The quality of these various essays is variable.

Most suffer from a lack of clear planning and economy of presentation, which might have been less marked if publication had been the original intention of the contributors. There is also a tendency for most of the authors to make authoritative assumptions, occasionally illustrated but seldom validated by clinical anecdotes, reflecting the prevailing psycho-analytic influence. There is a noticeable reluctance to state the extent of the clinical material referred to, which might suggest to the sceptical reader that either few records were being kept or that numbers were not large enough to justify such authoritative conclusions. In only one paper, *Families Out of Wedlock*, by Elizabeth Hertzog, are any sort of statistics given.

The book is in five parts. The first aim was to give some basic principles of family system theory. Anyone expecting from this a tidy theoretical model will be disappointed. The gist of family system theory, as described here, is that individual members of a family inter-relate to form a family group, and consequently the individual should not be viewed in isolation from his family; an important basic principle but hardly a theoretical system.

The second section is on socio-economic and cultural factors in sexual delinquency. This does include some interesting observations about deprived families and their cultural backgrounds, although there is a tendency for a middle-class standard to be taken as the yardstick of normality.

The other three sections are on 'Psycho-dynamic factors and sexual delinquency', 'Family interactional factors and sexual delinquency', and 'Family therapy applications'. There is little of note in any of these papers, though the reviewer found Tessman and Kaufman's paper 'Variations on a theme of incest' more helpful than the rest.

In general this is an unimpressive book. Readers who are not adverse to psychoanalytically based concepts may glean some quite interesting and stimulating ideas which are scattered through the book, but as a source of useful facts it is quite barren.

JOHN BANCROFT.

HOMOSEXUALITY

The Other Love. By H. MONTGOMERY HYDE. Heinemann. 1970. Pp. 323. Price 60s.

The sub-title—An Historical and Contemporary Survey of Homosexuality in Britain—accurately describes the scope of this book. The author has written over 30 books, mainly historical and biographical; but he started his career as a barrister, and from 1950–59 he was Ulster Unionist M.P. for

North Belfast and was an active campaigner for reform in the homosexuality laws.

From this background it is not surprising that the best parts of the book are those concerned with the legal, political and historical aspects of the subject. His account of the contemporary scene and possible future developments is marred by a rather dated outlook on the technical (medico-psychological) aspects, relying too heavily on the Wolfenden Report. There is also some confusion over terminology, e.g. hermaphroditism (p. 21), but nonetheless he manages to dispel a number of popular myths.

The more notorious cases are quoted and set in their social and historical context; these tend to be the more psychopathic ones, often bisexual, promiscuous and guilty of a variety of offences rather than of a simple homosexual indiscretion.

The Victorian period is well documented; the author is already known for his studies of Oscar Wilde. Obviously not everyone with alleged homosexual propensities could be mentioned; although he discusses some prominent politicians he does not mention Canning or Disraeli.

Whilst he makes a commendable effort to include lesbianism in his survey there are many omissions; for instance Edith Lees who later became Mrs. Havelock Ellis, Olive Schreiner, and particularly Marian Evans (George Eliot) who seemed to attract more than her fair share of female admirers. This would also be a good opportunity for discussing the possible effects of the female emancipation movement with its background of feminine militancy.

The book is divided into eight chapters, is well written and adequately documented with references and footnotes in the text and a very good general index. There is also a select bibliography, which might have included *Sex in History* by G. R. Taylor, London, 1953, and *Feasting with Panthers* by R. Croft-Cooke, London, 1967.

There is much here to interest the majority of psychiatrists, and while it is obviously not the definitive work on the subject it is a very able and interesting introduction.

F. E. KENYON.

INTERNATIONAL INTEREST

Social Psychiatry. Vol. XLVII. Research Publications of the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease. Edited by F. C. REDLICH. Edinburgh: E. and S. Livingstone Ltd., for Williams & Wilkins Company, Baltimore. 1969. Pp. 354. Price £10.

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