

## Kick-starting a debate around suicide

I am proud to have played a small role in the BBC One documentary *Life After Suicide*, which aired in March. It was a powerful programme, tackling an important topic. The bravery of those bereaved by suicide who shared their loss was poignant and heartbreaking, but vital. Angela Samata, the presenter, lost her partner Mark to suicide 11 years ago. The programme tracked her journey across the country meeting others who have been similarly bereaved, as Angela attempted to understand why people die by suicide, to challenge the stigma around suicide and to explore the impact of suicide on those left behind. She was simply outstanding; sensitively navigating the viewer through the lives of those so deeply affected by suicide as well as telling us her own very moving story.

My involvement with the programme began some 14 months earlier, following an e-mail from a BBC producer who was researching a potential programme, which she described as 'a sensitive and thought-provoking documentary about suicide'. I was impressed by her knowledge of the topic (and that she had read some of my work!) and her awareness of the unique challenges inherent in producing such a film – so I agreed to help. More than a year later, after numerous telephone and Skype calls, a meeting in London with the director and producer and a day's filming in Glasgow, the day of transmission had arrived. Angela and I were in Salford the night before the broadcast as we were appearing on *BBC Breakfast* and on Radio 5 Live the following morning to discuss the film. That evening, we talked about how important we thought the film was, how we hoped it would start a national conversation about suicide, about its complex causes and the devastating effect it has on loved ones – but we were also apprehensive, hoping, but not knowing how it would be received.

Although my main contribution to the programme was professional (providing background information on suicide, talking about my research into the psychology of suicidal behaviour and helping Angela understand why people take their own lives), during filming I was asked about my own personal experience of bereavement by suicide. I found this really difficult and I was initially reluctant to do so, but I was persuaded by the director to talk about it – and I am pleased that I did and that a small piece of this conversation was included in the programme. For me, it has always been much easier to talk about the effect of

suicide on others, being the so-called 'expert', rather than to talk about its effect on me.

However, the most difficult part about working on the programme came the Friday before its broadcast, when I unexpectedly received a preview copy of the final cut. It was difficult because Friday is the birthday of a very close friend of mine who took her own life six years ago. I was devastated by her death and it has affected me much more than I like to admit

(together with the death, almost four years ago, of the man who got me involved in suicide research 20 years ago in Belfast). This coincidence was particularly poignant, especially as it was the impact of her death that I had mentioned in the documentary. It's remarkable how these coincidences happen.

Despite the programme being first broadcast late on a Tuesday (10.45pm in England, and even later in Scotland at 11.40pm), the response during transmission was really positive: #LifeAfterSuicide was the top trending hashtag in the UK on Tuesday night and the feedback from social, radio and print media since has been overwhelmingly positive (with many people wishing that the BBC had broadcast it in prime time). The programme seemed to resonate with large numbers of people, both

those directly affected by suicide and those with no experience.

For my part, I found working with the BBC on this project really rewarding – sensitively handled from start to finish – and I would encourage others to do so should they get the opportunity. I also hope that the programme has kick-started a debate around suicide and is another small step in ensuring that suicide research and prevention are prioritised. We need to do so much more to tackle the 6000 deaths by suicide in the UK each year, and I would urge men, in particular, to talk to loved ones about how they're feeling; it is not a sign of weakness to reach out.

If you are affected by suicide or you are worried about someone, Samaritans are available 24/7 on 08457 90 90 90 (UK). They are also available by e-mail [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

View this item online for further reading from our archive: Professor O'Connor on suicidal behaviour (with the late Noel Sheehy), on responsible reporting of suicide, and an interview with him. Also, 'Psychologist suicide: Practising what we preach'.



Professor Rory O'Connor (University of Glasgow) talks about his involvement in the BBC One programme *Life After Suicide*.



