

The author draws throughout on the views and examples of other psychoanalysts, which are intermingled with her discussion (omitting, however, the work of Alice Miller). This makes it difficult to disentangle her views from those of others and to obtain a clear statement of her theory. The book however, is fascinating and easy to read and includes many of her own case examples. She has probably had more experience of perverse women than anyone else in Britain, has thought deeply about its causes and mechanisms, and has written a book which I believe will become a classic. It is certainly essential reading for analysts and psychotherapists. We eagerly await a volume on treatment.

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**Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit.** By HELEN EBAUGH. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1988. 246 pp. £8.75 (pb); £21.95 (hb).

This book is a sociological examination of an area psychiatrists link with changes in a person's assumptive world, either through normal life transitions or in relation to 'crisis'. For the sociologist, 'role' is the key concept, and in this book the anticipation of change of role, the stages of that change, and the outcome of change are analysed. Systematically collected data from 185 interviews are used, the group including ex-nuns (the author was one herself), widows, divorcees, ex-prostitutes, retired persons, professionals and, interestingly, transsexuals. 'Exes' from familial roles, occupational roles and ideological roles (religious and political) and stigmatised roles (ex-prisoners, ex-alcoholics) are included. The role exit process is followed, from first doubts, through seeking alternatives – the turning point – to creating the 'ex-role' (it is easier to be an ex-doctor than an ex-prisoner!).

'Passages' or 'turning points' are important at various stages of the life cycle. While this research does not introduce significant new ideas, it helps to flesh out an area which in psychotherapy not infrequently needs to be defined, understood, and worked through with the client.

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**Mental Health Response to Mass Emergencies: Theory and Practice.** Edited by MARY LYSTAD. New York: Brunner-Mazel. 1988. 480 pp. \$61.50.

In a world in which disasters, particularly technological disasters, seem to be becoming more common, the publication of this authoritative work is very timely. Written

by 26 American planners, administrators, sociologists, psychiatrists, psychologists, and others concerned with the administration of mental health services in disaster areas, this book reviews an extensive scientific literature and comes up with important conclusions and recommendations. Of these the most important is probably the recognition that, since disasters can have serious consequences for the mental health of victims, relatives, and even professional caregivers, this needs to be taken into account in the planning of a response to disasters.

The first part of the book reviews research on the psychological and social consequences of disasters. Despite great differences between disasters, post-traumatic stress disorder emerges as a well-documented consequence of many. Factors which increase the risk of this and other disturbances of mental health can be identified, enabling people whose health is at risk to be offered special help.

The types of help likely to be of use are discussed in the second part. The emphasis here is on 'outreach', with those at risk being contacted as soon as possible after the disaster, and a general agreement that it is best to avoid attributions of mental illness. Support can be given to individuals, families, or groups and a variety of approaches are described. So too is the support and 'debriefing' of caring staff.

In the USA, as in Britain, disaster plans seldom make any provision for preventing psychiatric problems and treating those that arise. The final section of this book looks at the need for proper planning and for public and professional education in preparation for disasters. It is suggested that every community mental health plan should include the management of disasters, and every emergency and disaster plan should contain a mental health component.

With so many contributors, it is to be expected that the quality of contribution is uneven. One would not expect so moving a topic to be boring, but there are several chapters whose analytical detachment seems remote from the chaos and passion of a disaster area. Even so, there is much to be learned from each chapter, and although the same basic messages emerge repeatedly the editor has done a good job in welding together a disparate group of contributors. She is Chief of the Emergency Services Branch of the United States National Institute of Mental Health, and so this book will have a particular appeal to planners and administrators. As such it contrasts with Beverley Raphael's *When Disaster Strikes* (Basic Books, New York), which is aimed at the clinician. Both books should be read by all who are seriously interested in preparing for the disasters that will surely continue to occur.

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