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Reading about . . .

Psychogeriatrics

There has been an almost twentyfold increase in consultant psychogeriatricians in the UK in the past twenty years, and a comparable growth in the literature. In the early 1960s there were very few specifically psychogeriatric texts, and not all that many on related topics; now the reader is spoilt for choice.

Some of those early works are classics. Felix Post's *The Clinical Psychiatry of Late Life* (1965) (alas, now long out of print, and most people's copies have been begged, borrowed, or stolen!) is a unique distillation of scholarship and wisdom, and his famous monographs *The Significance of Affective Symptoms in Old Age* (1962) and *Persistent Persecutory States in the Elderly* (1966) are meticulous records of the phenomenology and outcome of these disorders in elderly patients referred to the Bethlem and Maudsley Hospitals. Martin Roth's contribution to the almost 100 pages on "Ageing and the mental diseases of the aged" in *Clinical Psychiatry* (Slater & Roth, 1969) still reads beautifully; it is salutary to be reminded how meagre, in so many ways, have been the advances in our knowledge, especially of the functional disorders, since then. Finally, the compilation of Maudsley Bequest lectures edited by Kay & Walk (1971), although no longer very recent, is still cited – for example, for Barraclough's memorable study of suicide on the Costa Geriatrica.

My attempt at a primer, *Psychogeriatrics* (Pitt, 1974, 1982) – has enjoyed a fair success, and another edition is now in hand. Tony Whitehead's (1974) *Psychiatric Disorders in Old Age* has also found a great deal of favour. From America, Bob Butler and Myrna Lewis *Aging and Mental Health: Positive Psychological Approaches* (1982) is wise and caring. Alex Comfort's (1980) *The Practice of Geriatric Psychiatry* is quirky and uneven, but very readable and stimulating; I think it has been much under-rated. The most recent primer at present, deservedly acclaimed, is *Practical Psychiatry of Old Age* by John Wattis and Michael Church (1984).

As yet, the only large textbook seems to be Birren & Sloane's (1980) *Handbook of Mental Health and Aging*, which certainly leaves scope for another. Levy & Post's (1982) *The Psychiatry of Late Life*, Cole & Barrett's *Psychopathology in the Aged* (1980) and Tom Arie's (1987) *Recent Advances in Psychogeriatrics*, although not comprehensive texts, are valuable compilations.

Dementia is certainly the most important psychiatric disorder in old age, almost the *raison d'être* of psychogeriatrics, and there is an embarrassment of texts. The main problem is that research is advancing so rapidly that quite costly books are very soon out of date, and are no substitute for keeping up with the journals (notably *Nature*). Alwyn Lishman, who edited the MRC's historic pamphlet *Senile and Presenile Dementias* (1977), which formally acknowledged (hardly before time!) that these were topics warranting the attention of the scientific community, is the author of the indispensable *Organic Psychiatry* (1987), which gives the subject a context. Painless brief introductions are the Royal College of Physicians' *Organic Mental Impairment in the Elderly* (published in 1980 but still worth a glance) and Jorm's (1987) handy little book *Understanding Senile Dementia*. Among weightier texts, I enjoy Cummings & Benson's (1983) enthusiastic *Dementia: A Clinical Approach*, although is is obsessed with the sub-clinical form of the disorder. Equally idiosyncratic, but original and interesting, is Mahendra's *Dementia: A Survey of the Syndrome of Dementia* (1984), while Barry Reisberg's (1983) *Alzheimer's Disease: The Standard Reference* almost lives up to its title. The British Medical Bulletin's *Alzheimer's Disease and Related Disorders* (Iversen & Roth, 1986) is an outstanding state-of-the-art publication, and very good value. Pricier, and covering much the same ground but with more attention to carers and caring, is *Dementia in Old Age* (Pitt, 1987), which I edited for Churchill Livingstone's "Medicine in Old Age" series. The contents of symposium proceedings often have an excessively high dross/gold ratio, but Briley *et al*'s (1986) *New Concepts in Alzheimer's Disease*, reporting a conference in Castres, France, the previous year, is particularly commended by those who should know.

