Innovative Therapy

David Jones (ed.)
Open University Press, 1994, £16.99, 239pp.

This is the latest in the excellent *Open University Psychotherapy Handbooks* series. Like its predecessors the format is a series of individual contributions by practitioners on a variety of different approaches with the focus, in this particular case, on the newer therapies from within the humanistic-transpersonal spectrum. Each chapter, like the earlier handbooks, describes the history, key theories, limits and strengths of each approach with a case study to illustrate.

Featured approaches are primal integration, regression therapies, psycho- synthesis, core energetics, core process psychotherapy, post-reichian and focusing, plus articles on voice, multi-media work, dance and movement therapy, men's therapy and astrological counselling.

Every reviewer and reader is bound to bemoan what isn't covered either by this or the previous *Individual Therapy Handbook*; for me this means Hakomi, Mindell's work and Mahrer's radical experiential approach among others. The only reason I can think of for excluding these would be space and the fact that these approaches are less well represented in the UK at present than most of those that are included. However, be that as it may, the book is exceedingly welcome in making more generally available the so-called newer therapies, though as we know most of these approaches have a long tradition behind them.

One immediate point of interest to me was that by having an OU book on the Innovative therapies, the humanistic approaches not covered because they're more traditional—e.g. Gestalt, TA, person-centred,

psychodrama *et al.*, immediately become, in my mind, just that — 'more' and 'traditional'. They come to occupy the middle of the road space previously inhabited by psychodynamics and cognitive psychology. This leads to the interesting thought that a few more changes whereby 'Innovatives' become 'individual' and there will have to be a new series entitled *Traditional Therapy: A Handbook* or 'Therapies we have known and loved'. If all of this leads to psychodynamics being finally consigned to the lay-bys of history then roll on the handbooks as far as I'm concerned.

Needless to say, this 'Innovative' is all excellent stuff. I particularly enjoyed Andrew Forrester on Men's therapy and patriarchy; Laura Donington on Core Process Psychotherapy and David Jones' informative and open introduction. Virtually everything in the book is worth reading. However the absolute peak for me is William Emerson and Stephan Schorr-Kon on Somatotropic Therapy. The overall momentum created by this, Juliana Brown and Richard Mowbray's excellent 'Primal Integration' chapter, David Cranmer on 'Core Energetics' and William West on 'Post Reichian' demonstrates the consensus among the body-based innovative therapies towards a process-oriented somatic approach in which pre- and peri-natal experiences are focal.

Like the previous handbooks, I can't imagine anyone reading it cover to cover, and the danger is always that you dip in and then forget all about it, treating having it on the shelf as the equivalent of osmosis. Well, I do anyway! But I will say that every single chapter of this one appealed to me, and each proved stimulating and rewarding in its own way.

David Kalisch

Sick and Tired of Feeling Sick and Tired: Living with Invisible Chronic Illness

Paul J. Donoghue and Mary E. Siegel
Norton, 1992, 284pp.

Millions of people suffer from invisible chronic illnesses (ICI) which, although they have few or no outer signs, bring about pain, fatigue and a range of frightening or debilitating symptoms which markedly detract from the quality of life. These illnesses range from chronic fatigue syndrome, PMS and endometriosis to thyroid disease, HIV and irritable bowel. What unites them and other conditions is the apparent external normality of the patient, which heaps on the additional heavy burden of other people's suspicious and negative reactions.

A person with a broken leg, cancer or a socially acceptable disease with a definite orthodox diagnosis usually elicits concern and sympathy. Those with ICI, on the other hand, often have to run the gauntlet of countless medical tests, impa-

tience and disbelief as many of the symptoms cannot be measured objectively — often diagnosis is by elimination of other disorders. It is difficult to trust without evidence and those around them tend to find it hard to accept the seriousness of the situation. This exacerbates the fear, guilt, frustration and sense of loss of control of the sufferer, leading to spiralling alienation on all sides.

It is perhaps because one of the authors herself has MS that this book rings so true. Snippets of case histories and verbatim dialogue illustrate and enliven the main points and make for an easy though rarely simplistic read. The suffering, anxiety and frustration of the sufferers come over directly, as does the compassion and respect of the authors for sufferer, carer and health professional alike.

The book is divided into two sections — the first on the experience of ICI and the second on coping with it. The first part will almost certainly hit ICI sufferers with frequent stabs of self-recognition — and relief at being understood at last.

The second section identifies many areas where realistic self-help could be of benefit — clear thinking, listening and communication, as well as understanding patterns of belief and behaviour — and outlines simple, but effective strategies for change.