## Nailing the fundamentals

Listen! Say Yes! Commit! Improvisation for Communication, Creativity, Teamworking and Leadership at Work  
Harry Puckering & Julia E. Knight

*Listen! Say Yes! Commit!*, written by Chartered Psychologist Julia E. Knight and her colleague Harry Puckering, is an introduction to theatrical improvisation specifically promoting it as a tool for use at work. As a Chartered Psych, and long-time improviser myself, I decided to dive in and get to grips with their take.

This isn't the first book to take a more psychological approach towards the artform – see for example Clayton D. Drinko's *Theatrical Improvisation, Consciousness, and Cognition* (2013, Palgrave Macmillan) – but it's certainly the most accessible, giving a mix of reasons why to practise improvisation and exercises to get you started. On the whole most of these exercises are explained clearly enough that you could have a stab at

trying them yourself, although in some cases you might be looking at each other funny and wondering 'Is this it?' – a challenge in translating dynamic, often spatial processes onto the page. There is the odd diagram, hand-drawn and with a character that complements the self-published nature of this book.

Harry and Julia nail the fundamentals of why this stuff matters: it teaches collaboration over competition, 'holding on and letting go', meaning building on what is there but having the flexibility to turn when circumstances demand it, and the formation of trust through laughter and shared endeavour.

The book contains links to the academic literature, mainly to models of leadership

and communication, and the referencing is good if a little spotty in places. I applaud the authors for not over-stretching the connections, but still being able to draw my attention to research I hadn't been aware of.

Ultimately, this book is aimed at people unfamiliar with improvisation who want to get a handle on how this might live up an everyday, or introduce some fun habits for team meetings or brainstorming sessions. To my mind it succeeds admirably, providing an evidence base while managing to remain informal and engaging.

| Lulu.com; 2015; Pb £12.50

Reviewed by Alex Fradera who is a freelance writer and regular contributor to the *Research Digest*

## Informative and interesting



Control the Controller: Understanding and Resolving Video Game Addiction  
Ciaran O'Connor

Video game addiction (known as VDA) is often portrayed within media as the cause of various incidents. In *Control the Controller* Ciaran O'Connor takes a fresh attitude to this subject and offers a multidimensional approach through having experience as a video game designer, psychotherapist and a self-professed 'hardcore gamer'.

Interestingly, although internet video game addiction is mentioned within the DSM-5, it is not recognised as a mental disorder in its own right and there are no standardised diagnostic criteria. Consequently, O'Connor has scope to apply his multifaceted experience to explore the interaction between video games and addiction.

The book is principally a self-help guide written for addicts, their loved ones, healthcare professionals and

video game developers, with its *raison d'être* being to help its readers understand the addiction from the point of view of the gamer. It is well structured and discusses the damage, signs, causes and possible interventions of VDA,

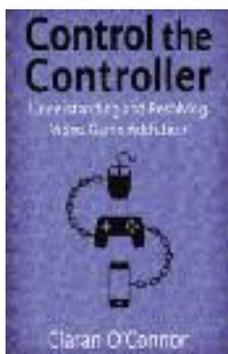
including a blend of CBT and mindfulness techniques, alongside acknowledging the pleasurable side of video games, which creates an empathetic tone.

Overall, it was engaging and having no prior knowledge of VDA it was

both informative for me as a clinician and interesting as a member of Generation Y.

| Free Publishing; 2014; Pb £12.99

Reviewed by Elizabeth Dewey who is an assistant psychologist with the Glasgow Pain Management Programme, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde



## Exactly what's needed

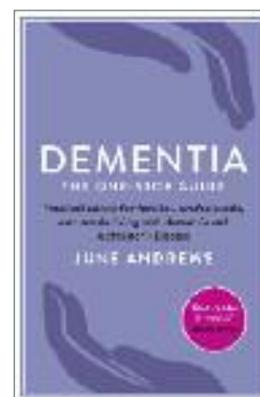


Dementia: The One-Stop Guide  
June Andrews

In this book Professor Andrews brings together science, practice and lived experience of dementia into an invaluable resource providing clear answers and practical solutions to the questions and challenges dementia brings. The book is punctuated with insightful quotations from people with dementia, friends, families and carers who tell it like it is.

