

Family Therapy beyond Postmodernism

Carmel Flaskas.
Hove, New York, Brunner-
Routledge, 2003.

Paperback. pp. 224. ISBN 0-415-18300-6.
£16.99.

A well-known German psychologist and systemic researcher, Günter Schiepek, drew our attention some ten years ago to a tendency within systemic discourse that leads us to quickly assimilate any new idea stemming from the sciences without having first explored in depth the possible benefits of the present position. Schiepek called this attitude a 'tourism of ideas' that reflects the fact that psychotherapy also is obviously subjected to the rules of fashion and market. Not exactly in these terms but similarly critical, Carmel Flaskas' book *Family Therapy Beyond Postmodernism* points to the limitations of either/or positioning as it is encountered when having to decide between 'modern' and 'postmodern'.

As is well known, theory and practice go together 'like a horse and carriage', but they can never substitute for each other: 'One of the great pleasures of thinking in practice disciplines is exactly the central dynamic of practice and knowledge, in all its richness and messiness' (6). In these terms, Carmel Flaskas opens a space for the therapist's experiences as a natural consequence of interaction between human beings. The effects of the emotional attunement between therapist and client are so immediate and 'real' that they can successfully counteract any rational understanding that what is felt as real is merely a 'constructed' reality. The question of whether an independent reality exists loses its relevance in the face of all the materiality, subjectivity and emotionality involved in therapy. Therapists don't just deal with words and abstractions in language, but with human beings, i.e. complex networks of different systems operating at different levels such as organic, psychic and social. But, at the same time, Carmel concedes that the therapist who deals with these ques-

tions also knows that all this complexity exists ultimately only in language, that being the domain in which our human worlds are constituted.

The author addresses basically two subjects, one dealing with the unnecessary side effects of a polarisation between modernism and so-called postmodernism, the other with reconciliation between systemic and psychoanalytic concepts. The first part of the book tackles what has become, especially in the Anglo-Saxon world, the primary theoretical orientation in contemporary family therapy: 'social constructionism'. After 'overcoming' the earlier positions of constructivism and systems theory, this new framework has become the theoretical basis for systemic approaches to psychotherapy. Carmel Flaskas describes how she originally adopted these ideas, stemming from French philosophy and North American social psychology, and thus stepped away from the 'old' models. Having revealed the immanent paradox entailed in proposing the acceptability of many equally valuable perspectives and yet rejecting alternative positions such as those held by so-called modernism, Carmel started turning back to a central tenet of systemic thinking: 'both/and'. Instead of an oppositional positioning between notions as, for instance, between a relational self and an autonomous, individual self, Carmel Flaskas pleads for a more fitting meta-perspective that permits us to make use of both notions, without having to decide whether one is better or more truthful than the other.

The second part of the book deals with the possibilities entailed in using a relational perspective to conceptualise such psychoanalytically derived notions as attachment, unconscious, transference, projective identification and time. These concepts can thus be re-introduced into the framework of systemic thinking and be useful for a deeper understanding of the therapeutic process.

Family Therapy beyond Postmodernism ventures a glance over the fence between 'modernism' and 'postmodernism', searching for a meta-perspective that permits us to value the benefits of 'social constructionism' — as indicative of a

postmodern attitude — without having to devalue alternative positions. The author regards the theoretical move towards sociology and social psychology as liberating therapy from the constraints imposed by earlier understandings such as cybernetics and biology and, implicitly, also systems theory.

Although I go along with many of the ideas and critical assessments of the book as well as with its struggle for a meta-position, I missed a more thorough discussion of those theoretical perspectives discarded because of their alleged inadequacy, e.g. the ideas of Humberto Maturana, Francisco Varela, Heinz von Foerster, Ernst von Glasersfeld and Paul Watzlawick. These authors have all advanced patterns of thinking that have proven useful in terms of theoretically substantiating systemic therapy. As a Central European reviewer, I find, in addition, it a pity that other fore-runners of systems theory could not be considered. For example, the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann proposed a systems theory of sociology that, expanding on the framework devised by Talcott Parsons, offers a theory of social systems and communication which proves most useful for systemic therapy. Anyhow, since these omissions mainly reflect the general difficulties entailed in transcending language barriers, they do not reduce, at all, the value of the book. In fact, this limitation is obviously well known to Carmel Flaskas, who states that she is restricting herself to the literature of the English-speaking community.

This book integrates achievements that at first glance seem quite incompatible: the arguments are thoroughly grounded, but unpretentious and easy to read; they are profoundly critical of an important part of mainstream thinking in systemic therapy, but they are conciliatory and non-aggressive; they are presented with proper scholarship and yet in an impressively personal manner, e.g. 'I found myself laughing when I was writing this part of the chapter, because I really wanted to say that I picked psychoanalytic ideas because I liked them' (111). The author deals with thick theoretical stuff, but the reader is kept refreshed by the impression of personal communication with someone who is

obviously a good teacher as well as being a scholar, a therapist, and a woman. Carmel Flaskas' book will surely be stimulating to every therapist and clinical theoretician who is interested in a critical discussion of the theoretical foundations of contemporary systemic therapy.

