

life is made so intolerable for the dark-skinned minorities.

The authors employ psycho-analytical concepts as well as historical, cultural and economic perspectives to deal with a wide range of topics. Their manner is candid and they have better understood such sensitive subjects as the often strong but contradictory emotions which are associated with mixed racial relationships in sex and marriage. There is an interesting account of the role of Negro mothers in America who, from the early days of slavery, had to teach their offspring to bow down in suffrance to the white man as the only way to ensure the survival of their kind.

The authors touch on such subjects as the deliberate suppression of African culture suffered by Negro slaves brought to America, the subsequent deprivation which they have survived and the exploitation which the great mass of blacks continue to experience in the United States. The consequent effect on a black man's sense of identity, his sexual strivings, his sense of family, and his ability to take part in competitive commerce.

On the cover and fly leaf it is emphasised that the book is written by two psychiatrists. A psychiatric discussion of such topical matters as politics, race relations, or riot is often both misdirected and inherently misleading. The great weight of evidence suggests that there are no essential differences between racial or ethnic groups in the kind of psychiatric illnesses to which people are liable. It is only the particular issues expressed by the symptoms which is culturally determined.

This point is borne out by case illustrations in the book which differ only from those of white patients because of the greater burden a black must bear in a white society.

Psychiatry is also concerned with the question of coming to terms with an individual's problems of coping with life and relationships in a personally satisfying way. But surely, the task of psychiatry is rarely, if ever, to change society itself, or the underlying social conditions which generate human distortion.

It is not surprising, therefore,

that the overall force of the book is to push the reader toward an understanding of Black America from the point of view of why it isn't more like White America. This is reflected in the authors' principal plea for change, which can be summarised: 'Get off our backs, so that we too can share equally in the bounties of the affluent society.'

Despite the fact that the authors describe the effect on the Negro's character as a result of social denigration, cultural deprivation and economic exploitation, they fall far short of asking why it arose and why it continues. Underlying forces which allow and promote racial prejudice are thereby ignored. There is a tendency to generalise which invites the reader to overlook the multiple possibilities and complexities of individuals.

Though 'Black Rage' may fall short of what it appears to be, understanding will no doubt be increased as a result of reading this book, and, consequently, alienation diminished.

Steven Hirsch

This stranger, my son *by Louise Wilson* *John Murray, 30s.*

THIS is the story of how a conventional middle-class American household—a surgeon, his wife and three normal children—had first to recognise, then to cope with and, finally, to exclude, an abnormal family member. Tony was a beautiful child, the eldest, and apart from long hours of screaming for no apparent reason, he seemed a normal baby. His intellectual and motor development was average, but he was shy, hated to leave his mother, and would not play with other children. He became extremely jealous of his younger sister and had to be watched in case he harmed her. He seemed to be able to manage with very little sleep and he would do literally nothing that he did not want to do.

Pædiatricians, teachers and well-meaning neighbours offered their diagnoses and their advice—Tony was lazy, spoiled, naughty, hyperactive, emotionally deprived. Most people thought he would 'grow out

of it', but he did not—he became worse. His parents tried everything, from permissiveness to spanking, without materially affecting the course of events. When they began to argue with and accuse each other, they realised that skilled help was necessary, and they went to see a psychiatrist.

They were told there was very little the matter with Tony—these problems were primarily in the parents, particularly the mother. In essence, this advice was repeated whenever, one form of treatment proving unavailing, they were referred to yet another psychiatric clinic or institution. Although sometimes a rider was added, that the harm had been done unconsciously, the effect on the parents—despair—was the same. Mother and child attended regular therapy sessions for a year, but there was no improvement. If anything, Tony became more destructive and aggressive. Treatment with another psychiatrist followed with as little result.

Finally, Tony had to leave home and he has remained in one or another residential setting since. Paying fees for treatment and board reduced the parents, who ordinarily would have been well-off, to something like penury. Always there was the nagging guilt that Tony's condition was their fault. Eventually, when Tony was adolescent, he was admitted to hospital for a short time for investigation, and the parents were told that he was suffering from schizophrenia and that this was an organic disease. They were relieved of their load of guilt and the book ends on this note.

Whatever was the matter with Tony (and neither schizophrenia nor childhood autism fits the clinical picture presented), this is a cautionary tale to be read by everyone who tries to help the parents of severely disturbed children. It has not the literary and dramatic quality of Clara Park's 'The Siege', but it raises similar issues. This family desperately needed help which it did not get. Perhaps the services for such children in the United Kingdom are rather better, and the financial burden, at least, is not so crippling, but there is no doubt that the same story could be told here.

J. W. Wing