



From the realistic to the idealistic

It's no secret that our modern Western society has a fascination with physical appearance and beauty. From 'flawless' models in media advertising to cosmetic surgery via the popularity of TV makeover shows, sweeping dieting and fitness fads... the prevalence of narrow sociocultural ideals for 'beauty' and the resulting efforts to achieve them abound. Team the impossibility of these ideals and the ubiquity of their promotion with the underlying message of success and happiness, and we are left with legions of men and women, boys and girls, feeling envious and decidedly less than beautiful. So was it any different some two and a half thousand years ago? Based on this exhibition of ancient Greek sculptures and artwork representing the human body at the British Museum, the answer is both yes, and no.

Walking into the opening room of the exhibition you are immediately struck by the magnificence and detail of the surrounding structures. A naked Aphrodite invites you in and introduces you to her male companions: an athletic bronze statue recently lifted from the ocean near Croatia; the powerful 'discus thrower' (Discobolus of Myron) depicting the balance of opposing forces in the body; the precisely proportioned Doryphoros, constructed according to mathematical ratios for the male body; the flowing 'river god' in reclining form. The exhibition opens with a bang, and a procession through thematically arranged rooms ensues, each providing snapshots of ancient Greek culture and civilisation and their visual treatise on human beauty.

The exhibition showcases the contribution of the Ancient Greeks in redefining how the human form was represented in art, and thus in popular opinion. In contrast to the highly stylised and stiff depictions common in earlier Egyptian civilisation, where nakedness was associated with shame, the Greeks progressed towards naturalistic and realistic representations of the human body. The naked athletic male form was upheld as a symbol of strength and heroism, highly esteemed qualities in the war times of the day. This resulted in myriad depictions of broad-shouldered, narrow-waisted, highly toned and strapping muscular men 'like gods', over which Heracles (Hercules) reigned supreme.

However, in depicting beauty and virtue through physical strength and perfection, these forms go beyond the realistic to the idealistic, as reflected in a displayed quote from Socrates: 'in portraying ideal types of beauty...you bring together from many models the most beautiful features of each'. Not unlike the prolific digital editing used today to create perfection, ancient artists used

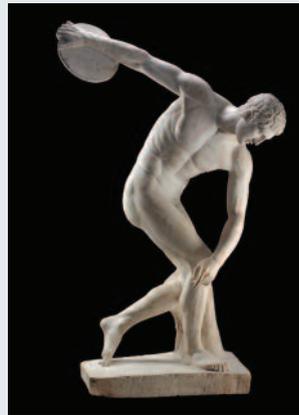
general features resulting in a narrow and idealised form. And their naturalism, while inspiring, was likely to serve to heighten the disparity with the actual self and create an unattainable goal for the everyman. It appears the Ancient Greeks may have been faced with impossible ideals for male beauty not unlike those faced in today's society.

On the other side of the gender divide, human females in their naturalistic form were clothed, in alignment with the presiding view that women should be hidden from public life, with only goddesses and mystical beings shown naked. In contrast to males, the exhibited females highlight the changes in beauty ideals from ancient Greek to modern Western society. The solid bodies of Aphrodite and Athena, with curves and rounded bellies, contrast with the currently prevailing thin-ideal; the depictions of mothers, friends and warriors encouragingly emphasising function as well as form. It is good to be reminded that expectations of female beauty were not always as unattainable as they are today.

Interestingly, a series of busts shows a later move away from generalised features of beauty towards more representation of diversity and

individuality, including and appreciating a variety of ages and facial appearances. This is fittingly included alongside a quote from Piny the Elder (AD 79), 'to think that among all the thousands of human beings there exist no two faces that are not distinct'. Hear hear!

'Defining beauty' is an impressive and enjoyable exhibition that elicits an appreciation for the skill and artistry of the Ancient Greeks, and an admiration for the human body. Nevertheless, the focus on idealised perfection begs the question: Will there ever be a time where individuality and diversity in appearance are celebrated for both males and females?



