

Psychology on the back seat?



Maureen Lipman: *If Memory Serves Me Right*
Britain's Biggest Hoarders
BBC One

A couple of recent offerings from the BBC had me pondering the use of psychological expertise in programme making. I can't be alone in noticing that TV these days is all about the personal back story, the transformation, the 'journey'. Are psychologists on board for the ride, or simply being taken for one?

Consider *Maureen Lipman: If Memory Serves Me Right*.

The clue's in the name: this was going to be very much a personal account of the topic. Yet expectations for a seriously scientific take were raised by a considerable buzz on Twitter before the documentary aired. An impressive cast of contributors had been assembled, the real crème de la crème of UK psychologists involved in memory research.

The programme did indeed begin pretty well, and it included authoritative and engaging contributions from Professor Martin Conway (City University), Dr Catriona Morrison (University of Leeds), and Dr Hugo Spiers (University College London). But my own abiding memory will be of the 'journey' taking an unfortunate diversion to Paul McKenna's house, so that he could hypnotise her into not crying when she talked about her late husband, playwright Jack Rosenthal. There was also a point that felt like 'OK, enough of the experts – let's get Michael Mosley in, viewers know him'.

I found this particularly hard to bear because I knew that on the cutting-room floor was enough material to make a really decent standalone documentary about memory. Dr Catherine Loveday (University of Westminster) was one of those who didn't make the final edit. She said: 'It's always a difficult decision when you are invited to contribute to a TV or radio piece. I am passionate about public dissemination of science but I've had mixed experiences so have learned to be wary. It's very easy to be taken advantage of, especially in terms of time commitment and receiving due credit, plus you often have to fight hard to maintain both scientific and ethical integrity. In the case of this programme, I knew many of my colleagues were involved and the producer was persuasive and appeared sincere so it seemed worth doing. I put a lot of preparatory work into the shoot that we did and we had some 60 older people who did a fantastic experiment that worked so it was very disappointing that it was not used, especially since I felt I had an important message to convey. The producer seemed to really like what we'd done but she went on maternity leave and the new producer obviously had different ideas. The experience was certainly still useful and fun, as well as hard work, but has only increased my level of caution about agreeing to get involved in future.'

Dr Catriona Morrison *did* make the programme, but she was not best pleased either. 'If I'd known that Paul McKenna was going to be in it I wouldn't have done it,' she told me. 'You don't know what you're getting into. They're just making a television programme, it's just whatever fits. I'm sure I only stayed in it because my bit involved kids!' So would you do it again, I asked? 'It's so tricky,' Dr Morrison replied. 'You do it through loyalty to psychology, the BPS, the Uni, but you have no control. We don't put a value on it, we don't expect to get paid, we're doing it to uphold credibility. But we expect credit where credit is due, and some decency.'

This issue of control seems to be key. I don't think psychologists working with the media expect editorial control, but neither should the final product come as a complete surprise. And some, for example Professor Tanya Byron, have managed to find the middle ground. In our pages (December 2005), she told me: 'I don't have any editorial control over any of the programmes I make, but my relationship with my producers is the key. Because they respect that



they're portraying what I do, they do run things past me. There's a healthy respect both ways. I know what I need to deliver for them to make their programmes – they need viewers, it's not just a bit of charity education here – and they know they need to respect my integrity in order for me to give them what they need.'

The second example was *Britain's Biggest Hoarders*. It began with the claim that this year has seen 'hoarding disorder recognised as a distinct psychological condition'. It's certainly the case that documentaries about hoarding disorder are stacking up like, well, hoarded stuff in a hallway. It's obviously an extremely complex condition, with 'up to three million suffering from it in the UK'. Television presenter Jasmine Harman, whose own mother was for many years a hoarder, set out to try to help others in a kind of mix of documentary and *Extreme House Makeover*.

Harman met 87-year-old Olive, who has to be at the extreme end even for an extreme hoarder (although there were shades of my wife in her response concerning the marmalade that was 15 years out of date: 'Course it's alright, it's only sugar!'). For Olive, hoarding is inseparable from the recycling she began in the Navy during the war – 'I don't hoard, I keep stuff that will be used again' – and when she donates the £29.50 from 165 kilos of cans to St John Ambulance, you have to admire her. Clearing becomes as much of an issue as hoarding, as Olive struggles to dispense with memories from nearly 80 years in the same house. She deserved better than Harman's speculations as to likely causes and solutions.

