

distorted, conflicted) or not demonstrably enough (absent, inhibited, delayed). What is left over – as normal or ‘uncomplicated’ mourning – becomes difficult to imagine.

As a strategy of power, the normalisation of grieving works in two stages. First, the abnormal is defined in contrast to a supposed category of the normal. Second, the clinical criteria for candidacy in the abnormal are expanded until the normal is defined out of existence or at least relegated to the margins¹⁵.

Whether you agree with these writers or not, their critique is provocative! Is it possible, as research and knowledge about bereavement grow and the levels of sophisticated information increase, for practitioners to avoid what Frank and Foote have described? If wisdom and knowledge are indeed different, how do bereavement carers become wiser about their use of knowledge?

After his wife’s suicide, Edward Rynearson wrote: ‘Don’t let anyone persuade you that avoidance is unhealthy. Resilience first allowed me a temporary avoidance from the chaos of Julie’s dying...Avoidance was my only option¹⁶.’ In his recent book, *Retelling Violent Death*, he advocates a combination of personal support and clinical structure. Still, his approach can be summarised by this sentence: ‘Without a caring connection, a violent death is an item for the news instead of a story that we need to restore ourselves around¹⁶.’

The challenge for bereavement care workers is careful use of information about all the nuances of bereavement, without allowing that same information to become a barrier to personal connection and support. Diagnostic categories can become self-fulfilling prophecies, thereby robbing the grieving person of dignity and support for their unique efforts to deal with death. Provocative statements like these from Foote, Frank, and Rynearson will not stop me from buying the next book about grief and bereavement. But such perspectives have caused me to wonder about the tendency to see problems and dangers more clearly than resources, resilience and normality.

Some lines from a poem by Mary Sheepshanks, a widow, serve to remind me of what is important to us as bereavement workers.

...all we can do
is share your north-face
route with you.
No one can take
your pain away
or cut bereavement’s

journey short.
...But let us share
that cold road too
– to walk a little
way with you¹⁷

SUMMARY

It is important to emphasise that this article has been written with keen appreciation of bereavement support. This is a lover’s quarrel. At this crossroads for bereavement care, challenging questions are being raised from outside the field, especially since public tragedies like 11 September. It is crucial that those within it also address issues that may undermine the potential of quality care. Use this article to continue that discussion. **BC**

References

1. Stroebe M, van den Bout J, Schut H. Myths and misconceptions about bereavement: the opening of a debate. *Omega* 1994; **29**(3): 187-203.
2. Harrington R, Harrison L. Unproven assumptions about the impact of bereavement on children. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 1999; **92**: 230-233.
3. Farrell P. The limitations of current theories in understanding grief and bereavement. *Counselling* 1999; **10**(2): 143-146.
4. Parkes CM. Counselling bereaved people – help or harm? *Bereavement Care* 2000; **19**(2): 19-21.
5. Joanning H. The long term effects of the Couples Communication Program. *Journal of*

- Marital and Family Therapy* 1982; **8**(4): 467.
6. Lomas P. *Doing Good? Psychotherapy Out of its Depth*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999.
7. Wolterstorff N. *Lament for a Son*. Grand Rapids, USA: WB Eerdmans, 1987.
8. Callahan D. Our need for caring. In: Cluff LE, Binstock RH (eds). *The Lost Art of Caring*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
9. Veninga R. *A Gift of Hope*. Boston, USA: Little, Brown and Company, 1985.
10. Palmer P. *The Courage to Teach*. San Francisco, USA: Jossey-Bass, 1998.
11. McCann C. *Who Cares? A Guide for All Who Care for Others*. Dublin, Ireland: The Columbia Press, 1995.
12. Larson DG. *The Helper’s Journey*. Champaign, Illinois, USA: Research Press, 1993.
13. White BJ, Madera EJ (eds). *The Self-Help Sourcebook*. Denville, New Jersey, USA: American Self-Help Clearinghouse, 1998.
14. Murray JA. Loss as a universal concept: a review of the literature to identify common aspects of loss in diverse situations. *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 2001; **6**: 219-241.
15. Foote CE, Frank AW. Foucault and therapy: the discipline of grief. In: Chambon AS, Irving A, Epstein L (eds). *Reading Foucault for Social Work*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
16. Rynearson EK. *Retelling Violent Death*. London: Brunner-Routledge, 2001.
17. Sheepshanks M. *The Bird of My Loving**. London: Michael Joseph, 1997.

*Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UK, UK.

BOOK REVIEW

NOBODY’S CHILD

Diane Sher Lutovich

Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishing Company, 2002. 148pp. \$28.95 pb. 0 895 032533 8



Nobody’s *Child* offers us a new perspective on older women confused by their feelings after the death of their mother. Diana Sher Lutovich explores what she views as a fairly recent change in the role and relationship daughters have with their mothers, caused by longevity. Mature women, she suggests, are now forging closer links with their mothers and this is giving rise to new patterns of grieving.

Whilst the book includes Lutovich’s personal experiences, she has also collected and analysed a range of effects and feelings from other grieving daughters and collated them

under headings exploring the new relationships. She found that women had difficulty in dealing with the loss of the new closeness and the feelings of guilt or relief that followed having given support in the latter stages of life.

Lutovich looks at how bereaved daughters can break free from the past and move into a new phase of their own life. In her summary, she analyses the range of responses, the gamut of feelings expressed by the women interviewed, pulling together what she has understood of the new relationship between mothers and their daughters during this special time and how that has affected the bereavement.

Lutovich writes of North American women, but I have noticed similar bereavement difficulties here in the UK resulting from a ‘re-bonding’ between daughters and ageing mothers. *Nobody’s Child* is a reference tool, detached and analytical in style and not easy to read straight through. Nonetheless, it is a useful aid with an important message for those of us involved in helping women in this situation understand what has happened and gain from their feelings and experiences. **BC**

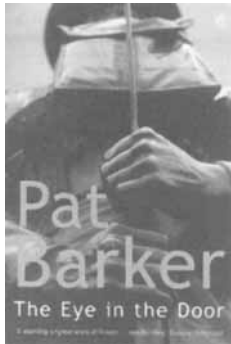
Joan Burn

Bereavement Counselling Trainer and Supervisor

THE EYE IN THE DOOR

Pat Barker

London: Penguin, 1994, 280pp. £7.99. ISBN 0 140 16878 8



The *Eye in the Door* is the second volume of Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy and deals largely with a WWI officer, Billy Prior, introduced in the first volume in a more peripheral role. Billy was at the battle of the Somme and we first meet him at Craiglockart, a psychiatric hospital for officers where he is being treated for 'shell-shock' by a pioneering (real-life) psychiatrist, WHR Rivers with, amongst others, Siegfried Sassoon.

In this second volume, set in London in the spring of 1918, we realise that Billy is suffering from what would now be called a 'dissociative identity disorder'. He slips into another personality for hours at a time, and has no idea what he has been up to when he 'returns'. This second personality is a violent one, and in working with Dr Rivers, he gradually is able to recognise the trigger for the dissociation, the eye of a friend blown up at the Somme which landed in his hand. The 'eye in the door' is also a peep-hole in the prison cell door where he visits his friend, Beattie, in prison, having been framed because she is a conscientious objector. Beattie was his surrogate mother and herself introduced him to sex. Her daughter was Billy's first love and her son-in-law, his own childhood best friend, Mac, is on the run because he too is a militant conscientious objector. In one of his dissociative states he comes to realise he may have betrayed Mac.

Rivers helps Billy to recover a childhood memory of himself, aged five, sitting at the top of the stairs when his father came home drunk and began to beat his mother. Once, he had intervened and himself been thrown against the wall. After that he felt helpless and angry and found that if he concentrated on looking at the barometer hanging at the head of the stairs and learned to dissociate, the helpless feelings would subside.

