

Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

GEORGE MORRISON CARSTAIRS, formerly Professor of Psychological Medicine, University of Edinburgh

Morris Carstairs, who died on 17 April 1991, aged 74, had not much interest in shaping the narrow concerns of the psychiatric establishment and was not a College man. He was moved by the plight of the disadvantaged and saw psychiatry as one way of bettering their lot. His theatre was medicine as a whole and his messages were directed at a large public. Hence the wide appeal of his Reith lectures, *This Island Now*. Adopting a combined psychiatric and anthropological approach (he had been trained in both) he reflected on the current scene in Britain with a sharp focus and a broad tolerance that made many blush at their own obtuseness and intolerance. He was especially persuasive about accepting the behaviour of the young. This was 1962. When he suggested that pre-marital sexual intercourse might not be a prelude to personal or national disaster it caused something of a stir.

He was born in India and saw the unhappy conditions in which so many lived. *The Twice Born* enshrined his anthropological study of three Indian villages. He joined Aubrey Lewis's MRC social psychiatry unit at the Maudsley in 1953. The relationship between the two men was not easy but was always informed by mutual great respect. Lewis gave him the chance to help another dispossessed group, chronic psychotic patients in asylums. He would have scorned those substantial adjectives 'rehabilitation' and 'community' that trendy psychiatrists today place in front of psychiatry; these were not to be considered 'sub-specialities'; nevertheless, with colleagues in the MRC unit, he helped make the discoveries of the '50s that are now their stock-in-trade.

He went to the Chair of Psychological Medicine in Edinburgh in 1961, taking with him his newly formed MRC psychiatric epidemiology unit. Gathering round him some distinguished colleagues and uniting together academic and NHS psychiatrists in common purpose, he built the Edinburgh department into an important centre where research, good clinical practice, and both undergraduate and postgraduate education flourished. As a member of the Royal Commission on Medical Education he urged that students everywhere were properly exposed to psychiatry as part of medicine. He travelled a lot on behalf of WHO and as President of the World Federation of Mental Health.

In 1973 he went to York as Vice-Chancellor but felt somewhat a displaced person away from a medi-

cal school. Moreover it was difficult to sustain the role of guru in a climate of student protest. After five years he resigned and returned to India to advise WHO on setting up suitable psychiatric services. While there he revisited the Indian villages to survey changes. This research was later completed in the United States.

Carstairs was a most generous man, of his time, his ideas and his hospitality. He brought out the best in both colleagues and students for he was a gifted and stimulating teacher. This is why he is so warmly remembered. His wide range of interests was reflected in the wide circle of his friends. He had a particular interest in psychotic art and was an expert on the madness of Goya. Vera, his former wife, and their three children all supported him during his long and distressing illness.

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ROBERT WALLACE SIMPSON, formerly Senior Consultant Psychiatrist and Physician, Old Manor Hospital, Salisbury

Robert Wallace Simpson was born in Glasgow in 1919, the son of a solicitor. He was educated at Queen's Park High School, Glasgow and from there he went on to Glasgow University and Medical School. He qualified MB ChB in 1942 and was house physician at the Glasgow Royal Infirmary. He then joined the Royal Navy in which he served for ten years. He travelled widely and it was while in Ceylon that he met and married Betty. During his service in the Navy he became interested in psychiatry, and after obtaining his DPM in 1951, was appointed a specialist psychiatrist.

After the Navy he first worked at Knowle Hospital, where in 1955 he obtained his MD and in 1957 he was appointed consultant and medical administrator at the Old Manor Hospital where he worked until his retirement in 1981.

In addition to his work in the hospital he was active in the Royal College of Psychiatrists (he was elected a Foundation Fellow in 1971), being Secretary and later Chairman of the South West Division. He was for many years a member of the Mental Health Review Tribunal and indeed continued this work until shortly before his death. He was a member of Salisbury Hospitals' Management Team and Chairman of the Regional Psychiatric Committee, also Chairman of the Salisbury Medical Society. He became a Justice of the Peace and served on the Bench for 14 years.