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Fatherhood for Gay Men: An Emotional and Practical Guide to Becoming a Gay Dad

Kevin McGarry.
NY, London, Oxford, Harrington
Park Press. 2003.

Paperback. pp. 107. ISBN 1-56023-388-5.
US\$19.95.

In a climate of greater social acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex relationships, increasing numbers of single and partnered gay men are becoming parents. This is so particularly in the US where laws governing adoption and surrogacy are far less stringent than in other Western countries. Kevin McGarry's story of his own foray into parenthood as a single gay man adds to a growing number of US-based biographical accounts of fatherhood by 'post-coming-out' gay fathers. McGarry, an accountant, states in the preface that he wrote *Fatherhood for Gay Men* for two reasons: first, to encourage gay men with a 'natural instinct' for parenthood to 'take the risks (and enjoy the rewards) involved with adoption'; and second, 'because I have seen many children in need of good homes'. His emphasis is very much on the personal highs and lows in becoming the adoptive father of two Vietnam-born children, and to give other gay men a considerable degree of practical information, from a lay rather than professional perspective, about how to arrange an inter-country adoption and then manage the subsequent transition to parenthood.

McGarry presents his personal reflections on the decision to adopt and how that decision changed his social and emotional life. A chapter in diary form chronicles the author's trip to Vietnam,

which culminated in the adoption of first son, Andy. Chapter four presents a research perspective on gay fatherhood along with some biographies of other gay male parents. Here, McGarry gives a brief summary of UK researcher Gillian Dunne's recent study of 100 gay fathers, which emphasises the thoughtfulness and care these men put into their parenting, along with 'testimonials' from some of his gay father friends who have been happy with their respective decisions to adopt children. Pragmatic chapters outline the steps in the inter-country adoption process, the costs and the laws in each US state, and the preparation and equipment required in bringing a baby home from overseas. Subsequent chapters return to a personal tone as McGarry offers his experiences of life as a gay parent and the reasons for his decision to adopt a second child.

For US-based or international readers — therapists, clients or prospective gay male parents — McGarry's book has very little to offer that is not better accomplished by existing publications in this genre. My most substantive criticism is that the author is prone to sentimentality and the book is riddled with observations about parenthood and the process of adoption that more astute writers, even in the autobiographical genre, would subject to more scrutiny. For instance, he refers to himself throughout as a 'natural father', sees his decision to adopt as a question of 'destiny' and claims 'It is easy to see the fathering instinct in other men, whether or not they are dads'. Fatherhood is thus reduced to an emotional relationship based on individual choice and a purported predestined inclination to care. Arguably, such a stance enables the author to ignore substantially any meaningful commentary on difficult issues such as the cultural ramifications of inter-country adoptions. He provides the reader with no evidence that he has considered the implications of adopting a child from overseas, beyond his (at times dubious) reassurances that the birth mother of his adoptive child was a genuine rather than coerced relinquishing mother. I could not help but be reminded that the US is not a signatory to the Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoptions, and I felt that McGarry's explanation of the adoption process in his situation begged more questions about ethical practice than it answered. By contrast, Jesse Green's *The Velveteen Father* (1999) and Dan Savage's *The Kid* (1999) are both engagingly written and genuinely

reflexive biographical accounts of gay fatherhood. Both Green and Savage demonstrate a greater capacity for awareness that their personal choices take place in a broader social context, including the poverty of birth mothers, as well as racial exploitation and inequality.

Much of the practical advice McGarry imparts to the reader is so US-centric as to be useless to overseas readers. Added to this, most local gay men in parental roles to children either became parents when in heterosexual relationships, or through self-help negotiations with a lesbian couple or single mother, or are foster carers. Few Australian children become available for adoption outside of their families of origin, for a range of complex social reasons including availability of birth control and abortion, and a cultural shift among social workers to encourage birth mothers to keep their children (Marshall & McDonald, 2001). Those children who are adopted are generally placed with heterosexual couples, in line with the wishes of their birth parents. A phone call to the Victorian Department of Human Services confirmed that single or partnered gay men rarely apply and are not accepted as clients of the inter-country adoption agency in Australia. This is because they do not fit the criteria of the countries with which Australia has inter-country adoption protocols.

Family therapists seeking information or avenues for support of this group of under-resourced parents would do better to turn to Barret and Robinson's (2000) revised and updated review of the therapeutic and experiential gay fatherhood literature. A good local resource for gay male parents and the therapists who support them has yet to be written.

References

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Challenging Oppression: A Critical Social Work Approach

Bob Mullaly.
Ontario, Oxford University, 2002.

Soft cover. 211 pp. ISBN: 0-19-541695-3.
Canadian \$31.95.

This is an extremely well written book. Complex ideas are clearly defined. Various theories of social problems are presented with an analysis of their effects, revealing who benefits and who pays. *Challenging Oppression* compelled me to re-examine my ideas about the causes and effects of social problems and review the effects of these on my practice. Reading this book took my critical reflection to a different level. My work is influenced by narrative therapy, and hence I am interested in consulting persons seeking therapy about the effects and history of the ideas and beliefs which keep the problems they experience alive in their lives.

