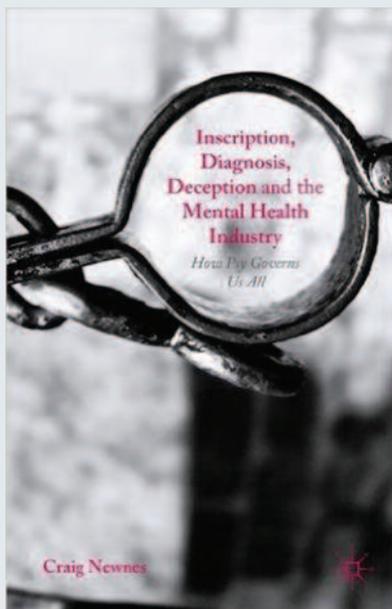


# Craig against the machine

This is a book that will be a shock to many students and trainees in psychology and psychiatry, for it shows how dangerous the machinery they are being inducted into actually is. And not only to beginners; it will confirm what many of us long suspected, that a psychological explanation for our distress is not much more progressive than the biological reductionist agendas of traditional psychiatry. Furthermore, the book deals with many of the attempts by



**Inscription, Diagnosis, Deception and the Mental Health Industry: How Psy Governs Us All**  
Craig Newnes

psychotherapists and counsellors to play the game of their elders and betters in the psy complex. Here the argument of the book is more nuanced, and we are alerted both to the brutal physical abuse that psychiatry has historically visited upon those it claims to cure and to the need for a compassionate and therefore limited attempt to support those who are labelled as 'mentally ill'. The limits are set by what is actually possible, and the work that a counsellor or psychotherapist is enjoined to carry out is one of empathic engagement. Numerous examples of this kind of work are offered in passing as we are led on a tour of the worst of psy practice.

The book is an impassioned critique of that machinery grounded in clinical practice and in an impressive range of research resources. Newnes aims to demystify the 'psy' industry, and he does this by describing in a clear way the ways in which it has developed and the way it functions today. This is an academic and professional industry that is interlinked with the imperatives of capitalist society, and so the book attends not only to the powerful economic drivers for an increasingly pernicious individualisation of social problems but also to the economic forces that produce so much psychological misery in the first place.

This is an unusual text in a number of respects, for it contextualises the debates in personal experience, many of which will resonate with the reader, whether they are

practitioners, researchers or relatively new to what they might genuinely believe to be a 'helping profession'. Theoretical frameworks are described to enable us to make sense of the wounds inflicted on patients, as is the way treatment mutates into assault. Here the book pursues a tightly argued agenda for critical participation and empowerment. The book contextualises the debates reflexively, that is to say, by allowing the reader into the process of knowledge-construction, to the writing of the book. This

is by way of events that have a bearing on the arguments in the book and by way of curious tasting notes which tell us something about what substances were ingested or what music was playing as the text was keyed in. Something of the machinery of critique, financial and sensual, is thus laid bare as well as the apparatus of the psy complex that is the focus of the book.

On the one hand, we are told how someone who is working in one of the ever-expanding psy professions might take seriously Newnes's critique without losing heart; and it should be emphasised that this is an angry rather than a pessimistic book. It is cynical about the claims of psychiatry and psychology to make things better, but not about the attempts of critical psychiatrists and psychologists to challenge mainstream thinking and practice. On the other hand, we are able to see why attempts to ameliorate abuse can only be successful if they make alliances with those who use psychological services. Here Newnes also provides links to a range of organisations that bring together service users and critical professional allies. What will strike some readers is the multiplicity of critical alternatives, and it is clear that not all can be mentioned.

This is a scholarly contribution that exposes, not for the first time but in a way that is accessible and enjoyable and up to date, how psychiatry and psychology works, the material conditions under which it has been formed and the forms of resistance that might be elaborated to combat it.