Rivers says to him 'I think when you were quite small you discovered a way of dealing with a very unpleasant situation. I think you found out how to put yourself into a kind of

trance. A dissociated state. And then in France, under that intolerable pressure, you rediscovered it'. Billy calls it going into 'the shine in the glass', remembering the shine on a glass of beer in a pub and feeling angry that people were enjoying themselves when Jimmy, his friend, was dead. He wanted them all to die violently and was saved by dissociating. Rivers helps him to link his two selves up, acknowledge that they are both aspects of himself. With Rivers' help he comes to realise that he is capable of damaging the very people he loves – Beattie and Mac – because a part of him cannot accept their objections to a war that he sees as necessary and just. He cannot accept that his comrades can die and conscientious objectors not suffer too.

It was this book, rather than any psychiatric text book, which first helped me to understand the mechanism of dissociation which can occur under extreme stress when a traumatised child is feeling helpless. Many of my young patients, who have witnessed the unimaginable horror of their mother being killed by their father, present afterwards as superficially unaffected. Yet it is clear as they develop that dissociative

mechanisms are at play to enable them to maintain this apparent good functioning. The trauma emerges in nightmares, in attentional difficulties, and in some cases, particularly as they grow up, in dissociated acts of violence. A complete personality split, such as occurs with Billie, is rare, but I believe that lesser degrees of dissociation are common after traumatic events, and that these maladaptive mechanisms are responsible for much mental suffering. Putting the individual together again is skilled work that requires much patience. Dr Rivers pioneered this work, using the technique of free association discovered by Sigmund Freud.

Barker is herself by training a historian, and a superb novelist. Another of her books, *Crossing the Border*, is about a child who murders and the psychologist who committed him. They meet as adults – but I won't spoil it by telling you more. I know many people who dismiss novels as light reading, and a waste of time. I believe the contrary is true and that it is often the novelist who can teach us more about human nature than the best textbooks. **BC**

Dora Black

Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

BOOK REVIEWS

Schools can make a difference

UNDERSTANDING CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES OF PARENTAL BEREAVEMENT

John Holland

London: Jessica Kingsley UK, 2001, 222pp. £14.99 pb. ISBN 1 84310 016 9

This book stems from Holland's doctoral research, a retrospective study of the effects of parental bereavement upon a population of children in Humberside. The study was named Iceberg to reflect the substantial amount of hidden loss and unrecognised grief there is among children. Holland offers a concise review of the literature and, in anticipation of the conclusions of his research, draws some interesting observations about the nature of bereavement for children.

One of his main themes is how we define bereavement. He states that bereavement is an overly simplistic term that does not sufficiently describe the range of experiences. This is elaborated upon in his model of multiple losses which arise from parental death: the effect of the secondary losses of home, school and friends upon a child's ability to re-establish a sense of security and rebuild their world. The process is further complicated, Holland

maintains, by the child's growing awareness of the significance of the loss of the parent. The idea that children grow up with and into their bereavement is not new, but Holland offers some useful suggestions from the young people themselves about how schools can accommodate their maturing and changing needs.

For a bereaved child, school is a paradox. It can be both a haven from the emotional intensity of home and a source of additional demands. It can provide support and generate feelings of isolation and alienation. The challenge for teachers is to recognise how to develop school as a positive resource for bereaved children, which is the main focus of Holland's study. Although he offers many interesting insights into children's experience of bereavement, his conclusions about how schools can best respond to their needs is a little disappointing. In some respects this is unsurprising because the range of preferences means that what is right for one child may not be right for another. However, the data confirm that children want to be involved in rituals, to be enabled to develop their own ways of mourning and, above all, want their status as a bereaved child to be recognised discreetly within school.

This is a useful book for all those involved in the education system, not least because Holland clearly identifies the size of the population of bereaved children and follows their experiences through to adulthood.