In a very accessible, down-to-earth and human style, Professor Andrews outlines what you need to know and do to stay well as long as possible. There's invaluable advice about avoiding hospital admissions, dealing with professionals and planning ahead if you have dementia. The sections on the social care systems are less clear, but this reflects the diversity and complexity of services. The system is far too complex.

I wish I'd had this book on my caring journey. I would have planned ahead; I'd have practical ideas to help my parents live independently for longer with much less stress on us all. I'd have had more confidence dealing with



professionals and would have known I was not alone in feeling confused, invisible or frustrated. For someone who may well get dementia, the book has given me clarity, information and options for planning ahead to manage my future if I do get a diagnosis. Professionally, I'll be using the book in my work with dementia-friendly communities. The book is great for opening difficult conversations about dementia and challenging the stigma and secrecy that make living with dementia even worse.

*Dementia: The One-Stop Guide* is, as John Humphrys says on the cover, 'Exactly what's needed'.

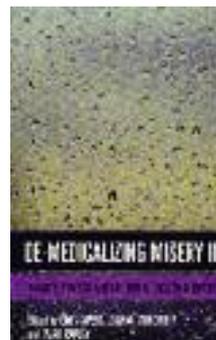
| Profile Books; 2015; Pb £9.99

Reviewed by Sue Northrop who is a psychologist in East Lothian



## Reclaiming the human

*De-Medicalizing Misery II: Society, Politics and the Mental Health Industry*  
Ewen Speed, Joanna Moncrieff & Mark Rapley (Eds.)



technical fix may have peaked.

This book rethinks madness and distress,

reclaiming them as human, not medical, experiences, and tries to suggest alternatives that better represent the complex, socially and historically situated nature of human suffering. It is required reading for all who are wrestling with the one-dimensional way of looking at mental health and pathways of care.

Palgrave Macmillan; 2014; Pb £19.99

Reviewed by Dr Giovanni Timmermans who is a clinical psychologist working in healthcare in the Netherlands

The first volume of *De-Medicalizing Misery* was published in 2011 and was written by an impressive cast of leading mental health experts, who together challenged the so called 'simplistic and pessimistic' biological model of human distress. This model has, with support from the pharmaceutical industry, dominated the mental health field for a long period. The medicalisation of distress enables the mental health professions to manage the human suffering that they are confronted with while knowing there is little that they can do to help. But the medicalisation of misery and madness also renders people unable to comprehend their experiences

in ordinary, meaningful terms. Yet the myth of biologically based mental illness still defines our present.

This new multi-author (20 authors) work derives from a series of conferences arranged by the Critical Psychiatry Network, the Hearing Voices Network and the School of Psychology at the University of East London. Their roots lie in the anti-psychiatry movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Since the publication of the first volume the medicalisation of ordinary human experience nevertheless has continued apace and the use of drugs for mental health problems has continued to rise. Nowadays we even can diagnose and treat people on the basis of there being a possibility they

might develop a mental disorder in the future! So we still live in an age when feelings of misery, stress, confusion and fear are likely to be understood as conditions that require medical-type interventions.

Several contributions in this book analyse the process by which psychiatric labelling and treatment colonises ever more corners of modern human life, while others suggest alternative ways of conceptualising human distress and its origins. The criticism that DSM-5 has received is for the authors a sign of hope, for it is seen as a sign that the vision that brain disorders require quick

## Uniquely placed



*Working with Emotion in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy: Techniques for Clinical Practice*  
Nathan C. Thoma & Dean Mckay (Eds.)