Palgrave Macmillan; 2016; Hb £63.00

Reviewed by Professor Ian Parker who is Professor of Management at the University of Leicester

## Developing network theories



**Macroneural Theories in Cognitive Neuroscience**  
William R. Uttal

William R. Uttal provides a compelling read and captures the reader's attention as he discusses controversial and complex issues within the field of neural network theories. Despite the title, there are actually three chapters before any detailed discussion of macroneural theories themselves. The first section of the book provides the reader with a useful background on the development of theories in cognitive neuroscience. This would be useful to a novice, helping in understanding the complex discussions in later chapters.

Uttal offers an insightful overview of functional neural networks and succeeds at highlighting the pitfalls of creating network theories from fMRI data. The book could be taken as giving a somewhat negative view of the field. It would have been beneficial to make more of an acknowledgement throughout of the valuable information that can be gained from neural network research and data from other sources (e.g. electrophysiology in animals).

Uttal puts forward an interesting concept, that nodes within a functional network do not need to be localised anatomically. This idea could provide a new insight into brain networks from the perspective of distributed processes as nodes, rather than the heavily studied localisation of function. Each chapter provides well-written and well-supported arguments for the current problems in the development of network theories, specifically relevant to cognitive neuroscientists.

*Macroneural Theories in Cognitive Neuroscience* is an interesting read and enables network scientists to consider controversial topics in great detail.

Psychology Press; 2016;  
Pb £31.99

Reviewed by Stacey A. Bedwell  
who is at the Division of  
Psychology, Nottingham Trent  
University



## Glorious... worth absorbing

**My Beautiful Broken Brain**  
 Lotje Sodderland, Sophie Robinson (Directors)

When I teach undergraduates what head injuries have taught us about the functioning of the brain, there is a clean, unrealistic quality to the descriptions available in textbooks. Clinical neuropsychology operates through the reassuring logics of double dissociation and localisation of function. There is a familiar canon of cases, many of whom are long dead and easy to underestimate: Phineas Gage, 'Tan', H.M. The most common response from students is that such cases are 'cool', and I tend to notice a gruesome fascination at play. They are right in some sense: it is staggeringly interesting to see how damage to the brain undoes us, and it is wonderful to learn thereby how it usually holds us together.

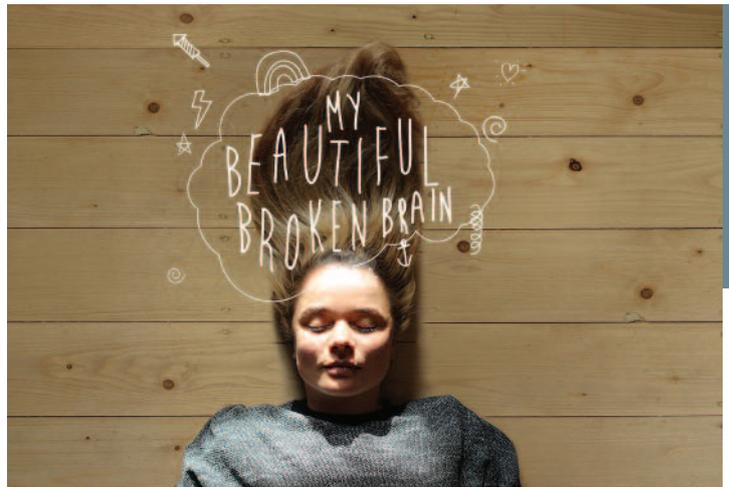
But there is also a sense in which my students are wrong. There is nothing 'cool' about brain injury, least of all a stroke at age 34, which is what Lotje Sodderland set out to record in this utterly beguiling film. It is a banality to say that, in the clinical psychological sciences, the person can get left out. Saying so is easy, but how do you put them back in again? How do you capture the pathos and disorientation, and the deep sense of the uncanny that accompanies brain injury in a real human being? Despite the profundity of the experience, cheapness and exploitation is a dangerous potential side-effect of trying to wring a story out of tragedy.

