

Hate the player, hate the game?

'Scientists have interests and sometimes they have trouble dealing with them,' says the antihero of *Faking Science* as he reflects upon the derailment of his career in social psychology. In doing so, he brings into view a problem that has also caused other researchers and practitioners before him (and potentially others after him too) to take risks in the way in they carry out their work.

How do they come to engage in – or, alternatively, avoid engaging in – scientific misconduct? This is a question to which

both of the volumes reviewed here address themselves; and while they come at it from different directions, they arrive at a similar understanding.

First, Sternberg and Fiske's expansive collection of case studies, in which psychologists (most in United States academic settings, but the odd one or two from the UK or doing practitioner work) candidly discuss ethical dilemmas in which they have found themselves in the past. The dilemmas range from wayward students, through client confidentiality issues, potential harm to study participants, revelations during study write-ups, and conflicts of interest, to attempts at exploitation and dubious data management practices.

It might be the case that a reader comes to this book expecting every case study to culminate in an obvious solution that was taken up to the benefit of all involved.

Not so, as it happens: in some of the cases the dilemma was indeed resolved in a satisfactory manner, or even forestalled; in others, an imperfect solution, or no solution at all, was adopted. In reflecting on these situations, the contributors point to a range of personal and situational factors that create the dilemmas in the first place, and influence the attempts of those involved to find a way through them. The result is a compelling set of stories about psychologists foreseeing trouble, getting into it or escaping from it.

This brings us to the second publication. *Faking Science* is the English-language version of *Ontsporing*, in which Diedrik Stapel

recounted his misdeeds whilst working at universities in the Netherlands (he was discovered to have fabricated his research studies to such an extent as to render at least 30 publications fraudulent, and to cast doubt on yet other outputs). The original version courted some controversy when it appeared on Dutch bookshelves, the dust having barely settled from the 'Stapel affair' at the time. Three years later this translation, available as a free download, provides a wider audience with the opportunity to find out how the author accounted for his actions.

We join the story as the tangled web that Stapel weaved is about to unravel. From that point, Stapel takes us back in time to the start of his career, where we learn about what inspired his academic interests, and then forwards again, where we witness the weaving of that web and the unhappy aftermath of its unravelling. Along the way Stapel throws in a few insights from psychological studies – both others and his own, but helpfully signposting where the latter were based on made-up data – plus the occasional anecdote from his childhood. While that might all sound a little self-indulgent, much of it is quite pertinent to the subject matter of the book, as it provides clues as to what Stapel believes motivated him to engage in scientific misconduct.

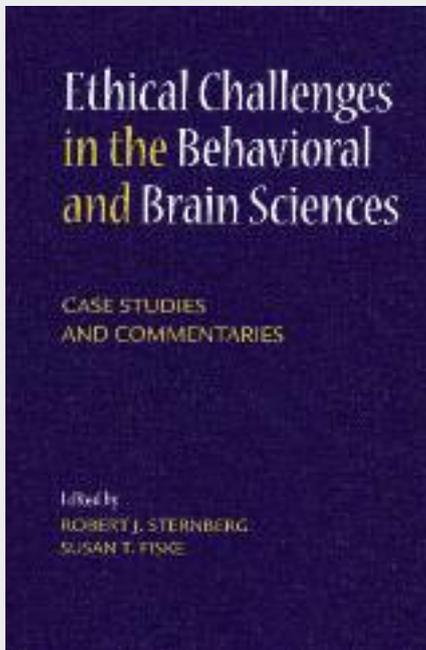
The picture that Stapel presents is of someone whose desire for success led to some latent behavioural tendencies coming into play in an unhelpful way. Unchecked either by his own moral restraint, or by social or institutional controls, Stapel's 'dark side' clouded his ethical judgement, as a result of which he crossed the boundary between expediency and plain duplicity in his handling of research data; a movement that he would (eventually) come to regret.

It is here that *Faking Science* converges with the stories collected by Sternberg and Fiske. The latter too describe interplay between ambition, moral values, prevailing circumstances (such as publication pressure and insecure employment), an understanding of ethical boundaries and the ability of professional peers to hold each other to account for their practice. Indeed, a couple of the case studies there resembled the developmental path of the Stapel affair; hopefully, history will not repeat itself.