This book covers a broad range of topics that encompass both traditional and non-traditional approaches to cognitive behavioural therapy. This includes useful discussion on compassion, mindfulness, image rescripting and relational techniques. The book is uniquely placed in the CBT literature in its focus on emotion as the central theme in the therapeutic process.

It is well structured, taking the reader on a journey through a wide variety of emotions followed by techniques that are relevant to particular diagnoses. This includes significant contributions from leading clinicians discussing their respective areas of expertise. At the end of each chapter, the reader is also signposted to further resources that may be useful. Although many techniques are discussed throughout the book, the authors take a holistic and evidence-based approach to therapy. Each chapter skilfully educates the reader on techniques whilst presenting a solid research base which has informed the therapeutic process.

This book will be of relevance and interest to clinicians and CBT practitioners of all levels of experience.

Guilford Press; 2014; Hb £36.99  
Reviewed by Nathan Walker who is a Counsellor at Doncaster College



## Bringing Buddhism into the clinic

*Contemplative Psychotherapy Essentials: Enriching Your Practice with Buddhist Psychology*  
Karen Kissel Wegela

The past decade has seen the NHS slowly but surely opening its medicalised iron gates to the influx of Eastern spiritual practices. Within psychology, this influence has taken its form in third-wave therapies (e.g. ACT, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy). This growing interest is reflected in the recent exponential rise in mindfulness papers published. The release of this new book by Karen Kissel Wegela seems therefore very timely.

Wegela – a private practice American psychologist – draws on her knowledge of Buddhism to offer psychotherapeutic ways of working which honour Buddhist traditions from a more secular viewpoint, in other words, without the need to worship any big gold Buddha statues (an audible sigh of relief from the NHS purse-string holders).

Although, unsurprisingly, mindfulness is an imperative feature of the book, it also discusses fostering compassion and insight to oneself and others, alongside recognising what Wegela terms as 'Brilliant Sanity', or fundamental goodness, in our clients, as opposed to the more familiar script of psychopathology. This book shines by suggesting a myriad ways to cultivate competencies in this area, offering scripts for practical exercises and even a final chapter detailing a clear 'Mandala' visual model to use with clients and supervisors.

Interestingly, Wegela stresses the importance of the clinician's own personal meditation practice, similar to the importance of personal therapy in psychology training, something which may be missing in current mindfulness clinical practices.

My only gripe with this way of working would be the difference in the duration of therapy (sometimes one to two years) with Wegela's clients vs. NHS time-limited psychology sessions, possibly indicating the lengthy process of this work. Nonetheless, these competencies can certainly be used as an adjunct to the more traditional techniques to develop an individual therapeutic style.

With compassion being a hot topic in the NHS currently, I would surely recommend this book.

Norton; 2014; Hb £20.90  
Reviewed by Eleanor Parker who is a clinical psychologist with Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust



## A little too two-dimensional

Chappie  
Neill Blomkamp (Director)

Those film-goers that are enthusiastic about robots should probably buy popcorn in bulk, because we'll all be making several trips to the cinema this year. We've already had *Ex Machina* and *Big Hero 6*. We have *Avengers: Age of Ultron* and *Terminator: Genisys* to come.

And now we have Neill Blomkamp's *Chappie*. Blomkamp is developing a reputation as a science-fiction director of note, having already helmed the excellent *District 9* and perhaps slightly less excellent *Elysium* (though the director himself admits that he should have done better with that one). Blomkamp has now been offered the Grand Prize of sci-fi cinema, a chance to sit in the chair for the *Alien* reboot, so *Chappie* is a film that, despite a silly name, is demanding to be taken seriously.

I have to admit to approaching this film with certain trepidation, watching in the trailer a naive robot learning to be down with da kids and walk like a gangsta. But I decided to give Blomkamp the benefit of the doubt, the magnanimity granted in no small part on the film's terrific cast (including the compelling Sharlto Copley), but also because of Blomkamp's previous endeavours: from a roboticist's perspective, Blomkamp has a history of making dystopian not-so-much fantasies that pose very interesting questions about how we imagine ourselves getting along with intelligent, mechanised creatures that increasingly play a part in our everyday lives.

