

cover some similar ground. However, the former focuses on epidemiology, politics, resources, and so on, while the latter concentrates on diagnosis, functional assessment, and approaches to treatment.

In style, the first book inclines to the academic and detached. The discussions on prevalence of chronic mental illness, homelessness, and social and political aspects are all to a greater or lesser extent thorough, scholarly, and well referenced. The second book essentially outlines an aggressive, but not particularly innovative, treatment approach in an enthusiastic fashion. There are chapters on practical psychopharmacology, social skills training, family management, vocational rehabilitation, and community support. Flow diagrams, case histories, and learning exercises abound, but references are thin on the ground.

These books are aimed at an American readership: the social, political, and economic contents of the first do not always have obvious counterparts in Britain, and the uncritical style of the second will grate on many British psychiatrists. Perhaps the most striking feature of both books is an optimism about chronic mental illness, particularly chronic schizophrenia. Accordingly, they will both undoubtedly be welcomed by community-orientated psychiatrists, but will perhaps meet with a more weary scepticism from the remainder.

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Human Behaviour in the Concentration Camp. By ELIE A. COHEN. London: Free Association Books. 1988. 295 pp. £9.95.

Cohen is a Dutch physician, one of the 60 000 Jews deported from the Netherlands to Auschwitz and one of only 1052 who survived. Eight years after his liberation he presented a thesis for a Doctorate of Medicine, which was published in book form in 1954. The book is now reissued to fulfil the need of the author to constantly remind the world of "the depths of misery, madness and cruelty to which man is capable of descending".

The author acknowledges that the writing of this book arose out of a profound personal necessity, as part of his attempt to mourn his lost world. At the same time, he has tried to provide an objective account of the process. It is this combination which makes the book so overwhelming in its effect. Accounts of medical procedures and survivors' memories are interspersed with tables of statistics detailing the calorie content of a prisoner's diet or the ratios over the years of deaths to admissions. Cohen struggles, largely using psychoanalytic theory, to make sense of what happened. After dealing with general and medical aspects of the concentration camps, the remainder of the book is an attempt to deal with the psychology of the prisoner and of the SS guards. He admits that his own contribution to provid-

ing an explanation is limited, using medical psychology as his only tool, and that clearly other fields of study are required to really understand the behaviour and beliefs of an organisation such as the SS.

One can ask, almost half a century on, whether we still need reminding of the horror that existed in Europe. The answer must be yes, partly for its own sake, because it is our immediate history and part of us all, but also because it is only through this reminding that we really can be aware of the capacity of humans for evil. The terrifying thought is how much easier it would all be now with stainless steel equipment, computerised records and more effective and 'humane' despatch methods. It is not a pleasure to read this book. It is a duty.

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Reclaimed Powers: Towards a New Psychology of Men and Women in Later Life. By DAVID GUTMANN. London: Hutchinson Education. 1988. 335 pp. £30.00.

This engrossing book is clearly the summation of a career in gerontology, but the contents are endowed with additional relevance and intimacy by Gutmann's comment that his own ageing is "a prime object of my study".

Gutmann opposes the view of old age as a period of involution and decay prior to death; he argues that it should be considered as a developmental stage in its own right. This assertion is supported by projective material, mainly obtained using the Thematic Apperception Test, collected from a variety of societies: urban Kansas, the Navajo of North America, the Highland and Lowland Maya of Mexico, and the Druze of Galilee and the Golan Heights. He found a recurring pattern in all the groups: that as they age, men become more 'feminine', whereas women become more 'virile'. He argues that this pattern fits in with the "parental imperative" and the need for differentiated gender roles during child-rearing; the declining aggression of men in old age allows their sons to assume power, aided by their wives, without conflict between the generations.

Industrialisation, urbanisation, and geographical mobility have arrested this pattern in contemporary Western society; Gutmann ascribes many present-day ills, including child abuse, to the ascendancy of the nuclear family. The book ends with a plea for a return to traditional social structures.

The book makes fascinating reading; each chapter is charmingly prefaced by an apposite literary quotation, a device which serves to remind one of the breadth and depth of learning underpinning Gutmann's work. I particularly enjoyed the chapter entitled 'The seasons of the senses', which deals with the return to orality of the older male. He also gives a fine account of the relationship between ageing and art.