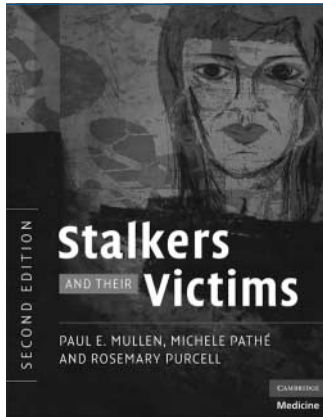


## Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboade  
and Rosalind Ramsay



### Stalkers and their Victims (2nd edn)

By Paul E. Mullen, Michele Pathé  
& Rosemary Purcell.  
Cambridge University Press. 2008.  
£35.00 (pb). 334pp.  
ISBN: 978051732413

It is 9 years since the first edition of this book was published. Since then there has been an explosion of interest in stalking, both in popular culture and as a subject for academic research. In the first edition, a foreword by Anthony Clare (sadly no longer with us) highlighted the book as representing ‘the definitive account of one of the pathological phenomena of our fractured times, of gripping fascination to lay and professional readers alike’. I am happy to report that the second edition builds on this reputation and presents a fusion of exceptional research, clinical experience and sociological exploration that makes it unique in its field.

Stalking is no longer a new categorisation of human behaviour, as described in the first edition, but a well-recognised problem behaviour, ranging from the immature suiter making annoying and crude attempts to start a relationship to the predatory and dangerous sex offender (thankfully rare) who stalks victims without their knowledge before an assault. In between lies a range of behaviours difficult to define and categorise. And herein lies one of the main problems in stalking research – how can one effectively research such a diverse behaviour reflecting such a complex range of motivations? The development of a now widely adopted classification of stalking remains one of the great achievements of the authors, in addition to proposing definitions that promote research internationally.

This second edition is longer than the first, with a more readable layout. It updates and expands previously explored topics, with discussions on stalking as a social construction and social reality, stalking among juveniles, female stalkers, stalking of health professionals (my interest), legal aspects of what is a criminal behaviour in many jurisdictions, and stalking of celebrities and public figures. Its skill, related to the close and long-standing working relationship of the authors, lies in its ability to explore complex topics with a consistency, freshness and clarity to satisfy the interested as well as the academic reader. Summary boxes and case vignettes throughout provide focus to illustrate and highlight clinical aspects of the challenges raised. Unlike in other texts, there is an emphasis on the management of stalkers (as well as victims), with separate chapters on risk management and therapeutic approaches to the stalker.

*Stalkers and heir Victims* remains the definitive account of this problem behaviour, written in a scholarly and highly readable

style. It would be of interest to a wide range of clinicians and also to those professionals, unfortunately not uncommon, who have themselves been victims of stalking.

**Ronan Mclvor** South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, Maudsley Hospital, 103 Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AZ, UK. Email: [ronan.mclvor@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:ronan.mclvor@slam.nhs.uk)

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What Works with  
Children, Adolescents,  
and Adults?  
A Review of Research on the  
Effectiveness of Psychotherapy



### What Works with Children, Adolescents, and Adults? A Review of Research on the Effectiveness of Psychotherapy

By Alan Carr  
Routledge. 2008.  
£65.00 (hb). 400 pp.  
ISBN: 9780415452908

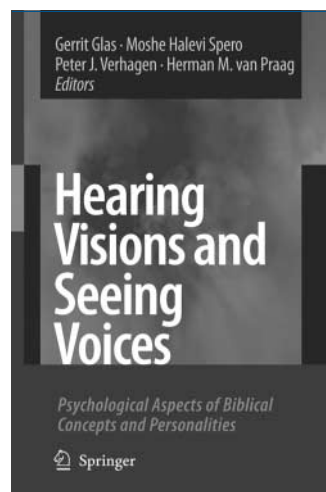
In his book, Alan Carr gathers together and summarises a large body of evidence. Covering a comprehensive range of presentations across the age spectrum and wading through a huge number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses must have required great stamina. Carr starts by explaining the background to and methods used in psychotherapy research. He then covers research examining factors influencing outcome that are common to all psychotherapies (such as quality of therapeutic relationship), before undertaking an extensive review of the outcome literature diagnosis by diagnosis for psychotherapy with children, adolescents, adults and older people. The book is written in an accessible, easy to understand style, with a helpful summary at the end of each section. However, what the book has achieved in abundance in breadth, it lacks equally in depth.

What more in-depth examinations of the psychotherapy literature have found is that the ‘contextual’ (or common factors) model explains the research findings much better than the ‘medical model’ (or diagnosis-specific techniques). All recognised formal psychotherapies are effective to roughly the same degree for all common mental health problems; factors such as quality of therapeutic alliance have a much more significant impact on outcome than matching diagnosis to technique. Whenever there is a fair, properly conducted, head-to-head comparison (i.e. similar duration of treatment using the same number of sessions with properly trained therapists who are supportive of the model of intervention they are using), the results are that each model is equally effective, and client/therapist variables, particularly therapeutic relationship, have a far greater impact on outcome than technique. There was nothing in this book that contradicted this repeated finding. Although Carr refers to these ‘common factor’ findings early on, he then loses his way by dividing the evidence by diagnostic categories, thus giving a misleading impression that for specific diagnoses there are specific techniques to be used that trump others. My knowledge of some of the studies and reviews he discusses also led me to conclude that Carr lacks a more critical

questioning and perhaps accepted some abstracts at face value, leading in places to incorrect conclusions. Thus, I think a better and more analytically thorough job is done by some of the older texts such as Bruce Wampold's *The Great Psychotherapy Debate* (2001).

