



## Camp Concentration

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## **Camp Concentration** Thomas M. Disch

Louis Sacchetti is a poet and pacifist imprisoned for refusing to enlist in the war against Third World guerillas. Sacchetti and the other inmates are used in perverse scientific experiments, and Sacchetti is infected with a germ that raises intelligence to incredible heights while causing decay and death.

## **Camp Concentration Details**

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Author : Thomas M. Disch

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## From Reader Review Camp Concentration for online ebook

### Miriam says

This book didn't grab me straight away -- it isn't like contemporary novels aimed at a wide popular audience, where the first sentence is a hook, or the author begins in the middle of an action scene to get the reader caught up. Disch doesn't show his hand, or even his prose, right away. But once he has lulled you into complacency and snuck up on you, oh man. Great writing.

Here is a helpful list of a few words you may not use every day:

nystigmatic: subject to involuntary eye movement.

tappet: a projection that imparts a linear motion to some other component within a mechanism.

Krebiozen: an alternative cancer treatment made from mineral oil.

lutulence: dirtiness, impurity (appears to have been coined into English from the Latin by Joyce).

caliginous: misty, dim; obscure, dark.

resile: to spring or shrink back; recoil or resume original shape; abandon a position or a course of action.

semblable: (despite its suffix, a noun): a counterpart or equal to someone.

opsimath: a person who begins, or continues, to study or learn late in life.

parenchyma: the bulk of a substance. In animals, a parenchyma comprises the functional parts of an organ (as distinguished from the connective and supporting tissue) and in plants parenchyma is the ground tissue of nonwoody structures.

illapses: a gliding in; an immission or entrance of one thing into another. A sudden descent or attack.

Latria: a theological term used in Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic theology to mean adoration, a reverence directed only to the Holy Trinity. Latria carries an emphasis on the internal form of worship, rather than external ceremonies.

There are different terms for the veneration of the saints. Dulia is a Greek term meaning the veneration or homage, different in nature and degree from that given to God, that is paid to the saints. It includes, for example, honoring the saints and seeking their intercession with God. Hyperdulia, the special veneration accorded the Blessed Virgin Mary because of her unique role in the mystery of Redemption, her exceptional gifts of grace from God, and her pre-eminence among the saints.

ramiform: branching or branchlike.

anastomosis: the connection of two structures (usually used medically, eg for blood vessels).

haecceity: that property or quality of a thing by virtue of which it is unique or describable as "this (one)." The property of being a unique and individual thing. Coined by Duns Scotus.

farctate: stuffed; filled solid.

flagitious: criminal, villainous, shamefully wicked.

Musical pairing: Messiaen, who as I learned from this book was an ornithologist as well as a composer.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhEHs...>

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## **Rageofanath says**

I find that it isn't easy to run across books by Thomas Disch, he's a fairly obscure pulp scifi author. After reading two of his books, I understand why he's both critically acclaimed in reviews but not a common find in the bookstore. The mechanics of his writing obscure the overall story and tend to create a slog for the reader. The other Disch book I have read to date is "Puppies of Terra". Both books have a very inventive plots and a few solid characters but appear to act as a soapbox for Disch to write several chapters of allusion-heavy monologues interspersed with enough plot points to hold a story together.

I felt that the plot and big reveal for "Camp Concentration" might be worth the slog, but it was not always an enjoyable experience. Several times I put the book down when I got sick of the pretentiousness and didn't feel bad about not picking it up for a few days. I skimmed more of the monologues than I care to admit and really didn't miss much.

One thing I found problematic was the fact that unlike the somewhat similar book "Flowers for Algernon", you can't see the progress of the disease in anyone. You know the main character is infected only because he writes a play he thinks is his best work and gets a dream about it, but there's nothing in his actual writing to indicate the progress of the disease and his burgeoning intellect. While you might not expect such a dramatic change as in Algernon's Charlie, you should expect some subtle change in writing, or in the behavior of those around him who were in different phases of the disease. Instead we mostly saw end products.

