

penultimate chapter is interesting because it brings together important medico-legal issues and will be valuable to those who prepare reports or give evidence in cases of litigation. The book sleeve states, "this book is a unique review of the extensive literature which exists on various aspects of post-traumatic neurosis". It is, and I recommend it unreservedly to all those who are interested in this difficult area of clinical and legal practice.

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**Agoraphobia: Nature and Treatment.** By ANDREW M. MATHEWS, MICHAEL G. GELDER and DEREK W. JOHNSTON. London and New York: Tavistock Publications. 1981. Pp 233. £15.00.

This is an important book. The three authors have all been closely involved in the development of therapeutic approaches to agoraphobia and they trace the evolution of behavioural treatments since their inception over two decades ago. Agoraphobia is a complex neurosis which has eluded explanation in terms of the learning theory model which appeared to provide a causative explanation for simpler forms of phobic neurosis. The authors have recognized this complexity and avoided dogmatic statements; instead they have assembled the evidence for aetiological factors from a wide variety of sources, and, in the light of these, have considered the various theoretical explanations at present on offer. Finding none of them entirely satisfactory they present their views of the nature of agoraphobia in terms of an 'integrated model'.

In addition to behaviour therapy they consider the role of pharmacotherapy and various psychotherapeutic techniques in the management of agoraphobia. They then expound, at some length, their own home-based treatment which is based upon enlisting the help of the patient's partner as a cotherapist and regular meetings for explanation, guidance and monitoring of progress with the therapist. This method appears to lack what the second author, at another time, called a counterneurotic device; moreover some readers may be forgiven for doubting that many partners may be able or willing to take on the role of cotherapist. Nonetheless the important principles of clear communication and guidance to the patient and the partner concerning the procedure of therapy should, it is to be hoped, provide a model to be adopted by other therapists using, perhaps, different approaches to treatment.

In the last chapter the role of cognitive factors in both the genesis and therapy of agoraphobia is reviewed. The authors have succeeded in avoiding a

rigid theoretical orientation and admit, with refreshing humility, to only a rudimentary understanding of how their treatment works. They have rendered a valuable service by encouraging open-mindedness and they have outlined future directions for research.

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**Family Therapy and Major Psychopathology.** Edited by MELZIN R. LANSKY. London: Academic Press. 1981. Pp 431. £18.20.

The editor of this volume, is chief of Family Treatment Programme, Brentwood Medical Centre, Los Angeles, California, a programme based on a general psychiatric ward and offering for its patients any appropriate standard psychiatric treatment but always in the context of family work.

The theme of the book is an attempt to bridge the gap between the fields of general psychiatry, with its emphasis on the medical model and specific treatment of the individual, and family therapy with its focus on the family system. Rapprochement is necessary, says Lansky, because a knowledge of systems especially the family system, is needed for the competent administering of other treatments, for example, drugs. Major forces that oppose effective drug treatment come from unrecognized and unresolved difficulties in the family. "A new eclecticism" is required in treatment, he maintains, to overcome the problems posed by major psychiatric illness and management of the patient within the family system is part of this.

This aim is laudable and yet unfortunately I am uncertain whether it will be achieved, at least with this book, which is expensive, based on the American psychiatric scene, and somewhat repetitive.

Contributions come from widely different areas of psychiatry covering adolescent work, schizophrenia, alcoholism, organic brain syndrome amongst others, and each chapter author writes from a basis of clinical experience, with emphasis on the practical where possible, with much case illustration. Some chapters are excellent, for example that on the treatment of patients with bipolar affective illness, and I am sure, will stimulate the receptive reader. However taking the book as a whole, it suffers from its wordiness and repetition, some very poor contributions, and its main use must, I think, be in its inclusion in the general psychiatric library, rather than the psychiatrist's personal collection.

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