Those with an interest in understanding scientific (mis)conduct will find both of these publications an insightful, and perhaps provocative, read. *Ethical Challenges in the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* in particular would also be a useful source of study material for courses on ethical issues.

[*Ethical Challenges..*] Cambridge University Press; 2015; Pb £21.99 (*Faking Science*) Free download from tinyurl.com/pvua9z6 (PDF version); tinyurl.com/ogk4yez (mobile version); tinyurl.com/onuv9yb (epub version)

Reviewed by Denham Phipps who is a Research Fellow at the University of Manchester



Ethical Challenges in the Behavioral and Brain Sciences
Robert Sternberg & Susan Fiske (Eds.)
Faking Science: A True Story of Academic Fraud
Diedrik Stapel (translated by Nicholas Brown)



A blissful wander

Tibet's Secret Temple
Wellcome Collection

'I have seen in my wanderings great temples and shrines, but none are as blissful as my own body.' – Mahāsiddha Saraha, 8th century

When a serpent-like water deity called a lu appeared to Tibet's Fifth Dalai Lama (Lobsang Gyatso, 1617–1682) during his meditations and warned that construction of the Potala Palace was disturbing the lu's subterranean realm, Gyatso vowed to build a temple to appease them. The Lukhang, or 'Temple to the Serpent Spirits', was completed in the late 17th century, its symmetrical design and ascending levels forming a Buddhist representation of the integral harmony of the cosmos and the human psyche. The Sixth Dalai Lama promptly renounced his monastic vows and used his new pad for his 'amorous encounters'.

Why did that strike me as incongruous, and amusing? Maybe because, like so many Westerners, I have largely lost that connection between mind and bodily energy. This exhibition puts 'body' before 'mind and meditation', yet still I arrived expecting the emphasis to be on the mental.

Of course, it's not either/or. One of many quotes adorning the walls (from Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, 1730–1798) reminds visitors 'Unless the vitally important body is compliant and energy flowing freely, the pure light of consciousness will remain obscured. So take these physical practices to heart!' And many of us do find our own mindful moments in running, dancing, and other forms of exercise. But modern 'mindfulness', as Oxford psychologist Professor Willem Kuyken outlines in a film at the end of your walkthrough, emphasises attention, attitude, and ethical/virtuous qualities. Is it just me that finds that a bit intellectualised, worthy, dull even? Give me 'couples making

love', a 'trul khor' yoga workout, and a sexually aroused bull-headed deity that vanquishes death (three of the exhibits here).

The Lukhang's uppermost chamber conceals intricate wall paintings that guided the Dalai Lamas on the path of spiritual enlightenment. Lifesize, lightbox digital recreations of these fabulous murals are the centrepiece of the exhibition. Photographer Thomas Laird has performed miracles in bringing these stories of rapture, terror and self-transcendence to the Western world in such a vibrant manner, and any concerns that Lochen Dharma Shri's paintings were not meant for our eyes were assuaged by the curator quoting the Dalai Lama: 'The time of secrecy is over'. The murals express living traditions that we must share and learn from, or lose.

Indeed, it could be argued that we crave the essence of enlightenment more than ever. In the film, Geraldine Davies, Principal of the UCL Academy, describes how her school pupils come from sometimes chaotic family environments, on noisy buses, to learning environments where they are constantly questioned. She is using the .b mindfulness programme to build their own strategies to provide moments of silence and calm in a busy, turbulent environment.

And yet... again, we are reminded that one of the earliest of the Buddhist tantras, the Hevajra, states that 'the yogi must always sing and dance'. I hope the importance of embodied expression is not lost amongst the colonisation and (some would say) dilution of ancient mindful practices. Much of what is on show here represents a threshold: a transition from mundane reality to engagement with primal aspects of the human condition. That's a transition we could all perhaps do with making more often.



The curators describe their offering as 'a bit of a risk': a consideration of well-being rather than their usual focus on medicine, and a whole gallery devoted to a non-Western perspective for the first time. Perhaps it will encourage visitors to take their own risks: we are reminded that Tibetan Buddhism is characterised by its 'unhesitating evocation of aspects of existence that are normally psychologically and culturally suppressed'; and confronting them in this incredible 'free destination for the incurably curious' is

a wonderful wander in our own temples: our brains, and our bodies.

