Correction: The review of Ernesto Spinelli's *Demystifying Therapy* which appeared in the September issue was by Margaret Davies and not by Courtenay Young — our apologies. John Rowan's review of Spinelli's book appears on page 58 of this issue.

Eating Disorders: Personal Construct Therapy and Change

Eric Button
Wiley, 1993, £17.95, 246pp.

People who suffer from eating disorders are notoriously difficult to help and I welcome this sensitive and meticulously researched book. Eric Button has divided his work into four sections.

The first section gives a detailed description of the nature and treatment of eating disorders, from every possible perspective. Anyone wishing to gain a clearer understanding of this complex subject will find this section of immense value. It is written with great clarity. The second section was where I ran into difficulty. Button describes personal construct therapy in detail, but I wondered if there were simpler ways of ways of helping which might be equally as effective.

The third section contains a number of fascinating case studies, which admirably demonstrate the complexity of these disorders and the degree of psychological disturbance that the therapist encounters. There is a keen look at the degree of change needed to effect an improvement in the sufferer's quality of life.

In the last section Button provides an overview of the subject, with particular analysis of the many forms of help which may be offered, looking at research into what works and what doesn't.

Despite my reservations about personal construct therapy, I found this to be an enjoyable and highly informative book, which made me think over and question my own practice. Perhaps an exploration of the addictive nature of eating disorders could have been useful. The book is written with great compassion and humility, and manages to convey the author's deep understanding of eating disorders in a clear and helpful manner.

Barbara Radburn

Good Grief: Experiencing Loss

Carol Lee
Fourth Estate, 1994, £8.99, 256pp.

This is a simple, readable yet insightful book on a subject which has become taboo in our saccharin society — loss and its associated grief. Carol Lee, a journalist, stimulated by her own painful but ultimately positive experience of the loss of a

beloved cousin, has accentuated the valuable aspects of really experiencing our losses at the point when they occur. She gives permission for people to grieve in their own individual and idiosyncratic ways, and rejects prescribed or rigid ways of expressing feelings or behaviour.

She includes divorce within the spectrum of loss, pointing out that its incidence in the modern family is both more frequent, and often more painful, particularly to uncomprehending children, (even if the pain is shorter-lived) than is death. She focuses on childhood experience of loss, asking us to acknowledge its depth and seriousness and that it can have deleterious effects on the adult psyche if not dealt with appropriately. She banishes the myth of the inevitable supportiveness of the family, as this tends to be smaller and more closely knit than in former times, and, using the example of a daughter supporting her widowed mother who was quite unable to feel her own loss of a father, draws attention to the fact that the few individual members may all be experiencing different stages of grief at the same time and thus be unable to give each other the emotional support each needs. She acknowledges the role of the 'bereavement counsellor', but stresses that these counsellors need to be flexible enough to meet individual needs on a deep level. She also points out that the parallel experiences often offered by well-meaning friends and relatives of others who have suffered loss may not be helpful. The bereaved person may wonder why these were withheld earlier and experience a sense of exclusion.

Like William Worden and other 'grief professionals', Ms Lee highlights the importance of acknowledging the reality of our loss; only in this way, she thinks, can we come to terms with the fact that ours is not the only human tragedy. She also points out that we can only feel and exhibit compassion for others through first feeling compassion for ourselves; thus the over-eager recently bereaved person who then wants to work as a counsellor and share her experiences to 'give something back' may rapidly come unstuck.

Carol Lee has had many conversations with those who have suffered loss and consequently her book is well illustrated with both familiar and eccentric perspectives. It is the kind of jargon-free book which a counsellor could confidently offer to a lay client, yet which also offers some fresh dimensions to professional workers in the field.

Val Simanowitz

Counselling For Young People

Judith Mabey and Bernice Sorenson
Open University Press, 1994, £10.99

As the founder, and for fifteen years manager, of a Schools' Counselling Service in West Hertfordshire (kindly acknowledged in this book), I was very in-

terested to see how Mabey and Sorenson would tackle an area of counselling on which literature is sparse; particularly as their book covers the younger end of adolescence, whereas Ellen Noonan's earlier volume on the subject (*Counselling Young People*, Methuen, 1983) concentrated more on later adolescents, and also on a more analytical counselling style.

I am pleased to have read this book, for it covers its subject with a commendable breadth, clarity and sensitivity. The authors steer a careful yet forthright path through the minefields of the political and academic, remaining reflectively academic but with a peppering of political views.

The opening chapters of this useful book give definitions of adolescence and of 'counselling for young people', and discuss the development of the (very patchy and fragmented) national provision of counselling services for the young. They also compare the Egan model of counselling with those of the more fully explored existential and psychodynamic approaches.