Family and friends — those affected at second-hand and puzzled or exasperated would profit greatly from just reading how it is to be trapped in a body that won't go properly, and sufferers themselves will find a wealth of helpful — and respectful — suggestions from people who clearly know the inner torment of invisible illness.

Jane Ridder-Patrick

What's Really Going on Here?

Susie Orbach
Virago, 1994, £7.99

Susie Orbach has written numerous articles for her *Guardian* weekend column, and this book contains the equivalent of a year's articles which are categorised into five headings. The first is 'Towards emotional literacy in public and private life', which carries Susie's main objective of making readers aware of the dearth of emotional language and expression which surrounds us in our daily lives and personal interactions. She maintains that if we put as much energy into understanding the complexities of our emotional lives as we do in learning the complexities of reading, writing, and arithmetic then our emotional lives would make more sense to us, instead of being unconsidered and unknown.

In the second section 'What's really going on here?', Susie explores common feelings such as anger, envy and betrayal and says that by recognising these feel-

ings, acknowledging and accepting them, we can then begin to understand them and work through the barriers that we have created through fear and ignorance.

Similarly in the third section 'Between parents and children' she suggests that we are scared of children's needs and vulnerabilities because they remind us of our own needs and vulnerabilities which we have come to repress and fear.

In the fourth section 'Fear of intimacy' she catalogues clearly the varied emotions which are encountered along the journey from first love and valentines through to breaking up, and again says that, by analysing the pattern of old relationships and conflict within them, we can enter into new relationships with the headstart of awareness of such conflict, and so hopefully minimise the emotional damage and despair that may arise.

Finally in 'Women observed' Susie discusses familiar topics such as anorexia, menopause, and sexual harassment in her own familiar way.

I found this anthology of vignettes at first appealing. I could dip into each one whenever I had a spare moment — it was truly like reading a newspaper. But after a while I became frustrated, because I had a book in my hands and not a newspaper and expected more than I received from the contents. Just as I got into an article, it finished and left me wanting more, quite frustrated. While a week's space in between reading each article may have been okay for Guardian readers, (to raise their awareness in small doses suitable for a weekend's reading) I found the individuality of the articles too great to be compressed together page after page, and would at least have expected a bibliography at the end of the book to encourage further reading. To become emotionally literate is a big step and one of the intermediate steps is to be aware of the literature about emotions — this was omitted. Several of the articles really hit home to me, both personally and professionally, but I am able to reach out for other sources in order to continue to become emotionally literate, and readers of this book may not be.

Sandra Booth

Discover Your Sub-Personalities

John Rowan
Routledge, 1993, £9.99, 187pp.

I am not quite sure for whom this book is written. Certainly every counsellor and therapist should be thoroughly familiar with its contents. It contains a good summary of work in this area. The formula is neat. The chapters start with an explanation leading us step by step into the depths of our personality and the discovery of our many sub-personalities. This is followed each time by a very good and helpful exercise and sometimes a questionnaire, all of which are set out

clearly and simply. I enjoyed reading it, but on the whole what is a serious field of enquiry is treated too glibly and superficially with the aim of making it popular. Perhaps it is the illustrations which I find most disturbing. They are ugly and aggressive and somehow flippant.

There are one or two warnings for the general reader such as: 'It is quite scary to see the way in which these conflicts reflect back and forth inside us and outside us', or 'Don't run away with the idea that the concept of sub-personalities can be used to diminish any of our human responsibilities'. But we are carried along in an enthusiastic tone deep into sacred territory that could be quite dangerous if this is the general reader's only guide.

Hal Stone and Sidra Winkelman, whom the author quotes as having the most ambitious and well-worked-out approach to sub-personalities yet devised, warn against treating work such as this as a parlour game. Nor do they recommend sub-personalities talking to each other but rather that they should integrate within an Aware Ego. Not enough emphasis on the unifying process encompasses Rowan's book nor advice as to how to merge the energies of these sub-personalities into coexisting simultaneously. Is the Aware Ego of the Stones the same as the Real Self of Rowan? We are left to wonder.

Some of this weakness is referred to at the end of the book: 'There never comes a time when we can simply abandon our multiplicity and lay (sic) down in a perfect and final unity'. I think there may be glimpses of this state however.

John Rowan refers briefly to the soul. In one exercise he suggests writing a dialogue between you and your soul or between you and one of your *other sub-personalities* (my italics). There is a tantalising reference to an ancient Egyptian document of a dialogue between a suicidal man and his soul but no indication as to where to get hold of this. Nor where to find a 12th century account of a similar kind

The last chapter faces up to these difficulties. Perhaps this will be the subject of a further book where the author will draw on the wealth of expertise contained in spiritual knowledge and thus bridge a few gaps.