Additionally as in many other works of the genre and time, "Camp Concentration" has a mild dose of racism tempered only by its heavy sexism. There is only one black character (Mordecai) and one female character (Dr. Busk) and neither is either flattering or spoken of well between characters. Mordecai manages to prove himself to be a powerful, insightful, and multifaceted character by the end, but as usual, the female character is defined strictly by her sexual activity - lack or excess. Her academic credentials only serve to put her in the position to exercise her sexual power. Her only real function in the plot is her vagina, and the main character and another high ranking official, Haast, constantly make disparaging remarks about her apparent sexual conservatism.

But what is good about the book? It's a refreshing break from the Hero's Journey, it's not fluff, it's an interesting thought experiment, it expands your vocabulary, and the end is pretty good if you can muster the patience to get there.

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## **Rebecca McNutt says**

This book was incredible, no doubt about it. I'm honestly surprised that it isn't more well-known; it was insightful, deep and thought-provoking, while still offering vivid characters, imagery, vocabulary and scenery. It was very depressing and morbid, but still a fantastic and chillingly interesting book to read through.

## Anna says

'Camp Concentration' reads to me as a novel very much of its time. It was first published in 1968 and is set in a near future that is now decades past. The narrator is a conscientious objector to America's latest war in Asia, this one apparently including the use of tactical nukes in Malaysia. After an initial period in a normal prison sharing a cell with criminals, he is transferred to a mysterious underground base. There, he learns that the other prisoners are being experimented on and is asked to keep a journal of what he observes. I found Louie the narrator interesting for his obvious unreliability, but also irritating for his racism, homophobia, and florid verbosity. I have no objection to verbosity in principle, however he takes it too far into pretentiousness. Of course, since he knows that his journal is being read by the camp authorities, likely he is being deliberately obtuse.

The main themes of the novel appeared to be the interplay between genius & madness and how people reconcile themselves to death. The narrative certainly dances all around the two themes without coming to firm conclusions. There are three major twists in the story, one and a half of which I saw coming. The first of these seemed inevitable, the second plausible but under-explored, and the third surprising and yet oddly lacking impact. I found the novel unsettling and intriguing, yet perhaps the message it conveyed most strongly was the paranoia and confusion associated with the Cold War. Camp Archimedes, where the vast majority of the novel is set, seems ostensibly to be a weapons research facility. Yet it is much less focused than that, the parameters of the experimentation are unclear, and there is a sense that the war itself is no longer important. Whether madness or genius is predominant in our narrator, it is focused on his internal life and channelled into writing fiction. The same appears largely true of the other prisoners, although our narrator clearly takes relatively little interest in other people much of the time. The implication could be that the war is something that those of genius transcend, or perhaps merely disregard? I'm not sure.

Overall, it's a thought-provoking and unusual little novel without any clear answers to the various questions it asks. I can't help feeling I am of the wrong generation to understand or truly appreciate it.

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## Reynard says

Un libro difficile da affrontare, sia per il tema trattato che per il tipo di scrittura. Ci sono pagine per le quali non trovo un aggettivo migliore di *delirante*; d'altra parte è esattamente quanto voluto da Disch nella sua analisi introspettiva del protagonista che, ricordiamolo, è rinchiuso in un campo di detenzione in cui i prigionieri sono usati come cavie.

Forse non ho capito appieno tutto quello che l'autore voleva dire, potrei volerlo rileggere in futuro. È curioso che anche l'altro libro di Disch che ho letto 20 anni fa (*Le ali della mente*) mi abbia lasciato un ricordo simile e la voglia di rileggerlo.

Consiglio la lettura di "Campo Archimede", a patto di affrontarlo in un momento in cui il vostro stato mentale sia "ben disposto" a un libro a tratti delirante, spesso oscuro e introspettivo, perennemente angosciante. Non l'angoscia dell'horror ma quella molto più terrificante di una realtà possibile.

