

Baker's few examples of advertiser pressure actually undercut his own argument, for they show that news organizations are willing to publish and damn the consequences: The Washington State Fruit Commission pulls \$71,000 worth of ads from CBS after "60 Minutes" airs a critical report on the hazards of the fruit pesticide Alar. Proctor & Gamble withdraws \$1 million in ads from Boston's WHDH after it carries an ad criticizing the company's Folgers coffee. Cigarette companies cancel their ads in *Mother Jones* after the magazine runs an article on the hazards of tobacco. This hardly proves the author's contention "that advertisers buy a 'kept' mentality in relation to the press."

To be sure, some newspaper owners and managers have pro-business sympathies, and this may subtly affect daily news content, even without any explicit orders to subordinate. It's hardly an accident that few papers have fulltime consumer reporters any more, or that the consumer's perspective is often missing from business stories. But this doesn't mean the papers are kowtowing to advertisers, merely that such reporting has fallen out of fashion.

Yet Baker can't resist throwing every stray allegation into his evidentiary pot. Thus, CBS's refusal to continue losing \$1 million a pop by airing news specials during the Persian Gulf War is cited as further evidence of capitulation to advertisers, rather than a recognition that news increasingly takes a backseat at networks devoted to entertainment.

Baker's thesis is as follows: Advertisers favor affluent readers to whom they can peddle more perfume or Porsches. Newspapers and magazines therefore alter their content so as to lure these well-heeled cus-

tomers and avoid offending corporate sponsors. If publications could be made less dependent on advertising, they would be free to crusade to their hearts' content, to appeal to all readers instead of just monied folks.

What Baker seems not to grasp is that most editors would be chasing yuppie readers (with whom they identify) regardless of advertising. Low-income folks in Harlem or South-Central L.A. are not the prime consumers of *The New York Times* or the *Los Angeles Times*; that is why neither paper had a separate weekly section for city readers until recently. What's more, the media's move toward softer and more superficial fare is part of a frantic attempt to stem a 30-year decline in readership levels. The advertising, while important, is quite secondary.

Even if the author is right that advertising subtly corrupts the news business, his remedies are both far-fetched and politically unrealistic. He proposes a 10 percent government sales tax on newspaper advertising, with the money plowed back into the papers based on circulation. This subsidy, he argues, will tilt the publications away from corporate sponsors and toward the interests of readers currently unwanted by advertisers. But the likely impact would be marginal, except for giving politicians more sway over the press by allowing them to fiddle with the formulas. Other proposals—legally barring advertisers from using their clout against news organizations, requiring television to randomly schedule commercials so as to reduce corporate influence over any one program—would be impossible to enforce. Even Baker concedes that his ultimate plan, using the advertising tax to fund public broadcasting, is a tough political sell.

Baker's book is useful insofar as it forces the reader to consider these

issues in a new light. But whatever the problems of advertiser-subsidized journalism, more government intervention—with the sort of political grandstanding and bureaucratic overkill made famous by the battles over the National Endowment for the Arts—is most assuredly not the answer. One free-market solution would be for more reporters to blow the whistle on their brethren, embarrassing the hell out of anyone who sells his journalistic soul to corporate devils.

*Howard Kurtz, a Washington Post reporter, is the author of Media Circus: The Trouble with America's Newspapers (Times Books).*

### **The Mad Among Us: A History of the Care of America's Mentally Ill**

*Gerald N. Grob*

*Free Press, \$24.95*

**By E. Fuller Torrey**

The voting record of mental health professionals is more consistently liberal Democrat than any other group of professionals in America. In presidential elections, 79 percent of psychoanalysts voted for Adlai Stevenson in 1952, 85 percent for Stevenson in 1956, 90 percent for John Kennedy in 1960, and 95 percent for Lyndon Johnson in 1964. Even social scientists teaching in universities, a professional group well known for liberal propensities, gave Johnson only 90 percent of its votes in '64. Given the political persuasion of mental health professionals, it was hardly surprising that the John Birch Society attacked them in the fifties as being Communist agents, or that Presidents Nixon and Reagan were less than enthusiastic about mental health programs.

The history and politics of America's mental health establishment have never been fully analyzed. Gerald N. Grob, a professor

of the History of Medicine at Rutgers University, is uniquely qualified for the task. Since 1966, he has published four books on America's care for its mentally ill in different historical periods. His current book is a distillate of those four books, together with an update of the current scene.

Grob succeeds admirably in describing the history and politics of almshouses and insane asylums from colonial times through World War II. He has mined the voluminous primary sources for anecdotes and arguments, and skillfully ties the various phases and fashions of psychiatric care to the social and political milieu of the times. His one major and rather surprising omission during these years is giving almost no space to Sigmund Freud.

It was Freud's curious belief that parent-infant interactions were the cause of serious mental illnesses. This belief underlay the mental hygiene movement of the 1920s, which advocated psychotherapy for all problem children and promoted the widespread idea that therapy would prevent the development of serious mental illnesses. That movement in turn spawned the community mental health movement of the 1960s, which operated on the belief that tender loving care and a warm home—as opposed to medication and rehabilitation—were all that patients leaving state mental hospitals needed in order to live in the community. Freud was the spiritual father of community mental health, the psychiatric Charon who directed the boats across the river Styx to the social disaster that we call deinstitutionalization.

