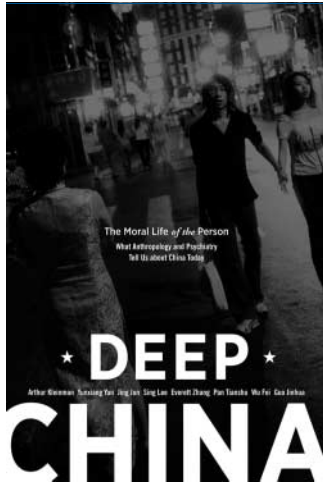


Book reviews

Edited by Allan Beveridge, Femi Oyeboode
and Rosalind Ramsay



Deep China: The Moral Life of the Person

By Arthur Kleinman, Yunxiang Yan, Jing Jun, Sing Lee, Everett Zhang, Pan Tianshu, et al.
University of California Press. 2011.
£18.95 (pb). 289 pp.
ISBN: 9780520269453

I was born in the northern Chinese city of Tangshan in 1973. At 04:00 h on 28 July 1976, when I was 2 years old, my home city suffered one of the most destructive earthquakes of the 20th century. My father tucked my sister and me under each arm and ran into the sitting room of our apartment, only for the floor to collapse beneath him, sending us all tumbling down two stories. By some miracle we all survived: a quarter of a million people perished.

Meanwhile, another earthquake was about to strike. A few months earlier, China's premier Zhou Enlai had died and the following September saw the death of Mao Zedong. The subsequent chain of political events saw the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, the man credited as the architect of the socialist market economy and the economic and social earthquake of China's rise to world economic powerhouse.

These days it seems China is never out of the news. Like the death toll in the Tangshan earthquake, the statistics about modern China – of population movements and economic growth – seem always to be staggering. But as with the Tangshan earthquake, behind the numbers are the particular stories of individual lives that have changed. *Deep China* seeks to explore through the lenses of psychiatry and sociology the effects on the individual, and on the millions of individuals that make up China, of the seismic social changes we have lived through – the shift from a centrally controlled economy to a free market, from collective values to individualism and individual aspirations for personal happiness.

So why should this be of interest to readers? Personally, I found it fascinating to see the insights of psychiatry brought to light in this way – to see how psychodynamic models can help us to understand the way individuals and nations come to terms with or sometimes fail to come to terms with repeated trauma, terrible suffering and huge change. As a doctor trained in China and working as a psychiatrist in the west of England, it was good to be reminded of the cultural contingency of psychiatric diagnoses such as depression, and I was dismayed by the vivid stories of the continuing stigma of mental illness in China and by the commercialisation of mental distress through the encroachment of Big Pharma.

Deep China both saddened me and made me optimistic for the future. As a psychiatrist I am fascinated by the stories of individual

people. The stories of China over the past 100 years are amazing, but even more amazing are the stories of the individuals that have lived it.

Rui Zheng Together NHS Foundation Trust, Weavers Croft, Stroud, UK. Email: ruizheng100@yahoo.co.uk

doi: 10.1192/bjp.bp.111.107193



Bad Souls: Madness and Responsibility in Modern Greece

By Elizabeth Anne Davis
Duke University Press. 2012.
£17.99 (pb). 360pp.
ISBN: 9780822351061

Thrace, the northeastern most province of Greece, is ethnically diverse, borders Bulgaria and Turkey and is a point where political refugees and economic immigrants cross into Europe. The author, a North American anthropologist, researched her PhD there during 1999–2004, a time of psychiatric reform and deinstitutionalisation. In part, she illustrates some difficulties in working across cultures, including mutual mistrust between patients and staff.

'*Bad Souls* is an ethnographic study of responsibility among psychiatric patients and those who give them care.' (p. 4). Davis draws a distinction between personal ethics and responsibility, and moralising about the behaviour and responsibility of others. She focuses on patients that have not done well (e.g. severe and enduring mental illness, personality disorder). Such difficult cases give only a partial view of psychiatry. Nevertheless, lessons can be learnt from these cases.

The services described are similar to community-oriented services one could find in the UK at the time, some more advanced than others. Reports of discussions with staff and patients ring true. Staff come across as both caring (about patients) and mindful of the fair administration of public finances, even when muddled or inconsistent at times. Nevertheless, Davis, a critical interrogator of psychiatric practice, may have been disappointed to conclude:

'I sought but failed to find a coherent framework of local beliefs and practices that might make mental illness and healing intelligible outside the medical paradigms of pharmacology and psychotherapy or the ethical paradigm of personal responsibility promoted in community-based care. What I found outside those paradigms was conversion symptoms.' (p. 137).

The final chapter implies that Davis' answer to the riddles posed by difficult psychiatric cases, including problems arising out of need for compulsion and dependency on disability benefits, is not to have psychiatrists at all. This sets us back to the libertarian ideology of Thomas Szasz. It is surprising, therefore, that on the back cover Davis' fellow anthropologists Elizabeth Povinelli and Vincent Catanzaro praise *Bad Souls* as a critique of neoliberal