*My Beautiful Broken Brain* makes something remarkable out of something awful; like the best understanding gleaned from clinical neuropsychology, this is catastrophe turned opportunity, but the voice

is not that of a clinician or experimenter drawing inferences. Instead it is a highly personal recounting of a whole phenomenological experience, from horror to wonderment. Through it all Sodderland's determination, humour and profound curiosity illuminates everything.

The film opens with the terror of the early stages of a stroke. We hear from her bewildered relatives, who entered her deserted flat (Sodderland had taken herself to hospital, disoriented and alone) to find 'faeces and vomit everywhere'. Here is Lotje staring into her smartphone camera, one eye closed, and here she is losing her capacity to retrieve the word 'record', and confusing 'nephew' for 'niece'; pulling them out of mind after an almost physical struggle. A sociable and passionate young woman, it seems like Sodderland has lost everything ('It's beyond terrifying,' she heartbreakingly says) and it is frequently painful to behold.

But while something is lost, something else has survived. Sodderland retained her film-maker's desire to record life. 'I'm obsessed with recording everything, and I'm unable to remember everything...you're just terrified that it's going to get lost', she tells Sophie Robinson, the director she invited to collaborate on this piece. She thinks in film,



and lends her talent to fleshing out the phenomenology of visuospatial neglect ('If I go on the right side it's like a whole other dimension'), likening her experience to the bizarre universe of David Lynch (who acted as executive producer). She jokes too. Being taken to an inpatient neurological ward for rehabilitation, she downplays the evident dread at her imminent solitude, 'I've got no sense of space and time, so it's alright for me.'

*My Beautiful Broken Brain* is a glorious addition to the genre of 'first person accounts', but it also feels much more than that. Much like *The Man With a Shattered World*, this is self-authored case study; documentary as 'romantic science'. It should be filed alongside Luria and his literary inheritor Oliver Sacks, and all psychologists should absorb it.

**I Reviewed by Huw Green** who is a PhD student and trainee clinical psychologist based in New York



## Balm for your splintered soul?

**8 Keys to Forgiveness**  
 Robert Enright

While what is considered fair or just varies across culture and history, humans, across the world, feel peeved, angry or vengeful when injustice is meted out to them. Whether or not we take revenge, in word or deed, most of us are aggrieved when we are wronged. And, very often, angry thoughts simmer in our minds long after the misdeed or offence was committed. In a sense, we then become victims of our own negativity, as bitterness or resentment gnaw at our emotional cores.

In order to break free from our inner turmoil, Robert Enright suggests that we practise forgiveness. In *8 Keys to Forgiveness*, Enright explains why and how pardoning our offender can be cathartic. From helping incest survivors cope with depression, to cardiac patients exhibiting indices of healthier hearts, to victims of PTSD showing fewer anxious symptoms, forgiveness therapy has far-reaching consequences. While the author also provides a few case studies to illustrate the transformative power of forgiveness, they are rather short and sketchy. The case studies would have had

a stronger impact if they had been etched in more detail.

The author delineates eight keys or steps as one progresses on the forgiveness journey. As the book is part of a larger 8 Keys series, the reader should not take the number eight literally as the chapters have been chalked out to fit into the series format. The author also anticipates how hard it can be to forgive but coaxes the reader to press on and provides exercises that can help a person become 'forgivingly-fit'. As this book is written as self-help, its touchy-feely tone is unlikely to win over sceptics of the self-improvement industry. But if you are open to the idea that forgiveness can heal, then this book may be the right balm for your splintered soul. The author also explains how forgiveness not only helps the individual, but can affect generations to come.

**I W.W. Norton & Co.; 2015; Pb £9.99**

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



## Sting like a bee

I Am the Greatest: Muhammad Ali at the O2  
O2 Arena

I have wrestled with an alligator, I done  
tussled with a whale.  
I done handcuffed lightning, throw'd  
thunder in jail.  
That's bad.  
Only last week I murdered a rock,  
injured a stone, hospitalized a brick.  
I'm so mean, I make medicine sick.