Defining Beauty:
The Body in
Ancient Greek Art
The British
Museum

at Sainsbury Exhibitions Gallery (Room 30) until 5 July
Tickets: £16.50 adults (under-16s free)

Reviewed by Dr Melissa Atkinson who is Research Fellow at the Centre for Appearance Research, University of the West of England



Ageing – a complex matter

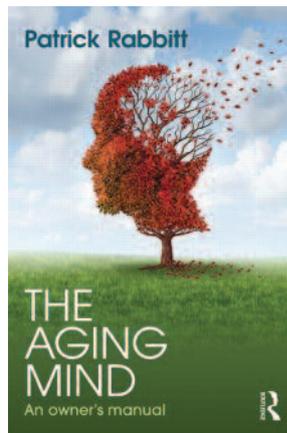
The Aging Mind: An Owner's Manual
Patrick Rabbitt

Ageing is a subject that affects us all, and Professor Rabbitt recognises this in the way in which he engages with the reader directly. From biological explanations of the senses to social explanations of recognising faces, each chapter thoroughly discusses the influence of ageing with the inclusion of supporting evidence and personal experience. This could be potentially heavy material, but the danger is cleverly avoided in a writing style that makes it an easy read.

The text switches from lay descriptions to detailed discussions for readers with a more developed understanding of science and psychology. The book can be described as a narrative story to read from cover to cover but also as a reference book to dip into. The facts are presented with a blunt

honesty; however, it is not all doom and gloom. The hard truths about ageing are counterbalanced with a sense of hope and encouragement for how we can age well.

From a more academic point of view, each chapter presents a useful collection of well-balanced arguments for a number of ageing theories with a vast array of research evidence included within the text as well as plenty of references. Being a researcher into ageing myself, I find the concepts of ageing particularly appealing, especially the



information on processing speed. It was refreshing to read a book with such a vast array of topics reflecting all areas of human ability. When one thinks of a book on ageing, it is usually memory and physical changes that spring to mind, but not so much of other more obscure topics, such as how time perception changes with age.

After reading this book, you will gain a full and interesting overview of what occurs as we grow older.

| Routledge; 2015; Pb £19.99

Reviewed by Anna Torrens- Burton who is a PhD student at Swansea University



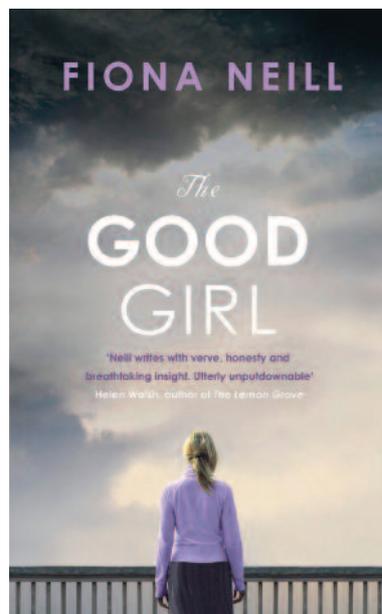
Being young never gets old

The Good Girl
Fiona Neill

Was there a moment in your life when you felt you had finally become an adult, when everything made sense? Or are you just muddling through the best you can, learning to do a better impersonation of being a grown-up? Romy, the teenage girl at the heart of this story, looks to her mum, Ailsa, for answers, but she hasn't got them. She's harking back to her own lost youth, tempted to be more playful, to 'play truant' from her family... teenagers may have 'Ferrari engines and crap brakes', but 'adults can be reckless too'.

Employing the unusual device of alternating chapters with Romy's voice and the third-person perspective, Fiona Neill's novel unfolds as a chain of events that denies its own existence – 'there was no chain of events', it's just the comforting narrative we tell ourselves. Psychological theory and evidence abound – Romy's father, Harry, is a cognitive neuroscientist bearing more than a passing resemblance to Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, who is thanked along with other psychologists

and neuroscientists at the end of the book. 'He was never happier than when talking about his



work', Neill writes, and consequently he does talk about his work rather a lot. I suspect I was not the only reader cheering when Ailsa's tolerance finally snaps: 'I'm not interested in your science any more,

Harry... it doesn't help me feel anything differently and it won't resolve anything.'