Blomkamp is undoubtedly committed to making popular, action-filled sci-fi films that are nevertheless a vehicle for big ideas, and *Chappie* is no different. Structurally and thematically, *Chappie* is very similar to *District 9*: we watch a story unfold of naive recklessness transformed into redemption, innocence corrupted by violence. (To say that *Chappie* is structurally and thematically very similar to *Elysium* as well might imply that Blomkamp, for all the hype, is already running out of ideas, but for now we can still try to convince ourselves that this is the mark of an auteur rather than creative draught.)

Like *District 9*, *Chappie* is set in Blomkamp's native Johannesburg of the not-too distant future, where a small army of completely automated, humanoid robots work with the human police to battle the extreme violence that threatens to engulf the city. When one of the police robots is stolen by a small gang, the robots' creator, Deon (Dev Patel), must reprogramme the damaged robot with his new 'consciousness.dat' file, giving birth to a

new, artificial life form. Chappie (Copley) is re-born into a state of complete naivety, having to learn everything like an infant, and what follows is a story about the struggle to 'raise' Chappie as you would any child. (Chappie rather quickly grows into an annoying teenager, complete with irrational mood swings and a compulsive defiance of authority.)

Blomkamp regards human nature from the 'blank slate' idea that violence is something we come to learn, rather than something innate with which we are born. His robot is a vehicle through which he explores these ideas, and on that level – as a fable or an allegory – the film works very effectively as an entertaining way to look at lofty questions about human violence.

And that's fine – a good science fiction film will always say much more about human beings than it does about aliens or sentient robots or robots or wizards or any of that lot who, let's be honest, might not even exist.

So Blomkamp probably isn't really trying to say profound things about AI and robots. But then you do not expect Aesop's fables to provide profound insights into the nature of talking foxes.

However, some films have managed better to ask some deeply intriguing questions about AI. *Ex Machina*, for example, is first and foremost a story about crises of masculinity, and about the relationship between master and slave, but nevertheless forces us to look seriously at the issue of artificial intelligence. *Ex Machina* succeeds where *Chappie* fails for two reasons. First, the artificial intelligence in *Ex Machina* is allowed more room to, erm, breathe. You do not look at Alicia Vikander's biomechanical face and think that she is merely a symbol. You are watching a plausible, artificial intelligence emerge from the wires and gears.

Which leads to the second problem with *Chappie*: the robot's birth is so miraculous that you cannot really credit that he is anything other than a symbol of something else. Loath though I am to criticise sci-fi on the grounds of plausibility, there are a number of obvious problems with the science in *Chappie*. Massive intelligence does not equate to emotional self-awareness. Consciousness is not something



that can be written into a .dat file.

Often, in science-fiction, asking questions about the plausibility of the fiction is a sign that something else is wrong, that you are not being sufficiently carried away with the story to suspend your disbelief. And you don't suddenly declare in a fable, 'Hey! A fox can't talk!' But *Chappie* does not pose complex, or even clear, questions about AI, and you wonder if it needed to be a story about robots at all.

(Ironically, perhaps, the insentient, less intelligent robots of *Elysium* are more intriguing in what they suggest about the future shape of human-robot interactions.)

*Chappie* is a fine film, and an entertaining allegory on human violence. But the questions posed by Chappie himself are negligible, and so the film feels a little too two-dimensional, because without saying much interesting about AI, the film is left with the rather prosaic point that 'violence begets violence'. More science would have helped this fiction immeasurably. But here's hoping Blomkamp lets rip with radically less-credible themes in *Alien*.