Born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr, Muhammad Ali went on to become one of the most recognisable figures in the history of sport. Named *Sports Illustrated's* Sportsman of the Century in 1999, there is no doubt that Ali is a sporting icon for the ages. In 1964, at just 22 years old, Ali (still known as Cassius Clay at the time) became Heavyweight Champion of the World. Three years later, having joined the Nation of Islam and changed his name, Ali refused to be drafted into the US military to fight in Vietnam. He was charged with draft evasion, stripped of his boxing title and passport, and was denied a boxing licence in every US state. For almost four years, during what would have been the peak of his athletic career, he was denied the opportunity to compete, yet Ali went on to become the only man in history to win the heavyweight title three times.

Muhammad Ali is much more than just a sporting icon; he is a cultural icon. 'I Am the Greatest: Muhammad Ali at the O2' captures Ali's journey of triumph, loss, notoriety, and redemption, through a collection of videos, photographs and memorabilia, all tied together by an audio tour, with commentary provided largely by Davis Miller, Ali's close friend and biographer.

Before visitors even see the entrance to the exhibition area, they can expect to hear commentary from Ali's most famous bouts as they walk around the O2. Once inside, the first room of the exhibition shows us the familiar Ali, training, sparring and enjoying his playful, poetic relationship with the press. A corridor of beautiful, wall-sized, black-and-white photographs of Ali follows, giving an insight into the hard work, the motivation, and the commitment required to be as successful an athlete as he was. It's genuinely inspiring.

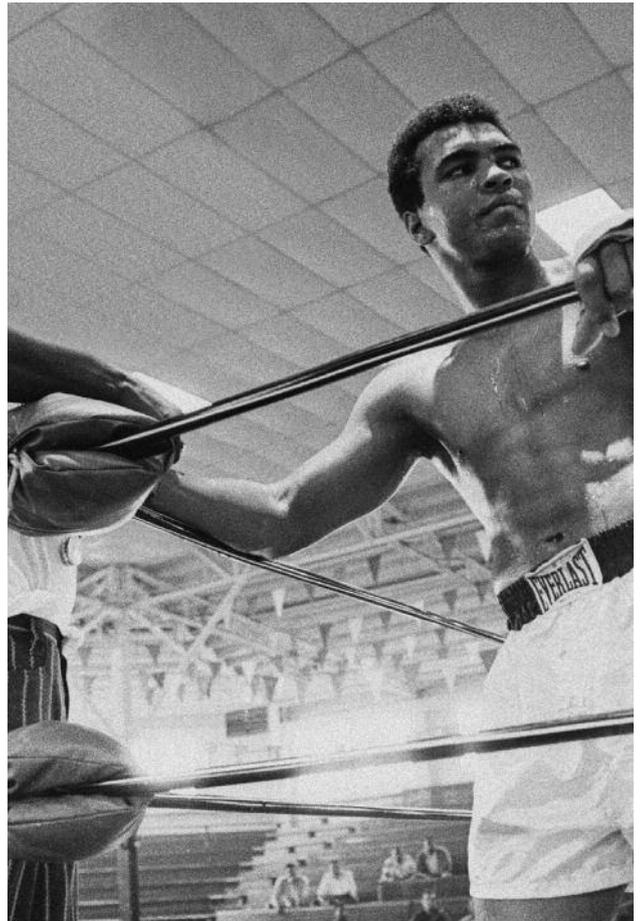
We're then taken back to Ali's childhood in what I assume is going to be the start of a chronologically presented showcase of Ali's career. We get to read and hear about Ali's neighbourhood, family and upbringing in Louisville, Kentucky, all in the context of the almost inconceivable politics of the time. We also learn how Ali became involved with boxing, and I would urge visitors to spend some time here, getting to see a little of the

development of the character we think we know: the unshakable confidence, the self-presentation as 'the greatest' developing long before any real boxing success.