Unfortunately clinical psychologist Dr Caroline Wells was busy tackling the relationship between Janet, another hoarder, and her teenage daughter Vicky. Even then, there was very little professional input – on screen at any rate – and at times it seemed Dr Wells was just there as another pair of hands to shift stuff. However, Dr Wells told me: 'It became clear that it was not going to be ethical, if possible, to explore the full picture of Janet's story; it was so deeply buried and protected within her, exposing it for the sake of our understanding was not fair, as it was not possible to offer her long-term work and her history of engagement with local services was extremely poor. For this reason, our work focused more her behaviour; I wanted her to have the experience of clearing her belongings and to have the opportunity to realise that she could do it and that it was beneficial to her and her family.'

As psychologists, we need to be aware of the potential back story to the programme itself, and wary of becoming too precious about our involvement. If the audience need so much of the back story to engage, and only then will they understand the issues, then perhaps the producers have got it right? But I can't help feeling we've got more to offer. If we're along for the ride, then maybe we can learn from those who've managed to clamber up into the front seat.

I Reviewed by Dr Jon Sutton who is Editor of *The Psychologist*



A classic that continues to improve

Pioneers of Psychology (4th edn)
Raymond E. Fancher & Alexandra Rutherford

Pioneers of Psychology is one of the classics in the history of psychology. The first edition appeared in 1979. It was followed by a second edition in 1990 and a third edition in 1996. Now a fourth edition has appeared. The main difference between this edition and the ones that preceded it is that its author, Raymond Fancher has produced it in collaboration with his former student Alexandra Rutherford. Rutherford is well known for her feminist-oriented work, and one of the intended consequences of the collaboration is that the book contains more material on women and gender issues. The fourth edition also contains new chapters on personality and applied psychology, while the chapters on social and cognitive psychology have been significantly expanded. Other than that, the book continues with its winning formula of intellectual biographies of important figures in the history of psychology.

The biographies are entertaining and well written. We learn, for example, that Hermann Helmholtz came from a poor background and was only able to go to university because of a scheme that the Prussian government had introduced to meet a shortage of army doctors. It paid for the medical training of poor but talented students on condition that they served as army doctors for a minimum of eight years. We also learn that Charles Darwin originally intended to follow his father into the medical profession but decided that it was not for him after watching surgery being performed without anaesthetic on a child. Among the stories connected with women in the history of psychology, one of the most poignant is that of Mary Whiton Calkins who completed the requirements for a PhD at Harvard University. Her supervisor, William James, considered her to be the best student he had ever had. In spite of this, she never received a PhD for the simple reason that Harvard University refused to award a PhD to a woman. These stories help to bring the history of psychology alive. I have used the book in courses over many years and have always found it to be popular with students.

While its popularity with students and lecturers has undoubtedly been an important factor in the book's longevity, popularity should not be the only consideration. Although the history of psychology is widely taught in departments of psychology, specialists in the field are relatively rare. One of the consequences of this situation is that some of the most popular textbooks on both sides of the

Atlantic have been written by psychologists with no background in the subject and consist of regurgitated material from other textbooks. I would therefore advise anyone who is considering a textbook in this area to look carefully at the qualifications of its author(s). There are no problems here in that regard. Fancher is a former head of the International Society for History of the Behavioural and Social Sciences and the recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the APA's history



of psychology division. Rutherford is an associate professor in the history and theory of psychology programme at York University in Toronto and the current president of the APA's history of psychology division. They have a sophisticated knowledge of historiography (the theories and methods of history) and the book is based on the most recent research. It is thus one of those rare books that can be recommended both on scholarly grounds and in terms of its popular appeal.

| Norton; 2012; Pb £29.99
Reviewed by Adrian C. Brock who is at University College Dublin



Austere experiences of war

Nineveh
Theatre Témoïn

With the media so often focusing on issues closer to home, the daily struggle of people in war-stricken countries is often overlooked. A short-running play (16 April–11 May) consisting of in-depth, replicated dialogue of combatant experiences brought an enlightening and shocking reminder to London's Riverside Studios.