I *Tibet's Secret Temple runs until 28 February 2016 at the Wellcome Collection, opposite Euston Station in London. There is also a series of events to accompany the exhibition: in particular, see 'Mindfulness unpacked' with the Hubbub group. For information see <http://wellcomecollection.org/secrettemple>*
Reviewed by Dr Jon Sutton who is Managing Editor of *The Psychologist*

contribute

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Big Data at Work: The Data Science Revolution and Organizational Psychology Scott Tonidandel, Eden B. King & Jose M. Cortina (Eds)
The Science Inside the Child Sara Meadows
Play and the Human Condition Thomas S. Henricks
Psychology for Sustainability (4th edn) Britain A. Scott, Elise L. Amel, Susan M. Koger and Christie M. Manning

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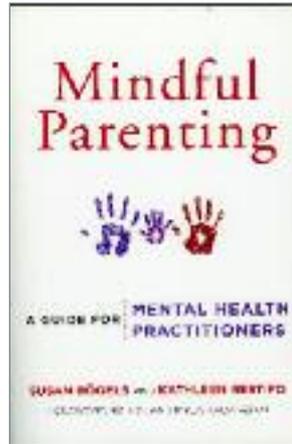


Minding children mindfully

Mindful Parenting
Susan Bogels & Kathleen Restifo

Stress in families can often set off a vicious spiral, with one member triggering vulnerable buttons in another, who in turn exhibits more negativity, thereby setting off a chain reaction. And when parent-child relationships fall into this tiresome trap, the onus typically falls on the parent to change the pernicious pattern. However, when children present difficult temperaments or parents themselves have their own issues to contend with, it is not easy to envisage a peaceful household. Further, when we are confronted with intractable problem situations with no simple solution, often the only option we have is to change our perception of them. A mindful orientation, where we simply observe what is happening within and around us without being judgemental, can stem the floodgates of negative emotions before they cascade and cause further havoc in a household.

In *Mindful Parenting*, the authors provide a resource book for professionals who work with distraught parents. The book provides a step-by-step programme that may be conducted with a small group of parents over eight weeks to help them cultivate



mindfulness in themselves and in their relationships. The book is a useful manual for professionals who are interested in introducing mindfulness to parents as it provides a course curriculum and includes relevant handouts. The goal of the programme is to help parents respond thoughtfully instead of giving in to their usual automatic reactions.

As the authors themselves point out, mindfulness cannot really be taught but has to be practised. Thus, the book is ideal for mental health professionals who have been practising mindfulness meditation themselves and would like to share this ancient technique, which has its roots in Buddhist thought, with parents who would like to repair their relationships with their children. The book is not meant for professionals who are unfamiliar with mindfulness as it does not provide a rationale on why we should practise this form of meditation. While *Mindful Parenting* is an excellent 'how to' book, it is not meant for novices or for those who are sceptical of the concept of mindfulness. Further, the book could have been edited with a more mindful eye as it is replete with typos.

| Norton; 2014; Pb £17.99

Reviewed by Aruna Sankaranarayanan who is Director, PRAYATNA, a centre for children with learning difficulties in India



Most uplifting

Elaenia
Floating Points

There have long been links between music and modern science, from studies of acoustics at the University of Cambridge in 1873 to keyboard-playing Professor Brian Cox, but London-based producer and University of London neuroscience PhD Floating Points is no D:Ream.

His debut LP, *Elaenia*, has just been released on the back of a progression of sparkling singles and EPs and offers a journey through swirling dark jazz reminiscent of the late-night paths a mind can follow but also shares calmer, more meditative moments. Composed mainly of strings, piano, drums, synths and wordless backing vocals it could be described as 'electronica' but is far from medicalised or reductive. His live shows with an 11-piece band offer an immersive set full of tension, expression and waves of emotion reflecting all aspects of human experience – hard to quantify but instantly recognisable in our response to art.

As someone intrigued by the beauty and power of the brain, *Elaenia's* detailed rhythms and patterns can appeal to the intellectual side and lead us to admire how complex layers have been interlaced with delicacy and precision. But although structured connections underpin what we



hear, in their combination they produce something intangible, far greater than the wiring that produces it, something more akin to spirituality.

Standout tracks from the concise seven presented are 'Nespole', 'Silhouettes (I, II & III)' and 'For Marmish', but the whole piece flows seductively from moment to moment with such subtlety that it could be a continuous mix.