**I Reviewed by Dr Michael Szollosy** who is a Research Fellow in the Department of Psychology, University of Sheffield, and a faculty member of Sheffield Robotics



## Remoteness and rapport

Using Skype in Qualitative Interviews with Young People  
National Centre for Research Methods

In this audio slideshow, Dr Susie Weller (London South Bank University) discusses methodological considerations behind her NCRM-funded project 'The potential of video telephony in qualitative longitudinal research: A participatory and interactionist approach to assessing remoteness and rapport' (quite a mouthful!). Discussion is framed around Susie's experiences of trialling Skype and FaceTime technologies as a 'remote mode of interviewing' in this longitudinal qualitative study with young adults. With young people increasingly immersed in internet-related apps and environments, it is proposed that researchers should aim to trial related research methods to capture the interest of these 'digital natives'. Unlike telephone calling, Skype allows both audio and visual data to be synchronously exchanged and collected in real time. The ubiquity of this free, simple-to-use software on smartphones, tablets and

computers means that participants can be interviewed at times and locations convenient to them. It also allows widening participation to those in isolated environments in the UK and abroad, with savings in time and money for the research team. However, these factors pose some important methodological and ethical questions. An honest reflection of the potentials and pitfalls is provided to help answer these.

Firstly, how does the distance of the digital interview affect the researcher-participant relationship? It is arguably difficult to build rapport from remote interviewing alone. Susie provides practical advice on building relationships prior to the interview, via e-mail exchanges and using such techniques as part of wider longitudinal work. Much can be gained from face-to-face interviews in travelling around the areas of participants' homes and meeting their family and

friends. This absence in remote interviewing arguably provides less understanding of the participant's background and may reduce rapport. Issues with unstable internet connections may also provide a frustrating experience, whilst poor audio or visual quality may impede observations of body language and facial expressions. The suitability of such techniques for sensitive topics is also questioned. Although the researcher may be less able to give appropriate comfort during the discussion of difficult experiences; individuals may be happy to disclose more in this informal setting. This extra disclosure has knock-on ethical considerations. Does the informal, remote nature allow participants to be fully conscious of the data they are generating at all times?

Secondly, is Skype really that ubiquitous in young people? It is important not to assume that all young people are happy to use such methods to disclose personal information. Uptake

depends on the individual participants' acceptability and perceived reliability of the technology. Susie reflects from her own work that it is hence important to provide a variety of interview options. She describes how many participants still preferred telephone rather than online interviews, for reasons of shyness and security.

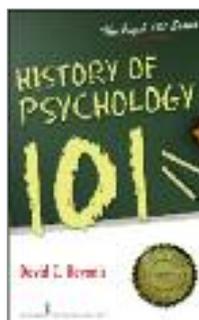
The presentation ends with 10 top tips to consider in the appraisal of remote interviewing techniques. What is emphasised here is the need for a full evaluation of these tools and ethical considerations alongside each specific project's aims and objectives. Such methodologies must be used only if suitable for the research in hand, not purely to be fashionable and tech-savvy.

**I** The slideshow is on the NCRM's YouTube channel at [tinyurl.com/ond2tl6](http://tinyurl.com/ond2tl6)  
**Reviewed by Emma Norris** who is a PhD student at University College London and Associate Editor (Reviews)



## Tracing our roots

History of Psychology 101  
David C. Devonis



The novelist Michael Crichton wrote that if you don't know your own history 'you are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree'. Regular 'Looking back' articles in *The Psychologist* and history of psychology content in BPS-accredited courses show the interest in psychology's history, but some textbooks can be heavy-going. Fresh winds are blowing with this small book, which – as if to prove it is from a different mould – won the American Library Association's 2014 award for Outstanding Academic Title.

Unusually, it starts at the 1920s and each chapter tells a decade up to the 1990s and 2000s. Each weaves developments and figures in psychology into a fast-moving story with that decade's social, historical and political movements. Each covers trends in science and practice. As is common in the history of psychology now, its emphasis isn't so much on 'great men' as on the influence of the zeitgeist – the changing spirit of the age. To show life for psychologists at the time, stories based around a fictional family round off each chapter, with each generation involved with psychology. Even more unusually, the book is detailed about psychology in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. The story leaves off in the late 2000s – 'unfinished', as Devonis writes.