But the science does illuminate the book's consideration of growing up, growing old, growing young, in the modern world. 'Age doesn't exist anymore', when your parent's death can send you 'hurtling back through time', when adults can be as conscious of what others think of them as any teenager, and above all when grown adults can constantly 'fuck up'.

Perhaps the only difference left between the teenagers and adults in the book is that the latter can implode in relative safety, stumbling along in marriages that are 'a series of atonements'. For teenagers, there's the ever-present threat that one mistake can end up defining their lives. Neill writes this like a love letter to a lost, analogue age, when teenagers could fuck up in private. Perhaps the main message is that as parents we

should encourage children to believe in the possibility of renewal, of rebirth.

There's lots more for psychologists and parents here... a delicious clash of parenting styles that builds nicely to a comic confrontation; a touching meditation on how our babies are always there in our mind's eye, coming to the fore in times of crisis ('she cooked food that I used to eat when I was a child'); and plenty on addiction and the role of 'the ever-pervasive male porn industry that permeates contemporary culture'. And spun right through the spiralling plot is the oldest story of all: 'We all have darkness and light within us and are in control of neither.'

| Michael Joseph; 2015; Hb £14.99

Reviewed by Dr Jon Sutton, who is Managing Editor of *The Psychologist*. At the Latitude Festival in July, Jon will host a discussion between Fiona Neill and Professor Sarah-Jayne Blakemore [see tinyurl.com/lat15byngo]. See also p.534 for a report of Professor Blakemore's keynote.



Things that go bump in the mind

The Enfield Haunting
Sky Living

Sky Living recently aired a three-part drama, *The Enfield Haunting*, that claimed to portray the real-life investigation of paranormal activity at an ordinary semi-detached council house on a suburban street in London. The programme features an impressive roll call of A-list small screen actors (though the show is clearly stolen by Eleanor Worthington-Cox as 11-year-old Janet Hodgson) and after being heavily advertised captured impressive viewing figures of over 750,000 for episode 1. The case is one of the most celebrated of its type in the UK (and was apparently the inspiration for BBC's *Ghostwatch*: see tinyurl.com/npqnlwo), in part because it was subjected to onsite investigation for much of the 18 months between 1977 and 1979 during which unusual happenings were witnessed (and some recorded). Strictly speaking, the case is not a haunting but a poltergeist case: the former tends to involve apparitional experiences associated with a particular location over an extended period of time, perhaps hundreds of years, whereas the latter tends to involve more physical phenomena that occur over a shorter more intense period of weeks or months and are associated with a person or group of people rather than a location.

The phenomena portrayed in the programme are not terribly spectacular by horror film standards but, with some artistic licence, are representative of what were reported by the Enfield investigators, Guy Lyon Playfair and Maurice Grosse, and are fairly typical of the hundreds of poltergeist cases that have been documented by researchers. Cases often involve knocks and raps coming from various surfaces, perhaps in a manner that seems responsive to requests, and movements of small objects (such as marbles and Lego bricks in the Enfield case) as if being thrown around, that afterwards can seem hot to the touch. Trajectories of those objects can be weird, avoiding obstacles in their path or travelling slower or faster than expected. Cases can involve more substantial physical effects that seem more difficult to produce by sleight of hand. For example, a police officer who was called to the Enfield house reported seeing a chair shake then lift off the floor and slide about four feet when no one was near, and other heavier objects such as chests of drawers and an iron fireplace were moved.

The term 'poltergeist' is generally translated as 'a noisy, racketing type of demon' reflecting the raucous and



chaotic nature of events, and the phenomena are typically interpreted by witnesses as due to some mischievous external – perhaps disembodied – agent. However, researchers instead look to the living for the cause. Poltergeist activity might be concentrated on a focal person, occurring only when they are present, and stereotypically this is a pubescent girl (over 60 per cent of focal persons are female and their median age is 13); in the Enfield case 11-year-old Janet Hodgson was at the epicentre. It would be easy, therefore, to dismiss the phenomena as a result of fraud perpetrated by an intelligent but bored young girl who saw an opportunity for a bit of attention; indeed, Janet was caught cheating on a number of occasions, and interview footage with the girls that includes the channelled gruff speech of one of those discarnate entities could be attributable to a kind of ventriloquism. Certainly, conventional explanations emphasise the fallibilities of eyewitness testimony and memory, along with our tendency to underestimate the capacity of others to deceive us.

