



## BOOK REVIEWS

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# Compelling insight

**W**HAT features of Asperger's syndrome might foster artistic success? This is the question addressed by Michael Fitzgerald, who has already made significant contributions to the debate on autism and creativity. This new book from him is to be welcomed.

Here we are offered compelling insights into the association between creative genius and autism spectrum disorders – ranging from Arthur Conan Doyle's interest in cricket statistics and Ludwig van Beethoven's inappropriate proposals of marriage, to Andy Warhol's obsessions with work, publicity and his health. The

## *The Genesis of Artistic Creativity: Asperger's Syndrome and the Arts*

MICHAEL FITZGERALD

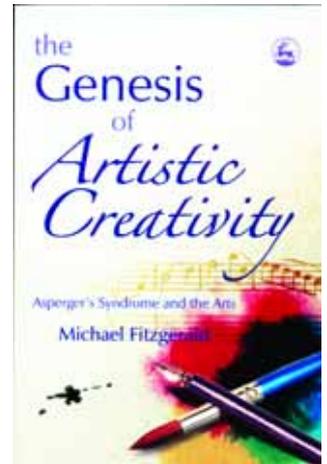
LONDON: JESSICA KINGSLEY PUBLISHERS; 2005; Pb £13.95 (ISBN 1 84310 334 6)

REVIEWED BY Ruth Hewston

book's subdivision into parts discusses the creative talents of genius ranging across music, painting, literature, poetry and philosophy. The text covers the recognised criteria for diagnosis of high-functioning autism and Asperger's syndrome (AS). However, it is written in an uncomplicated and well-explained manner, assuming the reader has only a

moderate level of understanding of AS.

Fitzgerald brings together a number of individuals in whom he believes genius and AS coincided, including George Orwell, Immanuel Kant, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Vincent Van Gogh. Although the author acknowledges the partial need for an artistically creative environment in order



for these talents to be expressed, this book does present a comprehensive argument for an association between AS and creativity.

Fitzgerald writes clearly for the layperson. His writing takes a psycho-historical approach by documenting the life history and family background of persons with artistic genius and AS. The text could be criticised for diagnosing such individuals after their death. However, Fitzgerald presents a wealth of biographical and autobiographical information about their lives. His work broadly references and describes indicators of AS, including social behaviour, language, humour, and obsessive interests and routines. With these criteria in mind, in reading accounts of their lives Fitzgerald proposes that these individuals behaved like persons with autism. Despite Fitzgerald's conclusions being rather limited, the text will provide the reader with a greater understanding of AS and creative genius. This is an affordable and highly recommended read.

■ *Dr Ruth Hewston is a Research Fellow at the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick.*

## *Offending Identities: Sex Offenders' Perspectives on Their Treatment and Management*

KIRSTY HUDSON

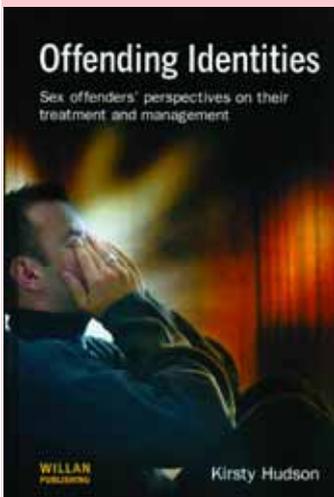
CULLOMPTON: WILLAN PUBLISHING; 2005; Hb £35.00 (ISBN 1 84392 115 4)

REVIEWED BY Lynda Meina

**F**ROM first sight, this book is striking. The front cover is a photograph of a young adult male in casual clothes. The photograph is clearly focused; the man looks very 'ordinary'. The contents of the book continually reflect its cover image, starkly bringing the reader to the reality of sexual offending and the 'human-ness' of the offenders who perpetrate it. The author succinctly summarises the politicisation of sexual offending, bringing the reader from the historical past through the changes to date including the latest legislative framework (although in the current climate this chapter is likely to date quite quickly). The populist image of a homogeneous group is dispelled throughout, leaving a more realistic understanding of the diversity of sexual offenders, challenging the media hype without minimising the seriousness of the offences.

The book reminds the reader that the paucity of sex-offender perspectives in forensic literature perhaps leaves clinicians prone to forgetting that the offenders with whom we interact are equally exposed to sex-offender stereotypes; indeed we do not often acknowledge our own susceptibility to media and populist opinion. Kirsty Hudson's research findings reinforce the need for attention to the issue of offenders' self-identity and the impact of stereotyped identities on treatment amenability. The book offers professionals insight into an issue that may contribute to denial and minimisation, and is highly recommended.

