

**CORRUPTING THE YOUNG
AND OTHER STORIES OF
A FAMILY THERAPIST**

*T. Lang, and M. Lang, (1986),
Rene Gordon, Melbourne, available
through the Australian and New
Zealand Journal of Family
Therapy, P.O. Box 663, Lane
Cove, N.S.W. 2066, enclosing a
cheque for \$8.95.*

This small book (169 pages) is the product of Moshe the family therapist reminiscing on his work to Tesse, his confidante, and wordcrafter. And a delightful job of wordcrafting has been done in this book. It is consistently written in a style that owes much to the Jewish

story telling tradition; and despite the fact that it is about Family Therapy, it contains almost no jargon. It is eminently accessible to the lay reader.

The stories in this book range in size from a couple of paragraphs to a few pages in length. They are not spectacular stories; they are brief glimpses of worried peoples' lives, and a therapist's contact with them. It would be too much to expect anyone to write such a book and not portray themselves as at least insightful. However, this book manages to avoid that terrible pitfall of some Family Therapy writers, of painting themselves as a guru. There are not even any of the obligatory guru-disclaimers, of which such people as Bagwan are so fond. This is despite the fact that some guru-language creeps into the book. For example, what might otherwise be called the preface is titled, 'Setting Out'. But the therapist in this book is not omnipotent, and not even omniscient. He is, however, open to the enormous variety of human experience, and to his own response to it.

Despite the brevity of its stories, *Corrupting the Young* does not trivialise therapy, as Hollywood psychiatry cinema so often does. The fact that therapy is hard work, that it may take a long time, be profoundly painful and boring, and at times end in failure, is well illustrated in its

pages. It also captures how rewarding therapy might be, and reflects the therapist's contacts with real, alive people, with all their differences and idiosyncracies.

This book places emphasis on therapy as art, theatre and creative activity and in no way emphasises therapy as technology or science. Teaching of the technology of Family Therapy is done well by a few people; the science of therapy is taught, if at all, poorly by most; and perhaps the art, the theatre, the creativity, can never be taught. It can only be shown, exhibited. This book is a delightful exhibition, to which one can return and browse many times.

This book does not teach in the way that a textbook of family therapy might. But there is much to be seen in it. But it is the kind of book that, even after they have read it a few times, therapists will want to have nearby, to take on bus trips, just in case they happen to need it. Therapists may well find it the source of much rejuvenation.

Wittgenstein said of his book *Tractatus* that it could be used as a ladder, which, once climbed, could be thrown away. I expect that very few copies of *Corrupting the Young* will ever be thrown away.

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