

behaviour to the victim in the presence of other family members. Inevitably, one is tempted to view the abusing father's apology in a rather cynical light since experience of sexual offenders suggest that they can con themselves and others about virtually anything, including a formal apology to the victim, particularly if this ensures continued non-custodial therapy. What is lacking from the chapter, and indeed from the book, is an adequate explanation of the rationale for treatment of sexual offenders in the community, and a full explanation of the treatment programme in which the treatment session is, presumably, one small component.

Other chapters look at the role of medical assessment (not particularly helpfully) and the court (much more helpfully). "A therapist's primer for court testimony" contains a number of helpful hints about attitude and behaviour within the court context, which will help the therapist to convey his or her opinion clearly, credibly and objectively.

The last chapter in the book by Conte, "Sexual abuse in the family: a critical analysis", grasps the nettle of the limits within the family systems perspectives, and indicates that there is much more to learn about the psychopathology of the abuser and the role of this issue in family dysfunction, before any final statement can be made about incest. Conte remarks that "systems theory is a general theory describing the functioning of systems; it is not a cause or theory . . ." and later goes on to say that certain applications of systems thinking can result in the notion that the problem is not what it appears but rather something else, which, for incest, could mean that sexual abuse is not really sexual at all, but perhaps an expression of the abuse of power. Conte points out that both sexual and non-sexual dimensions are present in all forms of sexuality, presumably including incest, and that to date this has not been acknowledged in the family therapy literature. The issue of mother-blaming in relation to distorted-systems thinking is not covered in this chapter, and Conte ends by noting the need for research which will differentiate between primary processes responsible for the development of sexual abuse and secondary ones which only support or maintain sexual abuse.

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The Empathic Imagination. By ALFRED MARGULAS. London: W. W. Norton & Co. 1989. 181 pp. £17.50.

Psychoanalytic psychotherapies are often construed as lacking in empathy. The classic analytic session with the client on the couch and the analyst out of view is a picture which many find incongruent with being empathic. This book helps to fill the empathic gap in psychoanalytic writings. Margulies provides us with an

eloquent and scholarly insight into the nature of empathy in the therapeutic relationship. Having previously attempted to publish his work in journals, he abandoned this in favour of a book as this is really a journey, and you have to travel the whole distance to appreciate this work.

He does not write about being empathic but about empathic exploration and the demands on and capacities of the explorers. He draws upon art, poetry and literature on the one hand, and on the other, the dreams, fantasies and imagination of his clients' inner-world. Parallels are drawn between the various conceptualisations of the self in psychotherapy, from psychoanalytic to interpersonal and existential viewpoints. Therefore this book is a must for all those engaged in psychotherapy. Margulies deepens our understanding of the complexities of the individuals' inner-world. The book has an American flavour and British readers may be irritated by the absence of references to Klein and the British independent tradition. Personal Construct Psychology does not get a look in either. Despite this, the book is rich in insight and I would recommend it to all therapists.

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Adolescent Group Psychotherapy. Edited by FERN J. CRAMER AZIMA and LEWIS H. RICHMOND. Madison: International Universities Press. 1989. 260 pp. \$30.00.

In this monograph, one of a series from the American Group Psychotherapy Association, Azima & Richmond bring together 13 authors experienced in group therapy with adolescents to give theoretical, clinical and research perspectives on the topic.

There are three chapters on theoretical issues, three chapters on general clinical applications, then four chapters on working with special clinical populations (in secondary schools, the learning disabled, delinquents, substance abusers) and a review of relevant clinical research.

I found this a somewhat uneven book. There is plenty of good advice in it and the contributions are generally well written and easy to read. However, the very first sentence of chapter one, "There is little doubt that group psychotherapy is considered by most clinicians to be the treatment of choice for adolescents", oversells the product, although the author of this statement does redeem herself later in a very thoughtful critique of the research literature concerning adolescent group therapy. Also, the editors have been too benign in exercising editorial control. As a result I was left with an impression of questions unanswered and areas of overlap. In this respect, the theoretical section is particularly weak.

Nevertheless, there are undoubted strengths to the book. Well-chosen case vignettes from several of the

authors include a detailed exposition of the course of therapy in a case of borderline personality. The clinical chapters are unusually well graced with advice based on research results as well as clinical wisdom. The broad range of clinical populations covered provides opportunities for the discussion of very different approaches to group therapy such as the short-term focus with in-patients and the focus on cognitive issues with learning disabled adolescents.

There is a brief concluding chapter in which the editors summarise the differences between working with adolescent and adult groups and list the qualities especially needed by therapists working with adolescents.

Overall, the editors do, with some reservations, succeed in their aims to "present adolescent group psychotherapy in a contemporary light" and to provide "a helpful manual for both the beginning therapist and the senior clinician".

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Issues in Geriatric Psychiatry (Advances in Psychosomatic Medicine, vol. 19). Edited by N. BILLIG and P. V. RABINS. Basle: S. Karger AG. 1989. viii + 184 pp. £43.50.

This book is the latest in a long series of hardback books considering the most recent advances in psychosomatic medicine. There are eleven chapters from invited authors, the vast majority coming from the USA, on a wide range of topics from sleep disorders through agitation to sexual problems. Some are only of relevance to the American system but the majority are equally appropriate both sides of the Atlantic.

The chapter on delirium in older adults by Lipowski is a neat, concise and well referenced dissertation on what can be a very confusing subject! Peters reviews the concept of 'excess disability' in dementia, concentrating on the concepts of treatable versus curable illness, and stressing the importance of thorough evaluation. Waldhorn's chapter examines in detail the common problem of sleep disorders in the elderly, and contains the clearest account that I have read of both normal sleep patterns and the various disorders from insomnia to sleep apnoea.

Wise presents a biopsychosocial perspective on sexuality, confirming that sex does not stop at forty but highlighting the increasing difficulties with regard to vascular problems and cancer that may confront the

elderly sexually-active person. Gottlieb's chapter on hypochondriasis is rather difficult to digest but is thorough and well referenced, and the review of agitation in the elderly is well structured and practical.

The chapter on the nursing home resident as a psychiatric patient provides an interesting insight into the differences between the British and American systems, and the section in this chapter on the financial viability of providing a consultation service for nursing homes may be an example of shades of things to come!

The update on geriatric psychopharmacology is an excellent addition to the available literature and the chapters on liaison psychiatry and assessment of competence for making health care decisions are concise, readable and informative. There is little to fault in this book. It is an excellent reference work for the already established specialist, and although probably a little too pricey for the interested paramedic, should be an essential addition to any psychiatric library shelf.

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Psychosomatic Symptoms: Psychodynamic Treatment of the Underlying Personality Disorder. Edited by C. PHILIP WILSON and IRA L. MINTZ. London: Jason Aronson. 1989. 460 pp. £44.50.

This very interesting book is divided into three parts. In the first part, the psychodynamic structure of the personality of the psychosomatic patient is discussed. The second and third parts deal with asthma and inflammatory bowel disease respectively. Theory is illustrated by vivid clinical material and it is refreshing to see that these authors wish to challenge the prevailing concept of alexithymia which they consider as unnecessary and perhaps misleading.

The authors discuss their way of dealing with psychosomatic patients and subscribe to Melita Spierling's view of psychosomatic disorder as a manifestation of a pre-genital conversion neurosis.

The authors' recommendation that the psychoanalyst should be the sole doctor to the patient and that all decisions must be made by the psychoanalyst and the patient alone is very controversial. For this reason, although I find the book fascinating, its concept of treatment of psychosomatic disorder is limited.

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