Bob Mullaly (Professor of Social Work, Victoria University, Melbourne) proposes that social problems are the result of conflictual relationships of domination and submission. His analysis prescribes action to stop oppression and alleviate its effects on subordinate groups; however, this is as prescriptive as he gets, admitting he has no 'vision', in the modernist sense, of a proper order for society or theory for understanding it.

In Chapter 1, the author argues that if we propose not to have a theory, we are more likely to reproduce inadvertently the oppressive domination of subordinate groups, which has created the social problems practitioners are attending to. Chapter 2 defines oppression as the domination of subordinate groups by a powerful group, in order to derive benefits for the oppressors. For Mullaly, social construction of meaning accounts for why the injustices of oppression are not reducible to quantities and therefore not addressed by giving more to the oppressed. We must realise that resources have currency only in certain groups, and that membership of those groups is not based on merit but on socially constructed characteristics. The model presented in this chapter recognises different levels of oppression — personal, cultural and institutional/structural.

Mullaly analyses the process of making identity claims at the personal level, in particular the way dominant group members

identify the identities of 'Others', by characteristics such as gender, race, ability or age, in order to legitimise their own appropriation of resources and power. He adopts a broad 'stuff of everyday life' view of culture in Chapter Four, explaining how language and stereotypes manifest the discourses of oppression which impact on people's identities. He makes clear that the relationship between the personal and the political is mediated by culture, which must be deconstructed for people to recognise the need for structural reform.

Chapter 5 provides a theory of how society's institutions, in promoting the interests of the dominant group only, have violent outcomes for the oppressed. Mullaly discusses two dominant discourses of cultural diversity, multi-culturalism and assimilation. A 'politics of difference' introduces some questions regarding what would be required of a state for people with inter and intra group differences to live peacefully together. Further thought provoking distinctions are drawn between representative and participatory democracies.

Chapter 6 looks at the concepts of internalised oppression and domination. Chapter Seven provides a model to account for the complex, multi-faceted nature of oppression, to help the reader reflect on the ways that people belonging to diverse groups, some as subordinates, some as oppressors, are affected. The analysis in this part of the book helped me to understand how people's multiple memberships of groups in society may impact on them in more than a summative way.

Chapters 8 and 9 examine anti-oppressive social work practice at the personal, cultural and structural levels and present some principles of anti-oppressive practice, including critical reflection, realistic aspirations, support and, most importantly to the author — the constructive use of anger. Mullaly proposes that the ultimate goal of practice is the transformation of society's oppressive institutions and structures.

Challenging Oppression analyses the subtly powerful ways in which the discourse of the dominant culture acts as an ideological umbrella over oppressed people, keeping from their consciousness the alternative interpretations of their predicament. I appreciated insights into some of the ways ideology is promoted today; through the vicarious identification of people with the lives of the privileged, the fact that most people experience being both oppressors and oppressed in different contexts, the

division of the oppressed from each other, and their inter-competing relationships. These factors preclude the development of consciousness raising and solidarity.

This book should be essential reading for all persons committed to contributing to the betterment of people's well-being (social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, family therapists, community workers, politicians and policy makers). Failure to recognise the influence of broader contextual factors such as oppression can lead to, at best, a failure to develop viable, co-operative strategies for justice and equity; at worst, to inadvertently blaming the victim.

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The Black Grapevine — Aboriginal Activism and the Stolen Generations

Linda Briskman.
Sydney, Federation, 2003.

Paperback. 213 pp. ISBN -86287-449-2.
RRP \$22.95.

The introductory chapter opens with a poem by Kym Robe (1993) which tells the story of the forcible removal of Aboriginal children, and the return to their communities. The story of the removal, and of the development of child care agencies, is told here through oral histories and the 'written voice' as documented and developed under the auspices of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

The 'great Australian silence' (the government and community discourse, based on the rhetoric of forgetting the past) is discussed in relation to the government response to the Aboriginal voice. This is borne out in the Stolen Generation Report and the discourse promoted by SNAICC. From individual and collective experiences, a movement and transformative process emerged, enabling structures to acknowledge and define indigenous rights. The individual 'stories' document the development of state Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Agencies, which invariably involved state and commonwealth tensions in policy and funding. The national umbrella organisation arose from a workshop in New South Wales. Federal

government funding was released in November 1983. SNAICC's dual campaign to realise the findings of the Stolen Generation inquiry and to call for National legislation in the child welfare arena has been aimed at gaining Federal funding. The overall aim of campaigning has been the primary prevention of indigenous family breakdown. This has been generally unsuccessful due in the main to the complexities of Federal-State relationships.

'The pain of being separated from one's own parents is compounded by being separated from one's own children' (96). SNAICC's quest to keep families and/or communities together demonstrates the importance of identity, retention and continuation of culture.

It is a basic right of the future generations of children to be free to follow their cultural heritage and own destinies. To ensure this, family violence, child poverty and child abuse must be responded to from an Aboriginal perspective. Aboriginal childcare, discussed under the subheadings 'Not enough to go around' and 'Structural barriers' is handicapped not only by the difficulties of funding programs, but also staffing within agencies.

Linda Briskman highlights the need to recognise Indigenous communities' rights of self-determination. As a response to the domestic political scene, the collective action of Indigenous communities and groups has sought to harness the potential impact of positioning themselves alongside worldwide Indigenous groups and international human rights forums, and in doing this, to have their voices heard by an international community. This has also had limited success.