We're then taken through Ali's incredible rise through the amateur ranks, leading up his gold medal winning performance in the 1960 Olympics, his inevitable decision to turn professional, and the beginnings of his relationship with trainer Angelo Dundee. The relationship between athlete and coach is of vital importance in elite sport, and while the impact of Dundee on Ali is alluded to more than once in the commentary, I was left wanting to know a little more about this aspect of Ali's career.

Visitors then enter an impressive rotunda, filled with rolling video clips of Ali's most memorable fights, and it's interesting for the non-boxing experts to hear about Ali's inimitable style while watching his most iconic performances. It's here though that the chronological presentation falls down somewhat. The audio tour, directs us immediately away from this section, into an area where we learn more about Ali's conversion to Islam, his draft evasion charge, and the loss of his title (which we don't know that he's won yet, because that's on the other side of the exhibition). Again, I would actually have liked to see more about this period in Ali's career, his transition from sporting personality to civil rights activist, to cultural icon during a turbulent time in American history. While 'I Am the Greatest' certainly captures the significant moments of this period, the impact of the section is somewhat diminished by that fact that we haven't yet learned just how much Ali had to lose by the decisions he made.

Back to the central area of the exhibition, though, we're guided through a history of Ali's fights, with a useful timeline for those confused by the somewhat distracting layout. The collection of memorabilia here, and indeed throughout the exhibition, isn't what I would describe as 'the greatest'. There are signed gloves, and



replica belts, medals and robes, and it's well put together; but for me, the tale being told is more important, more captivating, than the artefacts on display.

The triumph of this exhibition is in the story. The collection of Ali's greatest fights, the audio commentary that adds some personal insight, the photographs adorning the walls, all in one place, are what makes this exhibition worthwhile. We're only given a brief look at Ali's later life and his battle with Parkinson's disease, but photographs of him with the Dalai Lama, Malcom X, and Bill Clinton, amongst others, as well as more personal stories from Davis Miller, show clearly how Ali has cemented his place in history.

Finally, sitting in a mock-up boxing ring, we're treated to a video montage of Ali's career, which beautifully brings into perspective everything we've seen throughout the exhibition. It's a strangely emotional experience as we end, in stark contrast to the opening segment, with a man subdued by Parkinson's disease, quiet, reflective, but still Muhammad Ali... still 'The Greatest'.

I *I Am the Greatest* runs until 31 August at the O2 Arena, London.

[www.aliattheo2.com/theexhibition.php](http://www.aliattheo2.com/theexhibition.php)  
Reviewed by Dr Peter Oluosoga who is Senior Lecturer in Sport Psychology at Sheffield Hallam University



### A moving journey

Inside the Mind of a Gambler: The Hidden Addiction and How to Stop  
Stephen Renwick

This book offers an insightful vision into the nature of a pathological gambling addiction, successfully exploring the many challenges experienced by affected cases and helpful ways in which to recover.

The book is split into two well-written sections. It begins with a fascinating case of a gambler called Guy, highlighting his subjective experiences, challenges and inspirational recovery. The author then considers psychological theories of gambling, identifying potential predisposing and precipitating factors, an amalgamation of relevant aetiological theories, and an excellent section regarding treatment approaches.

I particularly enjoyed the chapter partly written in the form of an interview between Stephen Renwick and Guy: it was honest and

refreshing to read. Having myself only dealt with a theoretical side of gambling addiction, it allowed me to explore gambling truly through the mind of a gambler.

Guy's moving journey, from devastating situations to a gambling-free life, through self-help and strength, provides a wonderful sense of hopefulness! His advice, along with the author's depth of explanation, I believe has great potential to provide support to practising professionals, as well as to affected cases on a path to recovery. Overall, an insightful, engaging and well-written book.

**I Trafford Publishing; 2015; Pb £5.54**  
**Reviewed by Despina Lazarou** who holds a master's degree in abnormal and clinical psychology and is an honorary assistant psychologist



### Exudes authenticity

Sugar and Snails  
Anne Goodwin

Fiction can be what it wishes – reliable, unreliable, truthful or deceitful – and in the hands of someone with grounding and knowledge, it can do those things with integrity. This is what Goodwin achieves in her penetrative story of Diana's self-discovery, and it's a riveting read.

