while the author discusses the rigidities, despite recent improvements, of residential care generally, she finds it particularly necessary in considering longstay hospital wards to remind the reader of matters which, as she points out, 'are already well known to the point of tedium': 'lack of choice or control concerning diet, times of sleeping and waking, use of money, escape from external noise, personal clothing...the use of cotsides and "geriatric chairs" to immobilise patients'. 'Perhaps', she concludes, 'it is basically impossible to maintain human dignity in longstay hospitals and we should be looking much harder at alternatives in terms of community nursing homes and community domiciliary nursing?'

Some of the reasons why longstay hospitals restrict patients' freedom, the author suggests, have to do with the traditional authoritarian ethos of hospitals in general, with the traditional temptation in particular of the nursing profession to favour dependency, and with the contemporary low prestige of geriatric nursing. In this context the author might also have mentioned the significant role of auxiliary staff, whose position and influence in geriatric care clearly require further study. But a point which she does mention, namely that patients in longstay wards may be 'labelled like a piece of luggage...and even then not correctly addressed by name and title' well illustrates the fear of risk which underlies much unnecessary restriction of the rights of the elderly. In practice, as the author points out, fear of legal repercussions is often exaggerated, but professional attitudes to risk are often related to a not unfounded fear of social blame, reflected in press and public reactions. The paternalism which restricts the rights of the elderly is thus not something for which the professionals and other carers should too readily be blamed. It is, rather, essentially a failure of the public as well as the professional imagination to realize that we are all ageing. This sensitive and sympathetic book should help its readers appreciate that it is their own rights which are at risk.

K. M. BOYD

Edinburgh Medical Group

Arch Loughton, *Retirement: the New Beginning*, Bachman and Turner, London, 1976. 134 pp. £3.25. ISBN 0 85974 060 9.

This book is not typical of the do-it-yourself guides to an easy retirement which seem daily to appear on the bookstalls. Nor is it a serious competitor to Aleda Erskine's more creditable volume, *Time of Your Life* (Help the Aged, 1979). Neither is it written in the well reasoned manner of Paul Tournier's commendable work, *Learning to Grow Old* (SCM Press, 1972).

It is instead autobiographical in tone and didactic in mood. 'When I retired at the age of sixty-five...I decided that I wasn't going to let myself rest and rust out.' Arch Loughton has good health, a wonderful wife, tremendous grandchildren, adequate finances, and an amazingly wide range of interests. He also has an active Christian faith. Not surprisingly, his retirement has been as enjoyable as it has been successful. He has tutored pre-retirement courses for the last fifteen years.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X81250117 Published online by Cambridge University Press

This wealth of achievement since leaving work saves the book from a potentially annoying list of do's and don'ts. His very personal approach is eminently readable, and the tide of optimistic expectancy carries the reader over the muddy sandbanks of style and the shallow waters of content.

He covers the classic points laid down by Alastair Heron, but is brave enough to also raise the question of the single elderly and the problems of the elderly in a multi-racial society.

And perhaps this is the author's – and the book's – main strength; retirement is not just about accommodation and finance, but it is very much to do with attitudes and faith.

DAVID SIMMONDS

Department of Adult Education,
University of Surrey

James B. McCarthy, *Death Anxiety: the Loss of the Self*, Gardner Press Inc., New York, 1980. $16.50. ISBN 470 265 086.

James McCarthy is a Clinical Psychologist working in New York, who has also trained as a psychoanalytical therapist under one of the American programmes. His book is about what he terms 'death anxiety', which he defines as being the fear of one's own death in a physically healthy individual. In view of the dynamic origins of McCarthy's ideas, one has to consider his work against the background of orthodox psychoanalytic theory. Charles Rycroft in his '*Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* defines anxiety as 'the response to some as yet unrecognised factor either in the environment or in the self, which may be caused either by external dangers or unacknowledged (unconscious) forces in the mind'. Rycroft points out that of the two varieties of anxiety suggested by Freud in his definitive account of 1926, signal anxiety serves to warn the ego of possible threats to its equilibrium, whereas primary anxiety is defined as the anxiety that accompanies disillusion of the ego. The internal function of signal anxiety is to make sure that primary anxiety associated with very early experiences of the loss of the self never menace the ego of the individual.

McCarthy takes up Freud's hypothesis and uses it as a basis for the description of what he terms 'death anxiety' which he describes in terms of the neurotic fear of loss of the self. This neurotic fear is present throughout life and needs to be met within each individual in all developmental stages throughout the life cycle. In particular the affect of depression underlies death anxiety as it is experienced. In these terms the fear of death is both ubiquitous and universal.

In metapsychological terminology, McCarthy takes up Freud's suggestion that the fear of death is a consequence of conflict between two mental structures, the ego and the superego, and suggests that it should be regarded as a consequence of the relinquishment of narcissistic investment of external objects. He develops the idea that death fears arise in the course of the early relationship between the child and his environment, and that these fears as

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X81250117 Published online by Cambridge University Press