A searing account of life in the underclass and why it persists as it does, written by a British psychiatrist.

I got this book after listening to Mr. Dalrymple interviewed by Dennis Prager, a radio host based in Los Angeles. I was raised in a lowerclass family which fell from the middle class when my dad would not stop drinking and spending money on toys for himself rather than things like the rent and the electric bill. We moved from cheap apartment complex to cheap apartment complex. Like many of the individuals described in Life at the Bottom, my own father found blame for his misfortunes in everyone and everything but himself and his lack of self-control when it came to alcohol, money, and his temper. I have watched friends raised in middle class homes end up on welfare or living hand-to-mouth because they have not one or two, but three or more children with three or more men (who, of course, pay no support and never marry the women), and their low-level office jobs cannot possibly pay for the needs of a family of 4. Yet without exception the women blame men as the foundation of their problems, not their own promiscuity or their apparent lack of knowledge concerning the rudiments of birth control.

It was with these experiences in mind that I read Life at the Bottom. Mr Dalrymple shows in essay after essay how the choices the underclass in Britain make determines their destiny. There are countless parallels to American life - the rampant gambling that goes on in casinos and in bingo parlors (and those who cannot stop then blame the casino for their problem!); the spending of needed cash on lottery tickets; the horrible standard of education that graduates illiterate young adults who can barely add in their heads; the ignorance of science, history and math that students display; women who go from one violent man to another, making baby after baby with them and then saying they love him and cannot leave him. The stories are pathetic and frustrating because the victims are their
own hindrance. They live in some sort of parallel universe where they have no more control over their emotions or actions than a squirrel or a worm, and blame their problems on the government, the bureaucracy, their parents, the pubs, the casinos, their teachers... everyone carries the victims sin on their own shoulders, because the underclass itself is not responsible for anything. One story that has stayed with me was one in which Mr. Dalrymple says the patients he sees often refer to their violent, brutish, immoral behavior as not really me, as though inside the skin of a drunken, gang-banging wife-beater beats the heart of a noble knight that is too deeply imbedded to be truly exercised. Some reviewers have noted that the author does a lot of complaining, yet has no answers. That is the point of the book, isnt it? There is no one outside of these people who can change them. More government agencies? More welfare money? More policemen? What? The entire theme of the book is the relinquishing of personal responsibility by the underclass so that they can live and die as they see fit and someone else can foot the bill. How many young men in Britain are forced to rob cars, rape women, steal food, skip school, have numerous children by numerous women, tattoo and pierce themselves, drink themselves silly in pubs, etc? What magic pill is there for these miscreants that does not come from inside the individual himself?

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