

complexity of the world of social and cultural variety within which we live. Feminists have long criticised such development theory as reflecting essentially masculine concerns. The relationship between religion and spirituality is complex not least when set against what sociologists describe as an increasingly secular society. At points in the book, I wondered whether MacKinlay does justice to what I have found in my own limited experience – which indicates that much of the theory and practice relating to spiritual care is more closely integrated with the Christian religion than some of that theory suggests. Given the marginalisation of religion in Britain today, my experience of working with health and care staff is that the concept of spirituality is both hard to define and even harder to put into practice. In many settings, there is little enough time for being with the person, let alone for support and reflection on meaning in life and responding to that meaning through God and others. This is an agenda that care staff themselves have hardly begun to address, let alone have the skill to help others. MacKinlay's work is valuable and I shall attempt to put some of it into practice in my own work, but her framework is less helpful than she claims. This is an area of work for those of us committed to 'whole person care' that requires much more collaborative research and concerted thought.

While it is impossible for any book to deal comprehensively with the variety of social, economic and political systems that organise the support of older people, no one should under-estimate the difference that people's financial resources make to the care received. MacKinlay offers a convincing case for the positive value of residential care. She makes a contribution to the discussion about the environment within which residential care is organised and delivered and the particular importance of motivating good, trained staff. Australia is much more generous than Great Britain in the funding of 'age-care'. Those involved in social policy should continue to make a contribution to maximising choice for older people. Such choice should include the various benefits of residential care for those living in the fourth age of life and especially to work with other agencies in acknowledging how poverty limits choice and therefore quality in old age. Living well in old age may literally depend upon geography or chance, and more certainly on available wealth.

Leveson Centre for the Study of Ageing,  
Spirituality and Social Policy,  
Temple Balsall,  
Solihull, West Midlands, UK

JAMES WOODWARD

doi:10.1017/S0144686X07006022

Richard Hoggart, *Promises to Keep: Thoughts in Old Age*, Continuum,  
London, 2005, hbk £14.99, 160 pp., ISBN 0 82648714 9.

In considering Richard Hoggart's three-volume autobiography, Melissa Gregg (2003) wrote of his 'discourse of empathy'. She used this term to illustrate Hoggart's continual seeking of the ways by which readers will identify with him

and so reveal shared concerns and values. In her article, Gregg pointed to the ways in which in his writing Hoggart spans class divides; not underplaying their substance or power but suggesting that there may be overarching shared cultural experiences. Hoggart's thoughts in old age provide a further opportunity to consider this 'discourse of empathy' in action, but here it is age that Hoggart employs as a prism through which to contemplate culture and history. He asks, 'How do I or we see children?' and 'How do they or you see me or us?' Hoggart seems slightly surprised but also delighted by his old age, and he explores many of the hidden aspects of later life that are represented more often in popular than academic writing. These include his depictions of bodily or physical changes, but deeper taboos are tackled, notably the possession of money and attitudes to it that he recognises in himself and his circle. How does a man brought up with ideas of thrift, economy and nearness to poverty manage a modern social world in which money is not a pervasive problem, and material comfort well describes his position?

For gerontologists this book bridges oral history and cultural studies. Hoggart's accounts are rich in detail and in personal leaps of imagination, doubts and tremors. He paints a picture of a world at times overshadowed by fear of the Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, but also of the fears and apprehension of moving and the loss of place. This is a risky society. Acting in your own best interests is something that just seems hard to do and individuality seems to intersect with independence. Cultural patterns are never far from Hoggart's curiosity. Why, he wonders, does the rhythm of the week still seem to be dominated by a weekend – when its props of work do not apply – and external reminders, such as shop closures for the fulfilment of personal and religious obligations in evenings and on Sundays apply less and less? Such domestic musings are accompanied by numerous short quotations from imaginative writing. These are used variously: as hooks on which to hang a discussion or to change subject, to sum up a point of view, for sheer interest, and as ways to support the author's own leanings. Readers may be struck by the breadth of reading that is deftly cited, for this literary convention has faded in the current vogue for personal disclosures and biographies. *The Uses of Literacy*, Hoggart's (1957) most celebrated book, are put on display through such illustrations. His genuine fondness for Auden I found most evident, whose writing provides the title for this book. This is a reflective book, with a conversational style, which made me think about the 'discourse of empathy' and the potential contribution of cultural studies to enlarge gerontology's disciplinary foundations.

## References

- Gregg, M. 2003. A neglected history: Richard Hoggart's discourse of empathy. *Rethinking History*, 7, 3, 285–306.  
 Hoggart, R. 1957. *The Uses of Literacy*. Chatto and Windus, London.

Social Care Workforce Research Unit,  
 King's College London

JILL MANTHORPE