Produced by and for autistic people

The name of this magazine is going to *change*

Edition **95** July 2018

AU

The National Autistic Society

The magazine that was Asperger United

This magazine is run by and for autistic adults (although some parents subscribe on behalf of their under-sixteens). The magazine aims to put people who have the condition in touch with each other and to share information so that they can lead more independent lives.

Please note that this magazine receives many letters each quarter so it is not possible to respond to every one, nor for every contribution to be printed. Discussions on editorial choices will not be entered into. The magazine protects the identity of contributors by not printing full names unless the writer asks for their full name to be used.

This magazine is available at
www.autism.org.uk/AUonline
or by paying a subscription. To subscribe you, we need your postal address. Please subscribe online or contact the Goth for a subscription form. All contact details are below. Organisations requiring multiple copies: please get in touch.

Editor: the Goth

National Autistic Society production support: the Content Team

NAS phone support: the Supporter Care Team

This magazine was founded in 1993 by Pamela Yates and Patricia Howlin, in association with the Maudsley Hospital, and Mark Bebbington and Judy Lynch of the National Autistic Society.

This was in response to a recognised dearth of services for people with Asperger syndrome and the potential for self-help and networking as a means of support for this group.

The provisions for editor's and sub-editor's post was to develop a publication that was truly the voice of the people it was aimed at. This post also provided the possibility of work experience and responsibility and has benefited those who have held the position. These are Richard Exley, David Wright, Martin Coppola, Ian Reynolds, John Joyce and the current editor, the Goth (who does not wear black).

Pamela Yates provided support and advice to the editors until the publication was handed over to the National Autistic Society in 2000.

The name *Asperger United* was chosen by the group of original readers as the most "appropriate name" for the publication. This was suggested by Anna Kaczynski, formerly Cohen. Please see page 5.

Please send all correspondence and subscription requests to:

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Tel: **020 7923 5779** (geographical charges apply)

All we need is your email address and we will add you to the email notification list.

Thank you to Graeme Lawson for producing the *AU* logo.

Please note that the views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the editor, the National Autistic Society or those involved in the publication of the magazine.

This magazine is available in large print on A3 sheets (double the size of this page). If you need large print, please let us know using the email address or postal address above.

Contributions for the next issue should reach *AU* by **13 August 2018**

Welcome to the July edition of the magazine that was called *Asperger United*.

A news story broke in April. Most of the details known about Hans Asperger's life have appeared in English in one place. This has drawn attention to the children he was officially responsible for sending to an institution where many were experimented on and killed. The research also details the records that show he chose to save certain children from this. In his lifetime, he emphasised the children he saved and kept quiet about the others. He also made up a story about being threatened with arrest by a Gestapo officer, to make it seem heroic and daring that he saved any children at all.

Because of these facts, the NAS has decided that the name of this magazine should change, and the person who originally named the magazine has also written in asking for the name to change (see page 5).

Sorry for the sudden change.

Yours,

the Editor

the unnamed edition — suggestion for next issue on page 11

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The language of autism: on whose terms?

by **Ametrine**

Firstly, sorry this article has taken so long to appear in this magazine. It is one of many, Editor.

Victoria, in the July 2014 edition of *AU*, argues against all of the terminology currently available to describe autistic people (this is my "term of choice": I run the Upper Valleys Autistic Adults group, for example).

Most of my reasoning for using the terms "autistic" or "autistic person" is presented in Jim Sinclair's essay "Why I dislike person-first language",

web.archive.org/web/20090210190652/http://web.syr.edu/~jisincla/person_first.htm

Sinclair argues three main points. The first is that autism cannot actually be separated from the person, and the second is that person-first language makes autism look like an insignificant part of who a person is.

On these lines, I had a letter published in *New Scientist* magazine three and a half years ago, in which, speaking against "person first" language in autism, I wrote, "Personally, as hypersensitivity is a major aspect of my autism, autism affects everything, from what I like to eat to what I wear, where I live to who I want to spend my time with."

www.newscientist.com/article/mg21228400.800-i-am-what-i-am.html

In other words, many things that people would think of as parts of "who I am" are in fact inseparable from my autism. Autism is evident in every facet of my life and personality, and taking away my autism would produce a stranger with my face.