In a recent interview Floating Points himself suggests that rather than force

parallels, music and science can exist exclusively but also harmoniously. *Elaenia* perfectly demonstrates the carefully balanced blend of system and creative freedom essential for the most uplifting of music.

| *Elaenia* was released 6 November on Pluto. There are live shows at the Brixton Electric in February 2016.

Reviewed by Dr Laura Meldrum-Carter who is a Chartered Psychologist



Wisdom, madness and folly

The Divided Laing
Patrick Marmion

Psych-professionals are popular characters in plays and films, but portrayals of actual people are much rarer – with the notable exception of Dr Freud. The problem is presumably not only must their work be original, interesting and accessible, but there needs to be a person worth portraying.

Step forward R.D. Laing. In the 1960s and 70s, Laing was a towering figure, both professionally and culturally. For some academics Laing still matters; but culturally, he has all but disappeared. It was therefore

compassion. But he argued that ‘mental illness’ was a natural reaction to an ill society, and not due to individual biology or brain chemistry. As 60s culture changed, Laing was in the right place at the right time to put his theories into practice.

The play is set in Kingsley Hall in 1970, a rundown building in east London and the location of Laing’s radical attempts to turn psychiatry on its head. There, all rules were off. There were no white coats, and no division between patient and psychiatrist.

down from the roof by Joe Berke (James Russell), a gentle Jewish-American doctor who travelled to the UK to work with Laing. Aaron Esterson (Kevin McMonagle) is also glad to see Laing, but for different reasons: they’re about to be thrown out of Kingsley Hall. Laing takes it all in his stride, charming and cajoling those around him to bend to his will.

But as the play progresses, tensions mount. Joe wants to leave, Cooper is challenging, the locals are rioting, and Laing’s pregnant partner Ulrike (Amiera Darwish) is about to pop. Worse, Laing’s relationship with Esterson is declining – they co-founded The Philadelphia Association – and Laing is worried he may lose control of it.

Although not an out-and-out comedy, the play is undoubtedly funny, shot through with dry Glasgow humour, appropriately fruity language and farce. Oscar Pearce makes the most of the best scene when, tripped out on LSD, he recounts a surreal sexual experience whilst standing on a table in a grubby vest and Y-fronts. Cox gives a sophisticated performance, his Laing laid-back and empathetic, yet also capable of hogging the limelight and not caring who gets trampled on the way.

This is how Laing is ‘divided’: and towards the end, there are literally two Ronnies on the stage, as Marmion imagines what might have happened if Laing had not died in 1989, but lived on today (he’d be 88). Marmion comes down on the side of current orthodoxy – ‘Take your medication, contribute to group therapy, don’t misbehave and you’ll be out in no

time.’ You sold out, says 1970 Ronnie. No, it’s because it works, replies 2015 Ronnie. Maybe both are true.

The Divided Laing is an accomplished piece that anyone with an interest in psychology or mental health would enjoy. And as well as this play, next year sees the release of a biopic starring David Tennant – so perhaps the name of R.D. Laing will again be known to the wider public.

| *The play was running at the Arcola Theatre, London until 12 December 2015*
Reviewed by Kate Johnstone who is Associate Editor (Reviews)



a smart choice by Patrick Marmion to put Laing centre-stage in his new play, *The Divided Laing* (humorously subtitled ‘The Two Ronnies’).

During the 1960s Laing, a qualified psychiatrist, published books such as *The Divided Self* and *The Politics of Experience*. These challenged brutal and cruel practices in mental institutions – satirised by Ken Kesey in *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* in 1962. Laing asked fundamental existential questions about the nature of mental illness in general, and schizophrenia in particular. Emotional and mental distress existed and should be responded to with kindness and

No one would receive electric shock therapy or lobotomies; and no one would take drugs: or at least, not medically prescribed ones. LSD and other recreational drugs were encouraged.

