keenness to impress the flaws of the government's illogical choices following their National Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy (such as the significant evidence against the extension of licensing hours), an objective discussion seemed to have been sacrificed. It is, perhaps, a little hopeful to expect a group of scientific experts, even with a strong evidence base, to outweigh an industry worth billions to the government.

All in all, if you are looking for a summary of Britain's obsession with alcohol over the ages, including more recent trends and political policies, *Binge Britain* is a worthwhile read.

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Dynamic Security: The DemocraticTherapeutic Community in Prison

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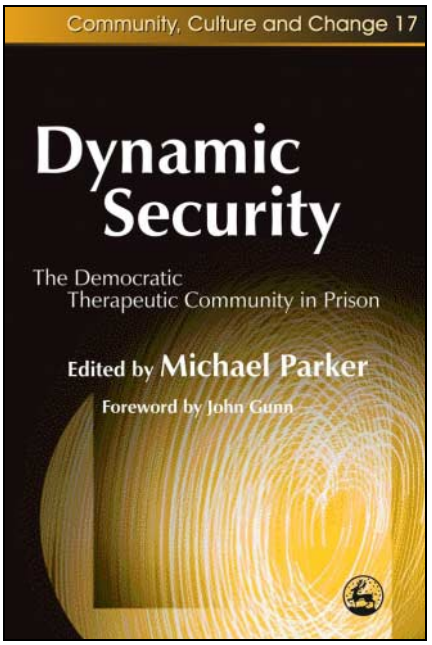
If, as various sages have asserted, the state of a nation's prison system is a reflection of that society's socio-political health, where does that leave the UK? Well, frankly, in the doldrums, in need of little short of a revolution. Current penal policy persists in a largely hostile and non-rehabilitative attitude to the offender, who is invariably (ware)housed in one of the increasing number of our increasingly overcrowded, prisons. But, as in the larger matter, there are (quantitively) small beacons of light within this rotten system, which seek to understand and address the many factors which play their part in the personal and societal failures and tragedies which result in criminality. The subject matter of this volume is such an illumination: specifically, the combination of activities needed to run a democratic therapeutic community within the prison system.

This well-edited book is written by psychologists, prison governors, therapists, psychiatrists and researchers. It contains different sections: three chapters on theories of criminality; three on the history of the therapeutic community in prisons – especially well done by Newell & Healey – which trace the pervasive influence of Maxwell Jones and the Henderson Hospital



experience, and three in a section covering methods and practice. In one of these, Alan Miller reviews recent initiatives for resettlement and support of prisoners after prison discharge. It is a sobering and depressing fact that 95% of inmates move on from prison therapeutic communities back to the general prison, with all its pressures towards reaffirmation of the criminal identity. So, post-therapy after-care needs to include initial support in surviving (again) the depredations of prison, and only thereafter, support in the outside community.

In my view this return to prison – quite unnecessary other than for bureaucratic reasons – is but one example of the common phenomenon of sabotage of good work undertaken in the prison. The internal saboteur of creative work by offender and staff is a crucial dynamic in understanding the stagnation of the individual and the institution, and to help overcome it. Neither this, nor any psychodynamic theory, receives attention by Day in an otherwise competent overview chapter on psychological theories of criminality; nor is it addressed in an otherwise vivid section on psychodynamic aspects.

There is a helpful section on managing the therapeutic community – a difficult task in a frequently uninterested and sometimes antagonistic institutional structure. The old canard that the application of the therapeutic community model of treatment, of its essence democratic and free, is therefore unsuitable to the coercive situation of the prison, is ably dealt with by several authors in this section. There follows a chapter on audit and accreditation, now required for all treatment programmes within prisons, and an account of a body created jointly by the Association of Therapeutic Communities and the Royal College of Psychiatrists Research unit, called the 'Community of Communities' – a voluntary network of peer review and quality assurance for therapeutic communities of whatever hue, in whatever setting, in the UK or abroad.

The penultimate chapter contains four rather brief accounts by individuals who have experienced therapy within a prison therapeutic community. They are, clearly, selected and merely illustrative but they make their points well, and are not uncritical. One contains the comment 'I think the massive overreaction in Grendon by Security in the last few years has damaged therapy'. This is a constant danger, common to all mental health provision and not just the forensic.

Why, then, does our dominant penal policy continue to be reparatively bankrupt as well as economically and humanly expensive, and further, why does our society and electorate continue to tolerate it? Almost the last words in the book from a Grendon prisoner may give us a clue:

> 'We all do it, we all keep up a hard man front, we have to because if we don't we'll get crushed. We don't want to, though, not always. There's hundreds of us out there (in the prison system) who are dying to find some peace and security for once in their lives but we're never going to be the first to say so, its too dangerous . . .'

This is familiar to those who work in the system. The contributors to this excellent volume know it well, and in different ways express their versions of trying to change this mind set. It is surely up to us to help change the reciprocal 'macho' attitude of politicians and the penal system itself.

Certainly, the paranoid attitude to offenders and their demonisation has the comfort of simplicity and retributive appeal. It may make us feel better but it is the cause of a continuing sink system. More disturbingly, perhaps, for our own psychological purposes, we need to have this already marginalised group (over half of all prisoners are graduates of our equally awful care system) to further punish, neglect and vilify. All the more praise for the contributors to this volume.

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