Peta Hemmings
Senior Social Worker

A STUDENT DIES, A SCHOOL MOURNS

Ralph Klicker
New York/London: Brunner-Routledge, 1999, 143pp.
£13.95 pb. ISBN 1 560 32742 1

Schools can make a difference to the grieving process. The message of this book is that they should provide direction, structure and support for dealing with death and can only do this well if there is an appropriate planned strategy: death affects all schools at some time. In *A Student Dies, a School Mourns* teaching staff will find the advice they need on setting up a crisis response team, including roles for many liaison people, such as family and media liaison, as well as the school social worker, nurse, librarian, support staff and others connected to the school.

Klicker gives detailed guidance on practical matters, and his information on factors affecting grief and age-related responses to death make this book great value as a reference source. There are sections on practical matters, such as helping grieving pupils and teaching them how to behave in grief-related situations (towards friends, parents, teachers, and returning grieving teachers or classmates). There is also advice on dealing with suicide, funerals, condolence letters, helping yourself through grief and coping with violent death, including murder.

The author is American and there are references to aspects of schools that are perhaps more particular to that country, for example, the availability of school counsellors and a more endemic level of violence, but the book would still have value to schools everywhere. In the UK, it would not replace other guidance already sent to all schools here: *Wise before the Event* by William Yule and Ann Gold (London: Gulbenkian Foundation, 1993).

Caroline Lodge
Lecturer in Education

MANAGING LOSS, SEPARATION AND BEREAVEMENT

Best Policy and Practice

Brenda Mallon
Manchester, UK: Education Matters, 1999, 60pp.
£25.00 pb. ISBN 1 904 08400 1

Brenda Mallon's slim volume offers useful guidance to teachers on how to manage an individual pupil's bereavement or a critical

incident within the school community. She emphasises the need to prepare for and establish a planned response that acknowledges personal strengths and preferences within the staff group. This principle of using the staff group is embodied in her argument that the subject of death needs to be incorporated into the school curriculum from reception class onwards. She outlines how this can be achieved

by integrating topics into existing lessons and provides some exercises which are appropriate for the classroom.

Mallon attempts to cover a wide range of issues, all of which are pertinent to her central theme. She draws our attention to the secondary losses children experience and how these more discreet losses can have a significant effect upon already vulnerable children. She

WEB WATCH

Internet resources for work with bereaved parents

Amanda Aitken BA PGCE DipCouns
Counsellor, Torbay Social Services, Devon, UK

Searching for sites for bereaved parents and their helpers, I was faced with a huge array of choices. However, it soon became apparent that although there are a number of excellent international sites for parents, fewer offer support to those working with this client group. Of those that do, many focus on specific types of bereavement, such as sudden infant death or miscarriage. Here I have picked out two sites of wider relevance which not only consider issues arising from many types of child death but also include a variety of good resources.

The Compassionate Friends (TFC) is an international organisation created for and by bereaved parents and their helpers, with strong links in the USA and a number of web sites worldwide. Many of these do little more than give contact details for local support groups, but the **UK site** at www.tcf.org.uk provides much more, including a useful range of resources for those involved in bereavement work. Helpful links, a translation facility, and clear and easy navigation help to make it very user-friendly. With over 6,000 visitors per month, this popular site conveys a sense of community and clearly provides a lifeline for many bereaved parents.

A range of interesting **leaflets** is available at the site. Some are written specifically for those involved in bereavement work and explore best practice. Others, looking at different aspects of loss, help to explain and normalise the grief process. Single copies can be printed directly, free of charge. (Click on 'publications', then on 'leaflets' to view.)

An unusual and valuable feature for those supporting the bereaved is access to the organisation's **postal lending library**. Containing over a thousand books, audio and videotapes it is claimed to be the largest of its kind in the UK. Many sites provide resources for sale but few offer items on loan or at such reasonable rates. There are also details of their **telephone helpline**, offering support and information to anyone working with this particular client group.

Bereaved parents can submit creative writing, support each other by **email**, and express their loss freely at a very poignant section of the site called the **Meeting Point**.


There is also a **chat room** facility, (run from the USA), with separate rooms available for parents wishing to discuss different aspects of loss. These rooms appear to be well monitored, with clear ground rules regarding use. In most areas, bereaved parents and their families can be put in contact with local TCF befrienders and support groups.