The book concludes by encouraging stakeholders not to give in to despair, and to continue dialogue with governments. Although *The Black Grapevine* neglects to make explicit dialogue amongst Aboriginal groups, it usefully illustrates the development of a 'national umbrella organisation', and the 'voice' of the advocates of Aboriginal childcare. As a part of a wider discourse on indigenous rights, it complements well the 'Stolen Generation report' (*Bringing them Home*). It does map a change in the dominant discourse on the subject, with a call to move from a current service-based approach to a need-based approach in organisations.

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Angry Young Men: How Parents, Teachers, and Counselors can Help 'Bad Boys' become Good Men

Aaron Kipnis.
San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 2002.

Paperback, pp. 277 inc index.
ISBN: 0 787 9604 38. \$33.95.

Angry Young Men is written with passion. The author intends to carry the reader forward on a journey that analyses the causes and attitudes that lead to acting out behaviour in boys and young men. Kipnis begins with his own story, and through that he highlights some of the experiences that create a context for acting out behaviour in boys, such as weak attachment to carers and a lack of connection with significant others. He also considers the role that abuse plays in boys' emotional difficulties and the later mirroring of those abusive behaviours in their own lives. He then discusses education for boys, homelessness, young people in the juvenile justice system, drugs and criminalisation, gang culture, gaol and creating a context for change.

One of the interesting chapters (3) is an analysis of how boys 'fit' into the current structures of the education system. *Angry Young Men* argues for more involvement of fathers in school, a learning environment that suits a boy's learning style, a gender balance in the teachers to provide role models for boys, and tackling violence in schools. The increased acceptance of medication to 'help' boys with attention problems is also critiqued. Many of the author's comments will resonate with Australian readers familiar with Steve Biddulph and the Boys in Schools Project by the University of Newcastle.

Chapter 8, entitled 'The American Gulag', questions the notion of incarceration and its effectiveness. Kipnis indicates that America's incarceration rate is significantly higher than that of other western nations. He sees this as a function of societal values such as a public thirst for vengeance, fear of violent crime regardless of its prevalence, the widening gap between rich and poor and a cultural bias against those who are different. His analysis certainly resonates with our own

situation in Australia where Aboriginals are over-represented in gaol, and refugees are detained in what are effectively gaols. The beliefs he questions are just as apparent in the 'law and order' debates that are popular in our own country and so often reflected in the media.

The final chapter makes an appealing call to allow boys who have had difficulties and been labelled as 'bad' to change and grow. Kipnis rejects the notion of 'once bad always bad' (the 'mark of Cain') and goes on to discuss a number of American programs that have tried to address this population of boys.

At the end of each chapter are ideas and statements that summarise the main points.

The author moves back and forth between his own experience and an analysis of the issues primarily as they relate to American society. One of the most appealing things is *Angry Young Men's* clear emphasis on how societal structures and institutions drive disadvantage and promote vulnerability in young people. As a clinical text it will not satisfy most readers. This is not to take away from its interest per se, but it is a distinction worth clarifying for the purpose of review.

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Family Empowerment Intervention: An Innovative Service for High-Risk Youths and Their Families

Richard Dembo
and James Schmeidler.
NY, Haworth, 2002. 193 pp.

Hard cover. ISBN 0-7890-1572-2 \$49.90.
Soft cover. (alkaline paper). ISBN 0-7890-
1573-0 (alkaline paper) \$29.95.

This book describes a randomised control trial, delivering either Family Empowerment Intervention (FEI) or Extended Services Intervention (ESI) to high-risk youth in Florida. FEI is an intensive (three times a week) intervention provided to families, usually for ten weeks, in their own home, aiming to empower

parents. Alternatively ESI offers families access to an extensive resource file and assistance to refer to services. Richard Dembo and James Schmeidler are both well-published authorities in the area of adolescent criminology, drug use and delinquency. They note that this book builds upon a number of other family focused interventions delivered in America, particularly the work of Scott Henggeler's MultiSystemic Therapy (MST). MST is an in-home, intensive low-caseload, fully contactable service for adolescents with substance use and offending behaviours.

The first chapter describes the needs of high-risk youth, the paucity of research and the need for cost effective and efficient services. Dembo and Schmeidler describe reasons for urgently focusing on this area of intervention, and these reasons are very pertinent to the current Australian context. They note the increase in overall youth crime in America, that services struggle to address effectively the multiple and complex problems presented by young people, and that their difficulties can commonly be traced to their early exposure to family drug use, mental health difficulties or criminal activity. Most importantly they note the great challenge in engaging young people in treatment services. Surprisingly, throughout the book, suicide, accidental death and self-harm do not feature alongside criminal activity and substance abuse. By contrast, a recent Melbourne study from the Royal Children's Hospital, Centre for Adolescent Health and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute has 'found that 1 in 25 young people who have been in detention are dead within three years of release' (Place, 2003).

