I started at the back, as I usually do, which is why electronic reading never works for me, and enjoyed scanning the exercises and notes. Then I started again at the beginning. The suggested writing activities, at the end of each section of the book, made me want to do some personal writing immediately, after a period of some silence. For anyone with an interest in the therapeutic potential of expressive and creative writing, *A Fox Crossed My Path* is a find. It's difficult to describe its usefulness to interested people and practitioners, so I'll give examples.

Some practitioners and students of counselling and psychotherapy have had very little contact with mental health services and psychiatric illness. The very openness of Monica Suswin's writing about her psychiatric history, the six episodes of clinical depression and the one time of being sectioned means that she is a witness of extraordinary authenticity. She describes her illness and wellness; times of wanting to die, not because of wanting death itself, but because of not wanting to live 'in the reduced hopelessness and despair' that the illness brought with it.

Some people have no idea about how depression feels. I will recommend this short and very readable book to those in the helping professions who don't quite get how very hard it is to *do* anything when clinically depressed. I'll also recommend it to those who have no idea what spending time in various mental hospitals in the UK is like, and how the powerlessness of locked wards, a regime of diagnosis and treatment works.

Monica Suswin is, like many survivors of the psychiatric health system in Britain, well able to monitor her own history of, for example, being prescribed medication with all of its consequences. She explores in chapter 3, in clear and engaging detail, the shock of realizing that although her self-guided writing is vital, the depression will return. To those who want to try therapeutic writing but feel nervous because of their own history, the exercises at the end of chapter 3, 'The Truth and Lies of Writing', are very carefully introduced. For example, 'A list for a traumatic illness or a difficult event' and 'A list for recovery from a serious illness'.

Like spending time with a good novel or short story, *A Fox Crossed My Path* leaves the reader changed, more aware of how people's lives are, and this life in particular. For any reader who has tried therapeutic writing and is looking for more, Monica Suswin is an experienced and very sensitive guide. I would also suggest that for starting points in how creative writing can be a lifeline when other options are limited, this book is a must-read, and it can be accessed from the beginning, middle or end.

Jeannie Wright
Associate Professor of Counselling, University of Malta
jeannie.k.wright@gmail.com

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Political hegemony: a Marxist theory of mental illness, by Bruce M.Z. Cohen, Palgrave Macmillan, 241 pp., £66.99 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-137-46050-9. Reviewed by Gavin Robinson, Counsellor

Bruce M.Z. Cohen's book titled *Psychiatric Hegemony: A Marxist Theory of Mental Illness* is an interesting look at how the current control of people's lives in the early twenty-first century is affecting us in today's world. The book examines how the self is affected as we struggle with trying to 'shape up'. And shaping us up is very much what the neoliberal world is

doing to us, it seems. Cohen concludes, more or less, that 'I hope I have now convinced [my readers] that the mental health system is a fundamentally political project' (p. 205). However, Cohen also goes on to say, ' … lest we forget, there are societies that live perfectly happy (in fact, happier) lives without psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists, counsellors, life coaches, and agony aunts and uncles' (p. 207). Cohen does not name these countries, however.

Cohen is a sociologist from New Zealand and has written this book from a Marxist perspective. It would have been helpful for me if there had been more quotations and texts from Karl Marx to illustrate his position, and to have a source to compare to what Cohen was referring to in this book. He does say this:

> Ultimately, however, a Marxist critique of political economy needs to consider the ideological function in the context of the underlying economic prerogatives of capitalism. The social control of populations considered as deviant and labelled as 'mentally ill' by the psy-professions serves specific requirements of the market, whether this is through the profiteering from individual treatments, the expansion of professional services, or the reinforcement of work and family regimes in the name of appropriate treatment outcomes. (p. 33)

Cohen then refers to William Tuke, an Englishman born in 1732, who at the York Retreat in England developed treatments that were rather more humane than the more coercive and restraining asylum that was in place generally in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This, according to Tuke achieved a 70% 'recovery' (p. 36). In today's world, specifically in the UK, the ever more advanced capitalism means that social control is even more so. Any 'deviant' behaviour is controlled by various disciplinary regimes and practices.

To use a current example in the UK, for instance, there are inappropriate benefit sanctions that exist for missing an appointment for ordinary circumstantial reasons at the Department of Work and Pensions when trying to obtain or continue much-needed benefits. This is an example of the many overt and covert ways of enforcing behaviour to suit the market in what is mischievously called a 'free society'. This free society misnomer is used in a capitalist society to mislead us. This misleading assists in keeping us calm and in control – or rather more accurately, to calm the powerful and control us. I am using 'calm' in a way that capitalism tries and succeeds in keeping us controlled. Underneath this calm, there is, perhaps, much anger, which comes out in 'civil' society whenever there is an opportunity.

This book gives a very good overview of the history of trying, and indeed of succeeding, to control people seen as deviant, in many ways. The use of various means to cure these suffering people in many tortuous ways, such as bloodletting, ECT (Electroconvulsive Therapy) and lobotomy, again 'shown' to 'calm' the individual. To exemplify in a bit more detail, in the 1890s there was the 'tranquilizer chair' to which the 'lunatic' was strapped for several days so that (s)he could hardly move, which 'calmed and steadied the blood supply of the insane' (p. 44). The alienists, now being called psychiatrists, were attempting to show that insanity had organic causes. This might help the status of the psychiatrist become closer to the doctors trying to treat physical diseases. Nowadays, even though approaches such as ECT are still being used to treat depression and some other 'mental illnesses', the emphasis is on drug therapies. Cohen argues (p. 27) that this is a lot to do with Big Pharma, who have power over psychiatrists thus enabling capital to control us, the working people, who generate their profits.

