

Review

Corrupting the Young: and Other Stories of a Family Therapist.

By Tesse and Moshe Lang
(Rene Gordon, \$8.95)

A mournful tight-lipped face stares in through a stone window at the reader of 'Corrupting the Young'; out of the right eye, bubbles or crystal balls come spilling forward. It's a beautiful Yosi Bergner called 'Girls with Tears' and what are we to make of it? Can we read the crystal balls? Is it any use? Yes, these stories say.

Melbourne psychologist Moshe Lang has devoted over 20 years as a family therapist to helping people break out of their walls of silence, secrecy, sorrow, fear. His wife is a doctor. Their stories – parables, anecdotes – often have a pie-in-the-eye punch line, with him as the stooge. They're full of folk wisdom, folk humor: kindly, dry tales of human nature in the battlefields of suburbia.

"It was all right," one reconciled couple remarked of his work with them, "but quite frankly he didn't tell us anything we didn't know already." (Who was it who said Life was an open secret?) The stories tell us what we know already. They tell us the moral. Some hit home, others are too mild and predictable. A few, like Ilene's story, are strengthened by unstated anger.

The last story, in which the therapist's blindfold brings about an unlooked-for break through, ends on an almost Chekhovian note of restrained pathos.

Beverley Farmer.

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