**Sami Timimi** Ash Villa Child and Family Services, Willoughby Road, Greylees, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 8QA, UK. Email: stimimi@talk21.com

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**Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices. Psychological Aspects of Biblical Concepts and Personalities**

Edited by G. Glas, M. H. Spero, P. J. Verhagen & H. M. van Praag  
Springer. 2007.  
£99 (hb). 326 pp.  
ISBN: 9781402059384

*Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices* arose from a conference that sought to explore the bond between religion and psychology, which the authors suggest lies in their shared history of the *cura animarum*, or the care and cure of the human soul. The book contains a series of erudite reviews on the psychological and theological literature of some iconic Jewish and Christian biblical characters.

The studies on Paul and Jesus are extensive but draw almost exclusively on the theological literature and have little in the way of psychology, possibly because so little was known about the early formative years and the personal lives of these key religious figures. The chapters on the Old Testament Hebrew prophets, especially the one on Jeremiah, draw on Hasidic writers such as Joseph Heschel and show how the Hebrew concept of God changed radically during the prophetic era. Blind obedience to the deity and the law characteristic of the earlier patriarchal period are no longer the sole expectation of the Hebrew God, nor is there to be vengeful punishment for deviation. Instead, society assumes a more compassionate perspective and thus the God of the prophets emerges as a champion of ethical values while the prophets preach on the importance of individual moral responsibility. The beginnings of social justice are to be found in the pleas of Jeremiah, who urges the people to care for the widows and orphans, groups who were dangerously disadvantaged throughout the ancient world. Perhaps here are also to be found the beginnings of socialism. The huge chapter on Job reviews the mainly psychoanalytic literature on his suffering and his stalwart capacity to withstand personal tragedy. It seems as if Job was not an ancient Israelite at all, but most likely a mythical figure of the ancient world that never actually existed (which is most fortunate for Job since he had a truly enormous amount of bad luck).

Only one chapter explores how biblical themes feature in the presentations of common psychiatric disorders today; thus in Switzerland, where the author practises, religious delusions in psychoses may be associated with a demonic presentation in up

to 30% of cases. Some patients, especially those with religious mania, may even trek to the Holy places (the so-called 'Jerusalem syndrome').

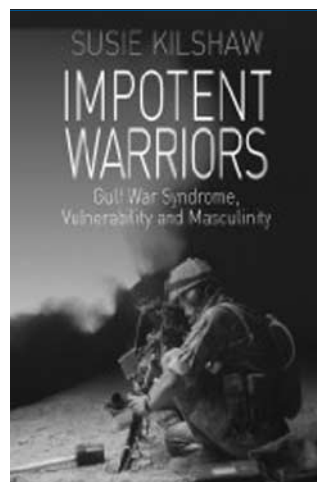
The book also contains brief essays on topics of general interest to psychiatrists difficult to find elsewhere, such as prophetic frenzy, messianism or martyrdom (an act of religious faith) and its relation to suicide (a sin). It ends with a chapter on the lengthy history of biblical psychology which appears to have started in the 16th century. The word *psychologia* was first used by Marulic and popularised in 1530 by Philip Melanchton, a student of biblical psychology and associate of Martin Luther, in his book *Commentarius de anima* which in turn was a commentary on Aristotle's *Peri Psyches* indicating that psychology itself owes its name to the early Lutheran tradition.

Much in this book is fascinating but some of the writing in its unbridled enthusiasm for the topic is barely comprehensible, let alone scientific. At £99 for a mere 326 pages these words of wisdom are very expensive.

The topic attracts a wide audience, yet so little of any academic worth is published in the field. *Hearing Visions and Seeing Voices*, being both scholarly and a rich source of references, is a 'must buy' for all the larger teaching hospital libraries.

**George Stein** Hayes Grove Priory Hospital, Preston Road, Hayes, Bromley BR2 7AS, UK. Email: george.stein2@btinternet.com

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**Impotent Warriors. Gulf War Syndrome, Vulnerability and Masculinity**

By Susie Kilshaw.  
Berghahn Books. 2008.  
£55.00 (hb). 280 pp.  
ISBN: 9781845455262

The status of 'Gulf War syndrome' has been the focus of a vigorous and sometimes bitter debate. Groups of veterans suffering from medically unexplained symptoms have argued that their enduring ill health is the result of exposure to toxins while serving in the Gulf. Whether it be side-effects of vaccinations, organophosphates, fumes from oil-well fires or depleted uranium, they believe that their immune systems have been compromised leaving them vulnerable to known diseases. However, their campaign has attracted little support from scientists and doctors who have been unable to identify a unique disorder or a specific pathological mechanism associated with the Gulf War. Because much of this research was funded by government, negative findings have fuelled conspiracy theories and claims of a cover-up. The picture is further complicated because the public in the UK and the USA is generally sympathetic to the veterans' plight and shares their belief in the existence of a definable syndrome.

Seventeen years have passed since Gulf War syndrome was first proposed, sufficient time to allow an objective view of these