Nineveh, by company Theatre Témoïn, portrays aspects of director Ailin Conant's 'Return Project' work in conjunction with the charity War Child. After running creative expression schemes with ex-soldiers and child fighters in Kashmir, Israel, Lebanon and Rwanda, Conant created this piece with writer Julia Pascal. Drawing its story solely from combatant accounts, the play is set in the purgatory of 'the belly of a whale': simply staged in a small, darkened theatre space.

Nineveh presents physical and verbal demonstration of the austere experiences of war. The play features a small character cast of three adult ex-soldiers for its majority, arguing and fighting over their varying length of habitation in this purgatory and their associated superiority. A child-fighter with his mouth stitched together is found to be hiding at the play's later stages, with an onslaught of suspicion and accusations thrown at him from the adult figures. The play depicts their mental anguish in the restricted, damp setting of the whale. In their entrapment, the four struggle with

dreams of their violent fighter pasts and gain hope from ideals of their freedom and future. At the play's conclusion, most characters apparently come to terms with the struggles of their past and escape. A solitary member remains.

Featuring true accounts of violent, sexual and tender experiences, this one-hour play concisely delivers a breadth of post-traumatic reflection. Interspersed with dark comedy, this intense play is both uncomfortable and witty at times. Powerful dialogue, high-quality acting and proximity to simple staging combine to provide an intense, thought-provoking experience. Knowing the subject matter is grounded in true combatant experiences made this an informative, emotional and intelligent piece. It would be good to see a further run of this production – well recommended.

| Reviewed by Emma Norris who is a PhD student, University College London



CHROMOSATURACION (1965-2013) Cruz-Diez Foundation. PHOTO: LINDA NIJHINO



Bamboozling our visual systems

Light Show
Hayward Gallery, London

Light Show at the Hayward Gallery from 30 January to 6 May curated work by 22 artists. Upon entry there was a glittering, hanging installation of lights ('Cylinder II' by Leo Villareal) which is mesmerising. The show includes fluorescent works by Dan Flavin, a beguiling misty installation by Anthony McCall, and strobe-lit fountains by Olafur Eliasson.

Is there something fundamentally visually exciting about this sort of art? I asked Dr David Kane, a visual psychologist from Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.

'We like novelty', David explained. 'We are so well adapted to our everyday world that it no longer fascinates us. Lighting exhibits can place us in a novel, alien world... Art exhibits can push the visual system to the extremes and expose its limitations. Often it is when our visual system fails to correctly interpret the world that we are most fascinated.'

'For instance the colour room,' said David, referring to Carlos Cruz-Diez's 'Chromosaturation'. Here the same walls change colour depending on where you stand in relation to coloured bulbs. When you move from one room to the next, the walls' colour seems to change, sometimes whitening, sometimes deepening in colour.

'What's happening here is a failure of colour consistency, which is the ability to see an object as having the same colour regardless of the background lighting conditions,' said David. 'In Carlos's light room, the lights are monochrome blue, green or red. We can't fully adapt, meaning that the walls take on the colour of the illuminant. We do get some adaption, and this is where the fun begins. Lingering in one room will cause partial adaption, and the walls will begin to whiten, but then move to another room and you have to re-adapt.'

For me, at Light Show, there was something I liked about extremes of light and colour. I also liked the darkness, especially in the misty installation, and I liked the idea (if less the execution) of Katie Paterson's 'Light Bulb to Simulate Moonlight'. Perhaps as well as enjoying the bamboozling of our visual systems, there is something about capturing familiar light experiences in unfamiliar ways. Sunlight, moonlight, starlight, reflection... all of these light experiences were represented in the artworks, but in a man-made, off-kilter fashion.

I Reviewed by Lucy Maddox who is a clinical psychologist in the NHS and Associate Editor for Reviews
An extended review is available at Lucy's blog:
<http://psychologymagpie.wordpress.com>

What makes us human?



Being Human:
Psychological and Philosophical Perspectives
Richard Gross

Is there something about our species that makes us 'exceptional' or 'unique' and distinguishes us both biologically and socially from the other creatures inhabiting the planet?

