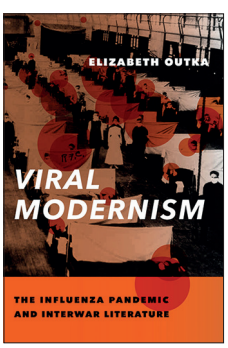
Fundamentally, perinatal psychiatry is a high-stakes partnership of risk management, whether you are a general adult psychiatrist or a perinatal psychiatrist. However, it's not just about dealing in risks and fears. It's about hopes and dreams. You need to hear the thoughts and feelings of your patient and her partner. You need to do your homework and provide the best assessment of the evidence you can, without negating the limitations. If you don't know something, ask—this could be a referral to your perinatal psychiatric service or, in some circumstances in the UK, the second-opinion service offered by Dr Ian Jones at Cardiff University. There are resources like advice from the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Action on Postpartum Psychosis, Mind, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, MotherToBaby, and the UK Teratology Information Service (and the accompanying Best Use of Medicines in Pregnancy leaflets). Use these resources to help inform and empower your patient, and together you will navigate the stars.

Anonymous

Book

Tracing faded rainbows



Viral Modernism: The Influenza Pandemic and Interwar Literature
Elizabeth Outka
Columbia University Press, 2020
pp 344, £30·00
ISBN 9780231185752

The Pull of the Stars
Emma Donoghue
Picador, 2020
pp 304, £16·99
ISBN 9781529046151

For **Outka's blog** see https://modernismmodernity.org/forums/posts/outka-grievability-covid

At the beginning of the novel *Mrs Dalloway*, Virginia Woolf describes Clarissa Dalloway stepping out on a beautiful June day, revelling in the noise and bustle of London streets. I re-read Woolf's novel in April, tracing Clarissa's steps as she walked to Bond Street and shopped for flowers. I felt nostalgic for the street life so vividly depicted. While I was virtually walking through the London of Woolf's impressionistic prose, news bulletins flashed up images of empty streets and roads deadened by the lockdown. The hallucinations of the shell-shocked, former soldier Septimus Smith, who sat in the park near to where Clarissa Dalloway walked, seemed more real. Even in a busy part of south London, where I lived at the time, the streets were eerily quiet. Only the noise of the emergency services broke the stillness, with helicopters buzzing above and sirens on the roads around us. Children's paintings of rainbows for the NHS started to appear in the windows of my own house and then other houses around us. I wondered whether faded rainbows would be one of the main things we would remember of this period in our lives.

In *Viral Modernism,* Elizabeth Outka asks why the deadly 1918–20 influenza pandemic left few traces in literature and culture? Pointing to the enormous death toll—at least 228 000 died in Britain alone—Outka outlines the usual narrative of a Europe convulsed by World War 1, with influenza considered yet another catastrophic tragedy. In the USA, influenza had a more profound effect, but was rarely marked in cultural memory. Outka uses Judith Butler's concept of grievability in *Frames of War* (2010) contending that this absence was politically motivated. Butler uses the term grievability to describe how lives are grieved but underlines that, particularly in war, some lives are deemed, usually by the State, more worthy of grief than others. The more grievable lives of those who died in warfare are usually male; their deaths were used for political ends—for example, to further a narrative of nationalism. Influenza deaths could not be spun into so-called stories of victory. Instead, Outka argues that you can read traces of the pandemic in interwar novels by Willa Cather, Thomas Wolfe, and others, as well as in the zombies and spiritualism of popular culture.

Traces can also be read in the texts of so-called high modernism, such as TS Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*. Outka connects *Mrs Dalloway* with Woolf's 1926 essay *On Being Ill* and Woolf's own recurring bouts of influenza, including one in 1919. We are told by Woolf that Clarissa Dalloway has had influenza; her weak heart and white hair are recognised after effects. Outka makes a strong case that *Mrs Dalloway* is "a novel of influenza, though it is rarely read as such" by showing glimpses of the influenza's so-called intangible presence. Septimus Smith's war and Clarissa Dalloway's influenza experience merge in the novel, like the spirit photographs of the same period, to depict a city haunted by the recent dead.