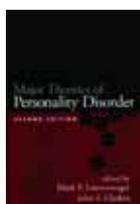
■ *Dr Lynda J. Meina is Principal Psychologist with the Child & Adolescent Forensic Mental Health Team in Oxford.*



# Persistence rewarded

TEN years ago, the first edition of *Major Theories of Personality Disorder* was published. Since that time much has changed within the field. This edition has been substantially revised with all of the contributors having updated and extended their original chapters, with two additional chapters, exploring 'interpersonal theory' and an 'attachment model of personality disorders', both well written.

On attempting to read the first edition some time ago, I found myself 'lost' and gave up all hope of enriching my understanding any further. A few years later and a new edition and the text is



## *Major Theories of Personality Disorder (2nd edn)*

MARK F. LENZENWEGER & JOHN F. CLARKIN (EDS)

NEW YORK: GUILFORD PRESS; 2005; Hb £35.00 (ISBN 1 59285 108 1)

REVIEWED BY Sarah Gladden

much more accessible; however, I still found some parts challenging.

The reader is introduced well to a brief history of personality disorders, including issues relevant to classification, and throughout there are references to the current diagnostic classification system and the weaknesses and influences that it brings

to the development of theoretical explanations. The editors provide a critical framework with which to evaluate each theory proposed, which I found particularly helpful. This book features new and interesting ways of attempting not only to *describe* but also to *explain* theoretically how individuals might develop personality disorders. Explanation posing the greatest challenge, some theories rising to the challenge better than others.

The chapters are long but are bursting with relevant information, including the basic underpinning principles of each approach, the theoretical evidence base, the weaknesses, and future directions that warrant further investigation. Information regarding assessment and treatment, and in some cases formulation, provide comprehensive stand-alone chapters.

With a range of theories covered, the you are left with a combination of possible explanations, some of which fit with your current ideas, and some that challenge your current thinking (exactly what the book aims to do). Case examples help to 'lighten the load' and might be useful to the reader with no experience of interacting with individuals labelled as 'personality disordered'. There are excellent references to other research and relevant debates not afforded by the text.

This book would be beneficial for anyone working in the field of adult mental health or in forensic services, or for anyone in the academic or research arena. I suspect that some students might find aspects of this book challenging – it is not an easy read – but do not be deterred. There are some good explanations in the early chapters that clearly indicate the text is also aimed at 'novice' readers. Persist with some of these chapters and you will be rewarded!

■ Sarah Gladden is a trainee clinical psychologist based at the University of Liverpool.

## *Measuring the Mind: Speed, Control, and Age*

JOHN DUNCAN, LOUISE PHILLIPS & PETER MCLEOD (EDS)

OXFORD: OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2005; Pb £29.95

(ISBN 0 19 856642 5)

REVIEWED BY Sarah Connell

DEDICATED to the distinguished cognitive psychologist Professor Pat Rabbitt, this edited collection elaborates on his work in experimental psychology over the last few decades. This book is a marvellous testament to the breadth of topics that Rabbitt's work encompassed, and to the admiration he has drawn from his contemporaries.

The first of four sections delves into Rabbitt's influence on the study of reaction times and mental speed, with relation to ageing and individual differences. It includes an interesting chapter on time perception, discussing the notion that our 'internal clocks' slow down with age, drawing my attention to a relatively neglected area of experimental psychology. The following section progresses to consider 'cognitive control and frontal lobe function', with an emphasis on the prefrontal cortex and its relatively elusive function. In addition, new light is shed on the debate of the frontal lobes theory of cognitive ageing.

Section 3 looks at the relationship between memory and age, with one

chapter discussing methods of reducing age-related decline in memory and executive control; although not all the suggestions (e.g. bilingualism is shown to have cognitive benefits in older adults) may be possible for us all! This section also includes a chapter from Alan Baddeley and colleagues exploiting the theoretical and practical advantages of the study of ageing for furthering his own model of working memory. The final section considers real-world cognition and the variability of behaviour outside the domain of experimental control.

The majority of the papers can be approached with little to no background information, providing insights into exciting contemporary issues. Overall, the book is an informative read, rich in interesting contributions to psychological theory and research methodology.

■ Sarah Connell is a graduate of the University of Reading.

