

book reviews

1966 book round up

Blind flight

by Fritz Peters

(Gollancz, 21s.)

If hopes were dupes

by Catherine York

(Hutchinson, 25s.)

Fritz Peters is probably best known for his two enchanting books about Gurdjieff, the salty seer who brought consolation to Katherine Mansfield. He also wrote a fine first novel about the progress of a young veteran through mental hospital. Now he has returned to the theme with a cool, brilliant account of the self-rehabilitation of a middle-class American lady, Ellen Bradshaw, after an unsatisfactory (from her doctor's point of view) year in a similar institution, to which she has been committed by her remorselessly efficient husband after an attempted suicide. The doctor turns her loose, hoping she will act out her own cure—hence the title.

First asserting herself, she then learns to live experimentally. This involves divorcing her husband, facing incestuous feelings for her teenage son, playing new boy-friend against jealous ex-husband. Free at last, she leaves all the boys to simmer and sets off on a world-cruise. Thus baldly set forth, it all sounds a bit candy-flossy; but once you accept the economics of the family, it's entirely credible. Without cash, Ellen Bradshaw's first flutter to independence would have been entirely impossible. When the cash isn't there, the positive action that leads to self-knowledge and detachment is out of the question. But what about the thousands that can't pay?

Catherine York gives a narrow, intense and often muddled account of the depression that propelled her to five

psychoanalysts or psychiatrists in turn. The better part of the book is about the male consultants, to whom she 'transferred', for the most part with singularly distressing effects. The end is muted, but there is some hope in the full line from which the title is taken: 'If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars'. The case history is necessarily incomplete, but it seems significant that Catherine York is a failed career woman, an unlucky actress with a husband evidently prospering in the same line of business. Fame is the spur, but it often draws only blood. Not only young Tolstoy could cry: 'I felt the need to be known and loved of all the world; to name my name.' The hope sustains a lot of us. It died in Catherine York. Yet none of the experts seemed to discern this. It caught my imagination on the raw. I have a feeling that the failed actress has the makings of a first-rate writer, once she learns to look outwards. That at least is something to settle for.

Sid Chaplin

Margery Fry—the essential amateur

by Enid Huws Jones

(Oxford, 42s.)

Margery Fry's niche in history is as a penal reformer. Not everyone remembers that she was also Principal of Somerville College, Oxford, a member of the University Grants Committee, a Governor of the BBC, and Chairman of a London Juvenile Court. Few will think of her as hostess to her brother, Roger Fry, and at ease with Paris and Bloomsbury of the 20s, or as companion to her father, Sir Edward Fry, ten years earlier in the world of international diplomacy.

Mental health was a marginal interest

to her. But it should be gratefully remembered that in 1908 she was engaged with Lady Adrian's mother in the 'feeble-minded agitation' which led to the Mental Deficiency Act; in the early 1920s she was concerned with occupation for subnormals as much as with work for prisoners; in 1950 it was she who insisted that John Bowlby's 'Maternal Love and Mental Health' should appear in a popular version and herself collaborated with the author in producing one.

I have a personal memory of her. In 1952 she was a member of the NAMH Council when the first Mental Health Flag Day in Greater London was granted. I appealed for volunteers and she came to see me afterwards to excuse herself from selling flags. She was over eighty but dearly felt this to be a dereliction of duty.

Selling flags, editing books, speaking, lobbying are all part of the essential amateur revealed by Enid Huws Jones' book. It is perhaps a thought over-respectful and some questions are left unanswered. Why was the Somerville period so short; what was the reason for some of the failures; above all, why the absolute commitment to penal reform? But it well conveys the flavour of the person and the period. I personally wanted more.

Mary Applebey

Personality and personal illness

by G. A. Foulds in collaboration with T. M. Caine

(Tavistock, 35s.)

This is an erudite and original book, also a very rewarding one. The authors offer nothing to those who think psychiatry is an easy subject in which one has merely to find words for ideas that are already known. They are con-

cerned with the inadequacy of existing systems of psychiatric classification and they distinguish between personality traits and attitudes on the one hand and the systems and signs of mental (or personal) illness on the other. Existing systems of classification either attempt to prove or disprove the presence of some distinct disease entity, or, alternatively, descriptions of personality traits are offered as if those were the disease. Both methods are sometimes used simultaneously.

A large part of the book is devoted to technical studies, using a symptom-sign inventory. It also refers to the fact that classification is an essentially selective process in which we choose resemblances amongst our data which are relevant to our intention, and that we neglect certain other resemblances which are not relevant.