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the Family Empowerment Intervention, and this is of great relevance to family therapy. The theoretical foundations of the intervention are systemic, structural, transgenerational and psychoeducational. Dembo and Schmeidler do not view one member of the family as having a 'problem', and note that Minuchin's concepts of hierarchy, subsystems, alignments and boundaries are crucial elements in their understanding of families experiencing difficulties. Structural Intervention Strategies are described in detail under the headings: engaging, joining, tracking, enactment, circular questioning and reframing. The simple, articulate descriptions of the phases of the intervention

and techniques employed by the field consultants would be useful to many family workers in non-government organisations and for training therapists. Interventions are delivered by paraprofessionals. 'Consultants do not provide psychological treatment services, which are beyond the scope of their educational and professional training' (33). The authors' rationale for not using trained therapists is financial. For the intervention to be cost effective and have the potential to be funded further, the use of therapists is not possible. Field consultants having received six weeks of training eventually see up to six families, usually three times a week for an hour each.

Chapter 3 describes the youth and families involved in the study. Young people, having been assessed at a Florida Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC), were sampled for inclusion in the project. Seven hundred and sixty-two youths were screened as appropriate for the project and 315 families enrolled in the project and were randomly assigned to receive FEI or ESI. They were followed up at twelve, 24, 36 and 48 months time points. The results of these are presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. I found the detailed tables and statistical analyses difficult to follow. Therefore I did find myself relying upon the summary at the end of each area for the results.

The results:

... the main hypothesis of the study was that empowering parents would improve client youths' behaviour and psychosocial functioning ... findings support this key hypothesis, and they indicate the promise of this intervention (153).

In the areas of crime/delinquency and alcohol/drug use, statistically significant results indicated the efficacy of FEI. One of the results I found interesting, being a mental health worker, was that there was no impact on the youths' emotional/psychological functioning, although young people did report increased satisfaction with their families. Not surprisingly, short-term outcomes (one year) were more significant than long-term outcomes (four years), indicating the need to include booster sessions. The authors repeatedly note the cost saving benefits, both in regard to delivering the intervention (thought to be US\$1200) and the savings on the justice system. Dembo and Schmeidler describe the ways their intervention could be

improved via booster sessions, increasing efforts at enrolment/involvement and finally, required participation. Growing evidence suggests that the length and quality of treatment are more important in assisting with substance abuse than voluntarily entering the program, therefore court directed participation could be considered.

Family Empowerment Intervention adds to the limited body of research into the area of interventions with high-risk adolescents. The lack of change in individual emotional/psychological health indicates the need to find some way to include individual mental health treatment within the systemic framework, as it seems clear that both are required. Indeed the recent article by Anne Sved-Williams (2003) described a systemic treatment framework in which attachment theory, systems theory and a trauma framework were applied to infant mental health. This approach may be useful to consider for adolescents. Finally, this book would be of interest to policy makers and the service systems currently working with young people at risk. The extensive descriptions of techniques and interventions would be of great use to the numerous organisations delivering short-term family care.

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Try and Make Me! Simple Strategies that Turn off the Tantrums and Create Cooperation

Ray Levy & Bill O'Hanlon, with
Tyler Norris Goode.
Emmaus, PA, Rodale, 2001. 226 pp.
ISBN: 1057594 553 X. \$26.95.

This little book is a gold mine of ideas for parents who have been browbeaten by children. It surprised me that Bill O'Hanlon was a co-author, as it seemed quite different from his usual style of

writing. It is very prescriptive, explicit about what to do or say in the face of children's challenging behaviour. There is no solution-focused approach here, although the authors are certainly pointing the way for parents to 'do something different', as with most models of change. The overriding goal throughout the book is for the parents to regain and maintain their high status in the family hierarchy. There is a sense of the velvet glove on the iron fist. The techniques are very behavioural, and the parental attitude is 'You solve it, or I'll solve it ... and you won't like my solution'.

The authors cite many examples from personal and professional experiences, which make the techniques come alive and convey empathy and hope. They emphasise the necessity of developing a positive relationship alongside the behaviour management approach, but given the entrenched negative interactions that can develop, I would have expected more reminders of this. Perhaps I have less faith in the ability of frustrated, angry parents to begin acting respectfully in the face of major ongoing challenges from their children. Towards the end, the book began to read like the game plan to win the match of a parent-child power struggle. Flow-charts and scripts of responses are provided for difficulties: arguing, non-compliance, and aggression. A series of audiotapes is cited in the Resource section of the book, including a set of seven tapes by the first author, Ray Levy and his associate, Joe Cates.

The conversational tone and regular summaries make the ideas easily accessible. An interesting innovation is 'The Academy', which refers to supervised practice at a time that is inconvenient for the child, and convenient for the parent.

The authors fail to acknowledge the many years of research that have gone into some of the techniques presented. No parent wants to read a book that references every paragraph, when they are tearing their hair out about an out-of-control child — or, as the authors would say — about a child who is actually very much *in* control — of the parents.

In fact, the premise of the book is that control is *the* goal of most children who are defiant. The authors give little attention to underlying emotions, as the focus is mainly on stopping defiant behaviour. Eight pages briefly comment on the role of parental relationships with

respect to defiant behaviour, touching on disagreements in parenting philosophies within marriage, after divorce, and during dating/remarriage.