There is an interesting quotation from the noted pioneer Dr Abraham Myerson. Myerson bluntly stated of candidates for ECT that

> these people have … more intelligence than they can handle, and the reduction of intelligence is an important factor in the curative process. I say this without cynicism. The fact is that some of the very best cures that one gets are in those individuals whom one reduces almost to amentia (simple-mindedness). (p. 47)

Myerson was an American psychiatrist and neurologist suggesting, it seems, that we are not supposed to be intelligent unless we contribute to the capitalist machine. I wonder why any other intelligence is frowned upon? Similarly, we are introduced to Walter Freeman, who pioneered lobotomy so that it could be done in 20 minutes without an anaesthetic – just 'three successive shocks of ECT to pacify the patient' (p. 50). This further increased medical interest in the procedure, due to its ability to maximize 'doctor's profits, [reduce] hospital expenses, and dramatically [increase] the number served' (pp. 50–51). Freeman argues for performing this operation on deviant children, one as young as 4, for 'it is easier to smash the world of fantasy, to cut down upon the emotional interest that the child pays to his inner experiences, than to redirect his behaviour into socially acceptable channels' (p. 51). Freeman was made to stop the treatment when too many died from this procedure (ibid.). It is as though his fantasy was smashed at the same time!

Cohen suggests that capitalism is about ensuring that we are only living to function for the capitalist machine and are not allowed to be human. And if we do not function to enable the powerful to benefit from us, then we are diagnosed with a disorder. Symptoms of that diagnosis contain, as in the example below, the way that the powerful exemplify how we ought to behave for their benefit. As Cohen writes:

> With the diagnostic criteria for premenstrual dysmorphic disorder (PMDD), for example, the manual (American Psychiatric Association 2013: 172) states that '[t]he symptoms are associated with clinically significant distress or interference with work, school, usual social activities or relationships with others (e.g. avoidance of social activities, *decreased productivity and efficiency at work*, school, or home)'. (p. 80, italics are Cohen's)

Cohen evidences the significant increase in the number of times certain terms are used in the various DSMs (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*) over the years, using a textual analysis of the terms in the DSMs. Cohen demonstrates that there is indeed a significant increase in terms giving context to the diagnoses and the number of actual diagnoses that reflect the rise of neoliberalism in the last 30 or 40 years. As indicated in the example above, we see the diagnosis and the conditions for the diagnosis reflecting the world of work, the home and the school. This shows how neoliberalism is actually affecting the way that drugs and treatments are used to tame the person. The result is an increasing depersonalization of the individual in the world, and a shaping of the human being so as to meet the production needs for the capitalist state.

Cohen tries to remedy the problems of capitalism by being more vocal and challenging and 'to resist the top-down state-run agenda' (p. 211). He also writes that 'sociological investigation needs to focus on the powerful rather than the powerless' (ibid.). Cohen says much else along similar lines, and in essence it is difficult to disagree with what he is saying apart from, for instance, when he encompasses all the psy-professionals as being part of the neoliberal machine (pp. 205–211). And care needs to be shown to the many psychiatrists today who try their best to work within such a system. Cohen does not seem to give credence to those of us who try our best to argue and try to practise in a more democratic, bottom-up kind of way. And also to those such as Nick Duffell (e.g. Duffell, 2016), who do research into the powerful. Duffell argues that the powerful control the discourse, so that they can essentially silence us, with language verbally and non-verbally that reflects this.

I would like to think that some are trying their best to work towards being beneficial to the needs of the client as a person to be able to at least try and cope with the dehumanizing and toxic world in which we find ourselves in the twenty-first century. Many of us are trying our best to not be agents of the state. Duffell (2016, p. 119), for instance, shows that the powerful in Britain whom he calls 'wounded leaders' would rather not, or cannot, be in touch with the

unfulfilled child parts of themselves, and they then take this out on and over the other. They learn to control and essentially bully others, and by doing this help to assist neoliberalism to function. Instead we could as a society be in touch with a more mature self. Then we would be able to have more adult-to-adult relating with each other, rather than the powerful trying to treat us like children, so they can bully and manipulate us into existing for their own interest.

Hopefully this very expensive book (which is interesting in itself, in the context of making it more difficult to access this kind of needed analysis) will help us move towards a more mature world. There is an understanding from the book to demonstrate how and why we are like this as humans and hopefully from this we can be more aware of the psychological and other threats of the neoliberal age we live in. We can learn, for example, how to become more compassionate, and to be able to truly calm ourselves. Then we can challenge from a stance of real strength the dangerous toxic world that the powerful, with their false child-like selves, are trying to misshape us into. Misshaping perhaps in a way that fulfils their childlike fantasies, and destroys ours.

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Gavin Robinson
Counsellor
gavin_robinson2@yahoo.co.uk

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