In this book Richard Gross presents an unbiased look at a variety of arguments for and against the 'uniqueness' of human nature from a number of perspectives. Whether your interest lies in genetics, cognition, language, time-perception, culture or more existential questions surrounding the meaning of life, you will be sure to find this book captures your imagination.

Despite being only 335 pages long this book is packed full of information. The comprehensive chapters are logically structured beginning with 'key questions', moving on to information and examples punctuated by diagrams of

difficult concepts and boxes highlighting key studies, frequently incorporating 'time for reflection' to encourage readers to think about and question the content presented, and finishing with a detailed summary of the chapter contents and suggestions for wider reading.

While the book is primarily recommended for students of psychology and perfectly complements Richard Gross's *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behaviour*, I would say it is equally enlightening for anyone who has ever stopped to think: what is it that makes us human? Though don't be surprised if the book raises just as many questions as it answers!



I Hodder Education; 2012; Pb £24.99

Reviewed by Amy Burton who is a Research Associate, Aston University

Truly excellent



Clinical Practice of Forensic Neuropsychology:
An Evidence-based Approach
Kyle Brauer Boone

This is a truly excellent book. In an era where private practice appears an increasingly appealing prospect to many psychologists, this book provides a comprehensive discussion of neuropsychology in a medico-legal context.

As a published professor and practicing neuropsychologist, the author provides a thorough evaluation of the literature alongside well-informed recommendations for practice. The book contains detailed discussion of methods of symptom validity testing, including free standing tests and indicators within standard cognitive tests. The author also debates issues such as selection of normative data, maintenance of test security, methods of estimating premorbid IQ, and determination of the aetiology of lowered test scores.

As a clinical psychologist working in neuropsychology, my favourite aspect of this book is the ease of application to clinical practice. The chapter entitled 'Seven common flaws in forensic neuropsychological reports' provides some valuable recommendations for writing high-quality neuropsychological reports in any context.

I Guilford Press; 2013; Hb £33.99

Reviewed by Liane Hubbins who is a clinical psychologist



Missing the mark as science communication

The Salon Project
Untitled Project

As part of the Barbican's 'Wonder' series on the brain in March/April, Untitled Project brought *The Salon Project* to London, promising 'a new music theatre event inspired by the rituals of the 19th century salon... where performance interventions, music and guest speakers entertain and provoke conversation'. Excited by the idea of dressing up in period costume and experiencing an evening of challenging neuroscience-inspired conversation, I went along.

Our evening got off to a slow start, running half an hour late with no explanation. We were

Attempts at entertainment – a 'gramophone DJ' and a 'tableau vivant' of naked people, each with a different piece of technology, left me confused.

The event only really began to come alive towards the end, when the speakers gave their talks. Jenny Sealey's talk about disability was heartfelt, and Professor Stephen McMahon's discussion of pain was interesting, although as a psychology graduate I heard little that was new for me. One of the most difficult points for any science communication venture is pitching it at the right level. As this was aimed at the

looked on. I found this not only disturbing, but completely bewildering, and left the event with a feeling of having been left out – like there was some secret meaning that I should have understood but didn't.

While the idea of dressing up and entering a world of intelligent conversation, performance and debate is wonderful, for me at least *The Salon Project* missed the mark. It didn't seem to know what it was – shocking art, designed to make us uncomfortable, or an entertaining evening aiming to get people talking about neuroscience? With more



TOWERS GUN-KEN WIAN

rushed through costume, hair and make-up, with only a few minutes spent on each of us. Although the costumes were stunning, and the stylists did a great job with the limited time available, an indulgent, pampering experience quickly became stressful, as we were herded into the Salon.

The ambience in the Salon was wonderful, but once the initial impressions of the glamorous room and fantastic outfits wore off, we were left fending for ourselves – just a load of strangers in fancy dress.

art/science crossover I think Professor McMahon did a good job, but I would have liked more detail.