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Depression, which also looms large in psychogeriatric practice, is the subject of far fewer books – possibly because it is not perceived as being all that different from depression in younger adults. Dan Blazer's (1982) *Depression in Late Life* is the best monograph since Post's (1962), while in the "Medicine in Old Age" series *Affective Disorders in the Elderly*, edited by Elaine Murphy (1986) (whose work on social factors and prognosis well qualifies her for the task), contains authoritative contributions from a good team. The elderly are, alas, suicide-prone, very often because of depressive illness, and Nancy Osgood's (1985) *Suicide in the Elderly* deals with the topic very competently. *The Treatment of Affective Disorders in the Elderly* (1985), edited by Charles Shamoian for the APA, is remarkably slim! However, it deals only with drugs, about the usefulness of which for depression in old age we know little, because controlled clinical trials have been so sparse.

Psychogeriatricians use rather a lot of ECT, and Morris Fraser has a chapter on its specific use in the old in Murphy's book (Murphy, 1986). I also commend the Royal College of Psychiatrists' *The Practical Administration of ECT*, by the Research Sub-Committee's ECT Sub-Committee, convened by C. P. Freeman (1988), which deals with the subject in general but also refers to the elderly.

Dementia, depression and the other disorders of mind, mood, and behaviour which may be referred to a psychogeriatrician must be perceived in a context of normal and abnormal ageing, with biological, psychological, social, demographic, historical, cultural, philosophical, political, and economic components. As the world ages, the importance of the growth of the retired or anyway economically less productive population is reflected in a great expansion of the literature about them, and it may be hard to know where to begin. A good start might be made with Ronald Blythe's (1979) *The View in Winter*, with its poignant, sometimes harrowing revelations of what it was like to be old in Britain when today's old people were young (and, perhaps, what it could be like when today's young are old?). Carver & Liddeard's (1978) *An Ageing Population* for the Open University, a collection of outstanding papers on social, medical, and psychological topics, is probably only available from libraries now, but well worth borrowing. Anthea Tinker's (1983) *The Elderly in Modern Society* is crammed with vital information and should always be to hand, while bang up to date, if considerably more expensive, is Christine Victor's (1987) *Old Age in Modern Society*. David Hobman (1981), then director of Age Concern, edited *The Impact of Ageing*, with thoughtful contributions by Mark Abrams, Olive Stevenson, and Bernard Isaacs, among others. Alison Norman, late of the Centre for Policy on Ageing, has addressed important ethical issues in *Rights and Risks* (1980) (a title which captures the essence of the management of the frail elderly in the community), and *Aspects of Ageism* (1987). *The Law and Vulnerable Elderly People* by Sally Greengross (1986) of Age Concern must also be read; it is not expensive.

We all subscribe to prevention, don't we? Muir Gray's (1985) *Prevention of Disease in the Elderly* (in the inevitable 'Medicine in Old Age' series) hasn't all the answers, but is a good try; in it Elaine Murphy gamely tackles the prevention of depression and suicide. Gray also co-wrote *Take Care of your Elderly Relative* (Gray & Mackenzie, 1980), a useful 'user friendly' guide to carers, far less Thatcherian than it sounds.

Alex Comfort writes at very different levels: sometimes as a scientist of international repute – his *Biology of Senescence* (1979) is a scholarly work which I am glad to have on my shelves – and sometimes not — *The Joy of Sex* (which has almost nothing to do with the old!) is the sort of book one might prefer to receive in a plain brown envelope! The gerontologist and the populist combine in *A Good Age* (1977), a folksy but heartening and often amusing celebration of late life. In much the same vein is Doris Hammond's (1987) jolly *My Parents Never Had Sex*, which helps us relax our incest taboos enough to allow that sexuality doesn't disappear the first time one draws a pension.

