

Divorce as a Development Process. Edited by JUDITH H. GOLD. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1988. 166 pp. £18.50.

This American book is one of the 'Clinical Insight Series', a series edited by Gold, who also contributes the final chapter of this volume. The series seems designed to produce handbooks on various topics of interest to clinicians working in psychiatry and in other mental health professions. The present volume reviews the effects of divorce on those involved (including children), but it focuses mainly on the therapeutic intervention, "in order to demonstrate . . . that marital dissolution can become a catalyst for the individual's subsequent psychosocial growth and development"

This is a multi-author book, and the chapters are diverse. Some are predominantly clinical, looking at, for example, the sexual behaviour of women after divorce, or the impact of divorce on children and adolescents. Some chapters are more to do with the legal processes, and with the sociology of divorce. The statistics quoted at various points are grim: e.g. the fact that there were 1 179 000 divorces in 1983, and the projection that half this year's marriages will end in divorce. Discussion of the economic implications of the 'no fault' divorce brings forth the phrase 'the feminisation of poverty'. Weizman's California study showed that women experienced a drop of 73% in their standard of living by the end of the first post-divorce year. Men gained a 42% rise.

All the chapters in this book offer some interest, and some are thought-provoking, but I feel that this is a book more suited to the general reader than to the experienced clinician. I had hoped that the clinical aspects would offer more, but on the whole I found the therapeutic issues were dealt with rather superficially. There are many case examples, but they gave the impression (no doubt unintentionally) that it is not too difficult to turn the trauma of divorce into a focus for personal development. Mostly the emphasis seems to be on counselling, and even the final chapter, 'Divorce as development: the process of psychotherapy', stresses support, reassurance, and teaching new modes of response. The only discussion of transference and counter-transference issues arises in the chapter 'Assessing and treating divorcing men'. This is by a male thera-

pist, and addresses the male patient: male therapist dyad. Since the book claims to focus on the therapeutic intervention, I think it has fallen short in its examination of its main theme.

I do not believe that this rather expensive little book has much to offer the British specialist reader.

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Psychiatric Interviewing: The Art of Understanding. By SHAWN C. SHEA. Sidcup: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 1988. 583 pp. £16.75.

"Sometimes the interviewing process is like exploring a darkened room in an old Victorian house". The author wrote this book as a guide to psychiatric interviewing for mental health workers. He attempts to provide a synthesis of many perspectives. In making this synthesis he undertakes a difficult task, and one might have feared that a poor compromise might be the result. In fact the author has done a good job, and the different viewpoints have been clearly set out.

The first part covers basic principles, focusing on practical issues of sensitive interviewing, such as the patient who refuses shaking hands with the doctor. In the chapter on the treatment plan, Shea stresses the importance of integration and synthesis.

The 'core' of the book contains the application of the fundamentals of interviewing to three of the major psychiatric disorders (depression, psychosis, and personality disorder). The author hopes that interviewing principles in these areas are generalisable to others.

The third part is devoted to special techniques of interviewing. The DSM-III-R criteria have been used for differential diagnosis, keeping the book up to date. It is interspersed with pleasant illustrations of Meg Malloney and quotations from poets such as Emily Dickinson. The author himself writes well. According to Shea interviewing is a shared work of creativity. This is a valuable book both for the novice and the expert.

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