But the case, and its portrayal in this programme, is characteristically ambivalent in implying that Janet was responsible for everything (a

drawn-out final shot shows Janet leaking a subtle, knowing smile), when some of the phenomena shown in the episodes are clearly beyond her capabilities. Similarly, in real-world investigations, such as the Miami and Rosenheim cases, conventional explanations can seem a good fit for some features but have to be stretched to breaking point to account for others. This might reflect limitations of collecting data through field investigations where even the most scrupulous and systematic of observations still allow for a whole agglomeration of potentially causal factors to go unnoticed, preventing us from working out what happened. Of course an explanation in terms of fraud and error is much more plausible than any alternative but it does tend to lead to rather glib, superficial (and uncritical) application of explanations to the facts (e.g. tinyurl.com/oyfvsnk). In the end we are left with testimonials that boggle the mind and make for a good story, but don't give us much insight into the phenomena.

I Reviewed by Professor Chris A. Roe who is Director of the Centre for the Study of Anomalous Psychological Processes at the University of Northampton

Sample titles just in:

School Shooters Peter Langham

Eye Tracking Kenneth Holmqvist et al.

Self and Meaning in the Lives of Older People Peter G.

Coleman, Christine Ivani-Chalian & Maureen Robinson

The Moral Brain: A Multidisciplinary Perspective Jean Decety & Thalia Wheatley (Eds.)

Forensic Facial Identification Tim Valentine & Josh Davis (Eds.)

The Feeling Brain: The Biology and Psychology of Emotions

Elizabeth Johnston & Leah Olson

For a full list of books available for review and information on reviewing for The Psychologist, see www.bps.org.uk/books

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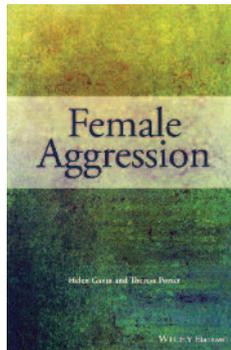
Challenging pre-existing ideas

Female Aggression
Helen Gavin & Theresa Porter

The book is co-authored by psychologists from the UK and the USA, drawing upon global examples of female violence and aggression. The authors convey an uncompromising view of female aggression, which challenges the traditional feminist narratives that underpin both the public and, too often, the professional understanding of this topic. The evidence for their position is articulately presented and key points are illustrated with case material that maintains the readers interest. Although comparisons are made to male violence, the authors maintain their position that female aggression requires consideration in its own right, not merely as an adjunct to theories of male violence. It is this stance that is the real strength of the book and requires the

reader to challenge pre-existing ideas about the topic.

The book is a comprehensive review of a broad range of aggressive acts that are committed by women. It begins with a theoretical review of the literature, building upon this with a developmental perspective on the function of aggression for women. Each subsequent chapter takes a particular topic in turn, including sexual violence, infanticide and homicide. The narrative is engaging and thought-provoking as the authors draw upon the evidence but



present it in a relatively informal style that makes it accessible to a wider audience than some other academic texts.

From a personal perspective, I found the book to be a very interesting read and useful resource for my clinical practice, particularly in relation to intimate partner violence and filicide. I have found the dominant narratives around female aggression to be worryingly lacking, and it is encouraging that there is an increasing focus on developing a more comprehensive multitheoretical perspective that will ultimately lead to more effective interventions to address this issue.

| *Wiley-Blackwell; 2015; Pb £34.99*

Reviewed by Dr Kerry Beckley *who is a Consultant Clinical Forensic Psychologist*



A beautifully made short film

Joe's Story
Russell Hurn (Director)

This film, involving CHUMS Emotional Wellbeing Service and Luton and Bedfordshire CAMHS in collaboration with the Big Spirit Youth Theatre Company, was previewed at Queen Mother Theatre, Hitchin, at the end of May.

