

successfully, psychological impacts similar to those revealed in the letters previously studied were recorded.

Much has been learnt since the mid-nineteenth century of the dire effects of separating children from their families and it could be argued that harsh criticism of those responsible for the early schemes would be unjust. Nevertheless, the lack of supervision, the frequent moves in Canada, examples of abuses and harsh treatment, denial of education and the general attitude of employers should have been regarded as serious issues, raising concerns as to the benefit to the children. In recent years further damning evidence of the physical and psychological harm caused by child migration

has been revealed, vividly exposed by Margaret Humphreys' *Empty Cradles*, 1994 (reprinted as *Oranges and Sunshine*, 2011). Admission of shameful mismanagement and neglect has now been made by the governments of the UK and Australia, as well as by the various organisations involved. Parker's study adds valuable documentation why this should never be allowed to happen again.

Reference

Humphreys, M. (1994). *Empty cradles*. London, England: Doubleday (Reprinted in 2011 as *Oranges and sunshine*. London, England: Corgi Books.)

Understanding Troubled Minds: A Guide to Mental Illness and Its Treatment (2nd edition)

Sidney Bloch (2011). Victoria, Australia: Melbourne University Press, ISBN 978 0 522 85754 2, 371 pp.

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This well written and easy to read text by Sidney Bloch is a fully revised version of the first edition published in 1997 that was co-authored with Bruce Singh.

As promised by the title, this book is a practical guide to understanding the various forms of mental illness and their treatments. Bloch provides a methodical and objective account of mental illnesses, their symptoms and treatments. Not only does this book provide the reader with an opportunity to 'understand' mental illness, but it also offers some insight into the practice of psychiatry from processes and procedures to decision-making and ethics.

The book consists of 21 chapters, most of which include heavily disguised case studies and/or pieces of literature or art that exemplify the point being made. Chapters 1 to 5 walk the reader through the evolution of psychiatry. Bloch provides a brief history of psychiatry and then delves a little more deeply into modern psychiatric practices, including the clinical interview and considerations given to diagnosis and treatment. He includes a description of the core groups of mental illness, as categorised by the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10) (WHO, 1993), and an overview of stress, crisis and coping as a foundation when considering more complex psychiatric illnesses. Chapters 6 to 13 discuss the range of psychiatric disorders in more detail. There are chapters dedicated to anxiety disorders, mood disorders, psychosomatic illnesses, eating disorders, personality disorders, the psychoses, alcohol and drug abuse as well as gender identity and sexual disorders. Each chapter describes the illnesses, symptoms, causes, treatments and ways of supporting the patient and their family members.

Chapters 14 to 16 are dedicated to mental illnesses of special concern for children and adolescents, women, and the elderly. Chapter 17 addresses the subject of suicide and self-harm, in which he discusses issues of prevalence, assessment, treatment, prevention and an interesting and thought provoking section on the ethical dilemmas of intervention and prevention of suicide. Chapter 18 provides a description of common treatment plans with a particular focus on the various forms of psychotherapy. The final chapters are dedicated to promoting mental health across the lifespan with tips and strategies for reducing stress and facilitating coping mechanisms, as well as a discussion on the ethical dilemmas faced by psychiatrists within their daily practice.

As cited on the back cover: 'Sidney Bloch is Emeritus Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and the Centre for Health and Society at the University of Melbourne and Honorary Psychiatrist at St Vincent's Hospital. He was associate editor of the *British Journal of Psychiatry* for a decade and chief editor of the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* for thirteen years'. Bloch's obvious experience and expertise shines through in this book. His goal, with Singh in the first edition, was to write a book that draws mental illness out of the shadows of university and medical walls, and provides a thoughtful, objective and thorough account of mental illness for the general public. Part of their goal was to challenge and destabilise the stigma and discrimination often associated with mental illness. I believe that the presentation of this current book authored by Bloch gives it the capacity to accomplish this goal, and I hope it will attract a wide and varied readership to help it on its

way. I think this book is an excellent tool for chipping away at the longstanding imbalance of power between expert and patient. Not only does this book provide an account of a psychiatrist's role, but does so in a fairly humanistic way. It removes the air of mystery often associated with this role, and not only provides the reader with a greater understanding of mental illness, but also the practitioners dedicated to treating it.

I particularly like the way Bloch weaves stories, letters, poems, paintings and other artistic forms of expression by well-known figures throughout the book. He has taken great care to acknowledge and include artistic expressions of mental illness as valid and worthwhile descriptions of illness. Of particular interest to me was the detailed description of Vincent van Gogh's life, and how he 'suffered' his way through his short life due to mental illness.

The only point that left me wanting to know more — and which might fall outside the book's intended meaning —

was the role of general practitioners (GPs), and in particular their role in administering antidepressants for patients presenting with low to moderate levels of depression. There are debates raging about the significant rise in antidepressants being prescribed by GPs, and I would like to have heard Bloch's opinion about this.

I highly recommend this book. I believe it would be of benefit to professionals when reflecting on their practice, students as a useful bridge between medical textbooks and mainstream literature, friends and family members of people who experience a mental illness, and to anyone who experiences a mental illness themselves. I congratulate Bloch on his fine book.

Reference

World Health Organization. (1993). *The ICD-10 classification of mental and behavioural disorders: Diagnostic criteria for research*. Geneva, Switzerland: Author.