At the start of the play, Laing (Alan Cox) arrives after a long absence globe-trotting, visiting his neglected family in Glasgow, and numerous TV and radio appearances. He is fallen upon with relief by Mary Barnes (Laura-Kate Gordon), the most high-profile of Laing’s patients [see ‘Looking back’ article at tinyurl.com/z2wzpmg]. David Cooper (Oscar Pearce), a Marxist and prominent anti-psychiatrist, is being talked



Brave and confident

Beasts of No Nation
Cary Fukunaga (Director)

Idris Elba was at the forefront of the trend for black British actors to turn to the States for roles of substance. He gave a stellar performance as Stringer Bell in *The Wire*, itself a trail-blazer for the now familiar long-form of TV drama. It is therefore fitting that Elba is again leading where others will surely follow, as star and producer of *Beasts of No Nation*. The film was funded by Netflix and has had 'simultaneous distribution', meaning it was available on the cable channel at the same time as a very limited cinema release.

More remarkable is that Netflix have chosen to fund a film about child soldiers, with an entirely black cast. Elba's commitment to the project no doubt helped, as did Cary Fukunaga's, responsible for direction on the brilliant first series of *True Detective*. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly challenging subject matter, and

proves that Netflix has creative cojones as well as financial clout.

The film begins gently as we meet Agu (Abraham Attah) and his loving family, living ordinary lives in an unnamed West African village. The adults know that their country has experienced a military coup. They try to carry on as normal, but fear what is approaching. Agu and his chums are oblivious to adult concerns, and concentrate on how to charm or scam money out of the UN peacekeepers.

Inevitably, the fragile peace cannot hold, and the family has to take action to try and save themselves. But it's not enough; and the scene in which the army finally arrive at Agu's village is terrifying. Agu finds himself alone in the jungle, and is captured by the rebel force now fighting the army. Its leader is



the darkly charismatic Commandant (Idris Elba), and he knows that boys can be very useful. Agu must fight or die.

Unsurprisingly, Elba commands every scene he is in. But equally strong is 14-year-old Abraham Attah, in his first ever role. He portrays the utter helplessness of a child caught in this situation without falling into sentimentality. Some scenes are hard to watch, as Agu's situation becomes increasingly brutal, and brutalising. But it never feels gratuitous, and it is a genuine attempt to represent the experience of a child soldier (an important topic for charities

and psychologists). And the cinematography captures the beauty of this part of Africa, and the ugliness of her wars, without ever resorting to cliché.

Beasts of No Nation is a brave and confident film, if not an unqualified artistic success. But as HBO did with TV drama, Netflix has the potential to shake up the film industry by improving the diversity of film output, and allowing creative talent to flourish. That is a welcome step.

I Reviewed by Kate Johnstone
who is Associate Editor
(Reviews)



Giving child sexual abuse no place to hide

The Truth About Child Sexual Abuse
BBC2

Over the past 30 years there has been an increasing shift in our ability to acknowledge the tragic and disturbing level of child sexual abuse that takes place in our society. What was once restricted to the pages of academic journals is now visible in all forms of media. This is progress, and it has helped many victims come forward, especially in the light of Jimmy Savile and Operation Yewtree. However, during my 15 years of working with offenders and victims, I can't help feeling society has created a new 'defence mechanism' against acknowledging the extent of the problem. There are many textbooks, novels with identical covers, dramas, and TV programmes that seem to connect with people's fantasies about abuse. Although these do



create a genuine drive to protect our children, in my experience, they can often mask the truly hidden aspects of child abuse.

The Truth About Child Sexual Abuse challenges this with a comprehensive, engaging, accessible, emotional and yet hard-hitting programme. Psychologist Professor Tanya Byron and reporter Tazeen Ahmad use the perfect balance of qualitative and quantitative evidence to highlight the challenging aspects of sexual

abuse that professionals and the public can no longer ignore, e.g. two thirds of abuse is committed by family or those known through family; abuse by mothers is a reality; and over a third of this abuse is committed by people

under the age of 18. What this programme does is break through the inaccessible nature of academia and policy. The general public are not going to pick up research journals or the Children's Commissioner's latest report *Protecting Children from Harm* (2015), which is why communicating information through an engaging programme like this is vital.

The most important message for me was that effective child protection

requires working with abusers and those struggling with their fears of becoming one. The programme takes a comprehensive look at paedophile vs. child abuser, nature vs. nurture, cure vs. therapy, Good Lives Models, and other services that are starting to have an impact in reducing the likelihood of further abuse.