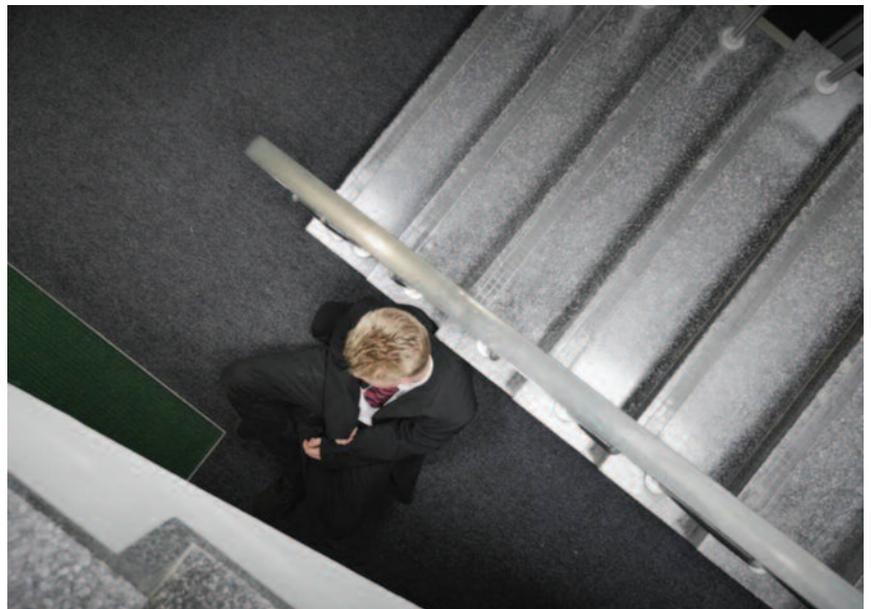
Joe, like most teenage boys, doesn't appreciate having to get out of bed in the morning. But it's much worse than that – he has lost interest in everything, cannot see the point in anything, but can't tell anyone, because this would be an embarrassing sign of weakness, especially for a boy...

In a pivotal scene of this beautifully made short film, Joe sits slumped on the floor of the school corridor. Will he take up his sympathetic teacher's offer of a private chat about what's wrong? His alter ego floats from his body and does indeed take the decision to knock on the teacher's door in search of a solution to get back on track. But in a cleverly understated shot of Joe remaining unmoving, we can imagine the more unhappy alternative routes that he might have taken at that point.

We were treated to the outtakes at the end of the film, which revealed the verve and perseverance with which these youngsters approached the process. To see this group of young service users grow in confidence, learning skills, making friends, and communicating their crucial message about how to access routes back to being able to 'have a laugh with your mates on the school bus' captured perfectly the objectives of the Service User Participation pillar of the CYP-IAPT (Children and Young People's Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) programme.

Young people who have used CAMHS services, and young actors from the Big Spirit Youth Theatre, developed and acted in this film after a series of workshops and focus groups, facilitated by a psychologist and a systemic therapist who work in local Tier 2 and 3 mental health services. They plan to screen it in local schools across Bedfordshire in the near future.

At a question-and-answer session afterwards, the young people



involved were asked about their hopes for the film. They believe they've made something that breaks the mould of the patronising information videos usually shown in PCHSE at school. And more importantly they hope it will spark useful conversations about mental health, to remove the stigma around it, and enable all those other Joes and Josephines to access the most appropriate help in a timely way. I think it surely will – and more than this too. It demonstrates the powerful effect that working in a group on a shared project can have on all involved.

| **Reviewed by Jenny Doe** *who is a Clinical Psychologist in the NHS in Luton*



A failure of parenting or...

Born Naughty?
Channel 4

Episode 1 of *Born Naughty?*, aired on 14 May, followed two children, nine-year-old Honey and six-year-old Theo, both of whom were exhibiting undesirable behaviour. The show began with clips of the children in their home environment and also included comments from family members about the impact of the children's behaviour on the dynamics within their respective households. A GP and paediatrician were frequently called upon to provide a medical perspective on what they had witnessed. Concerns were expressed by Theo's mother about his behaviour, and she shared her beliefs that he may have attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD). This episode followed the mother's quest to gain a formal diagnosis. Similarly, Honey had also been displaying unacceptable behaviour to the extent that she had been permanently excluded from school. Her parents believed that Honey may be on the autistic spectrum.