The central **USA site** also provides some useful written articles, similar to the leaflets on the UK site with, in addition, suggestions for medical personnel and first responders, and an exploration of common grief reactions experienced by siblings. For a complete list of all TFC sites, visit www.compassionatefriends.org/links.shtml

Click on 'brochures' to view these articles.

Another useful site at www.childbereavement.org.uk is that of **The Child Bereavement Trust**, a UK national charity founded in 1994 by bereavement facilitator and trainer, Jenni Thomas, who has many years of experience in the health service and is widely recognised as a pioneer in family bereavement care. Jenni's aim in creating this site is to improve the support offered by professionals to grieving families.

Brief details of a number of **resources** produced by the Trust, including training videos, memory boxes, workbooks and audiotapes, appear on the site. Those working with younger members of the family may be particularly interested in the interactive materials. All resources may be purchased online. Several **articles** are included exploring common grief reactions and best practice in supporting the bereaved within a hospital, school or family environment. The site also provides some written material for young people themselves, including the full text of the Trust's booklet, *A Teenage Guide to Coping with Bereavement*.

A recently created **telephone helpline** for those working with the bereaved appears to be proving popular. For contact details click on 'Latest News', then on 'Information and Support'. Finally, the site includes updated information about training programmes and initiatives provided by the Trust, some of which have been approved by the UK Department of Health. 

highlights some of the practical provisions that can enhance a child's quality of security within school and thereby support their academic life. There are several worksheets that are very appropriate for a teacher to use in class and a list of 50 tips to aid teachers in this work. However, in trying to include so much she leaves herself a little thin on the ground in some areas. For example, separation and divorce has barely a page and a half, and children and young people's responses to loss are covered in two sides.

However, it would be churlish to condemn this publication for not being fuller or more detailed. Mallon makes the important points succinctly and offers a wealth of reference material and resources to make up for what she could not cover in detail herself. All in all, a very approachable publication. **BC**

Peta Hemmings
Senior Social Worker

FINDING A WAY THROUGH WHEN SOMEONE CLOSE HAS DIED

Pat Mood, Lesley Whittaker
London: Jessica Kingsley, 2001, 64pp.
£7.95. ISBN 1 853 02920 3

This workbook for children arose out of bereavement groups run for children by the authors, both bereavement counsellors. Much of it is by the children themselves – illustrations and excerpts from what they said and wrote – and is meant for them to read and respond to by drawing or writing about their feelings when bereaved. There is unfortunately no information about the ages of the children involved in the project; I think the book would be too young for teenagers and might be best targeted to primary school children. I found it rather gloomy, printed on cheap paper, with poorly produced illustrations in black and grey (and inexplicably the same one on pages 59 and 60) and too expensive for a book that can only be used by one child. Whilst some children may find it helpful to know that others have felt as they do, I do not think this book can replace Marge Heegaard's *When Someone Very Special Dies** as a workbook. The latter is one of the few not listed in the otherwise helpful section on books for children of different ages. Cruse Bereavement Care does not get a mention in the list of helpful organisations.

Dora Black
Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist
*Minneapolis, MN, USA: Woodland Press, 1988.
Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR, UK.

Surviving as a couple

HELP YOUR MARRIAGE SURVIVE THE DEATH OF A CHILD

Paul Rosenblatt
Philadelphia, USA: Temple University Press, 2000, 248pp. \$18.95 pb. ISBN 1 56639 805 3

Aimed directly at parents bereaved of a young child, this book is a comprehensive review of the challenges that they and their families may face.

Rosenblatt, a well-known American author and professor of family social science, explains that grieving after the loss of a child may last a lifetime and that reminders of the loss can bring back the grief years later. He covers many issues specific to this loss: the importance of anger and guilt, the possibility that the parents may be unable to have another baby, or inadvertently neglect the needs of surviving children. He recognises the continuing relationships parents may have with their dead children, through looking at photographs, cherishing memories and thinking about them.