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## Jonfaith says

What should be shocking instead arouses a curiosity. Camp Concentration details a government experiment

where prisoners are injected with a compound which makes them progressively hyper intelligent before the syphilis component in the injection leads them to madness and death. A poet who had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector to the forever war is asked to chronicle the process. The inmates stage a play Faustus (by Kit Marlow) and the poet pens a play Auschwitz: a comedy. The whole enterprise feels like it is staged, people speak in speeches, think Marat/Sade meets Punishment Park. The Peter Watkins reference is telling, both Camp Concentration and Punishment Park can't escape feeling dated. our concepts of dissent have evolved, been altered. My initial high hopes melted to bemusement.

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### **Sam says**

Someone has something insightful to say about venereal disease and philosophy of mind and his name isn't David Cronenberg! Saints be praised!

Seriously though this will leave you starved for science fiction written by a WRITER as opposed to a thinker or a schemer.

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### **Voss says**

Una lettura non facile, ma senza dubbio affascinante,

Ci sono dentro tutti gli anni settanta del novecento, con tanto di deliri psichedelici, complotti delle big pharma e del governo. l'esercito e la guerra.

Molta poesia.

Non si può prescindere da questo libro comunque, anche se non è il miglior romanzo di fantascienza, serve comunque a dimostrare come il genere comprenda una tale varietà di stili e tematiche che lo rendono sempre vivo ed attuale.

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### **Glenn Russell says**

*Camp Concentration* – American author Thomas M. Disch's 1968 science/speculative fiction, alternate history set in the near future where the United States has declared war on the entire world and features main character Louis Sacchetti, a poet who resists the draft and chooses prison rather than the army. But what a prison! The poet is sent to a secret camp where prisoners are given an experimental drug without their knowledge or consent, a drug that increases intelligence but in less than a year will most certainly cause death.

Written at the height of the US involvement in Vietnam and in the aftermath of CIA experiments with LSD on unknowing subjects, Disch's novel is a hornet's nest of vicious stings. Below are a number of stinging direct quotes from the pages of Louis Sacchetti's diary that, in effect, comprises *Camp Concentration*. I have included a modest comment of my own coupled with each quote. Here goes:

“The cells are as bony-clean as a dream of Philip Johnson (Grand Central Bathroom), while we, the prisoners, carry about with us the incredible, ineradicable smell of our stale, wasted flesh.” ----- The

irony of much military mentality – make sure all objects are scrubbed antiseptic clean as counterpoint to minds of the dehumanizers that are little more than open cesspools inflicting a life of psychic filth on inmates.

“Nasty as this prison is, there is this advantage to it – that it will not lead so promptly, so probably, to death. Not to mention the inestimable advantage of righteousness.” ----- Sounds like our poet is a bit naive. Little does he know that the prison officials will subject any prisoner they want to any torture they want. If things get a bit touchy, well, those officials can have their guards snuff out a prisoner’s life with no more hesitation than stepping on a cockroach. And a prisoner’s righteousness! Such nonsense can be dealt with via all sorts of manipulations, including bad diet, light deprivation and powerful drugs.

“I have an almost desperate desire to understand him, for it is R.M. and his like who perpetuate this incredible war, who believe, with a sincerity I cannot call into doubt, that in doing so they perform a moral action.” ----- During the Vietnam War, many were the officers and soldiers who, like R.M., thought their participation in the war was highly moral. But many in the country, both in and out of the service, did not agree. It is this contrast the author’s narrator finds fascinating - Louis Sacchetti endeavors to understand the mindset of those like R.M..

Sidebar: During George W. Bush’s war, a huge number of cadets from the Air Force Academy were pumping Mel Gibson’s film about Christ, attempting to bully all cadets, even Jews, into watching and supporting. This to say, when the goal is achieved, when everyone upholds a common religious zeal linked to their inflicting war, there is nobody left like Louis Sacchetti to question the morality of the military action.

