

she explores the meaning of family, self, and “surrender to the insoluble mystery of God,” as part of the journey to finding meaning in illness (p. 147).

A further description of *Partners in Healing* is provided by Eleanor Ramos, who sketches the basic training, the qualities, unique gifts, and the call of those who participate in this ministry. The last article, “Pancakes in Mumbai,” by Roberta Troilo, is a moving account of the death of the author’s husband and the support she received from Sr. Kathryn, a pastoral associate, whose ministry became part of *Partners in Healing*.

The other co-editor, Neil J. McGettingan, professor of theology at Villanueva, contributed two articles. In the first, after summarizing the views of five authors (Judith Viorst, Sandra M. Gilbert, Ann Aguirre, Therese A. Rando, Carol Pregent, and C. S. Lewis), he concludes that “our experience of loss leads us to desire God and to seek release from loss and the only solace from death [is] possession of God in eternity” (p. 72). Although he briefly refers to the Buddhist perspective in his second article, “Loss and the Unraveling of Life,” McGettingan, like most authors in this collection, writes from a Christian perspective. (It may have been helpful to indicate the book’s Christian viewpoint in the title as a corrective to the description of *Partners in Health* as “multireligious” on the back cover.)

Several authors, such as Mary Ragan, illustrate well the application of theory to practice. For others, the vignettes are less well integrated. Overall, the collection accomplishes its purpose of underscoring the benefit of caring partnerships, and will be most useful to the non-specialist. The addition of an index would make this volume more useful.

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Archie Smith, Jr. and Ursula Riedel-Pfaefflin, *Siblings by Choice: Race, Gender and Violence* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 174 pp.

Siblings by Choice is an critical analysis of how differently situated human beings work through long-standing historical injustice, experienced trauma, ontological and concrete estrangement, and irreparable hurt to become siblings by choice. Reading this critical examination requires the reader to not only engage individual analysis, but also contextual analysis. *Siblings by Choice* con-

nects teachers and practitioners of pastoral care and counseling to knowledge, skill, and healing/caring pedagogical practices within communities as historical, social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics that shape communities and our place within them.

Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin use metaphor, myth, and scripture from the Judeo-Christian tradition to demonstrate how the concepts of intercultural realities, systemic thinking, and narrative agency help us understand processes that influence violence between and within cultures, races, genders, and religions. They also incorporate the use of art, social sciences and biological perspectives on change.

The many layers and complexities of race, gender, and class violence that make change difficult to achieve and sustain are uncovered.

The sibling metaphor for teaching and training pastoral caregivers and counselors is explored, extensively using Mark 3:33 and 35, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother," to propose a vision in which help seekers are offered assistance in facing the depths of suffering within the radical "then" and the radical "now" of the interconnected human community. Moreover, in hearing the sufferer, the caregiver/counselor stands as witnesses to "encourage the human capacity for resiliency and supports the injured person through a healing process." Movement toward living creatively as siblings is grounded in the belief that there are spiritual resources that are greater than the forces of seemingly insurmountable obstacles to becoming siblings by choice.

Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin explore two fundamental questions that present a difficult challenge: How is it possible for women, men, and children from different cultural and spiritual backgrounds to come together and struggle against common forms of oppression? How can we create relationships and make connections as teachers and practitioners of pastoral care and counseling while we acknowledge and find value in differences?

Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin offer their own life experiences, scholarship, teaching tools, group exercises, and case studies to build more culturally competent approaches to teaching and training pastoral caregivers and counselors, and enhancing possibilities for personal and social transformation. Through this approach we learn the social location of the authors, which make congruent the arguments concerning narrative agency, systemic thinking, and intercultural realities.

A significant strength of the methodological approach in Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin's *Siblings by Choice* is their clearly defined terms and that they

remain steadfastly focused on their thesis. They repeatedly refer back to the theoretical tensions found in the concepts of narrative agency, systemic thinking, and intercultural realities.

DEFINITION OF NARRATIVE AGENCY:

- We are purposeful creatures, born into a particular society and culture at a particular point in its development.
- We live within layer upon layer of stories.
- That a moral vision is never independent of personal identity, mental health, and family loyalty issues.
- The developing capacity for self-reflexivity—the capacity to act in relationship with others and with increased self-conscious awareness.
- Where justice has been denied and the effects of traumas remain hidden, there will surface a need to deal openly with the trauma and right the wrongs.
- We are moral, purposeful, and responsible beings that, in concert with others help to create maintain and modify worlds that hold meaning for us.

DEFINITION OF SYSTEMIC THINKING:

- A way of thinking about multipersonal and reciprocal influences within certain contexts and making connections between our social location, immediate life situation, and the wider world of which we are a part.
- Making connections between events in an attempt to see a larger whole and broader vision, and to gain a comprehensive understanding of justice.
- Working out a systemic, transgenerational perspective and working through the personal and collective history of the victims and perpetrators of economic or military power.
- A reflexive process of moving back and forth between memory, present-day events, and social practices.
- A way of looking at the contexts in which behavior occurs and tracking the reciprocal connections between contexts and individuals, as well as noting the changes that occur within individuals.
- Challenges us to make the connections between our own moral experiences and the ethos and broader contexts in which we live.

DEFINITION OF INTERCULTURAL REALITIES:

- The coming together of influences from many different streams of cultures and system of meaning.
- The developing capacity over time to gain trust and engage in effective communication between members of different ethnic groups.
- Situations when a moral vision is extended with resourceful acts of justice and compassion.
- Embedded in layers upon layers of experience; not all of the layers are in conscious awareness.
- Acknowledges the struggles that post-conflict societies are facing.
- Enlarge our understanding of forgiveness issues and make the matter of forgiveness more complex.
- Narrative agency, systemic thinking, and intercultural realities are often denied through a truncated analysis of one's own situation. It is important to remember that Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin's examination requires the reader to engage individual analysis, as well as contextual analysis.

As a pastoral care provider and teacher of pastoral care, the personal, interpersonal, and theoretical tension I felt through Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin's analysis made reading slow. I found chapters 5 and 6 on metaphor and myth very instructive on how to think about and practice pastoral care. These chapters also generated a slowing response as I found myself staring straight ahead reflecting on my own systemic metaphors, narrative foundations, and layered cultural stories. I began to search out and read myths, folktales, and dramas that seemed to relate to my complex social reality, as well as my pastoral care practice. This time of reflection was well worth the slow read.

For anyone involved in teaching or practicing pastoral care and counseling, it is well worth reading *Siblings by Choice*. Be aware that it does have a Christocentric core, however, the concepts of narrative agency, systemic thinking and intercultural realities are universal. Looking more closely at the processes, Smith and Riedel-Pfaefflin have highlighted can provide significant support for educational, supervisory, and clinical practices.

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