The focus of the book is the couple and the possible effects on their emotional and sexual relationship. One partner may appear unaffected whilst the other may be grieving more obviously – 'Lots of men feel the need to be strong for their partner, holding off their grief in order to be strong and supportive' – and these differences may cause misunderstandings and difficulties between partners. Chapter titles include: 'Deciding to survive as a couple', 'Two people always grieve differently', 'Grief can make marital trouble', 'The sexual part of our relationship died' and 'Depression and your marriage'.

When a family experiences the death of a child, the loss may be so painful that discussions about the death are avoided and areas of difficulty, such as feelings of anger and blame, are avoided. I believe that this book may be of help to grieving parents by giving them permission to recognise such feelings, to know that others have experienced them, and that there are ways of addressing such issues.

Whilst some readers may find the extensive use of verbatim transcripts of conversations to illustrate points rather off-putting, others may feel that it makes the points raised more accessible. Although this book is aimed at parents, it would also provide a useful resource for professionals or volunteers helping parents after what is often described as one of the most painful of all losses.

PARENT GRIEF

Paul Rosenblatt
New York/London: Brunner-Routledge, 2000, 248pp. £14.95pb. ISBN 1583 91034 4

This book is based on intensive interviews with 58 parents in 29 couples or former couples, after 33 'child' deaths (age range: stillborn – 33 years). Most interviews were carried out several years after the death had occurred. The volunteers were recruited through advertisements in a diversity of places but the author acknowledges, with some regret, that all the volunteers are white and heterosexual.

The narratives, many of which are moving, describe the painful reality of a child's death, and the long lasting nature of such grief. Rosenblatt points out both the need to listen to what is being said but also to what is *not* being said. Whilst 'narratives are rooted in culture and community', and the book is clearly based on American culture, most is of relevance to experience in the UK and probably to other western European-based cultures.

The use of common metaphors in narratives (for example, 'passing away', 'going on a journey') and common themes (for example, the deceased child being remembered as special in some way) are discussed. Readers are reminded that there is a continuing connection between parents and their deceased child, in that the child often continues to play a role in their lives and remains in their memories.

I believe the book would have been easier to read if the narratives quoted had been given a different typeface to the main text. A short final chapter summarising themes, and serving as an *aide-memoire* to those working directly with parents grieving for a child who has died, might be a helpful addition. However, those working with grieving parents may well find this book a useful resource.

Martin Newman
Consultant Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist

Suffering Love

For parents grieving the death of a child, a positive practical book
by **Bill Merrington** £7.50

The Bereaved Parent

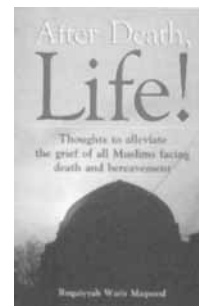
A classic text, comprehensive, helpful at any stage of bereavement
by **Harriet Sarnoff Schiff** £6.99

Order direct from
Cruse Bereavement Care

info@crusebereavementcare.org.uk
☎ 0181 940 4818 Fax 0181 940 7638

AFTER DEATH, LIFE!

Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood
Birmingham, UK: Islamic Vision
(Goodword Books), 1998, 235pp. £3.95
pb. ISBN 8 185 06334 6



To write a good, informative, interesting, and meaningful book on the subject of human mortality is by no means easy. One needs a special type of sensitivity to write on this subject with the lucidity and clarity needed to keep the main theme alive. Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood has done precisely that.

A deeply religious and devout Muslim, Maqsood explains in her opening chapter that, since only Allah has an awareness of the lives and deaths of us all, we must entrust ourselves and our fate to his will. If we do so, it will make it easier to contemplate our mortality and impending death.

Building on these foundations, *After Death, Life!* offers us sound advice on a variety of areas related to death, illness (terminal and sudden), suicide, mourning, bereavement and a wide range of emotional reactions including anger, guilt, fear and forgiveness. Each of the 16 chapters is concise, well-written and self-contained, beginning, in the first chapter, with the most striking problem – our awareness and, above all, acceptance of our mortality. There is a fascinating chapter on the rites, rituals and ceremonies related to Islamic burial practices and another on eternal life and the Day of Judgement. The author quotes generously from the Qur'an and other religious sources, which lends greater poignancy and scholarship to the text.