It begins in the middle, proceeding then in intermittent flashbacks reminiscent of PTSD, skimming the peaks of past events, then plummeting into their valleys. You discover Diana alongside Diana herself, although there are hints on the way for the sharp-minded. 'Dropping the knife, I bring my arm to my mouth: the vibrant colour, the taste of hot coins, the pain as sharp as vinegar spearing the fug of nothingness with the promise of peace.' The language is raw at times, academically precise at others. Goodwin's character, a psychologist, questions, denies, and stumbles towards her own truth in a way that exudes authenticity. Where professionals can describe and categorise trauma and evaluate the extent to which individuals deal with it, fiction delivered by a writer who knows not only how to craft her words but also what those words should be communicating can bang it home with vivid, unrelenting imagery.

**I Inspired Quill; 2015; Pb £8.99. Reviewed by Dr Suzanne Conboy-Hill**, a former consultant psychologist with Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, and writer of short fiction.

### A case for more support



Employable Me  
BBC Two

It's 9.41pm and I'm sitting here weeping over a telly programme, my heart full of compassion for Brett, who has just been offered a work trial. Finally, an employer has seen past Brett's communication difficulties and is prepared to give him a chance to use his skills. My joy knows no limits, and that's what the programme makers were no doubt after: to raise awareness and engage our emotions.

By following two individuals, we come to understand more about their struggles with autistic thinking, and Tourette's syndrome, and there are examples of strengths given too. Personally, I would have liked more explanation about the conditions, and both the struggles and the talents; perhaps these will be covered in later episodes. As a nation, it seems we don't understand neurodiversity very well. Wouldn't it be great if this stuff could be taught in schools? (I know, that applies to psychology generally, doesn't it? C'mon, let's start a revolution...) Also, job interviews: poor validity, and so often an unnecessary barrier. Discuss.

On hand as 'informed advocates' were psychologists Professor Simon Baron-Cohen and Nancy Doyle, to explain to employers what the individual is capable of and what their challenges are. The programme gave the impression that neither protagonist had received much help with their employment struggles; they had each had a diagnosis, and there the support appeared to have ended. It's



clear to me as a psychologist that there is a massive amount of work we could usefully be doing, contributing not only to the better working of society (by better use of our people's skills) but helping individuals to feel more accepted. (Brett's employer, after the two-week work trial, described him as a 'considered, delicate, bucketful of intelligence,' and while I'm sure that Brett is much more than that, isn't that a lovely phrase?)

And yet, the need is still there.

We could be helping both individuals and society. But we are not being asked to. Why is that? And what can be done about it?

P.S. The two specialists featured, Simon Baron-Cohen and Nancy Doyle, both did a great job as ambassadors for psychology. But am I the only one who noticed that Simon Baron-Cohen is always referred to in the voiceover using his full name, whereas there was a reference to 'Occupational psychologist Nancy'? Please, BBC, tell me you are not being sexist!

**I Reviewed by Sarah Cleaver** who is a Chartered Psychologist; along with Nancy Doyle, who featured in the programme, she co-convenes the Division of Occupational Psychology's Working Group on Neurodiversity and Employment. Contact Sarah on sarah@honestpsychology.com. The working group is hosting a two-day Learning a Living workshop in September on assessments for neurodiverse adults; please contact learning@bps.org.uk for details.

## A particularly elegant mathematical formula



Calculating Kindness  
Camden People's Theatre

A quote on the cover of Oren Harman's biography of American population geneticist George Price says that it 'would make a great film (probably starring Matt Damon).' His life certainly provides the template for a very impressive play.

Bursting onto the stage, Price (played by Adam Burton) announces that most people probably won't understand much of what he says, given that he has inherited traits of extraordinarily high intellect and a genius for all things reasonable and scientific. He makes these claims at breakneck speed and with such a charming, disarming, finely honed wit that the audience immediately warms to him. Almost the first thing he does after coming on stage is shake hands with everyone in the front row. But very little in this play has a single unambiguous meaning and even this gesture of seemingly straightforward intimacy and connection deserves reflection and interpretation. And as the play and Price's life story unfolds, keeping a firm grip on what things truly mean becomes ever more challenging.