Later chapters discuss the general issues arising out of the practice of counselling and those specifically relating to young people. The latter include the adolescent's tendency to act out in sessions in a challenging way, or to withdraw into silence, or to set out deliberately to shock, to test, perhaps through hostility, the counsellor.

Mabey and Sorenson rightly point to the need for counsellors of adolescents to be flexible in their approach and suggest that adherence to any rigid or dogmatic system of working is likely to be unhelpful. I agree with them: the integrative model of counselling, with its focus on relationship and on a variety of styles and psychologies, is particularly helpful in counselling young people. It might have been useful if the book had included a section on training counsellors to work especially with adolescents.

The authors rightly dwell on the cultural divide between the youthful client and the adult counsellor; the counsellor may find it difficult to empathise with a young person who holds very different, perhaps experimental, moral views. In turn, the counsellor may be challenged by a young person about the unethical adult world to which the counsellor is identified as belonging, as seen through the idealistic eyes of the adolescent about to enter it.

The authors discuss the setting up of a youth counselling service, and finally offer a critique of counselling for young people in which they survey current counselling practices, counselling in schools, issues for topical debate and a brief discussion on the forthcoming(?) NVQs. Counsellors of young people, they say, '. . . struggle to cope with ever diminishing resources . . . and ever increasing demands'. I appreciated the abundant evidence of their experience and the clarity of their deeply sensitive thinking.

I was a little disappointed that the crucial issue of confidentiality, especially when counselling the under-sixteens, was not given separate attention but left to be (though liberally) dotted throughout the

text. In my experience, it was inevitably a regular and worrying problem in our weekly supervision meetings. I also thought that to write about the provision of counselling side by side with advice giving and guidance — as adopted by many Youth and Community Service initiatives — missed out on a more full discussion of the differences between these two worthwhile activities. This confuses the issue of whether to regard young people as children in need of care and advice, or as adults, able with skilled, ethical counselling to make their own decisions, and poses the basic question of the developmental stage of adolescence which I thought could have been more thoroughly explored. These caveats apart, this book is both a useful training resource, and a celebration and acknowledgement of the often voluntary work of counsellors in frustratingly unsupported and difficult circumstances.

It draws together much current thinking and national evidence and ends, as it began, with the political: 'The need for counselling among young people has never been greater . . . A political climate in which young people are valued instead of blamed for reacting to circumstances over which they have no control . . . would not only motivate young people but would raise the morale of people working with them. Together, as partners, we have to find the way forwards.'

John Sivyer

Demystifying Therapy

Ernesto Spinelli
Constable, 1994, £18.95, 397pp.

This is a serious and interesting book. It starts by criticising psychoanalysis for a mystifying notion of the unconscious, too much reliance upon a notion of linear causality, an enormous reliance on the dubious notions of transference and countertransference and a largely unsupported belief in the importance of interpretations.

It goes on to criticise the cognitive-behavioural model for assuming the possibility of objectivity, the way in which it turns the therapist into a normative judge of what is rational and what is irrational and creates a technicised view of the therapeutic relationship.

It then criticises the humanistic model for its belief in self-actualisation, its emphasis on change, its unaware conditionality, its belief in the self as a distinct and separate entity and its tendency to turn its heroes into gurus. There is a very brief criticism of transpersonal therapy, which tells us very little at all.

All this is done from a position of the author's own which he calls the existential-phenomenological model. He does not explain what this is or where it comes from in this book, though he does in a previous book called *The Interpreted World*,

published in 1989. What was said in the previous volume, however, is so general that in reality it seems safest to say that when Spinelli says 'existential-phenomenological model' he really means 'my model'.

His critique of the humanistic approach suffers from being too narrow. He seems to think that Carl Rogers is about the only humanistic therapist who matters, and quotes Corey's book *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy* very often in support of his points. I don't know when Gerald Corey became an authority on humanistic psychology. What I do know is that it is a mistake to ignore people like James Bugental, Rollo May and Alvin Mahrer, who have just as much right to be considered part of the heartland of humanistic psychotherapy as does Carl Rogers. Hardly any of Spinelli's critique applies to them, and in fact all three of them work in a way which is close to Spinelli's own. The separation he makes between the humanistic and the existential-phenomenological is not quite real. The whole school of experiential psychotherapy, an important section of the humanistic camp, is highly compatible with Spinelli's own views, but he does not seem to have heard of it.

But there is a good chapter on the therapeutic relationship, including some good points on the training of therapists, and in general this book raises important issues, and is well worth attention.

John Rowan

Love and the Soul: Creating a Future for Earth

Robert Sardello
Harper Collins, 1995, £15.99, 209pp.

I liked the title of this book, as it is very much in line with my interests at the moment. I looked forward to reading it and seeing what it had to say. Recent books such as Robert Moore's *Care of the Soul* have been excellent pointers to a new way of looking at the world which does justice to the transpersonal.