It may be because I am more accustomed to applying these sorts of techniques with young children, that most of the ideas seem better suited to children under age twelve. In the introduction there are two sentences of cautionary exclusion:

If you have issues that make it difficult for you to control your temper, or if you struggle with a history of abusing children, this book is not designed to help you. Nor will it help if your defiant child is abusing drugs (xiii).

I keep my copy close at hand for all parent sessions. Several parents have come back to tell me stories of laughing heartily for the first time in a long time, as they spotted themselves and their children within the pages of this book.

Janet Roth

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Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Kleinian Tradition

edited by Stanley Ruzsycynki
and Sue Johnson.
London, Karnac, 1999.

Soft cover. 197 pp. ISBN 1 85575 175 5.
Price??

Those who know Klein's work will be aware of her theoretical stance which links our patterns of thinking to primitive states of mind. The Kleinian hypothesis is that for us all, sanity is an achievement. This stimulating and readable collection is in many ways an elaboration of the growth of Kleinian theory and its implications.

This book is the companion to *Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Independent Tradition* by the same editors. The impression created by both these volumes is that they are by practising psychotherapists, writing and making sense of their work, and one of the outcomes is the diversity of issues covered. To give readers a feeling for this diversity, I quote some chapter headings: 'On the persistence of early loss and unresolved mourning', 'Notes on a case of paedophilia' and 'When is enough enough?' Interestingly the Introduction

includes significant discussion about the efforts made to preserve confidentiality in the writing, and reflects an increasing debate in the therapy literature concerning the ethics of writing about an individual therapy.

Some readers of the Journal may recognise contributor Noel Hess. Noel was a Brisbane psychotherapist who has lived in Britain for some years and has become a substantial contributor to both British and international journals. Perhaps this is a Brisbane bias, but I found his chapter on 'Psychoanalytic psychotherapy for chronic depression' particularly moving. Noel describes the style of depression whereby a person feels not so much thrown by a particular life event, but has been depressed most of a lifetime. He emphasises the importance of mourning for such patients and the usefulness of intensive psychotherapy. He writes

We can, however only build on the inner foundations of love, hope, and goodness, even if they appear lost, fragmented or destroyed ... as a result of the emotional work of mourning, a barren and stultified internal world can be modified into one that is varied, balanced and alive (134).

I feel that the liveliness of the prose in describing the internal world reflects the aliveness of the therapy. Although it is not a book for beginners, I would recommend it to anyone interested in exploring the world of Kleinian Psychotherapy.

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Psychic Hooks and Bolts: Psychoanalytic Work with Children under Five and their Families

Maria Emilia Pozzi.
London, Karnac, 2003. xix + 202.

Paper. ISBN 1-85575-907-1. £19.99.

The Importance of Sibling Relationships in Psychoanalysis

Prophecy Coles. London, Karnac, 2003. xi + 97.

Paper. ISBN 1-85575-923-3. £12.99.

Psychic Hooks and Bolts conjures images from Peter Pan and the Munsters; *The Importance of Sibling Relationships* does not leave any ambiguity. The former is a therapist's book, the latter, a theorist's. Both are valuable contributions to the psychotherapy literature that come from the Tavistock through Karnac.

Pozzi describes psychodynamic case-work at the Tavistock's Under-Fives Counselling service — family therapy with babies and toddlers and troubled couples done in five sessions. Psychodynamic understanding with littlies can be direct and reparative of the FOO patterns that become FOP realities. The patterns are Pozzi's *Hooks*. Her *Bolts* are means for security.

Pozzi describes work with families with postnatal depression, separation difficulties, eating, sleeping and soiling problems, gender identity, grief, learning and intellectual difficulties, hyperactivity and parental mental illness. Application of the approach to parent guidance, mental health consultation, and telephone counselling is presented, along with introductory chapters that articulate Pozzi's theoretical position. The family therapist wondering about how to use countertransference might find this account quite clarifying.

Coles' book does not have the saving grace of escape from Object Relations terminology into the meaningfulness of casework, as Pozzi's does. Psychoanalysis, in its formative conclusions about the Oedipus Complex, missed the importance of siblings in shaping adult relationships of a collaborative rather than competitive form. We marry 'good images' of our siblings more often than those of our parents. Coles looks to the lives of Freud and Klein to demonstrate why such formative theorists might have missed the importance of siblings. Coles manages to get a great deal into a slim and readable (if you can get past the terminology) book complete with references to casework and figures in literature, such as Byron and Keats. At a clinical level,

Coles' description of destructive sibling transferences is very interesting and constitutes, in my mind, a significant extra pearl of wisdom.

For the family therapist, Pozzi's cases might well be eye-opening. For the psychoanalytically inclined, Coles is a splendid eye-opener from theoretical and historical angles, with many implications for clinical work.

Thank you Karnac.

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Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy in the Independent Tradition

Sue Johnson and
Stanley Rusczyński (Eds).

London, Karnac, 1999. 187 pp., PBK ISBN:
1 85575 176 3. £19.99.