In a key scene early in the play, Price 'mansplains' to a

receptionist that she is mistaken in her thoughts about humanity. Whatever people may feel about free will, morality, and love, he says, everything about us is the result of deterministic genetic evolution. With hints of mania, Price proclaims that he has recently fashioned a particularly elegant mathematical formula that expresses the crux of evolutionary theory perfectly. In almost the same breath, he mentions that he has also recently abandoned his wife and two small children.

In this scene, Price clearly articulates the difference between 'evolutionary altruism' and near-synonyms for 'altruism' in everyday life, such as benevolence, charity and kindness. The former is a theoretically described phenomenon in which genes for inherited traits become less numerous in successive generations, a process that should usually result in extinction of those traits as inherited characteristics. Despite common use of the word 'altruism', evolutionary altruism and behaviours motivated by desires to help others have no necessary connection. Being considerate and helpful might sometimes



lead to evolutionary altruism but so too might being unerringly socially oblivious and utterly self-serving. Depending on the environment, almost any behavioural trait can result in evolutionary altruism – or indeed in evolutionary 'selfishness'. Besides, most everyday behaviours are neither determined solely by specific inherited traits nor have any significant evolutionary effect.

Price gradually loses both the clarity of this distinction and his grasp of reality more generally. He begins to see everything as resulting solely from evolutionary processes, and he increasingly desperately struggles to find room in the world for anything else of value or meaning. At one stage he appears to claim that the colour of the shirts in his wardrobe is the result of Darwinian selection. Price's descent into madness is echoed by increasingly chaotic scenes on stage. As his connection with the world becomes ever more

tenuous, people who care about him find it increasingly difficult to maintain or re-establish a connection with him. At the play's bleakest moment, Price completely disappears from view and is replaced by a slowly spreading dark stain. Despite many excellent comic moments throughout the play, the mood moves inexorably from ebullience to a sombre and troubling sense of loss.

This is a clever play and with great creativity it explores multiple issues, including ambition, identity, meaning, responsibility, sanity, truth and value. Ultimately, it concerns relationships of all sorts, e.g. between science and theatre, intellect and feeling, theory and practice, reality and illusion, continuity and change, intentions and consequences, and, of course, between people.

**I Reviewed by Tom Farsides**  
who is a Lecturer in Social Psychology at the University of Sussex



## 'You say coaching, I say...'

The Art of Coaching: A Handbook of Tips and Tools  
Jenny Bird & Sarah Gornall

As an NHS clinical psychologist, I'd often wondered how coaching might fit in with therapy and other responsibilities (e.g. supervision, mentoring and managing staff). I should say that the book *is* for coaches and those already familiar with coaching but the authors say that it can be used in leadership, decision making, managing change and supervision contexts. So that's a shoe-in for adopting it in situations and with people where it might help.

They introduce the book gamely as 'a book of drawings' to stimulate visual thinking, help people see the world in different ways and to emphasise *relationship* at the heart of the enterprise of coaching. So

far so good with pinching their ideas! The 'coachee' (trainee, client, employee?) is encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings in a diagram or drawing to see things afresh and to develop a plan of action that is relevant and unique to them – the practical visualisation of 'issues' intended to clarify where someone is at and where they might go.

The authors encourage boldness and creativity in using the tips and tools, described clearly and succinctly in eight chapters with the same format: what this is, how we use it and putting it into action. They suggest dipping into the book for fun and inspiration, with their overall approach light

in touch and generous to readers to choose how to use the book and to let the authors know 'where it has taken you'.

I'd anticipate this book as probably particularly valuable to coaches but would suggest that therapists, mentors and managers see it as a kind of play-box of interesting ideas (some no doubt already familiar), to help share, clarify and maybe solve what's going wrong and what might go right. Communication, learning, influencing, facilitation – what's not to try?