But this book was a disappointment. It relies pretty heavily on the views of Rudolf Steiner, and can't resist the odd sideswipe at Freud. The author keeps on referring to 'depth psychology' with tantalising remarks about Jung, but this is not a Jungian book. There is a good deal in it about Sophia, Wisdom, Soul of the World, but this is not the feminist Sophia of Barbara Walker or even Baring and Cashford. According to Sardello, Chartres Cathedral is all about Sophia. And he is inspired by the Book of Revelation: 'Literalists read the Apocalypse as the story of the end of the world, but from the point of view that we have been taking, it is rather the picture of the formation of the new world of the unity of the cosmic soul, the earthly soul, and the individual soul, now in full consciousness.'

This illustrates a curious feature of this book: the way in which it purports to be dealing with the concrete, but keeps on flitting off into the abstract. And he seems also to have a sort of obsession with Jung (and James Hillman) which leads him to bring them in even when they have nothing much to do with his case: 'For depth psychology, as it has been developed after Jung, both individual and world are encompassed by soul. The ego is seen as a kind of disturbance that must be gotten rid of, or at least relativized, and the I is not recognised as an independent factor at all.'

This seems an extraordinary statement, which does not correspond with my understanding of Jung (or Hillman) at all. He has the weirdest way of working with dreams that I have come across anywhere.

Followers of Rudolf Steiner might like this book.

John Rowan

New Introduction to the Work of Bion

Leon Grinberg, Dario Sor and Elizabeth Tabak de Bianchedi
Jason Aronson, 1993 (Revised Edition), 178pp.

This book was first published in 1971. A second edition, not much changed, was published in 1977. This edition is the third, and has been revised quite a bit, in line with the more recent writings of Bion, who died in 1979.

It presents a faithful rendition of Bion's ideas, without subjecting them to any criticism or close scrutiny. The aim is to introduce people to Bion, and lead them into reading more of the master himself.

The first chapter is about Bion's work with groups, and this is of course the best-known part of his work. I did actually experience one of the Bion-type groups at the Tavistock, led by the late Pierre Turquet. It was one of the most unpleasant and least rewarding group experiences of my life. I wrote this up in the form of 38 poems, which I delivered as a scientific paper (existential research) at the annual conference of the BPS Occupational Psychology Section one year. This then formed part of a chapter in my book *The Power of the Group* (Davis-Poynter, 1978). What no one seems to point out, and certainly this book does not, is that the phenomena in Bion's groups arose out of his own basic assumptions, which come out of the Kleinian stable, without being particularly beholden to Klein in detail. In other words, Bion expects psychotic material to come forth, sets up the conditions in which this is most likely, and then notes carefully the resulting psychotic material. What this has to do with other types of group, set up with other assumptions about the nature of groups, is not at all clear. For example, Carl Rogers found quite different phenomena in those he ran, because he had a different set of assumptions about what could happen. In his groups

people tended to become more human.

As this book goes on, the psychotic character of much of Bion's own thinking becomes more and more evident. He bursts into neologisms and shorthand expressions to such a degree that they really become very much like the 'bizarre objects' that he says populate the mental world of the psychotic patient.

And he continually makes statements which are completely untestable. It has often been pointed out that this is a general fault within the Freudian mode of thought, but just listen to this: 'When the split-off parts of the personality have been violently fragmented into minute particles, their evacuation does not produce a hallucination (in the usual sense of the word), as these parts are deprived of any objective sensorial component. Bion calls these hallucinations *invisible hallucinations* and adds that they are very difficult to detect clinically and are only suggested by a gesture, attitude, or muscular jerk in the patient.' How on earth one would go about confirming this or using it in clinical work is not clear to me. And then there is the Grid. This is a matrix of seven rows and eight columns, which is supposed to enable the analyst 'to record and classify verbal formulations, gestures and linking situations in the psychoanalytic session'. It seems to me almost completely useless for this purpose, simply because it is much too complicated. And really what this whole book demonstrates is that Bion had a mind which was extremely complicated. By being true to his own thought processes and never letting go of them, he showed to the world what a complicated mind he had. This sometimes leads us into the farcical, as for example when the authors rather plaintively say: 'We remember that in our first contact with Bion (through his seminars in Argentina), when he referred to the O sign, we wondered whether he meant the letter 'O' (the first letter of 'origin') or the number 0 (zero). The zero, after all, is also the point of origin of mathematic space (infinity). In previous editions of our book, we interpreted it as zero. We now know that O is used by Bion, in this case, to represent the first letter of the origin of the process of transformation.' There is such a temptation, with this book, to give more and more examples of the inconsistency, the contradictions, the wild statements, the sheer craziness of Bion's thinking. But I will restrict myself to just saying that I don't think this is a particularly valuable book for humanistic psychologists to read.

John Rowan