Towards the end, we were assembled for a photo, at which point two toga-clad girls sat amongst us. If this wasn't baffling enough, they then stood in the middle of the room, staring at an older girl on a screen, before taking two swords off the wall and leaving the room. What followed was an unnecessarily grizzly film of naked actors, throats cut, lying in pools of blood, while children

experts and the hosts introducing people to each other and initiating conversations, it could have been a stimulating event. However, attempts to shock, distracted from the point of the evening, and made me less likely to spark up conversations with strangers. For this reason, I think *The Salon Project*, while a great concept, was an unsuccessful science communication activity.

I Reviewed by Ginny Smith who is a psychology graduate and freelance science communicator



Fresh insights



Eating and Its Disorders
John Fox &
Ken Goss (Eds.)

The simplicity of the title of this book does not do the content justice. I was pleasantly surprised to find that the authors focused on both a practical as well as an academic approach to eating disorders. The book largely explores the social, emotional and psychological influences that contribute to the development and maintenance of eating disorders. Therefore if you are more interested in the biological and neuropsychological processes involved in eating disorders, this may not be the book for you.

Despite this, I would argue that for most people interested in eating disorders this book is definitely a useful and worthy read. The authors manage to direct us through new research and ideas being applied to the psychological assessment and treatment of eating disorders, whilst also considering practical issues that practitioners face when treating this client group.

Overall, the book was well structured, thought-provoking and easy to follow. Therefore I would highly recommend this book, both to academic scholars and to practitioners wanting to update their knowledge and gain some fresh insights into these ever-evolving disorders.

I Wiley- Blackwell; 2012; Pb £34.99
Reviewed by Sarah Forrest who has a Health Psychology MSc and is a support worker at Fairfield General Hospital, Bury



From doomsday to the Digest

All in the Mind
BBC Radio 4

All in the Mind, the award-winning Radio 4 programme, is back with a new series. I listened to the first episode, which included an interview with *The Psychologist's* own Dr Christian Jarrett, who pre-recorded his contribution at BBC Broadcasting House.

All in the Mind is great at getting a good mix of topics on its programmes. This episode had three main items: a feature on doomsday prophets and cognitive dissonance, one on whether reading the news is bad for our mental well-being, and the interview with Christian on some of the latest interesting research taken from the Society's free Research Digest service (see www.researchdigest.org.uk/blog and www.twitter.com/researchdigest).

I asked Christian what the experience of being on the programme was like: 'It was exciting visiting the BBC and both the producer Fiona Hill and presenter Claudia Hammond were very friendly and professional, which put me at ease and made it really enjoyable. After we'd finished recording they showed me round the recently refurbished building and I saw the open plan office that appears behind the news readers on the BBC's main TV news bulletins.' Christian's 'best bit' of the experience was 'watching my wife's facial expression when she listened to me on the radio'.

As a listener, I found the feature on doomsday prophecies really interesting, as

I thought the cognitive dissonance angle on why people subscribe to beliefs about the end of the world was a fresh take, clearly explained. Christian's interview linked well with this too, as he commented on this but also went on to talk about other research. One nugget he discussed was a study that shows having a picture of a motivational woman on the wall when women are giving a public speech makes them speak for longer and more confidently. Women: change your screensavers to Angela Merkel now. Or maybe Claudia Hammond.

I Reviewed by Lucy Maddox who is a clinical psychologist in the NHS and Associate Editor for Reviews



Flights of fancy

A Box of Birds
Charles Fernyhough

'Plato said the mind is like an aviary full of birds, one for every thought or memory you've ever had. They're all there, all these thoughts and bits of knowledge: the problem is catching them.'

This novel, psychologist Charles Fernyhough's second, could be read as a glimpse into his own aviary, all vividly coloured flights of fancy on memory, identity, faith vs. science, thinking vs. feeling. There are a few other psychologists-cum-novelists – Frank Tallis, Dorothy Bishop and Ken Gilhooly spring to mind – who draw on their professional lives to varying degrees, but here Fernyhough heads straight for psychology's big issues in something of a busman's holiday.

The plot, which flies past at genuine 'page turner' pace, involves a race to map the (fictional) Lorenzo Circuit, 'the deep root-system of the self... the basis of memory, emotion and consciousness in the human brain'. There's a shadowy biotech company and a mysterious cult leader, some sizzling sex, and at the heart of it all is an academic (Dr Yvonne Churcher) and her students. Engaging in a bit of armchair psychology it's hard not to see the book as a reflection of Fernyhough's own divided life, part academic and part writer. Dr Churcher is scolded with 'You're given a choice between thinking and feeling and you choose brainpower every time'. A character is trying to 'bring the sordid business science to its knees', and I would say it's clear Fernyhough is not a fan of conferences!

