

by the concepts, it provides a useful information source, albeit one which is most likely to be dipped in and out of rather than read from cover to cover.

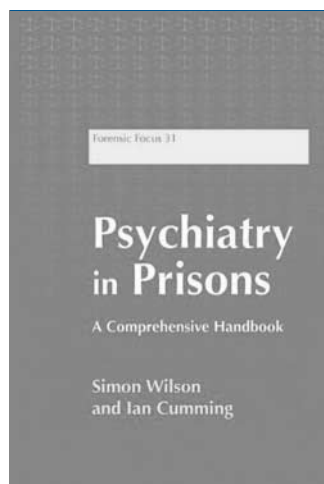
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anyone commencing training or already working in the forensic field. It will not lessen the challenge but will surely offer a firm foundation from which to start.

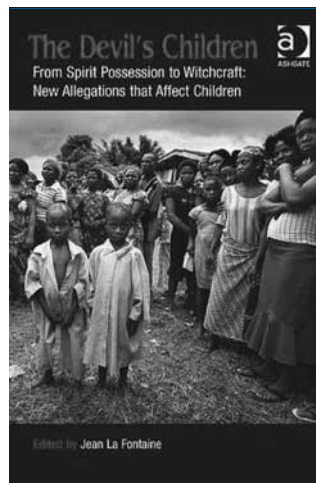
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Psychiatry in Prisons: A Comprehensive Handbook

Edited by Simon Wilson
& Ian Cumming.
Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 2009.
£34.99 (pb). 320pp.
ISBN: 9781843102236



The Devil's Children. From Spirit Possession to Witchcraft: New Allegations that Affect Children

Edited by Jean La Fontaine.
Ashgate. 2009.
£55 (hb). 220pp.
ISBN: 9780754667339

Is the subtitle here an oxymoron? I thought about this for some time. But that was before I started to read. Then the question became redundant as the real worth of this volume shone through. It is part of the Forensic Focus series which, as the introductory note states, 'takes the field of Forensic Psychotherapy as its focal point'. This, I would argue, is not really the case here, as I believe both the series editor and those responsible for this particular number might agree. There are thought-provoking chapters on ethical difficulties associated with the delivery of psychiatric care in prisons and a fascinating one on the use of language in penal settings. But what the book does do, to my mind at least, is represent a significant achievement and a milestone in writing about the practice of psychiatry in what can at times be the most difficult of environments.

The book's format makes it easy to read and there is relatively little repetition of material, which is no mean feat where multiple authors are involved. In the few instances where repetition does occur it is actually appropriate and helpful. The chapters are kept short, one suspects intentionally, and very much to the point. As a consequence they are packed with information, both theoretical and practical in most instances. Subjects covered range from prison history, present-day service structure and processes; through health screening, suicide, substance misuse, healthcare and therapeutic regimes, and the production of reports; to the various offender groups, consent to treatment, capacity and the UK Mental Health Act. There are particularly valuable and interesting contributions on hunger strikes and food refusal as well as deaths in custody. There is some variation in style from section to section but not in a way that detracts from the content. I was a little uncertain about the chapters offering an international perspective as they relate only to the USA and New Zealand. That said, what makes this book so powerful is that all the contributors have in the past worked, or still do, right at the coalface, thus imbuing the writing with a sense of credibility and authority.

I would hold that this book should be read by any psychiatrist who has worked, or intends to work, in a prison, as well as by

This book started badly for me. It got better but, let down by the variable quality of the contributions, left a sense of disappointment at the end. The cover shows two miserable and poor-looking Black children surrounded by a group of Black adults staring at them. When my 12-year-old daughter looked at this cover and said, 'Oh those poor African children, I feel sorry for them', I thought, 'Oh dear, another book that paints ethnic minorities as backward, with their children in need of saving'. But as I started reading I was pleasantly surprised to find a much more nuanced analysis.

The book tries to shed light on recent distressing revelations that have hit the headlines in British papers about the (sometimes fatal) abuse of children who have been accused by their carers of being possessed by dangerous demonic powers. Bringing together contributions from academics from social sciences, psychiatry and anthropology backgrounds, with traditional practitioners, social workers, police and others is both a strength and a problem in this book. It is a strength for the breadth of different perspectives, but a problem because the accounts vary considerably in style, scholarly evaluation and quality of writing, making it difficult to put the book down having arrived at some coherent understanding of the topic.

Many of the contributions come from two conferences organised by 'Inform', an organisation based at the London School of Economics and Political Science and supported by a number of organisations including the British government, with the aim of providing information about minority religions, faith movements and spiritual communities. The book is divided into three parts, each with several chapters. The first part, 'The meaning of possession', looks at 'possession states' in different traditions and how these have changed historically across cultures. The second part, 'Possession as contact with the divine', includes personal accounts of becoming 'possessed' by 'supernatural' entities. The