The reader can also be selective. Even those who find difficulty in following the detailed studies in tabular form could be stimulated by the way in which the authors borrow from philosophers, anthropologists, psychologists and clinical psychiatrists, in order to build up new concepts.

J. H. Kahn

Morbid jealousy and murder

by R. R. Mowat
(Tavistock, 30s)

This is a report on patients in Broadmoor, which shows that 12 per cent of the insane male murderers committed to that hospital had killed while under the delusion that their wives or mistresses were unfaithful to them. As murderers go, they were an elderly group, of average age 47½ years. Unlike ordinary, jealous lovers, their attacks were nearly always upon wives, rather than upon supposed rivals. The latter, being imaginary, could never be caught in the act and were only hazily identified.

As with most deluded patients, these murderers seemed driven by emotional necessity to misinterpret inconsequential happenings as evidence supporting their beliefs. They were singularly unwilling to give up their supposedly treacherous mates. Twenty-nine per cent attempted suicide after the crime, and ten per cent had a history of previous suicidal attempts.

Most of the patients retained their delusions years after the crime. In a small minority, the illness remained a monomania, without gross disturbance

in other respects, but most patients had experienced at the time of the crime, or else developed later, many symptoms of mental disease. Most commonly, the spread of delusional ideas, and the development of bizarre and distorted thought processes, revealed unmistakable schizophrenia. However, manic-depressive psychosis, or organic brain damage from alcohol or other causes, were also quite common. Thus, it seems that the symptom of morbid jealousy may arise in a variety of psychiatric states.

For public consumption, the presentation here is a little too much in the style of a research thesis, with points laboured and underlined with a surfeit of tabulations, but the book demonstrates what interesting, important and little-used clinical research material exists at Broadmoor, and the conclusions have implications far beyond the confines of that institution.

D. J. West

New horizons in psychology

edited by Brian M. Foss
(Penguin Books, 7s 6d)

To those who still think of psychology as a matter of philosophical speculation or moralistic dissertation, this volume will come as something of a surprise. Although the topics covered are by no means representative of the total field, they are wide enough to make most normal minds boggle.

The section headings sound innocuous enough. We have our old friends perception, learning and personality, but within a few pages the reader finds himself in a world of controlled experiment and mathematical deduction, in which the human being seems to play an insignificant role. It is not enough now for psychologists to be mere thinkers; they must be engineers, mathematicians as well. The fact that most of the contributors have been able to put over their work in simple and readable prose is extra credit to them.

The detailed knowledge which is being built up in the various branches of psychology makes it almost impossible for any one person to be an expert in more than a single subject. Hence the editor's very wise decision to have each chapter written by a separate person. The resulting work is less of a hotch-potch than many symposia, thanks to his dovetailing of the papers, and his own brief introduction to each one.

Moyra Williams

Behaviour therapy techniques

by Joseph Wolpe
and Arnold A. Lazarus
(Pergamon, 21s)

Pioneers must believe wholeheartedly in their cause and be prepared to fight for it. Drs. Wolpe and Lazarus are among the pioneers of behaviour therapy and for years they have struggled to gain acceptance. Now, psychiatrists are beginning to use the techniques and the time has come for a dispassionate appraisal of what has been achieved. But the authors are still fighting, with psychoanalysts, their particular target. Indeed, they write as though the only treatments for neurosis are behaviour therapy and psychoanalysis. In fact, the psychiatrist now uses a wide range of methods of brief psychotherapy, group therapy and drug treatment, and no doubt behaviour therapy will find a place among them.

Despite this, the book is valuable for its clear description of the techniques which Dr. Wolpe pioneered. It can be recommended to psychiatrists and psychologists, for whom it is mainly intended, but other readers must bear in mind the authors' particular viewpoint if they are to see their work in perspective.

M. G. Gelder

Social casework and administration

by Anthony Forder
(Faber & Faber, 35s)

This is an important and much needed book for the general public which will also help to clarify the ideas of the professional worker. It describes the administrative part in social casework, illustrating from a variety of real situations. It is a commonplace that social workers tend to ignore the administrative process or to feel that 'administration' impedes the treatment part of their work, which is what they have been trained to do. It is equally true that social workers today are asking for more teaching about social administration, the formation of social policy and how their speciality fits into the whole context of social service. How to teach social administration in a vital enough way, not divorced from real life situations, is one of the problems.

This book provides plenty of material for discussion at more advanced levels, and information about the kind of