

Part II.—Reviews

Psychotic Art. By FRANCIS REITMAN. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950. Price 16s.

The artistic products of the mentally ill have been approached from various points of view. As phenomena of expression they have been used as aids to diagnosis and treatment, as a means of investigating activities such as perception, imagination and thinking or even as evidence in attempts to explain certain schools of art. The standpoint of this book is mainly behaviouristic, avoiding by intention the interpretative approaches which are so difficult to verify. The author himself writes: "The aims of this book are to study the special characteristics of psychotic pictorial activity and to investigate its motivation. A psychiatric estimation of art aims to remain a scientific approach and must concern itself with truth only."

The main chapters deal with cognitive disturbances of the personality in relation to artistic expression. Dr. Reitman believes that altered categorical behaviour in psychotics is generally accompanied by disturbance of the body schema and that this is reflected in their artistic products. He marshals clinical, psychometric and experimental evidence which, even if incomplete, give strong support to his views, and he indicates further possibilities of research into various aspects of this interesting subject.

The chapters on the content and nature of psychotic art are followed by illustrative case-histories. In a short final chapter Dr. Reitman examines some cultural factors which influence "modern" artists to paint schizophrenic-like pictures. He points out that cultural influences on schizophrenic paintings are largely unexplored, and that the resemblances between the work of schizophrenic and "modern" artists are more apparent than real.

The bibliographic references and illustrations are well chosen, but it is a pity that it was not possible to reproduce more of the illustrations in colour.

Although the author has deliberately neglected consideration of the affective aspects of personality, the book is an important contribution to our knowledge of symptomatic art and is recommended to all who are interested in that subject.

W. S. MACLAY.

Schizophrenic Art: Its Meaning in Psychotherapy. By MARGARET NAUMBURG. London: William Heinemann: Medical Books Ltd.

In recent years there has been an increasing interest in the use of art to help in the understanding and treatment of patients suffering from mental illness. This book shows how valuable it can be in the hands of one who, as Dr. Rennie says in his introduction, has a trained understanding of human motivation and behaviour as well as being an artist. The conception advocated in some quarters of artists being given some kind of uniform training to turn them into "art therapists" seems fundamentally wrong, but if a psychiatrist, an analyst, an occupational therapist or nurse has a knowledge of art it can be usefully employed whatever the particular approach to treatment may be. Miss Naumburg describes the psychotherapy of two schizophrenic patients whose painting and drawing enabled her to achieve a much better understanding of the psychopathology of their illnesses than had been possible with only verbal expression, while through the medium of their painting the patients were helped to resolve their problems. The results appear to have been eminently satisfactory, particularly in the first case.

The importance of art as an aid to verbal expression and as a means of communicating by symbols in a way not possible in rational words is stressed by Miss Naumburg, and discussed in the interesting historical survey of the significance of psychotic and neurotic art which precedes the clinical studies. Examination of the symbolism revealed in the paintings of her two patients and of the use made of them are described and illustrated in the case-reports, which make fascinating reading.

Miss Naumburg contrasts the uniformity of symbols used throughout the ages