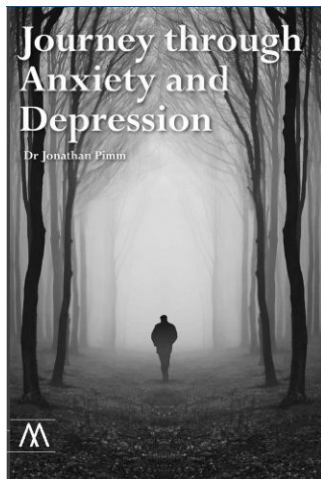


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



Journey Through Anxiety and Depression

By Jonathan Pimm
Muswell Hill Press. 2015.
£9.95 (pb). 146 pp.
ISBN 9781908995063

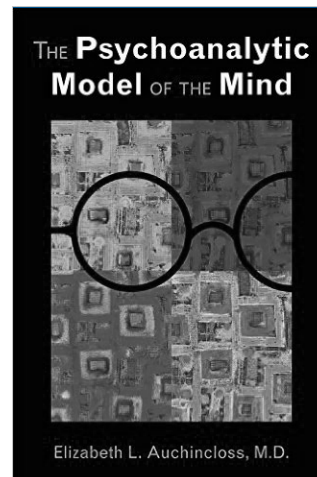
For the traveller who is forced to undertake it, the journey through a prolonged episode of severe anxiety and depression can feel like one for which there is no end. Your GP may feel unable to help you because of the severity of your symptoms, but the local mental health services do not consider you to meet their criteria for what constitutes 'severe mental illness', so you are forever tossed between the two, not getting adequate help from either. The author of this book works at the interface between psychiatry and primary care and acknowledges the important role our profession still has to play in helping people with severe non-psychotic illness and in supporting GPs to care for those who do not need to see a mental health professional more than briefly, if at all. It reads throughout as the distilled knowledge of a skilled and experienced clinician.

I did, however, find myself wondering who the intended audience was. It is not written in language that a person suffering from depression could necessarily understand; I must admit that, as someone who has experienced mood disorder, I found the use of the term 'strength of character' unhelpful in considering whether a person can 'survive the index episode' following a 'psychological insult'. Moreover, the focus of the book goes beyond what a general practitioner would need or be expected to know as it deals with some specialist therapies for treatment-resistant depression, yet it does not fully address the current guidance on treatment from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. The case studies are written from the viewpoint of a specialist and there is discussion of the multiple different diagnoses that might be applied to a person with common mental health problems without acknowledgement that specialist classification has less to offer in the primary care setting.

Overall, the book would have benefited from a more attractive layout and further editing to simplify what, at times, can seem an overly complex journey to the reader. In conclusion, this is a book for a young psychiatrist who is interested in stepping up to the challenge of the complex mix of problems beyond the world of psychosis, or the generalist who desires to understand more.

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The Psychoanalytic Model of the Mind

By Elizabeth L. Auchincloss
American Psychiatric Press. 2015.
\$62.00 (pb). 332 pp.
ISBN 9781585624713

Auchincloss starts with a fanfare: 'The psychoanalytic account of how the mind works is the most complex model of mental functioning ever invented for clinical purposes' (p. xv). Based on her Cornell course for trainee psychiatrists, the author sifts this 'complexity' into three manageable chunks: 'topographical' (Sigmund Freud's fundamental distinction between the conscious and unconscious); 'structural' (ego psychology, arising from Freud's 'tripartite' model of ego, id and superego); and 'object relational' (assembling the disparate theories of Melanie Klein, John Bowlby, Heinz Kohut and Otto Kernberg, who were united in their emphasis on the interpersonal aspects of the developing mind). Contrasts and overlaps between the three threads are presented in useful tables. Appendices summarise the various defence mechanisms and provide a glossary of all the main psychoanalytic terms. All will appeal to would-be psychiatrists in search of an accessible account to guide them through exams.

Despite there being much to admire about this book, its very clarity and certainty also manifest its weakness; the sheer unconsciousness of the unconscious lies latent, like a heartless textbook of cardiology. The author wants to please everybody – traditional psychoanalysts of all schools, cognitive-behavioural therapists and hard-nosed neuroscientists all get a nod – and amidst this even-handedness, the discriminatory power of science gets lost. For example, in discussing Kleinian object relations theory, Auchincloss describes psychosis as a developmental failure to differentiate between self and other, despite 7 pages earlier conceding (in a footnote) that 'psychosis is no longer conceptualized as reflecting difficulties in mother–infant interactions'. Despite the author's best efforts, there is also a backwards-looking feel to this book; 70% of her references are from before 2000. Finally, among a sparse collection of well-worn psychoanalytic clinical examples – such as the ubiquitous physician whose Oedipal conflict impedes his career – conspicuous by its absence is a sense of how psychoanalytic approaches can help, as indeed they can, those afflicted with borderline personality disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder or major depressive disorder.

In conclusion, while good things abound in this book, disappointment must also be recorded. Whether this view represents destructive envy in your reviewer or constructive depressive position thinking, readers – of whom there deserve to be many – will decide.

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