"Grow old along with me", says Browning in *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, "The best is yet to be". The quotation is hackneyed, but the lines which follow bear consideration:

> "The last of life for which the first was made,
> Our times are in His hand,
> Who saith "A whole I planned,
> Youth shows but half: trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"

This developmental view of old age accords with the Eriksonian, and with the Jungian, goal of individuation. This article has so far been confined to books, but as books on dynamic psychotherapy are so few I will refer to two papers instead. Elliot Jaques' (1965) classic "Death and the mid-life crisis" develops Browning's exhortation and illuminates the task in the second half of life of abandoning denial of ageing and vain hopes, accepting achievements and resigning oneself to the inevitability of death. I find some of the "unfinished business" which gives rise to anxiety and depression in the senium can be usefully understood as part of a still unresolved "mid-life

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crisis". Although some doubts have been expressed about the experiments on which Seligman (1975) based his theory of "learned helplessness", it has a certain face validity when applied to the elderly, who learn helplessness all too easily. Not only are they taught by masters, but some fall all too easily into a position of clamorous dependency. Goldfarb's (1965) "The recognition and therapeutic use of the patient's search for aid" clarifies this predisposition and is a valuable guide to management.

Behaviour therapy is well expounded in Jane Carr's (1985) *Teaching your Mentally Handicapped Child* (I'm not implying that psychogeriatric patients are like backward children – but the principles of behavioural modication are similar). In *Reality Orientation,* Una Holden & Bob Woods (1988) not only describe how to do it, but give evidence on whether it is worth doing; up to a point it is. Peter Coleman's *Ageing and the Reminiscence Process* (1986) deals with that enterprising technique for reaching the person overtaken by the dementia.

The literature on social work with the psychogeriatric patient is pretty meagre, which correlates with the under-involvement of trained social workers in the field. Mary Marshall's (1983) *Social Work with Old People* includes those who are confused, and Barbara Gray and Bernard Isaacs (1979) *Care of the Elderly Mentally Infirm* is more specific: it also contains Jenny Joseph's delicious poem "Warning". Goldberg & Connelly's (1982) *The Effectiveness of Social Work with the Elderly* is an excellent guide to evaluation research. The famous Kent experiment, in which social worker case managers spent two-thirds of the cost of keeping old people in homes on keeping them out, is recorded by Challis *et al* (1988) in a new book, while the problems of implementing similar schemes elsewhere are acknowledged in the Institute of Gerontology's *Enhanced Home Support for Dementia Sufferers* (Askham *et al*, 1987).

Psychogeriatricians need to know some geriatric medicine, and although the best way to learn this is by working closely with their physician opposite numbers, there are also plenty of helpful texts. The shortest on which I can comment is Malcolm Hodkinson's (1980) *Common Symptoms of Disease in the Elderly,* while *Lecture Notes in Geriatric Medicine,* from the Cambridge team of Coni *et al* (1980) is very good value. I rather like, too, the case-orientated approach of Hamdy's (1984) *Geriatric Medicine.* For library reading, John Brocklehurst's (1985) *Textbook of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology* and *Practical Geriatric Medicine* by Norman Exton-Smith & Mark Webster (1985) are weighty and comprehensive, while there are gems for psychogeriatricians in the *Recent Advances in Geriatric Medicine* series edited by Bernard Isaacs (1978, 1982, 1986), and the *Advanced Geriatric Medicine* series (Evans & Caird, 1984; Tallis & Caird, 1986). Grimley Evans' chapter on delirium in Levy & Post's (1982) *The Psychiatry of Late Life* is definitive. He also contributes a bravura piece on the "sanctity of life" to *Medical Ethics and Elderly People,* edited by John Elford (1987) for the 'Medicine in Old Age' series, which also features problems in dementia (Rob Jones), palliative care and aggressive therapy (Roy Fox) and the obligations of the family and the state (John Agate). Issues of hospital care are covered succinctly in *Improving the Care of Elderly People in Hospital,* a booklet produced jointly by the Royal College of Nursing, the British Geriatrics Society (1987) and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and there is an instructive survey for the King's Fund in Raphael & Mandeville's *Old People in Hospital* (1979).