“Not since the playground tyrannies of childhood have the rules of the game been so utterly and; Knowledge arrogantly abrogated, and I am helpless to cope.” ----- Again, the narrator is naïve in assuming just because he is a United States citizen protected by the law that as a prisoner he will retain his rights. Sorry, Louis, the military mentality here says the ends justify the means. As a conscientious objector you have not only surrendered your rights but also your humanity.

“It is an investigation of learning processes. I need not explain to you the fundamental importance of education with respect to the national defense effort. Ultimately it is intelligence that is a nation’s most vital resource, and education can be seen as the process of maximizing intelligence.” ----- In similar spirit to the LSD experiments conducted by the CIA on unknowing subjects, the death producing drug Louis and others are given will ultimately produce much more intelligent military personnel. Thus the sacrifice of their lives is a contribution to a worthy cause.

“Before you were brought here you may be sure we examined every dirty little cranny of your past. We had to be certain you were harmless.” ----- Ah, the government has no scruples or misgivings in prying into the privacy of any individual. After all, if you have nothing to hide, you have no grounds to object.

“If I should ever start feeling subjective again, I need only say the word and a guard will bring me a tranquilizer.” ----- Drugs and counter-drugs to the rescue. Those in power can be so kind and considerate - as long as it serves their ends, that is.

“And it isn’t just Camp Archimedes. It’s the whole universe. The whole goddammed universe is a fucking concentration camp.” ----- Rather harsh words from one of the other prisoners. To discover why he would say such a thing, I encourage you to read this distinctive novel for yourself.

Thomas M. Disch, age 28 in 1968, the publication year of *Camp Concentration*

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## Brad says

*WARNING: This review contains vulgarity. Just so you know. Thanks.*

"Well, you read it. How'd it go?"

"Well."

"Three stars well?"

"Yep."

"Only three."

"For now."

"Because ...?"

"Because I am going to have to read this again. That middle section of Sacchetti's ramblings needs to be dissected. I need more time with that portion, and I need to read the whole thing again at a time when I can focus on it and only it."

"So you're three stars is kind of bullshit?"

"Yeah. Kind of. But I can't give it anything else at the moment. I will say this, I think it is kind of brilliant, and definitely better than any other "let's make them smart" sci-fis I've ever read, and the end is at least as good as *Amazing Spider-Man #700*."

"That good?"

"Okay, I was fucking with you there. I think seven hundred wins in the you-know-what sweepstakes. Yeah, I think the ending may be exactly why I am uncomfortable giving this more than three stars right away."

"So it was cheesy like a comic book?"

"As much as it pains me to say it, yes."

"But you loved the last *Amazing Spider-Man*, so why not this?"

"Ummm ... I think you know. The real problem, though, my real problem was the stakes. I think Disch expected his audience to be shocked by the Faustian shit that was going on in *Camp Archimedes*, and the fact that I wasn't, that what was happening is precisely what I would expect the American government to be wrapped up in (Tuskegee syphilis experiment anyone?), made me feel like Disch was trying too hard to dazzle me, but this is probably a problem of me and my time rather than Disch and his. So ...."

"So ...?"

"So I am coming back and giving this another go someday. Disch deserves another crack."

"In the meantime?"

"I'm going to read *Spidey* again, of course."

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## Loucho B. ? says

Ho dato un indecisissimo 6. Ero propenso ad una sufficienza piena fin quasi a metà, poi scende molto di tiro per rialzarsi egregiamente nella parte finale ma soprattutto nel finale stesso.

Oggi sarebbe considerato un pò un romanzo trito e ritrito (non dico noioso perchè le parti noiose sono brevissime) ma mi rendo conto che contestualizzandolo agli anni 70 quando è stato scritto poteva considerarsi qualcosa di originale o quantomeno attuale. Essendo comparso in Italia negli anni 80 (correggetemi se sbaglio) secondo me non ha avuto nessun genere di successo che forse avrebbe meritato. Devo essere sincero, non è che mi sia piaciuto così tanto da osannarlo o da consigliarlo e sono particolarmente felice che fosse breve e scorrevole.