In England, between 2012 and 2014, an estimated 425,000 children were sexually abused. This informative programme is a timely reminder that however complex and challenging child protection is, we all have a responsibility to no longer hide from the truth.

I Reviewed by Dr Oliver Sindall
who is a clinical psychologist
working in youth offending
services



No little homunculus

Intelligence in the Flesh: Why Your Mind Needs Your Body Much More Than It Thinks
Guy Claxton

Intelligence in the Flesh takes on a currently very topical theme, the embodied mind. This is in the light of growing scientific interest in mind–body connections – for example, possible links between inflammation and depression, anxiety and gut bacteria, parasites and schizophrenia. Claxton’s treatment of embodiment is both comprehensive and engaging; a colourful tour of the human form, illustrated throughout with lively metaphor, which demonstrate the central point that our brain-minds are thoroughly enmeshed with and indivisible from our bodies.

Some might think such an argument unnecessary at a time when our familiarity with neuropsychology is growing, due to frequent stories in the press complete with colourful brain ‘images’. However, as the author shows, dualistic notions of mind as disconnected from and superior to the body, with a little homunculus calling the shots, still pervade much of our everyday and even scientific thinking. These ideas, when unacknowledged, can

influence our attitudes and behaviour, so that we value desk-work over physical labours or craft, become disconnected from and neglect our bodies, and measure intelligence chiefly by an ability to complete abstract logical tasks.

This is a thoroughly good read for all those who wish to understand the brain–body network more deeply – how emotions influence our decisions, perception is shaped by our goals, and how the evolution of intelligence is rooted in our ability to move. Claxton concludes with advice on how we can re-establish a connection with our bodies, for the betterment of society, education and ourselves.

Yale University Press; 2015; Hb £20.00

Reviewed by **Helen Foster-Collins** who is currently at the University of Exeter studying for an MSc in Psychological Research Methods. See <https://thepsychologist.bps.org.uk/intelligence-flesh> for an exclusive article.



A lot of bang for your buck

Cognitive Psychology: Revisiting the Classic Studies
Michael W. Eysenck & David Groome (Eds.)

You don’t normally expect a textbook to make you laugh out loud, but the author profiles in this one did. The quirkiness of an author’s self-description sets the tone for this book; this is not a dry and dusty textbook, but a dynamic and animated discussion of how key works continue to shape the field of cognitive psychology.

Each chapter, written by leading researchers, looks at one of 15 landmark studies. Most of which will be familiar to students of cognitive psychology as they include the Stroop test, prospect theory, the cocktail party effect and more besides.

The chapters are short, sharp and succinct providing historical and background detail for each study, a detailed description of the work itself and its impact on its field and psychology as a whole. This overview doesn’t do the book justice; while it is a slim volume in relation to other cognitive psychology textbooks, it packs in a surprising amount of information.

The various authors’ passion for both their subject and their research really jumps off the page, grabbing the reader and bringing them along for the ride. Considering some of these studies are over 50 years old, making them seem so relevant and engaging shows why the studies included are classics. The main brief of the book is to ground these studies in the context of what was happening in psychology at the time and why these works were so groundbreaking.

The chapters’ authors expand on the basic outlines to encompass what the impact of each study has been on the subject at large – in some cases launching whole new areas of study. It also moves us on, detailing work the studies have led to since. This not only allows but also positively invites the reader to think more deeply about each study and even explore beyond this book. I can see now why each chapter contains not just a list of references, but also further reading. There is much worth following up on and many questions to investigate. In two of the chapters the original researchers themselves are asked to comment on the review of the impact of their research, which adds an extra dimension.

While this book will appeal to those already in the field, sufficient information is provided to give a good overview of each of the studies, enough to bring the casual reader up to speed, or provide further discussion than standard textbooks for those studying psychology.

There are two other volumes in this ‘Revisited’ series, covering social psychology and developmental psychology which, based on this entry in the series, I will definitely be looking forward to reading.