In a recent blogpost, Outka contends that narratives about grievability are currently being shaped in the response to COVID-19. For example, the people in at risk groups were presented by government and the media (Outka refers principally to the situation in the USA) as being expendable and prompted responses from people in those groups pointing out how damaging and cruel such dismissals are. She draws parallels in the high mortality from influenza and COVID-19 of poor, Black, and immigrant people in urban spaces. 100 years ago the African American writer and activist WEB DuBois pointed to an index of social conditions of overcrowding, poor nutrition, slum housing, and

poverty to explain these statistics. The list of victims and causes are depressingly similar. Outka argues that "these statistics [are] tied to a government or culture's pre-existing frame in which certain groups have already been deemed ungrievable." This, in addition to police brutality and institutional racism, makes the Black Lives Matter movement crucial.

Influenza deaths in Ireland were four times higher than those from political violence between the Easter Rising in 1916 and the end of the Irish Civil War in 1923 but much less re-remembered. Emma Donoghue's new novel *The Pull of the Stars* is set in a maternity and fever ward in Dublin at the height of the influenza epidemic. Donoghue is unsparing in depicting the misery of influenza, although she makes the disease just another unforgiving and unfair trial amongst the many that impact women. Donoghue finished her first draft in March 2020, just as COVID-19 hit the UK and Ireland, and rushed to finish further edits as the parallels between the pandemics became clear. To remember the empty streets, the sick, the dead, and those that care for them, we need to re-remember the influenza pandemic. We should question the narratives that remember some profound events and not others. Donoghue's and Outka's books are good places to start.

Debbie Challis

Book

Inform, educate, entertain

The Beginner's Guide to Sanity: a self-help book for people with psychosis
Erica Crompton and Stephen Lawrie
Hammersmith Health Books, 2020
pp 160, £14·99
ISBN 9781781611555

The Beginner's Guide to Sanity is written by an interesting combination of authors: Erica Crompton, who has lived experience of psychosis and schizophrenia (and who is also a journalist) and Stephen Lawrie, a professor of psychiatry. Knowing this, I was intrigued as to how this book would appeal and come across to the reader.

As someone who has experience of psychosis and has some insight into it, I wasn't sure what to expect when I began reading this self-help book. Would it be something I could easily pick up and read and then keep my interest? Would I learn anything from it? Would I be able to relate to any of it?

After reading the book from cover to cover, I can safely say the answer to all of these questions is a resounding yes. I am amazed at how informative this little book is. It touches on everything, from different diagnoses and possible causes, to recoveries and treatments, and much more.

I especially loved the approach the book takes in terms of the writing style. Factual and scientific information is interspersed with little bits of humour, which keep the reader learning about the serious topic of psychosis, but at the same time maintaining a light-hearted approach, so that the information is not overwhelming.

There is an openness and frankness about this book that makes it extremely accessible to everyone. I really admired how Erica shared her thoughts on how and why she personally experienced mental health issues in the first place, such as childhood adversity, stress, and the use of illicit drugs, which she stopped using as soon as she received a diagnosis.

Even though this book is relatively short, it covers the topic of psychosis in good detail. The level of detail is perfectly balanced in providing enough information, but keeps that information accessible. Although this book covers different aspects of mental health issues in a realistic and serious way, after reading it, I did feel a sense of optimism. This optimism was in regards to not only understanding my own mental health better (mainly from the first half of the book) but also in the way that those who experience psychosis can manage their symptoms and live a more satisfying and fulfilling life (mainly the second half of the book). I found the book to be especially refreshing when reading about staying well after an acute psychotic episode, because the importance of medication is discussed alongside equally vital, but often undervalued and overlooked, non-drug approaches.

The Beginner's Guide to Sanity does not shy away from the fact that experiencing psychosis can be terrifying, confusing, and life altering. However, this book also shows that people can recover from psychosis. Symptoms can also be managed via different methods and techniques. In fact, overcoming this mental health issue can help you grow on a personal level and gain an insight that others do not have. It can also make you more grateful and enthusiastic about life as a whole.

Overall, I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in psychosis (or conditions that can cause psychosis), be it for their own mental health or someone else's, or if they simply have an interest in mental health issues in general.

Ziaul Choudhury