La storia in se è buona, niente di troppo originale o sconvolgente, ma che si poteva svolgere in una 50ina di

pagine. Il resto è chiacchiere deliranti e pretenziose senza un reale significato per la storia, pieno di riferimenti, camei e citazioni che, se non contestualizzate nel testo, non hanno nemmeno molto motivo d'essere.

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### Shannon (Giraffe Days) says

In this alternate America, the country didn't stop with Vietnam. It declared war on the world. Scientists work on creating and perfecting the latest in weapons and germ warfare. When Louis Sacchetti, a poet and war protestor, is moved from his prison to a secret underground camp called Camp Archimedes, he is at first bemused and impressed by the good food yet wary. The director of the camp, General Humphrey Haast - or "HH" as Sacchetti calls him - has had Louis brought there in order for him to keep a detailed record of the project. The project, as HH explains to him, is to inject criminals with a strain of syphilis, a virus that turns them into geniuses - but shortens their lifespan to about a year.

As Sacchetti gets to know the guinea pigs, including their apparent leader, Mordecai, he learns that Mordecai is working on an alchemical project that HH is more excited about than anyone else. But on the big day, nothing goes as expected - least of all for Sacchetti, who finally realises the truth about his role in Camp Archimedes.

I do like these kinds of stories - which sounds awfully trite, but I mean that I love apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, and dystopian fiction, for various reasons. This began strongly, albeit a bit uneventfully, and then, hm, petered out until it got to a solid ending that only slightly mollified me. It's written as Sacchetti's diary, and he has an affable, cheerful voice. He's like the jolly fat man (he describes himself as obese), and even when he's feeling other moods, his underlying personality is still there. He's slightly cheeky, has a bit of a split personality, and is very much a voice that bridges us the readers to this world gone crazy. It's black comedy, dark comedy, and the prisoners-cum-geniuses are like Shakespearian characters. I loved the tone of the novel, Sacchetti's voice, even though there were some problems with it, as I'll go into below.

The novel is divided into two sections, and the sections are noticeably different. Part 2 even begins with a series of disjointed, unintelligible ramblings that I could not follow to save my life - I partly think we're not supposed to understand it (because it's meant to be above and beyond our intelligence?), and I partly worry that I just don't have enough of a classical background to understand it. Like this:

Someday in our colleges Himmler will be studied. The last of the great chiliasts. The landscapes of his interior world will elicit only an *agreeable* amount of terror. (Of beauty, therefore.) Consider that the transcripts of the atrocity trials are already, these many years, offered for our entertainment in theaters. *Beauty is nothing but the beginning ...* (p.115)

That was one of the more lucid paragraphs. Here's another example, just for good measure:

Without science we would't have these rows of uprisen stela. It (science) is a veil over open lips, it is the word unspoken. Even the damned are reverent at that alter. (p114)

I suspect there's plenty of sense in this, but despite my love of puzzles, this is like a puzzle where the clues have been withheld, given to a special few, and then flaunted in front of you. But most of it's not written like that. Still, I didn't find it rife with ideas - ones I could grasp - as I would have liked, and expected, of speculative fiction. I was quite disappointed, and I struggled to end it. It moved beyond me and left me behind, gasping and flopping around like a fish on the bank, left behind after the tide has gone on a greater voyage than I.

Also, I generally consider my vocabulary to be pretty damn good, but I don't think I've ever come across so many words I didn't know in one book before. I can't tell if they're made up, incorrect grammar, or words that have become obsolete (or are out of my field - like "stelae"). Talk about a book that makes you doubt yourself!