Bronwen Astor

The Minimal Family

Jan E Dizard and Howard Gadlin
The University of Massachusetts Press, 1992, £11.95 pb, 285pp.

This is a sociological book about the emergence of the modern family, drawing on the work of social historians, political economists, sociologists and psychologists. It has a good deal to say about the rise and fall of familism: 'By 'familism' we mean a reciprocal sense of commitment, sharing, co-operation and intimacy

that is taken as defining the bonds between family members. These bonds represent the more or less unconstrained acknowledgement of both material and emotional dependence and obligation . . . Familism makes the home a base to which you can always return when your independent endeavours fail or prove unsatisfactory.' (p.6)

If we then look at the unconventional types of family which are now so prevalent — one-parent families, gay couples, unmarried couples, communal living arrangements and so forth — there is the paradox that on the one hand they are trying to uphold the very same values which families have traditionally espoused, while on the other hand they are judged by many as a threat to the very idea of a family.

The modern family is expected to be emotionally self-sufficient. Yet the supports which the ideals of familism gave to that are lacking in many cases. The inevitable result is that other sources of support are sought — material support from employers and the state, and emotional support from counsellors and therapists. The argument of the book is that familism needs to be extended beyond the family, and the values of co-operation and so forth found outside in the external world. How can we produce a familial public?

The authors say that it now has to be through legislation, negotiation through collective bargaining, or the activities of organisations for reasons of their own. In this way we obtain, through a diverse collection of ad hoc measures, something which might be called a public familism. Instead of the emphasis being on autonomy, it will be on connectedness and interdependence.

This is a well-written book, fully supported by reputable sources, and has much to say to those who are concerned with these issues.

John Rowan

The Psychology of Adaptation to Absurdity: Tactics of Make-believe

Seymour Fisher and Rhoda L Fisher
Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1993, 237pp.

The major goal of this book is to explore and integrate all that is scientifically known about the utility of magical plans and strategies for coping with life's inevitable absurdities. It traces the origins of pretending and the developmental phases of this skill. It analyses how parents depend on pretending in order to secure conformity and self-control from their children. It unravels the way in which make-believe is utilised to defend against death anxiety and feelings of fragility and insignificance. It tests the protective powers of illusory constructs by investigating how well they have functioned in the context of religious myths. It also defines the di-

verse contributions of make-believe to the construction of the self-construct, the defensive manoeuvres of the psychologically distressed, and the maintenance of somatic health.

Unfortunately it doesn't do any of these things very well. Partly this is because it is hamstrung by its decision to stick to the 'scientific'. This means that there is a string of references to books which one would normally steer clear of as too turgid. It also means that a (one would have thought) promising concept like subpersonalities is nowhere mentioned. This book starts out so well, but it soon gets boring, and it gets worse as it goes on.

Nice idea. Shame about the book.

John Rowan

Patient or Pretender: Inside the Strange World of Factitious Disorders

Marc D Feldman and Charles V Ford, with Toni Reinhold
John Wiley, 1994, £14.95 hb, 228pp.

This is all about factitious disorders and the sick role. We have all heard of malingering — putting on a fake illness to get out of some onerous duty — but more intriguing are the cases where there is no such external advantage. Typically people who go in for this kind of thing take playing sick to pathological extremes, profoundly affecting their lives, as well as the lives of others who support them.

This is a very readable book, helped no doubt by the fact that Toni Reinhold is a journalist. The most chronic and extreme version of the factitious disorders is Munchausen syndrome, where the person's whole life is organised around hospitals and varied treatments for diverse diseases. Those diagnosed with Munchausen syndrome are usually men in their 20s and 30s, while women (mostly between the ages of 20 and 50) are more often diagnosed with milder factitious disorders.

The symptoms presented may include: (1) total fabrications or 'disease forgery', (2) exaggerations of real experiences, (3) simulations using various forms of equipment or aids, (4) self-induced disease, using self-infection.

The book contains many case histories, even perhaps too many for anyone other than a fellow-sufferer. There is an interesting chapter on people falsely accused of faking — another error which is possible.

The cruellest and deadliest form of the factitious disorder, say the authors, is Munchausen by proxy, first named in 1977. It is a form of child abuse where adults claim or induce illness in children. These actions are usually taken by seemingly loving, caring parents or guardians and almost always without the knowledge of their marital partners or other family members.

This is a fascinating book, and essential reading for anyone interested in this subject.

John Rowan