This is a collection of essays by working psychotherapists trained in the British Independent Tradition. The British Independent Tradition comprises historically the analytic group who did not align themselves with Melanie Klein or Anna Freud in the 'Controversial Discussions' in the 1940s. These developments are described in psychoanalyst Gregorio Kohon's book *The British School of Psychoanalysis: The Independent Tradition*. Kohon lived and worked in Brisbane in the 1980s and 1990s, establishing the Brisbane Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies. Kohon's work here created a strong local link to the culture of these ideas, which I need to acknowledge. The independents sought to draw from the best of both the Kleinian and Freudian traditions. They are a group that identifies with the importance of thinking one's own thoughts rather than holding onto a static idea of the truth. This may mean using all that is good from theory and past experience to think new thoughts. One of the coeditors, Stanley Rusczyński, worked for many years at the Institute for Marital Studies, Tavistock Clinic. He co-edited *Psychotherapy with Couples* and *Intrusiveness and Intimacy in the Couple*. One could wonder if some of the feeling of this book could be influenced by his work with couples: psychoanalytic work is

also deeply intimate and involving of both parties, albeit in different roles.

Some pertinent questions raised in the Introduction are subsequently explored:

- May the false self of the patient be paralleled by the analytic neutrality of the therapist and if so what are the implications of this?
- How far is transference interpretation essential to psychic change?
- When does a therapist become a traumatogenic object and reproduce trauma in the treatment? (2–3).

However, I would add some questions stimulated for me by the book.

How can love in the transference be addressed without being unduly seductive, exposing or intrusive? Viqui Rosenberg's very interesting chapter, the 'Erotic Transference and its Vicissitudes in the Countertransference', poses the question 'At which point does the uninterpreted erotic transference become an uncomfortable shared secret?' (135). By the same token, Rosenberg cautions against being too interpretative in this area.

How much are psychic structures of dreaming and day-dreaming similar and different? How much is dreaming the prototype of creativity? How much does the structure of psychotherapy, the regular appointments, the couch, and the quiet room encourage a sort of 'awake dreaming' and creativity to take place?

Parts of *The Independent Tradition* may provoke family therapists to explore some of the theoretical constructs which inform it. However I think it is, in a general sense, accessible to a wider therapeutic audience. My experience was that it was helpful in establishing new vantage points to think from — the essays are not the end of the story but part of ongoing dialogue. Although it may not have been the intention of the editors, it is a good illustration of finding ways of thinking, ways of seeing and ways of understanding.

References

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Reverie and Interpretation, Sensing Something Human

Thomas Ogden.

Karnac Books, London, 1999. 276 pp.
Paperback. ISBN: 1 85575 239 5. £19.99.

Thomas Ogden, a highly prestigious psychoanalytic author, has written a book with a fascinating collection of ideas, stories and critical thinking, with personal comments where they complement his theme. I enjoyed reading *Reverie*, which embraces many contemporary views of psychotherapy, and which may enhance the dialogue family systems therapists have with psychoanalytic theory.

In a book which has many intriguing theoretical and literary labyrinths, two main threads are prominent. First, Ogden emphasises the importance of the analyst to be human; to develop a capacity for spontaneity and 'respond in a way that is not strangled by stilted caricatures of analytic neutrality' (25). As a way of illustrating this, he demonstrates the significance of the therapist being able to attend to the notion of deadness and aliveness in the therapeutic encounter. Four case vignettes illustrate his theme. Each gives a small sample of an experience in therapy, which elicited in him deadening hopelessness or distractibility.

Whose thoughts have not wandered in a family therapy interview? Here and there, Ogden tells us of what he may be thinking or feeling in a session which might at first appear a distraction or an impediment to attending to the patient. It is by attending and using his own floating feelings or thoughts that Ogden is able to connect more deeply with the patient's predicament; 'reverie is an emotional compass ... that helps me gain my bearings in the analytic situation'. He places reverie in the context of the patient-analyst partnership, 'the task of which is to help the analysand become more human in the fuller sense' (15). He

warns us, though, that the experience of a reverie is rarely immediately translatable. The therapist must be able tolerate being adrift, and symbolisation develops over time. (However the reverie that might appear to a family therapist when seeing a feisty family of five may be a different story!)

The second theme developed is the importance of language; both the patient's and the analyst's. He explores this by many means. The poetry and prose of literary figures complement Ogden's points. For example he uses Henry James (8) on the art of fiction to make a comment about the art of psychoanalysis. Here he is valuing the notion that the analyst, like the artist, has freedom to experiment. He sees language as a tool which continually needs to be honed.

Ogden's message is a strong plea for the therapist's authentic, simple and adequate language which gives voice to human experience. He is disparaging of those whose analytic language has become 'routinised form in which "knowledge is conveyed"' or those who offer a 'stale formulaic sound of "accepted" technique' (12). I am reminded of the previously fashionable family therapy techniques, such as the post-session message to the family, which usually started with 'We are impressed with/confused about ...' and the occasional disingenuous reframing of problems. Practitioners in all schools of therapy are at risk of falling back on prescriptive interventions, which become impersonal if used injudiciously. Ogden is aware of the paradox that spontaneous uncontrived language takes a great deal of training! Thus the importance of the authentic use of language in making human connections.

Imagine starting a family therapy seminar with the following written tasks:

- 'Describe a situation in which you were being insincere. In the situation you just described, how did you "know" that you were being insincere?'
- 'Describe a conversation in which you said something that felt insincere and then you changed a word or phrase or sentence, or even an intonation of voice, which resulted in your feeling that what you had said was now more sincere. What was changed?'