It's hard to like Dr Churcher. Living her life as 'a richly detailed sleepwalk', forever abrogating responsibility, leaves her maddeningly open with her life and her students. 'I'm half a person,' she bleats, 'ruled by linkages I have no map for. I'm a passenger in my own life, a hostage in a runaway car.' 'Stay,' her lover says, 'don't go'. She looks at him sadly. 'I was never even here'. Yuk. Like most 30-year-olds, she needs to grow up. But that's just it: as the book progresses, you realise that Fernyhough's will-o'-the-wisp is actually an everyday hero. Don't we all, to an extent, feel like Churcher? 'That feeling of centredness, of me-ness, that is supposed to keep you rooted in your life: well, it passed me by.'

The 'illusion of the self' is very much in vogue at the moment, and Fernyhough does a great job of picking that apart in an individual and her interactions. Churcher is 'some kind of zombie'; 'the confection of a restless, pattern-seeking brain', 'a ragtag collection of self-obsessed processors, each of which is mostly blissfully unaware of what the others are doing'. 'I don't have thoughts, I have wildlife', she says, 'sparks of ghostly activity in systems that act without knowing, siren warnings from a storytelling machine.'

Fernyhough heeds those siren warnings as he grapples with faith – in science, in stories, in fairy tales. 'Don't worry about me,' Dr Churcher says, 'I've just read too much neuroscience.' Materialism is 'everything... It's how a dumb lump of flesh can inherit a soul'. Yet in a tale that takes in connectomics, diffusion MRI and deep-brain stimulation it's as if Fernyhough himself thinks it's probably dangerous to care too much about this stuff. Ultimately, science can only take us so far.

I needed reminding of that. I tend not to read a lot of fiction, and early on in *A Box of Birds* I realised why. Partly it's petty jealousy... as an editor I'm a destroyer of words not a creator of worlds, and it frustrates me to see others managing it apparently effortlessly. But mostly it's the idea that you expect me to invest, emotionally and intellectually, in this made-up world,

characters and dialogue? When there's so much I still need to understand about real life, about science? Fernyhough may have ended my face-off with fiction, as I realised – it really shouldn't have been a surprise – that the two need not be mutually exclusive. We can, of course, learn about our world while our head's in an imagined one, just as our experience informs our writing. 'Stories are truth', he writes. 'Stories are the truest truth'. I'm grateful for the siren warnings from the storytelling machine that is Charles Fernyhough.

I Unbound; 2013; Pb £9.99

Reviewed by Jon Sutton, Managing Editor of *The Psychologist*



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Wide coverage and high quality

The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Coaching and Mentoring
Jonathan Passmore, David B. Peterson & Teresa Freire (Eds.)

This is part of a series of books from Wiley-Blackwell designed as course texts to support those studying and/or researching topics relating to industrial and organisational psychology.

There is a plethora of books available on coaching and mentoring from a range of authors (some more credible than others), but the vast majority are firmly focused on the practice of coaching and mentoring rather than on the research and evidence behind it. This is partly because this is still a relatively new field and research has been very much trailing behind the practice.

However, there is a growing body of research out there and this book fills a gap, pulling together the evidence behind what has rapidly become a common and widely used

approach to development within organisations.

The editors have gathered together a very strong collection of authors, many seen as experts in the field and representing views from across the globe. The topics covered are diverse with each chapter being a succinct literature review of an area whilst highlighting the gaps and future research needs. The topics are very up to date and reflect the latest approaches; including, for example, chapters on how neuroscience developments and mindfulness can benefit coaching.

The wide coverage and the high quality of the contributors makes this a valuable course text for any student of occupational or business psychology, or indeed of other

qualifications related to coaching and mentoring. I have already recommended it for my students.

| Wiley-Blackwell; 2013; Hb

£120.00

Reviewed by Emily Hutchinson who is Executive Coach at ejh consulting and Senior Lecturer at the University of Gloucestershire

just in

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