This may seem frightening, when we have been told that our autism doesn't define us. But it is only necessary to distance ourselves from our autism conditions if, as in Sinclair's third point, we think of autism as something bad, "so bad that it isn't even consistent with being a person". Sinclair points out that we have no problem with the concept of a "blue eyed person". We can all think of other traits treated similarly, eg. "animal loving person", "active person" and so on. Autism isn't a monster, rather it is a natural part of human variation, but forcing person first terms on autistic people seems to confirm there is shame to be had in identifying with it. Does "autistic person" really have an inherently "disabling, excluding ring to it" as Victoria wrote? If so, how can we healthily reclaim the term, as the gay movement has reclaimed once derogatory words used against them?

Victoria goes on to debate the term "Asperger's". She feels that people like her have nothing to do with apparently less able autistic people. Here she is wrong. The experiences of apparently able autistic people have served to shed a lot of light on the behaviour and experience of "less able" autistic people. For example, because "able" autistic people have been able to describe sensory differences, these have been noted and used to help those who cannot so easily communicate such things. It's also often the case that "able autistic" people relate better to "less able" autistics than neurotypicals do. I used to volunteer with children with learning disabilities, and eventually found myself working more and more with the autistic children that other volunteers found puzzling and unrewarding. I loved them! They made sense to me.

Also, autistic people can be on different parts of the spectrum at different times in their lives. I know someone who didn't speak until they were 12, but would now be indistinguishable from those given the Asperger label (rather than autism). I have been on line with a woman who now does not speak, and appears "low-functioning" but whose typing is more articulate than my own.

Asperger's makes no sense to me as something separate from the rest of the autism spectrum — and it's also an ugly word!

I feel no need to separate myself from "less able" autistic people. They are people too, just like me, and I'm not ashamed to be associated with them. Autism is hardly the only condition with such variety. Cerebral palsy, for example, can manifest as requiring extra concentration for muscle control but looking much the same as anyone else, or as someone who has virtually no controlled movements, uses a wheelchair and has learning disabilities. Since the brain causes are known, we know they are the same condition. There is still work to be done on establishing genetic and physical causes for autism, but since both "high-functioning" and "low-functioning" autistic people are often born into the same families, then it stands to reason that "able" and "less able" forms have the same bases.

I realise my points overlap with some of Victoria's, but I hope this overall presentation of some differing angles is useful.

Dear *Asperger United***,**

please publish my letter as soon as possible in *Asperger United.* Thank you.

I named our magazine twenty-five years ago, back in 1993 when I was 18 years old and a patient at the Maudsley hospital, in Elephant and Castle, South London. I named it *Asperger United* to unite everyone with our medical condition, which as you know is called Asperger syndrome.

Asperger syndrome was named after Hans Asperger, the Nazi officer who discovered our medical condition. We used to think that Hans Asperger was a Nazi officer who tried to save lives during the Second World War. We now know this was not the case. In fact Hans Asperger was deliberately sending hundreds of innocent children to their deaths at a clinic known as Am Spiegelgrund in Vienna. Children at the clinic died of disease and starvation, and many were put through cruel and horrific medical experiments. The other children who were sent to Am Spiegelgrund were gassed or given a lethal injection.

Hans Asperger fully cooperated with Adolf Hitler's euthanasia programme, which murdered hundreds of severely disabled children in Nazi Germany at Am Spiegelgrund in Vienna alone. Since this information has become public knowledge some people who share our disability have even begun to receive hate mail, which is terrible as they do not deserve to be treated badly because of a medical condition that they were born with. For both these reasons I propose we change the name from Asperger syndrome or Aspie to Highfa (high-functioning autism or high-functioning autistic) and from now on instead of saying AS for Asperger syndrome we should say HFA for high-functioning autism. On that note let's start by renaming our magazine *Highfa United* instead of calling it *Asperger United*, as we now know the true horror of Asperger's crimes.

We must all strive for better understanding of our disability despite this setback, and try hard to beat the odds that were stacked against us at birth because of this medical condition we were born with. I wish everyone well, and hope you all continue to enjoy our magazine as much as I do.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Anna Kaczynski

Please note that many autistic people find the term "high-functioning" offensive, so it may not be approriate. See page 6 for details about how we will find a new name, Editor.

Suggest a new name, and vote on the suggestions

by **the Goth**

Change is never easy, and big, sudden changes are among the worst to cope with. Nevertheless, the National Autistic Society feels that changing the name of this magazine is necessary and urgent.

So, as with the original naming, readers of the magazine are being asked to give suggestions, and also to vote on the suggestions.

The new name will appear on the October issue. Because this is very soon, voting will have to take place on line, but you can send suggestions in by letter if you prefer.

Please send your suggestion by the 31 July 2018.

Voting will be on the AUonline page,

www.autism.org.uk/AUonline

and voting will close on the 15 August 2018.