The last quarter of the book, covering 1950 to the present, fails rather badly. Grob describes various events and developments but is unable or unwilling to put them into a social and political context. The failure of community mental health centers to take responsibility for individuals being

discharged from state psychiatric hospitals, the abandonment of seriously mentally ill individuals by most mental health professionals who preferred the private practice of psychotherapy, and the continuing dumping of patients onto the streets and into jails in 1990—just as Grob had described it happening in 1830—these and related events appear to happen like random droppings from birds overhead. Grob seems to be paraphrasing a contemporary bumper sticker: “Things Happen.”

For an historian, a recital of random events is not sufficient. Deinstitutionalization of America's mentally ill was the single largest social experiment of 20th century America (with the possible exception of the New Deal), and its failure is visible to every American not living in a cave. Grob describes people like Larry Hogue, a mentally ill substance-abuser who has attracted national attention by terrorizing an upscale Manhattan neighborhood.

But Grob never makes clear the fact that Hogue is the direct product of decisions made by the National Institute of Mental Health, America's mental health professionals, and New York State's community health centers to devote the majority of their time to counseling and psychotherapy for less serious cases rather than to treating the seriously mentally ill. At fault, too, are advocacy efforts by the Mental Health Law Project and the American Civil Liberties Union to make involuntary hospitalization virtually impossible, and the New York State legislature's failure to pass an outpatient law which would have made Hogue's freedom contingent on taking medication.

Another example of Grob's failure to deal with contemporary events is when he says that John Kennedy's “younger sister Rosemary had been diagnosed as mildly retarded and had undergone a lobotomy which had appreciably worsened her condi-

tion.” Grob must be aware that lobotomies were never used for people who were merely “mildly retarded.” Published historical accounts are plentiful in strongly suggesting that Rosemary Kennedy developed schizophrenia in addition to her mild retardation, and that is the reason she was given a lobotomy. It is quite understandable that the Kennedy family itself has remained silent on this issue, perhaps out of respect for Rose Kennedy, who is still alive, but it is not understandable when an historian does. Rosemary's condition was a major reason—probably *the* major reason—President Kennedy supported legislation to create the community mental health centers.

Grob's inability to place contemporary events into a social and political framework may be partly related to his long support by the National Institute of Mental Health, which he credits in the preface as having “been extraordinarily generous in providing a succession of grants.” At the end of the book he also seems genuinely puzzled regarding how the lessons of the past can be applied to the present: “It would be useful if knowledge of past policies could offer a sound prescription for the present and future. Unfortunately, the ‘lessons’ of history are less than clear and often fraught with contradictions and ambiguities.” This is very disappointing.

Grob will remain a respected historian on the care of the mentally ill in early America, but the definitive social and political history of events in the second half of the 20th century must await another book. Since politics and mental health professionals are close bedfellows, it should prove to be a fascinating history.

*E. Fuller Torrey, M.D., is a research psychiatrist in Washington, D.C. His most recent books are Freudian Fraud (HarperCollins, 1992) and Schizophrenia and Manic-Depressive Disorder (Basic Books, 1994).*

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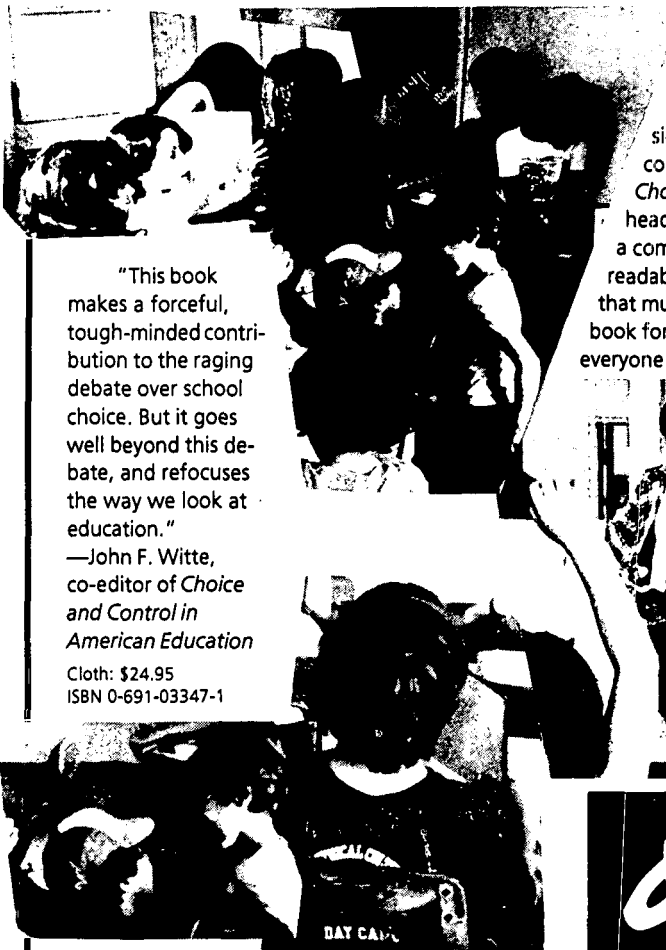
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