In timely places, the conditions were clearly explained with language that was accessible to the public and free from technical jargon. Another positive was that the programme showed a number of professionals being involved in the decision-making process regarding a diagnosis, as there was involvement from a psychologist

and speech and language therapist. This is important as some parents are often misguided and believe that with one visit from one professional they are able to get a diagnosis immediately.

Whilst there was a clear medical theme throughout, it did bring to the forefront the dilemma regarding advantages and disadvantages of diagnoses and labelling. Both sets of parents had a clear rationale for wanting a diagnosis; they had been battling with the behaviours seen on screen for years, and their parenting had been brought into question. In both cases, a diagnosis was seen as an explanation for why their children were behaving so differently from their peers. Arguably, the label brought no benefits to the children, other than their parents becoming more self-assured and reinvigorated in their parenting. It would have been hugely insightful to hear more from the children and gain their perceptions on the situation.

Born Naughty? may be of interest to parents who share concerns over their children's behaviour and professionals who work with children who have behavioural needs. I think the viewing could give some parents who are feeling defeated hope that behaviours are not fixed but instead, with



strategy, can be altered, as we see Theo's and Honey's behaviour improve over time. A behavioural approach was implemented with Theo through the use of rewards and sanctions to instil a rigid bedtime routine. A more therapeutic approach was used with Honey as she was taken to an animal therapy centre to calm her anxieties and was also given regular play therapy sessions, which the viewers were told had a positive impact on her behaviour.

From a trainee educational psychologist's perspective, it was great to see that Honey went from being permanently excluded to gaining a placement at a specialist school where, according to her mother, her needs would be catered for much better than in the mainstream system. Again, one could engage in a debate over whether a diagnosis was necessary for these steps to be taken; nevertheless, it was an engaging show that provided some relaxing midweek viewing.

I Reviewed by Kavita Solder who is a trainee educational psychologist at Exeter University



Enjoyable bedtime read

When We Were Sisters
Beth Miller

This heartfelt debut novel addresses the complexities of families, friendships, religion and divorce.

Childhood best friends Miffy and Laura are forced to meet again, two decades after their parent's have an affair, and so uncovering the past and the pain.

The story follows the path of the two women from Laura's present-day perspective and Miffy's childhood diary from the 1970s. Pieces of the past are slowly revealed during the book, fitting together effortlessly and convincing the reader to not put the book down.

The engaging and down-to-earth characters are well developed, allowing the reader to experience the turmoil, anger and sadness of divorce and the effect this has on the family. Despite the difficulties, there are several laugh-out-loud moments at all-too-familiar teenage dramas.

Glimpses of the author's background in psychology can be seen, providing more of an insight into the long-term psychological effects of childhood difficulties.

Recommended for a fast-paced, light and enjoyable bedtime read.

I Ebury Press; 2014; Pb £7.99

Reviewed by Elise Marriott who is an Assistant Psychologist with the Community Assessment and Treatment Service, Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust



Two to tango

Twins Talk: What Twins Tell Us about Person, Self, and Society
Dona Lee Davis

In contrast to the majority of twin studies in psychology, *Twins Talk* provides a fresh and much-needed voice to the subjects of countless studies.

Anthropologist Dona Lee Davis, a twin herself, provides an ethnographic study of twins who participate in major twin festivals in the United States.

While these festivals provide researchers with an invaluable 'database' to study the heritability of various psychological traits and medical conditions, Davis critiques Western assumptions made by lay persons and researchers regarding self, personhood and identity. She challenges reductionist views of researchers who see twins either through the lens of their genes and particular body parts or as a series of testable independent and dependent variables.

Through interviews, she elicits responses from pairs of twins on how they navigate their twinscape that includes their experience of body and the bond between the dyad. She also analyses how cultures view twinship and how twins construct and co-construct their lives. By evoking the concept of 'twindividual,' Davis questions traditional Western dichotomies between self and other, nature and nurture, and so on.

While this book broadens the scope of twin studies with a unique perspective, it is quite repetitive. As the same arguments are reiterated more than a few times, the steam in them fizzles out.