This book's great strength is the way it weaves psychology between events and trends in society. It shows that psychology isn't

separate, watching through a one-way mirror, but that psychology and society are threads woven together in the same tapestry. Key theories and 'big names' fit into a story that makes sense, and become more human than legend. I found the focus on the 20th century more interesting, and many books neglect psychology's story from the 1970s to now. The writing style is clear and direct; I found myself looking forward to each chapter.

However, the American focus is a weakness for readers in the UK: American social, political and historical events are emphasised, and psychology outside the USA hardly mentioned. Yet the book is still relevant, because much of the theory and research we rely on in the UK is part of 20th-century American psychology, or has roots in it.

This is not a book high on detail, but one that gives an epic, big-picture tour of the past 90 years of American psychology. Overall, despite its American focus, this is a highly informative book that would benefit students, psychologists and aspiring psychologists. We all need to know how the jigsaw pieces of our discipline's story fit together, and how our 'leaf' fits into the 'tree' that grew us.

**I** Springer; 2014; Pb £25.50  
**Reviewed by Dr Francis Quinn** who is Lecturer in Psychology at Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen



**Positive messages**

**By Reason of Insanity**  
BBC Two

I confess to being a tad dubious when sitting down to watch Louis Theroux’s most recent ‘access-based documentary’, exploring Ohio’s psychiatric hospitals and the patients who reside in them. The documentary focuses on patients who have been ruled ‘not guilty by reason of insanity’; many were admitted into psychiatric care following serious crimes, and so the ethical implications of a documentary concerning such sensitive issues were very much on my mind when I began watching *By Reason of Insanity*.

Although not the first time Theroux has focused on mental health, in my mind the filmmaker is associated with his *Weird Weekends* series, taking an often sensational and comical look at American subcultures. However, as patients were interviewed, often with their psychologists or other hospital staff present, many of my apprehensions began to dissipate. Individuals who had committed serious crimes whilst in the thrall of mental illness were allowed to speak as human beings, and presented in a way not often seen in

mainstream media: as victims of their illness.

Theroux’s trademark interview technique, direct and to the point, works surprisingly well, for the most part, with patients unafraid to speak frankly about their experiences, one patient telling Theroux he enjoyed being asked new and different questions, and that it’s healthy to talk to people from outside of the hospital. At other times, however, interviews felt heavy handed, and on a few occasions I found myself bristling at Theroux’s laughter, or insensitive pushing of an issue on a clearly uncomfortable patient.

Despite these few and fleeting moments, I thoroughly enjoyed *By Reason of Insanity*. Theroux’s conversations with patients, discussing past events and future hopes, were profoundly moving, and I found myself growing fond of many of the patients involved. This is indeed Theroux’s greatest accomplishment; to show that behind the headlines of crimes committed are human beings, suffering with illness but displaying resolve, hope and all the other qualities

necessary in those striving for a better life, or hoping for a new beginning. Another positive aspect, similarly unusual in mainstream media, is Theroux’s portrayal of the hospitals and staff; the centres appear to be happy, positive and hopeful places, and the genuine care and compassion of their staff members is obvious.

Although some of my initial concerns remain – the bluntness of some interviews, for example, or confidentiality concerns about the discussion of patient histories – individuals are, in general, treated with respect and sensitivity. Credit must be given to Theroux for presenting mental illness and psychiatric institutions in such a fresh and positive light, but the true magic of *By Reason of Insanity* comes not from the filmmaker, but from the patients he talks to. Their honesty, stories, hopes and fears show a touching, human side of mental illness, all too often neglected in the media and therefore unseen by the general public.

**I Reviewed by Tom Holliman** who is a student at Anglia Ruskin University

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