The book serves two functions: it offers sound practical advice to the reader on coming to terms with our mortality, and it offers hope of an afterlife by obeying the will of Allah and dedicating our life to prayer and doing good in the world. My only minor criticism is the lack of a bibliography which would assist readers to follow up some of the points independently. Furthermore, for non-Muslim readers, it might be helpful if there was a brief chapter expounding for them the main tenets of Islam.

Pittu Laungani
Senior Research Fellow in Psychology

A SPECIAL SCAR* (2nd edn)

Alison Wertheimer

London/New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2001, 270pp. £15.99pb. ISBN 0 415 22027 0

Suicide is a complex act shaped by many different factors. It challenges and defies our most deeply held beliefs that human life is a precious thing. The person who commits suicide has been released from their pain, but the bereaved may inherit the pain with the added burden of trying to understand their conflicting feelings about the deceased.

Though usually carried out in private, most suicides have far-reaching repercussions so that the death soon enters the public domain, bringing additional problems. Alison Wertheimer has lived through this process herself, as her sister took her own life. In this new edition of her established classic she has undertaken a major update and added to the content, offering new ways of coping with these traumas. Despite the difficulty of the subject, the material presented is not overwhelming because it is divided into small, manageable sections.

As before, the main part of the book follows the painful experiences of 50 survivors of suicide, showing how they have learned to live with the aftermath. Their grief is personal, but they have some shared thoughts, feelings and experience and their collected histories form a well-worked and thoughtful account of the pain and problems resulting from this death. For the new edition, excellent information about group work with the survivors of suicide has been added. Also new is a chapter on counselling the bereaved, with some revealing case histories. One of the important points made here is that clients can delay the counselling process by focusing on unanswerable 'Why?' questions, perhaps subconsciously avoiding their own feelings. Alison writes from the perspective of a psychodynamic counsellor, but she uses language accessible to all so that any counsellor, bereavement worker or bereaved person would gain knowledge and understanding from reading this section.

Though I regret the price hike, this is the best book on suicide on the market at the moment. It crosses many barriers and I feel it should be read widely, not only by bereavement professionals and volunteers, but also by bereaved people and others wishing to know more about this difficult subject.

Josy Williams

Trainer and Suicide Group Leader

Available from Cruse Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond TW9 1UR, UK.

DEATH, MEMORY AND MATERIAL CULTURE

Elizabeth Hallam, Jenny Hockey

Oxford, UK/New York: Berg, 2001, 249pp. £14.99 pb. ISBN 1 859 73379 4

'Far from being invisible, past generations, dead friends and lovers remain manifest – through well-worn garments, letters, photographs, flowers, residual drops of perfume, funerary sculpture... Material culture provides the deceased with a powerful presence within the here and now.' I am entirely in sympathy with the basic premise of this book. Though dying people may be shunted into side wards and though bereaved people may find certain kinds of conversation taboo, nevertheless death, the dead and the past are all around us in our material world.

Recent bereavement theory points to continuing bonds between the living and the dead, so mourning entails creating memories out of the fragments that a person leaves behind. This book reminds us that objects and how they are used tell us as much as do words about how this remembering happens.

The book is indebted to two recently fashionable areas of scholarship – the study of material culture and the study of historical memory. The authors bring these two fields together in the context of death, showing how we remember the dead through a whole range of material things. It is a book that was waiting to be written. Unfortunately, it displays a degree of abstraction, repetition, generalisation and theorising unlikely to appeal to most readers of this journal. The more accessible sections include detailed discussions of relics, jewellery, photographs and other mementoes.