The context of the exercise for Ogden was an English literature seminar

the author had attended as a young student, a strong influence on his valuing of the precise use of language. He offers us a creative way of acquiring respect for authentic expression; he provides a setting for students to listen to themselves and their efforts to use words. Should there be a place in all therapeutic training for the imparting of authentic therapeutic practice?

The book contains Ogden's emotional life in the practice of his craft, the impact of certain patients on him, and his views on literature, poetry and human connectedness. The eight points that conclude the chapter on perversion create an usually clear picture of the genesis of perversion, and requirements for successful treatment. He concludes with an unusual chapter in which he uses psychoanalytic thinking to explore three poems by the American poet Robert Frost, concerned respectively with Love, Death and Time. This typifies the book: the reader is enticed further and further, in the hope of further surprises. I was not disappointed!

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Tales of Solutions: A Collection of Hope-Inspiring Stories

Insoo Kim Berg and
Yvonne Dolan.

NY, Norton, 2001. pp.185. ISBN 0 393
7000320 7. US\$28.00.

Tales of Solutions contains ten chapters, most of which are defined by a different technique in Solution-focused Brief Therapy, including the miracle question, finding exceptions, scaling, and using compliments as interventions. Each chapter contains an introduction and rationale, with the main focus being on therapists' stories about their success with that technique. The stories provide the strength and originality of this book.

The first thing that is striking about these stories is the dizzying variety and severity of 'problems' to which solution-focused therapy has been applied. These include commonly medicalised conditions such as multiple personality, obsessive compulsive disorder, and psychosis, working with wider systems such as the

corporate environment or hospital ward, working with victims of violence and abuse, and dealing with grief, loss, and palliative care. The second striking element is the wide variety of cultural contexts. The therapists who have submitted stories come from Japan, Sweden, Israel, Ireland, and the US, among others. This combination of problems and cultures allows the reader to witness the creativity with which the basic techniques can be applied.

Why do these seemingly simplistic techniques appear to work so well with such complex and challenging problems? What is it about this therapy that seems to lend itself to this level of cultural diversity? One's first reaction is to disbelieve the narrators and wonder if they are wearing rose-coloured glasses, or are blinded by their own relentless optimism. This is tempting early in the book, given Berg and Dolan's descriptions of the miracle question as creating a form 'of psychological alchemy', or causing the client to fall into a type of trance-like state. It is also tempting when the concept of 'leading from behind' is described as 'gently tapping the client on the shoulder and asking whether she noticed the beautiful sunset'. One's immediate reaction is to see this simply as cliché, or as a form of delusional Americanism. As one continues, however, and the stories begin to take hold, other possible answers begin to emerge.

Perhaps the philosophy behind this model is more powerful than the simplicity of its techniques might suggest. Consistent through each of the stories is the therapist's unconditional faith in the capacity of clients. No situation seems too challenging to cancel this out, and I wonder if clients experience this as a form of spiritual encounter; one which, when applied so patiently and relent-

lessly, can break through histories of despair, pathologising, or oppression. Perhaps solution-focused therapy is ideally suited to cross cultures, because it works within the belief system of the clients and leaves the question of specific solutions to their own hidden expertise.

This book does not offer much in the way of technique that cannot be found in other texts on solution-focused therapy. What it does offer, however, is a source of inspiration that only stories of success can bring. *Tales of Solutions* is ideally suited to new therapists who want to learn about this model for the first time. It also serves as a healthy reminder to those of us who are more jaded that theoretical sophistication may be no substitute for a strong belief in the strength of others.

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The Harveys and Other Stories: Invitations to Curiosity.

Jennifer Lehmann.
St. Luke's Innovative Resources,
Bendigo, Vic. 2003.

Soft cover. 113 pp. with index.
ISBN 0-9580189-3-6. \$29.15.

The general audience for *The Harveys* would be social workers, and community services practitioners and students. It is a collection of short stories about people's lives, with characters covering a broad spectrum of society, from professionals to families struggling on welfare. The

author's purpose is to provoke thought and discussion around each of the stories. Jennifer Lehmann draws upon her vast experience as a social worker in both the city and rural environments.

I was quite taken with the notion of 'Invitations to Curiosity', as this is exactly what happened as I read the stories. I found myself hypothesising about the situations, and the characters, and I was curious about the outcomes. I found I was easily able to slip into the 'role' of the worker. I also wondered how I might handle each situation. The vignettes are varied enough to provoke thoughts on work practice, policy and procedure and personal and professional values and attitudes. It was good to read about other workers' experience, and the dilemmas they sometimes face. It helps to know you're not alone in your thinking and feeling.

From a lecturer's perspective (Community Services Youth Work), I find the book would be a good tool for promoting discussion amongst students. It is innovative, the characters are 'alive' the stories 'real', the situations broad enough to cover a number of learning outcomes, from social structure and policy to social justice, and values. My only suggestion for possible improvement would be to move the guide for discussion to the end of each related story. I found I read the stories all at once, and then discovered the guide. The guide brought up some possibilities I had overlooked in my own reflection, and it would have been beneficial to read it after each story.

All in all, this book achieves what it set out to do.

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