

together the accumulating knowledge about reactions to traumatic experiences. This aim is admirably achieved and the book is packed with information on all aspects of this relatively young diagnostic syndrome. Over 40 contributors, mostly, but not exclusively, from the UK, and representing a wide range of professions bring an extensive variety of perceptions and experiences to the subject.

The book is systematically arranged into four parts, of which the first, entitled 'Human responses to stress: normal and abnormal' reviews the origins of PTSD, current classification systems, distinctions from grief reactions, and outlines different explanatory theoretical models (i.e. physiological and biological mechanisms, psychoanalytic and cognitive-behavioural models). Part II reviews disasters in more detail, starting with a typology of disasters and including brief descriptions of a number of significant British community disasters in the later 1980s – the *Herald of Free Enterprise* disaster, the Lockerbie bomb, the King's Cross fire. Although one feels a little like a voyeur in reading again about these tragedies, the value is that there was something specific to be learned by professionals from each. For example, following the *Marchioness* river boat disaster in 1989, it was recognised how important it can be for relatives to identify the deceased personally, even if badly disfigured.

Part III deals with diagnosis, intervention and treatment, covering all current treatment modalities, and also specific situations such as dealing with children and adolescents, school-based approaches, and the role of police, employers and volunteers. It is acknowledged that the effects of treatment are seriously under-researched, with much still to be learned, such as whether early debriefing approaches modify the later development of significant psychopathology.

Finally, Part IV covers legal aspects, victims as witnesses and claimants, ethical issues, and some basic guidelines for organising psychosocial responses. A brief but practical chapter on psychiatric assessment of stress disorders for legal purposes will be helpful to many psychiatrists called upon to do medico-legal work.

All chapters are fairly short and packed with facts, with a bibliography of varying length at the end of each. This is a reference book to be dipped into and used as a starting point in approaching this complicated subject. My only quibble is with the

subtitle – it is not entirely clear what is implied by "a developmental approach", unless it refers to the gradually evolving understanding of the whole concept of psychological trauma and its effects. In my view a better subtitle could be either "a comprehensive approach" or "a multi-disciplinary approach". Nevertheless, this is an excellent publication. All professional libraries should have a copy and many individuals will find it good value for money.

**Patricia Ainsworth** Red Oak, Picadilly,  
Lancaster LA1 4PW

### **Death and Bereavement Across Cultures**

Edited by C. M. Parkes, P. Laungani & B. Young  
London: Routledge. 268 pp. £45 (hb); £14.99 (pb).  
ISBN 0-415-13136-7 (hb)/0-415-13137-5 (pb)

Bereavement is a significant life event across all cultures and thus makes an interesting starting point for understanding the stress and impact of loss on individuals as well as their families. It is also well known that different cultures have different taboos and different rituals to deal with loss and bereavement. These rituals are key factors in supporting the bereaved individuals by providing a structure and context in which to mourn and deal with their loss. Such a structure can work towards the benefit of the individual by avoiding a pathological grief reaction. In some cultures it is expected that mourning will continue for a year and during this period no 'happy' events such as marriage will be arranged. Another key difference across cultures is the assumption that we know what dying, death and life are. In many cultures people are counted as dead whom most Americans would consider alive and people are counted as alive whom most Americans would consider dead. On the island of Vanatinai, south-east of Papua New Guinea, for instance, people are thought of as dead whom we would consider merely unconscious, so it is possible for a person to die a number of times. Others have argued that the response to death across cultures at a visceral level is the fear of

death as well as sadness, both of which are universal emotions.

Divided into three sections with 13 chapters, the editors set the context for grief and bereavement in the first two chapters. Although they include definitions of culture, they do not include the notions of the self and identity which will determine how any individual sees himself/herself as part of a kinship system and how this identity is affected by the loss due to bereavement. The impact of religion on identity formation could have been built upon the introductory chapters. One could argue that individuals who live in ego-centric societies may well have different patterns of bereavement and may well respond differently to pathology. In such societies the loss may affect individual's self-esteem more strongly and may well lead to pathological grief reactions, especially if rituals are not there to provide an element of structure and support.

The second section deals with individual cultures or religions, providing highlights of the rituals and taboos.

For practising clinicians, especially those who work with the bereaved, the third section provides some helpful advice. The book would have benefited if attachment and losses across cultures had been discussed earlier in the volume.

**Dinesh Bhugra** Institute of Psychiatry, De  
Crespigny Park, London SE5 8AF

### **Mania: Clinical and Research Perspectives**

Edited by Paul Goodnick. Washington, DC:  
American Psychiatric Press. 1998. 412 pp.  
£53.95. ISBN 0-88048-728-3

A new book on mania is still bound to be overshadowed by Goodwin & Jamison's towering monograph *Manic Depressive Illness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). Paul Goodnick is to be congratulated on assembling a volume that concentrates on areas of new development, while dealing with older topics in a refreshing and original way. That his opening chapter is on 'creativity and mood disorder' and the final chapter is on