As for the story, it is as I mentioned rather uneventful, even ponderous. We get a very narrow field of vision, seeing and understanding only what Sacchetti shares with us, and because his transcripts are being openly read every day by HH and the psychiatrist, Dr Busk, he's not even a terribly reliable narrator. It's interesting actually what he *doesn't* say, the things you'd expect him to say - like judgements, like anger and indignation - that he either doesn't think and feel, or keeps to himself.

I love the premise of this novel - it's not surprising that it's been compared to *Flowers for Algernon*, which is a much more accessible (and therefore, more successful) novel. *Camp Concentration* is also, perhaps, a more adult novel - being bleaker, more cynical, more of a tragedy perhaps, and all the time with a slight smirk on its face. There are the general themes that speak loudly of ethics and war and the farce of war; and more subtle ideas that slipped me by (I'm sure they're there, because of how the characters talked).

It's a thinking novel, and frankly it's too hot to think that clearly. It would make a good book to read with other people, in order to share ideas and impressions. Unless you like to puzzle over these things strictly on your own.

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### **Jonas Reitz says**

If Philip K Dick had written "Flowers for Algernon", it would have come out like this.

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### **Manny says**

Flowers for Algernon has become a minor classic, and, thanks to the movie, even people who haven't read it often know the story. Poor Charlie Gordon is given an operation which turns him from a mentally subnormal dishwasher into a genius, but the treatment turns out to be flawed. It's a great weepie, and I am one of many people who love it.

*Camp Concentration* is Algernon's evil twin. It's exploring the same basic theme, but I doubt it will ever be as well known. That doesn't necessarily mean it's a worse book - just that it's taking more risks, and not trying as hard to be accessible. Algernon is a tragedy; CC is a black comedy, and often a rather horrifying one. In Disch's version, the program is run by the military, who are not slow to see the possible advantages of being able to create geniuses to order from the most unpromising material. So what if it eventually kills them? We're at war, you know! (At the time, it was the Vietnam war). It turns out, however, that creating a few dozen instant geniuses, handing them all a death sentence, and locking them up together can lead to unexpected consequences.

One of most engaging things about the book is the way the story is narrated. As in *Algernon*, it's a diary; this time, the diary is being kept by Louis Sacchetti, a poet and conscientious objector who is assigned to the project with the brief of reporting on progress from a literary perspective. I love fictitious writers who are actually given a chance to show what they can do. Louis is not as impressive as John Shade in *Pale Fire*, who will no doubt keep the number one spot for a good while to come, but he's definitely keeping up with the pack, and I would say is at least as good as e.g. Randolph Ash in *Possession*. He's credible both as a character and as an author.

The book has flaws (difficult to discuss them without spoiling a fun plot), but all in all I found it deeper and more interesting than *Algernon*, and I have re-read it several times. Strongly recommended to anyone who in principle likes SF, but tends to be put off by the fact that the average SF author just can't write. Disch could, and it's odd that more people haven't come across him.

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### Jeffrey Greggs says

I am, perhaps, prejudiced (and maybe still in shock). Tom was a friend. I am glad I didn't read his SF, though, while he was still around: I would have proved a blathering fanboy and an unworthwhile conversationalist.

I have encountered many writers who possess the twisted, wild skills of imagination germane to speculative fiction, but I have rarely seen them execute their visions with such facility. Tom's prose is knife sharp, and allusions to Dante, Marlowe, Rilke, Goethe, et al. abound (they hang like ripe fruit on the low branches—they don't slow the narrative down a bit).

In summary, I liked this book. If you like books about devils and poets and alchemy, you would probably like it too.

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### notgettingenough says

Camp Concentration by Disch and *Otto* by Tom Ungerer

<http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/...>

A pair made in a sort of hell, I guess, birthday books read back to back.