**I Routledge; 2016; Pb £24.99**  
**Reviewed by Marie Stewart** who is a Principal Clinical Psychologist



## A questioning film

Anomalisa  
Charlie Kaufman (Director)

The writer and director of the film *Anomalisa*, Charlie Kaufman, is not a psychologist. But he is obviously fascinated by the human psyche, and has used psychology in playful and imaginative ways in previous films (such as autobiographical memory in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*). His films also always have a surreal bent, and *Anomalisa* is no different.

It was made using a painstakingly stop-motion animation method, with foot-high puppets. The medium means that there's no pretence of 'reality', but the storyline is all too boringly real. Michael Stone (voiced by David Thewlis) is a well-known author and speaker, flying into Cincinnati for one night to promote his book. We see Michael arrive on the plane; take a taxi to his hotel (driven by an aggressively chatty driver); check into the hotel; follow the porter carrying his small bag, and listen to a description of the room and its facilities. Each step has a ritual that cannot be short-circuited. There's not just the politeness that two strangers must show each other, there's the fact that one is the customer, and the other is providing a service. Naturally, the book that Michael is promoting is about giving good customer service. But what about the customer himself? What if he doesn't care about 'customer service'? What if he just wants to get to the hotel and lie down in his room with minimal human interaction? Anyone who has ever felt dehumanised by a stay in a chain hotel for one night (which must be everyone) will sympathise.

But it's during Michael's journey to his hotel room that the central conceit of the film becomes apparent (this has been widely reported, but don't read on if you want it to remain a surprise). Everyone except Michael looks the same. Everyone except Michael has the same voice (provided by Tom Noonan). It takes a little while to realise this, maybe because puppet faces are not human faces, and have an intrinsic 'sameness'. The effect is deadening, confusing, disconcerting.

The hotel Michael has checked into is called The Fragoli, which is a reference to Fragoli delusion, a rare delusional misidentification syndrome. This is the delusion that different people are the same person, but in disguise or with otherwise changed appearance. It is normally a paranoid delusion, with the delusional person believing

that they are being persecuted by the person in disguise. Michael does not appear paranoid, although he is depressed. But then he hears a different voice in the corridor, a woman's voice (Jennifer Jason Leigh), and everything changes.

Kaufman has been here before. In *Being John Malkovich*, which Kaufman wrote, John Malkovitch finds himself in a restaurant where every single man, woman and child is played by John Malkovitch. It is both extremely funny and sinister. *Anomalisa* is never quite that funny or menacing, although it does have one scene of unsurpassed awkwardness and embarrassment, which human actors could not



better. It is, however, a questioning film. Kaufman is interested in physical appearance, and especially faces: What does it mean to be in a world where faces are not unique? But he is saying much more about identity, and the essence of being human. Identical faces might be a metaphor for our identical (deluded?) selves – is the only real difference between us is that you order a Cobb salad and I order steak from room service? It's likely you'll leave *Anomalisa* deep in thought, which is rare for Hollywood, and praise indeed.

**I Reviewed by Kate Johnstone** who is Associate Editor for 'Reviews'

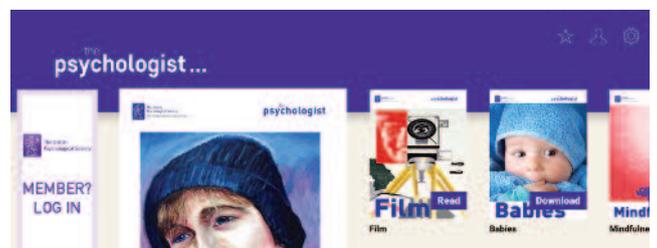
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## THE A WORD

For views on BBC autism drama *The A Word*, see our website or download the free special in our new app (which you can get in your iOS or Android app store, or via [tinyurl.com/psychmagapp](http://tinyurl.com/psychmagapp)).