Sage; 2015; Pb £18.99

Reviewed by **Louise Beaton** who is an Open University psychology graduate

Good, but at times hard to swallow



Solution-Oriented Spirituality: Connection, Wholeness, and Possibility for Therapist and Client
Bill O’Hanlon

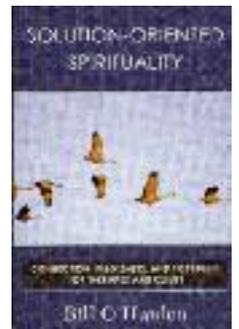
While not partaking in Marx’s proverbial ‘opium of the masses’ but holding a spiritual practice and also liking solution-focused therapy, I eagerly awaited reviewing this book. Acknowledging that some will disagree, the author gives his view of spirituality as the practice of connection, compassion and contribution. After describing the context of religious and spiritual practice in the USA – the former notably high – he takes us through raising the subject, assessing and intervening, all peppered with vignettes. He also sets out a spirituality-based intervention that – even if you do not see the areas defined as spiritual – gives a great way of drawing out strengths from the client.

Religion, despite being identified as different from spirituality, has a dedicated chapter. And here, like inadvertently taking a mouthful of pure wasabi during an otherwise pleasant sushi meal, the beliefs expressed were less palatable for me. Being invited to challenge clients’ views such as religion being ‘irrational or nonscientific’ or that ‘God doesn’t exist’ as ‘distorted beliefs’ did not sit well with me.

So, with acknowledging differing views on science, I still appreciated exploring ways of widening my therapeutic practice in this area but was left a little disappointed.

Norton; 2015; Pb £11.99

Reviewed by **Matthew Selman** who is with Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust





GUNDSTRUP CAULDRON, SILVER, GUNDSTRUP, NORTHERN DENMARK, 100 BC-AD 1. © NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DENMARK



An ambiguous, fluid and hybrid people

Celts: Art and Identity
British Museum

If asked to describe 'Celtic art', the majority of people would, perhaps, draw on items and imagery associated with early medieval Christianity in Ireland or Scotland: the intricate interlaced designs associated with the Book of Kells, the Ardagh Chalice and the Hunterston Brooch, for instance. The

ambitious aim of the 'Celts: Art and Identity' exhibition currently on display at the British Museum is to present these items in a new light. In doing so, it explores the distinctions and continuities between different forms of Celtic arts: incorporating items of artwork made by people known to the Greeks and Romans as Celts, items of artwork associated with 'Celtic-speaking peoples', and more recently, the artistry of the Celtic revival and beyond, produced as a means of articulating a distinct 'Celtic' cultural and political heritage.

The exhibition thus operates on two levels: both to showcase a diversity of fascinating artistic objects, but also to explore the shifting meanings of 'Celticness' throughout history. British Museum Director Neil McGregor has described it as not so much a show about a people, as about a label: that of 'Celtic'. This is occasionally an uneasy

balancing act: although the objects are presented chronologically, the informative interpretation text periodically reminds the visitor not to think of 'the Celts' as a continuous ethnic group throughout history. That this balance succeeds is largely due to the power of the objects themselves, presented in such a way as to bring the visitor to a more nuanced understanding of 'the Celtic'. Towards this end, the first chronological piece of 'Celtic art' the visitor encounters is well-chosen: a 2.3m sandstone statue excavated in Holzgerlingen in South-Western Germany dating from the 5th century BC. The deliberate simplicity and abstraction of this object, and others from the area north of the Alps during the Iron Age, is contrasted to the more realist forms contemporary to the Mediterranean world. The objects also stand in stark contrast to what the visitor might have expected from an exhibition of Celtic art.

The major strength of the exhibition is to lead the visitor from the Holzgerlingen statue (see left) to the Hunterston Brooch and beyond without a sense of it feeling disjointed or jarring. Along the way, we are introduced to objects of war, of domesticity, and of decoration. The highlights include the spectacular boar-headed *carnyx* war-horns (complete with sound effects), alongside a magnificent collection of torcs, excavated throughout Europe. The variety of torc designs, we are told, indicates that they were probably more expressive of local identities than any unified Celtic one: identity construction through torc, as it were.