I don't understand why *Otto* is badly written, when the author is obviously capable of writing good text in English. If you want to write some sort of nightmare for children – even worse, a nightmare that really happened – one has to be very careful, I imagine and this isn't. It uses badly cliched English that is inappropriate for any readership, let alone kids. He describes the bombing of his German town thus: 'Among the ruins and the fires lay innocent victims.' What on earth does that mean? That some of the civilians bombed in German towns weren't innocent victims? Does he mean anybody killed by these bombs were innocent victims? One could conceive of an argument along the lines of all the innocent victims being in concentrations camps, after all – two words ignored by this children's book. Then there is the general dilemma of writing about such a topic for children: I am uneasy about his treatment, really uneasy about picking such a theme and coming up with a happy ending. Finally, the language is stilted, quite unattractive to read. I don't understand why a child would want to read it.

Nor, as an adult, would I consider giving it to a child. ‘Mummy why did Oskar let those men take his friend away? Why didn’t his mother help? Why didn’t...If somebody wanted to take my friend away, would you stop them, Mummy?’ ‘Well, no, I wouldn’t, Oskar. It’s better just to watch when that happens and be glad it isn’t happening to you’. Honestly. The more I think about this book, the more I am really unhappy about it.

The pictures are nice.

Unfortunately *Camp Concentration has no pictures*. It does, however, avoid avoiding the words concentration camp. One can only assume, knowing that Disch considers himself too clever for words – no, not too clever for words, his books are full of his cleverness, little jokes for his friends and so on, exactly the sort of thing I object to when reading clever dicks – one can only assume that moving the word order is a play on his own camp ways as they are expressed in this book, much as it may have other rationales as well. It was explained to me after I finished reading this – and I must confess that my reading became cursory after a while – that I had missed all the clues. Was I supposed to know there were clues and that I was reading a mystery book? If I was supposed to realise this, it was badly communicated to me. If I wasn’t supposed to realise it, we are left with a denouement which is rather like one of those who-dun-its where the author cheats. There are always flashes of good writing in Disch’s work, but the point is, SO WHAT? There are probably a thousand people on goodreads, and tens of thousands of bloggers out there who produce such flashes, or, amazingly, keep it up. I think Disch is lazy, but because he has such tickets on his cleverness, he doesn’t think that matters. I beg to differ. But then, to be fair, I don’t think cleverness is nearly sufficient to produce a good piece of writing. Not nearly.

It is interesting to consider that we have here two examples of genre writing, both of which consistently fall down in the writing department. Picture books need good pictures and good text is only ever ‘nice if you can get it’. Science fiction is full of examples of authors who have great ideas but who can’t write. Six year olds probably don’t care and nor do science fiction buffs. Unfortunately I am neither.

As I meander through...

p. 19 ...people who can't diet for days running shouldn't attempt hunger strikes

p23 What gives? A question that is on the tip of every guinea-pig's tongue

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## Özgür says

Amerikan ordusunun süper dahi insanlar yaratma amaç?yla yürüttü?ü bir deney hakk?nda. Kitab?n anlat?c?s? bir ?air. Sava?a kat?lmay? reddetti?i için hüküm giymi? ve sonunda kendini bu deneyin yap?ld??? kampta gözlemci olarak buluyor. Kitap ?airin günlük olarak tuttu?u notlardan olu?uyor. Goethe, Dante, Rilke, Shelley, Van Der Goes, Messiaen gibi çok say?da yazar, ?air, müzisyen ve ressam ve eserlerine gönderme var metinde. Bu eserlere a?ina olmad???m için tüm göndermeleri anlad???m? söyleyemem.

Baz? k?s?mlar?n? okurken zorland?m. Özellikle birinci kitaptan ikinci kitaba ge?erken yazar?n say?klamalar? gibi olan bir k?s?m var. Anlams?z gibi geliyor bu k?s?m. Bir yorumda "bu k?s?m? anlamam?z beklenmiyor" demi? bir okur. Kitapta ismi ge?ince merak edip bakt???m Messiaen'in bir ka? par?as?n? dinleyince yazar?n bu k?s?mda neden b?yle bir yol izledi?ini anlad?m biraz. Messiaen'in eserleri i?in "En iyi m?zik bir t?r estetik ?orbad?r" diyor yazar.