I Ohio University Press; 2014; Pb US\$26.36

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



Accessible and thoughtful

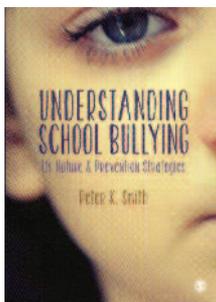
Understanding School Bullying: Its Nature and Prevention Strategies
Peter K. Smith

Written by one of the leading international researchers in this area, this relatively compact book is a useful and interesting text. Though primarily written for bullying researchers, I think that anyone from mid-undergraduate level upwards could understand and enjoy it.

Professor Smith draws his readers into the topic early in the book by giving an account of his own personal experiences as both aggressor and victim. These are complemented

by vivid and engaging examples of individuals' personal experiences of bullying; again, not just from those who experience bullying, but those who use bullying behaviours too. The human consequences of these dysfunctional relationships are all too apparent.

This text's breadth of coverage means that it provides a fantastic introduction to the area of study for anyone who is new to it. However, such is Professor Smith's knowledge of this topic that it also contains information that more seasoned campaigners will value too: I certainly learnt one or two things despite studying this area for almost 20 years! The book



covers core issues such as the history of the topic, definitions of key terminology, and a summary of the main research methods used in this area. It also includes up-to-date summaries of the academic literature relating to diverse topics such

as cyberbullying, discriminatory bullying, predictors of involvement, and the effects of bullying. It's topped off by detailing coping and intervention strategies.

Written in a style that is 'academic' in as far as it makes

extensive use of published research, Professor Smith also takes the time to draw clear conclusions and to add personal thoughts on the progress of the field and its future. I found these particularly interesting because they are the kinds of broad commentaries that research articles seldom have the scope to make and because of Professor Smith's knowledge of the area. The book is accessible and thoughtful, and sparked fresh ideas for me.

! Sage; 2014; Pb £22.99
Reviewed by Dr Simon C. Hunter who is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Psychological Sciences and Health, University of Strathclyde



Curiously uplifting

Every Brilliant Thing
The Dukes, Lancaster

A visit to the Dukes theatre in Lancaster to see this one-man play proved to be an unusual and unexpectedly cheerful 'busman's holiday' for a psychologist, dealing as it did with depression and suicide as its central topics. The actor had an inventive way of telling the story of his mother's first suicide attempt when he was six years old, which prompted him to start writing a list of 'every brilliant thing' that he experienced in his world, to give her reasons to be happy and to want to live (e.g. 'ice-cream, me').

The list continued into his thirties and reached one million (and counting), taking on a life of its own and eventually for the simple purpose of simply noticing 'every brilliant thing'. His understanding was that 'you have to believe in a future that's better than your past in order to be able to live in the present – that's what hope is all about'.

He involved the audience from the start, easier to do as the play was 'in the round', giving people large pieces of paper to read out 'a brilliant thing' when he called a certain number. Mine was 1155 'Christopher Walken's hair'. He also chose audience members to participate in moving and funny vignettes about conversations with his father, girlfriend and school teacher at important times in his life – his mother's suicide attempt (dad), meeting his significant other (girlfriend) and being supported as a child by his teacher (and a sock puppet) at times of feeling emotionally lost.

It was a curiously uplifting show, and he invited the audience to sift through the box left centre stage of some of his 'brilliant things'. In the end, whether the list saved his mother, who suffered bipolar illness, was perhaps not the point, but instead a reminder that at any given moment, we can notice a 'brilliant thing' that inspires or amuses or sustains us. As I left the theatre area, I glanced at the box of lists and noticed one that read 'here and now' and later in the café, I decided to notice that the chocolate brownie was indeed 'a brilliant thing. I'd recommend this play which is on tour for anyone willing to engage in this experience.

! Touring production, see www.pentabus.co.uk/every-brilliant-thing and www.painesplough.com/current-programme/by-date/every-brilliant-thing for details

Reviewed by Marie Stewart who is Principal Clinical Psychologist at Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Our Reviews section now covers psychology in a diverse array of forms: books, TV, radio, film, plays, exhibitions, apps, music, websites, etc.

To contribute, get in touch with the editor on jon.sutton@bps.org.uk or look out for opportunities by following us on Twitter @psychmag.