Returning to psychogeriatrics, a standard reference is the Health Advisory Service (1982) report on the need for services, *The Rising Tide* – the legacy of Donald Dick. Two more short books by Alison Norman repay attention: her report of a number of visits to selected psychogeriatric services, *Mental Illness in Old Age* (1982), and *Severe Dementia: the Provision of Long-Stay Care* (1987).

There is a good chapter on psychopharmacology by Malcolm Lader in Levy & Post's (1982) *The Psychiatry of Late Life,* and good books on the subject are Salzman's (1984) *Clinical Geriatric Psychopharmacology* and Jenike's (1985) *Handbook of Geriatric Psychopharmacology.*

A precious pair of volumes which I was lucky to receive as review copies and have lent extensively but could never have afforded to but are *Source Books of Geriatric Assessment,* edited by Israel *et al* (1982) for the World Psychiatric Association. Every assessment instrument – questionnaire, structured interview, and rating scale – known at the time of publication is described in the first volume, and a great number are reproduced in the second. There are some off-beat and clumsy instruments which hardly deserve their exhumation, but that leaves several worthy of consideration for virtually every conceivable purpose, and the book is a valuable disincentive to devising yet new ones. The manual of the CAMDEX (Cambridge Dementia Examination, Roth *et al*, 1986) should be published by the time this article appears, and the manual for the Geriatric Mental State (GMS) examination and its associated computer programme AGECAT is in the pipeline. Meanwhile *The Mind and Mood of Aging* (Gurland *et al*, 1983), by the US/UK teams headed respectively by Barry Gurland and John Copeland, is not an easy

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read, but a useful model of epidemiological research using the CAPE. Epidemiology among other research topics are highlighted in the report of an Oxford conference by Paul Bebbington & Robin Jacoby (1984), *Psychiatric Disorders in the Elderly,* in *Mental Health in the Elderly: A Review of the Present State of Research* edited by Hafner *et al* (1986), and in the report of the Ciba Foundation Symposium No. 134 chaired by Franklin Williams (1988): *Research and the Ageing Population.*

There are a number of books for carers, mainly of the demented, of which psychogeriatricians should be aware. Elaine Murphy's (1987) *Dementia and Mental Illness in the Old: A Practical Guide* is characteristically pungent and pragmatic, while Chris Gilleard's (1984) *Living with Dementia: Community Care of the Elderly Mentally Infirm,* is informed by his extensive research. Eleanor Deeping's (1979) *Caring for Elderly Parents* is deeply felt. But the prize work in this area remains the remarkable *The 36-Hour Day,* by Nancy Mace *et al* (1986) (it is an American book, but there is an Anglicised version) with a wealth of experience of carers. One cannot read it without being appalled by the extraordinary stresses some carers face, and astonished by the courage, resourcefulness, and ingenuity whereby they overcome them.

Finally, the British Geriatric Society's *Age & Ageing* (edited by Grimley Evans) sometimes and the *Journal of the American Geriatric Society* (edited by Gene Stollerman) always publishes papers of psychogeriatric interest. Also, there are now at least three specialist journals of which to be aware: *The International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* (edited by Elaine Murphy) started in 1986 and has original papers on all aspects of old age psychiatry; Lizzy Jarvik edits the *Alzheimer's and Related Diseases Journal,* the title of which indicates its bias towards those organic conditions; and a relative newcomer is the *Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry & Neurology,* edited by Michael Jenike.

In compiling the references for this article I have been considerably helped by Loic Hemsi's *Psychiatry of Old Age Reading List,* commissioned by the College and made available in November, 1986.

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