?yilik, k?t?l?k, g?zellik, din, cehennem, deha gibi bir s?r? konuda g?r?lerini payla?m?? yazar. Baz? k?s?mlar? zorlasa da okumaktan keyif ald???m bir kitap oldu. Bilimkurgu sevenlere tavsiye ederim.

Terc?me etmenin de baya zor oldu?unu d???n?yorum, ?evirmene takdir ve te?ekk?rlerimi iletmek isterim.

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### **Charles Dee Mitchell says**

I like sf books that take place in the present day, or rather, the present day of their composition. *Camp Concentration* was published in 1972. An expanded version of the Vietnam War seems to be underway. Robert MacNamara is mentioned frequently, and Disch assumes that his readers will know what Dwight Eisenhower looked like.

Sachetti is a jailed conscientious objector, a "conchie" who finds himself transferred from a federal prison to the luxurious Camp Archimedes. His new digs are spacious and he may decorate them as he wishes. The food is equal to a five star restaurant, the library is something akin to the Library of Congress. There are only a handful of internees, and they all seem like nice enough fellows although a couple of them a clearly ill.

Sachetti's role at the camp, according to Haast, the ex-military man with a dubious record and a mystical streak who runs the place, is to simply record what he observes. What he observes is an experiment involving a new drug that greatly increases one's mental capacity but unfortunately is fatal. Brilliant visionaries surround Sachetti, but each has only a few months to live.

The military hopes their lab rats will come up with brilliant weapons, but they tend more toward alchemical experiments and arcane theological discussions. Almost anything else I say about the plot will be a spoiler, so I will only say this about the writing. Disch is one of those highly praised sf writers that I have always assumed would not live up to his reputation. That does not prove to be the case. He has written a modernist novel crammed with ideas -- admittedly some have become more familiar over time -- and he tells his story in short bursts of Sachetti's diary that credit the reader with the ability to keep up and even anticipate things Sachetti himself does not see coming.

I do recommend keeping a dictionary app open on your phone while reading. I look forward to using the word *chyme* in polite conversation.

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### **William Randolph says**

Thomas Disch's *Camp Concentration*, published in 1967, is the most erudite work of speculative fiction I've ever read, beating out even the various books and short stories that I've read by Gene Wolfe. The book's narrator, you see, is a poet, and he casually deploys scores of allusions, some of which I recognized and others I couldn't follow. Disch is the only writer besides David Bentley Hart that I've seen use the word "chthonic," which is, along with "phthisic," one of my favorite words that starts with four consonants.

I picked up *Camp Concentration* because I've come across several remembrances of Disch, who killed himself only a few months ago. Joseph Bottum wrote of him quite fondly for *The Weekly Standard*, and an article in the *Boston Review* praised in his first book, 334.

Camp Concentration is set in a nightmare America, where President McNamara has embroiled the United States in another Vietnam-style war. The book is the journal of an imprisoned conscientious objector who finds himself stuck in a secret military human enhancement project. It really takes off from there. Themes include: the existence and nature of God, alchemy, the possibility of creating Hell for ourselves, science and ethics, human cruelty, the pathology of genius, and, inevitably, death's inevitability.

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### **Kathryn says**

This was published in 1968 and it feels like something written at least a decade or two later. I am rather surprised by how much this book is sticking with me. I finished today but I dreamt about it last night. It was the first thing I thought of when I awoke this morning. I wish more people knew of this book. I find it hard to believe that so few, at least here on Goodreads, have read this.

As other reviews have mentioned, this book is not perfect. I would rate 4 stars if considering that but I am choosing to rate solely on how this book made me feel and all of the wonderful imagery Disch forced upon me.

If you can find this book, I strongly recommend taking the time to read it. The characters are interesting and if you understand even half of the references Disch employs (I admit, there were a few I was oblivious to), then you will more than likely be happy you read this. Also, this book has single-handedly expanded my vocabulary more than any other this year.

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