

hypothesis in *Grief*: definitions, evidence, and whether the concept is gender- and culture-bound. In fact, it seems, people naturally 'oscillate' between a focus on loss and on restoration – a more practical focus on a now-changed world.

(8) In last month's issue, we spoke to Carolyn Mair about her book on *Fashion*: my favourite part of which recounts research from Dr Phillipa Diedrichs to bust the myth that men are less bothered than women are about their bodies, flaws and media depictions of style and beauty.

(9) *Addiction* covers an area shot through with entrenched myths, and Jenny Svanberg's approach to busting them is a book that 'mirrors my own learning curve' with Glasgow Addiction Service and Forth Valley Substance Misuse Service. It's from the heart, persuasive and unafraid to pose the big questions. Svanberg concludes that 'addiction isn't a weakness, or a moral disorder, but a learned adaptation to distress, isolation or dislocation, and one that each one of us might have faced'.

(10) You've got to be pretty brave to attempt to traverse the ever-shifting, hazardous landscape of *Gender* in 90 pages... Gary Wood seeks to 'shake things up – to cast a critical eye over the gender-club rule book.' The chapter 'Gender stories, backwards, forwards and sideways' uses fairytales, science fiction and re-readings of cultural history to reflect on how gender schemata can have mythical roots.

(11) If any of the topics particularly suit a slim volume, aimed at a wide audience, peppered with practical tips and humour, then it's *Dieting*. Jane Ogden is on inspirational form with an evidence-based argument that there is no 'miracle diet': we overeat and are underactive because of what's in our heads and the triggers in the environment.

The 'public understanding of psychology' is often put forward as a desirable end-point these days, but the pessimist in me points to just three stumbling blocks: what we mean by 'public', 'understanding' and 'psychology'. So Routledge's optimistic take is to be applauded. If we can go mining for psychology in everything, anywhere, this series is a fine view of the strata. The challenges are familiar: if portraying psychology as evidence-based is your priority, as it should be, then it can be easy to end up preaching to the converted. And I do think the books will find an audience that is already fairly scientifically literate – the mythical 'Brenda in the chip shop' may have needed a few more take-home messages and practical tips pulled out. Or maybe not... I picture her at a train station, picking one of these up on impulse in the shop, devouring it in one go and alighting at her destination with, as promised, a 'psychological lens' to view everything through.

Rights and wrongs

This book is about left-handedness and it covers both its history and the contemporary research. While few people would maintain that the condition is entirely of environmental origin, very little is known about its biological basis. There is even little agreement on how left-handedness should be defined. One thing that does come through loud and clear is the discrimination that left-handed people have faced.

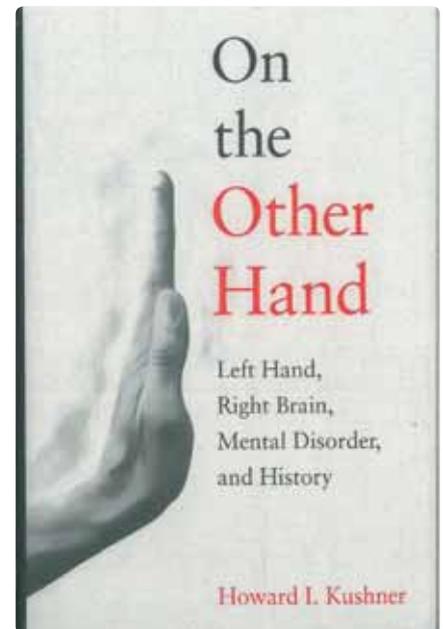
In Western countries it was common until recently to force left-handed children to write, eat, sew, etc. with their right hand, and the practice was brutally enforced. Forcing children to sit on their left hand or tying it up was common. It has often had negative consequences for the children involved. For example, stammering is common among children who have been forced to use their right hand, and the author points out that the stammer of King George VI, which was portrayed in the film *The King's Speech*, occurred when it happened to him. The practice has not entirely disappeared in the West, particularly among recent immigrants, and it is still common in China, India, Africa and the Islamic world. It is surprising how widespread it is. Most cultures associate 'right' with good, sacred and normal and 'left' with evil, profane and deviant.

These views have often been reinforced by religion and, for much of the 20th century, by science. Left-handedness has been associated with a variety of mental disorders, including schizophrenia, mental retardation, ADHD, and autism. It has also been associated with femininity, criminals, 'primitives' and homosexuality. The author shows that, in spite of all the effort that has gone into establishing these links, there is no evidence to support any of them. They are simply attempts to associate one kind of stigma with another. Indeed, the negative consequences of the discrimination that left-handers have faced are far more serious than any problems that it is thought to involve.

The book will be of special interest to left-handed people, particularly those who have suffered negative consequences as a result, and to members of other stigmatised groups. For the rest of us, it is an interesting case study in the seemingly limitless capacity of human beings to discriminate against those who are different from themselves.

Reviewed by Adrian C. Brock, who is an independent scholar based in Greater Manchester

On the Other Hand: Left Hand, Right Brain, Mental Disorder, and History
Howard I. Kushner
Johns Hopkins University Press;
Hb £20.00



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