Tony Walter

Reader in Sociology

DYING, GRIEVING, FAITH AND FAMILY

George Bowman III

New York: Haworth Press, 1998, 152pp. \$19.95. ISBN 0 789 00263 9

George Bowman III has spent many years in hospital and hospice ministry, as well as being a supervisor of chaplains in the USA. During this period he was very involved in supporting people who were, or had been, suffering loss. This led him to recognise that family systems theory has much to offer in understanding the dying and the survivors. He also believes, as a Baptist minister, that there may be a link between a person's family dynamic and their faith journey as an individual and as part of a family unit. Much of the text is devoted to the exploration of these links from a practical and theoretical stance.

The book looks at the issues from a professional and personal perspective. The author has had cancer and his own reactions to diagnosis and treatment inform the text at various points. The theory is heavily influenced by the work of Elizabeth Kübler-Ross and the author acknowledges the lack of focus on issues such as AIDS and the pastoral care of children. However, the final chapter does look at a range of religious resources and rituals from within the Christian tradition.

While there is much of value in exploring faith and the family dynamic in the face of death, one of the main weaknesses of the text is the lack of reference to much of the recent research. There is no reference to the work of Parkes, Walter, Stroebe or Worden. Neither is there much discussion of non-religious spiritual needs, as everything is channelled into a religious response. I hesitate to commend this book to a palliative/bereavement care readership in view of this narrow approach to the topic. It is, however, a very powerful testimony to the faith journey of one man and his family in the face of several serious life crises and, as such, has great value.

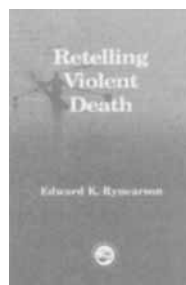
Peter Speck

Trust Chaplaincy Team Leader

RETELLING VIOLENT DEATH

Edward Rynearson

London/New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2001, 164pp. £14.50 pb. ISBN 1 583 91363 7




Despite its intimidating title, the book is presented in a clear, attractive format with a brief summary introducing each chapter. This enables the reader to select areas of immediate interest without needing to read from cover to cover. The central theme is the value of restorative retelling which enables the bereaved person finally to come to terms with life.

In the first part of the book Rynearson explains his concept. He relates, very movingly, the effect of his young wife's suicide through drowning. Although his background as a psychologist is relevant, it is his personal experience that makes an impact. Some chapters, for example 'From incoherent to coherent retelling', are

written in a style more suited for a professional clinician than a reader with limited experience of bereavement issues.

We come to recognise several key words associated with restorative retelling such as flow, resilience, chaos, intervention and coherence. The strong use of water imagery reflects on the author's life. We sense the strength of undercurrents of grief and despair but also the realisation that in order to reconnect with life, bereaved people must make their own journey to safety. Retelling, with the guidance of an experienced listener, should help them to finally reach a safe haven.

Part Two offers strategies of intervention. Structures and processes are introduced together with the goals and possible obstacles. Although these are probably of more interest to professional clinicians, the appendix outlines group sessions which could be adapted for use by a bereavement worker. Later chapters cover more specialised intervention and examine previous work, referring to Freud, Janet and others. The chapter on 'Retelling the literature on violent dying' suggests Rynearson is less convinced by some of the more recent research and treatment of violent death.

Retelling Violent Death offers valuable insight into issues following traumatic death; it is also a rite of passage for the author himself. 

Shirley Hill

Bereavement counsellor, trainer and supervisor

ABSTRACTS

Parents' perceptions of adolescent sibling grief responses after an adolescent or young adult child's sudden, violent death

Lohan JA, Murphy SA. *Omega* 2002; 44(1); 77-95

This article reports the findings from parental responses to an open-ended question about the difficulties faced by surviving adolescent children after the death of a sibling. The reactions of the bereaved fathers and mothers are compared, revealing their differing perceptions of how the children have coped. The authors conclude that further research is needed to understand the sibling grief process following violent death, and to develop nursing interventions to support bereaved families. The article is somewhat inconclusive, since, as the authors comment, the study does not distinguish between reactions caused by the loss of a sibling and those resulting from the manifold problems of adolescence.