
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus

Jennings, S., Cattanach, A., Mitchell, S., Chesner, A., & Meldrum, B. (1994). *The Handbook of Dramatherapy*. London: Routledge. 232 pp. \$19.95 us.

Reviewed by: Karen Cogan, University of Alberta.

Fascinated with the powerful impact of drama as a vehicle for learning, healing, and change in psychotherapy, I turned to this handbook as a valuable source of information, and for the most part was not disappointed. Filled with the theories and experiences of five well respected, practicing dramatherapists working with children and adult populations in a myriad of clinical, institutional, and educational settings, this book offers the reader a glimpse into the wide scope of the field of dramatherapy.

Contained within its pages are 11 self-contained chapters, each written by one of the five authors, and aimed at providing the reader with different models and practices of dramatherapy. In chapter one, Meldrum provides a variety of definitions of dramatherapy and examines historical and present developments of the field in Britain, which is particularly useful information for the novice interested in basic information and a framework for the field. While the book provides a strong overview of the practice of dramatherapy in Britain, those interested in North American approaches might refer to Schattner & Courtney (1981) as well as Landy (1986), which are not referenced in the books' otherwise extensive list of sources.

The first chapter provides the reader with a firm orientation and the remaining chapters need not be read in sequence. Those unfamiliar with the field, for example, might find it helpful to read chapter seven directly after chapter one in order to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences between the disciplines of psychodrama and dramatherapy. Other areas explored in the book are developmental and role theory models of dramatherapy, the connection between play and drama therapy with children, and evaluation and assessment methods in dramatherapy. Each author provides the reader with different applications of theory in practice with such populations as children, adults with learning disabilities, elderly hospitalized patients, as well as rehabilitation and residential groups.

Of great benefit to those intending to use dramatherapeutic techniques in their practice, are the many individual and group case descriptions which provide the reader with practical "how to's" and the experiences of dramatherapists and clients in the therapeutic process. A highlight of the book can be found in chapter 10, which includes interviews with pioneers in the field, including Gordon Wiseman, Robert Landy, Mooli Lahad, and Pamela Mond. The candid interviews provide the reader with a sense of where the field is heading and the struggles that pioneers have encountered in developing a theoretical basis for practice.

Mental Health professionals and students, educators, theatre artists, as well as students in dramatherapy and other art therapies will find this book a

fruitful addition to their libraries. Still, those unfamiliar with the field would likely benefit from first reading Landy's (1986) *Drama Therapy: Concepts and Practices*, which, in my view, provides a more clearly written overview of drama in the context of psychological theory and practice. As Jennings (Jennings et al., 1994) notes, "Drama and theatre are such vast topics that it is easy to get lost in the plethora of possible formulations" (p. 6). While concepts such as role, dramatic reality, and dramatic distancing weave throughout the handbook, at times I found myself feeling lost in the contrasting models and looked back to Landy's exemplary book for clarification. Although Landy provides a more exhaustive and clearly written overview of the field with a wider population, this book provides a more updated and perhaps more integrated look into the theory and practice of dramatherapy.

Those interested in obtaining dramatherapy training in programs recognized by the British Association for Dramatherapists are provided in the appendix with current addresses of the five available institutions. The appendix is also useful in providing the reader with information regarding The British Association for Dramatherapists, the professional body governing dramatherapists, as well as a Code of Practice and Ethics as developed by the Institute of Dramatherapy.

The book's focus in chapter eight on current assessment tools and research in dramatherapy brings to light both the difficulty of and the dire need for "creative" assessment and evaluation in the field. Disappointingly, the authors fail to explore in sufficient detail the use of phenomenological methodologies that would likely be conducive to understanding the dramatherapeutic experience from the perspective of both dramatherapists and clients.

While *The Handbook of Dramatherapy* has its limitations, it is recommended as a source of rich information for those interested in the field. What the book makes most evident is the powerful therapeutic impact of drama-therapy on a wide range of populations, and wets the reader's appetite for further training in the area.

References

- Landy, R. (1986). *Drama therapy: Concepts and practices*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
 Schattner, G. & Courtney, R. (Eds.). (1981). *Drama in therapy: Vols. I and II*. New York: Drama Book Specialists.

Szmukler, George, Dare, Chris, & Treasure, Janet. (eds.). (1995). *Handbook of Eating Disorders: Theory, Treatment and Research*. Chichester, England: John Wiley & Sons. 420 pp.

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Looking for an outstanding up-to-date comprehensive review of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa? This handbook touches on the evolution and manifestation of the eating disorders, as well as types of treatment. It is