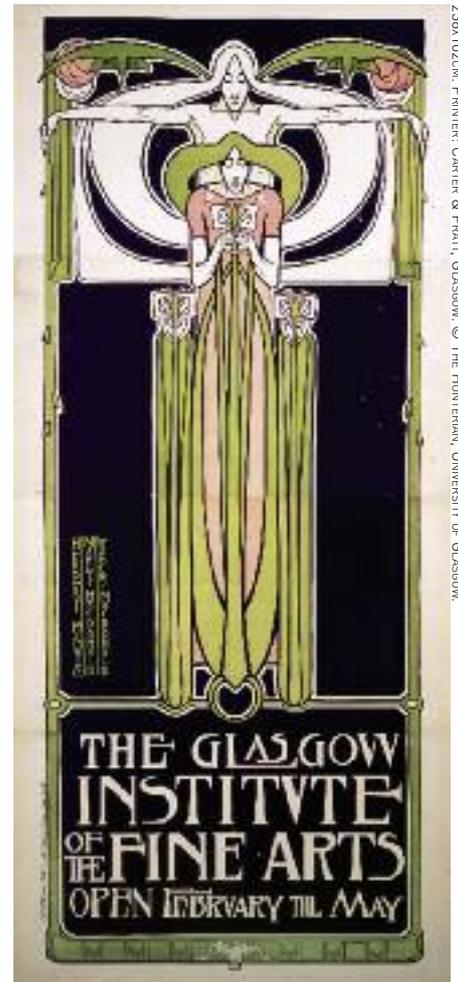
As well as these local variations, the distinctions between 'Celtic' and 'non-Celtic' art styles also become blurred. Brooches from the years following the Roman invasion of Britain indicate the emergence of a new hybridised Romano-British style, incorporating Celtic motifs on typically Roman shapes. Similarly, the presentation of 'Insular Fusion' artwork from the early

medieval Christian period demonstrates the Anglo-Saxon origins of the intricate interlace decoration now popularly thought of as 'Celtic knotwork'.

Bringing the concept of 'Celticity' up to



THE GLANBEIG STATUE, HOLZGERLINGEN, BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG, GERMANY 500-400 BC. SANDSTONE; H: 2.30 M. WÜRTEMBERGISCHES LANDESMUSEUM, STUTTGART



POSTER FOR THE GLASGOW INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS BY HERBERT MCNIR, MARGARET AND FRANCES MACDONALD. C. 1894. LITHOGRAPH: INK ON PAPER; 236x102CM. PRINTER: CARTER & PRATT, GLASGOW. © THE HUNTERIAN, UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

Interest in the Celtic past inspired 19th-century design

the modern day allows the exhibition to engage with the Celtic Revival, both as an artistic movement, and as a 'usable past' towards demands for greater political autonomy and liberation among what are now widely known as the 'Celtic nations'. The emphasis is mostly on the former: highlighting how growing public interest in the Celtic past, coupled with new archaeological and antiquarian discoveries (and inventions) inspired 19th-century artists in both theme and design. Some of this is undeniably melodramatic to the 21st-century eye, but of particular interest here are the more subtle usages of design within 'Celtic modernism'.

The exhibition has less to say, perhaps understandably, about the contemporary political meanings of 'Celtic' identity. Attempts by archaeologists in the 1990s to question public understandings of the Celts as a historically coherent people met with a backlash from those who characterised this as a thinly veiled revisionist attempt to undermine the cultural validity and real political concerns

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'The Druids: Bringing in the Mistletoe' by George Henry and Edward Atkinson Hornel (1890) – undeniably melodramatic treatment of a Celtic theme?

of the 'Celtic nations'. Perhaps mindful of avoiding such controversy, the exhibition is at pains to stress that while 'the Celts' may not have been a recognisable ethnic/racial group in the past, this does not invalidate

'Celtic' as a collective identity in the present. As if to demonstrate this point, the final exhibits are devoted to the 'Celtic Diaspora', and include video footage of Celtic, and pan-Celtic festivals worldwide. While footage of St Patrick's Day parades in Tokyo undeniably finish the exhibition on an upbeat note, there are perhaps more problematic aspects that are glossed over in this carnivalesque portrayal of Celts worldwide: for instance, the appropriation of Celtic imagery by some far-right groups.

It may be beyond the scope of the exhibition to engage with such politically contentious matters, but it can be argued that the objects are their own best response to such appropriations. What emerges here does not easily lend itself to any notions of a singular authentic 'Celticness', but rather of ambiguity, hybridity and fluidity: a way of reading art through an identity category, rather than the art of an identifiable people.

I Reviewed by Marc Sully who is a Lecturer in Social Psychology at Loughborough University. The exhibition runs at the British Museum in London until 31 January, and at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh from 10 March to 25 September.

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