Anna’s suggestion has, of course, been included, and I will look forward to more. Please remember that this magazine is not just for Asperger’s people.

’Tis better

’Tis better to experience all the heartaches and disappointment
Than to live like a jellyfish, unfeeling and cold.

’Tis better to take a risk, fall hard and lose everything
Than to play it safe, timid and shy
Never knowing what you could have won, or lost.

’Tis better to love, with all its joys and pains
To see beauty and ugliness, and know the true meaning of both.

It is better to fight to survive, to strive, to experience
Than to submit to pain and slowly rot and waste away, a living death

For it matters not that you win in this life,
It matters not that you lose.

It matters that you do.
So do. Live.

by **Alain**

Pen pals

Pen pal number 267

Hello, my name is Sarah and I live in Solihull. I am 29 years old and I was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome in 2015.

My interests include writing poetry, reading, astrology, walking and photography. I love listening to music — my favourite genres are classic rock, rock, indie and alternative. I also like to listen to Radio 2 and Absolute Radio.

I love to watch *The big bang theory*, *Dragon's den* and *The apprentice.*

I would love to hear from anyone who shares the same interests as me and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Thank you.

Pen pal number 268

Hello, my name is Michael.

I am 49 years old and live with my mum and dad in England.

My hobbies are going to the cinema, fishing, ten-pin bowling, heavy-metal bands, watching TV and London Irish rugby team. I am also learning to fly a model plane.

I would really like a pen pal. I am interested in other countries so a pen pal who lives in America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Europe would be exciting.

I hope you will email please.

How to place a pen-pal advert

- All you need to do is send your advert along with your name and address (and email address if you want) to this magazine. You can use the Royal Mail or email. The next pen-pal number will be given to your advert when it arrives.
- Please note that this magazine does not print dating adverts, as it is unable to provide suitable support.
- Those under the age of sixteen must have parental permission before placing a pen-pal advertisement in this magazine.
- If you get no replies, please don't take this personally.

How to reply to pen pals

- Please remember to let us know the name and number of the person whom your letter is for. (All pen pals are numbered by the editor, not the person who sends in the advert.)
- Please remember to put your address on your letter.
- To contact a pen pal, please send your letter to the Goth, c/o The National Autistic Society, 393 City Road, London, EC1V 1NG, or email **asp.utd@nas.org.uk**
- We will pass your letter on to the person you wish to contact. However, we cannot guarantee the person will reply as that is entirely their decision.
- Please note that all pen-pal letters sent via this magazine are opened before being passed on.

****Important notice — please read****

This magazine is happy to publish pen-pal advertisements but we must stress that we are not a pen-pal or introduction organisation. We do not match people up and we cannot monitor letters (other than the first letter, that is sent via us) so please be cautious when releasing personal details in your letters. The National Autistic Society / this magazine cannot intervene or be held responsible for any ensuing correspondence between letter-writers.

Looking back to move forward

by **Vrinda**

I was diagnosed with Tourette's at age 7, OCD at 13, and then sent myself back for assessment when I was 24 and finally got diagnosed with ADHD, high-functioning autism and bipolar. When I tell people, I can see the look of terror and confusion on their faces: surely not? It sounds an intimidating cocktail of diagnoses, but I know they all overlap and really it's just one general thing, and it happens to be who I am — take it or leave it.

I've also dealt with the usual head shakes from those who don't believe in labels, and while I can see where they're coming from, the labels have been a godsend for me. They do not define who I am, but they have led me in the right direction of books, forums, and friends who have helped me understand who I am and why it's okay. I no longer beat myself up for my "differences" because now I see there's nothing wrong with them. In fact, I like to think that if they say 1% of the population has autism, and 1% has ADHD, and 1% has . . . (fill in the blanks with all manner of diagnoses) . . . eventually, if you add up all those one percents, you'll find being "normal" makes you a minority!

My parents disconnected themselves from their respective families, such that I was raised in a very lonely environment. In a way, this suited my isolationist personality in childhood. I preferred my own company, and that of the friends I dreamt up for myself — something I am grateful for, as it's what led me to be a writer. But even the most solitary people long for a sense of connection . . . right?

When I got married at 25, we couldn't do the traditional "bridal company on one side of the room, and the groom's company on the other" because I only had seven personal guests, three of whom were family members. To put this in perspective, my husband had forty-three guests, three of whom were *not* family.

I will always maintain that my wedding day was one of the best days of all my life. But I couldn't help but feel a twinge of regret that I had so little family to attend my special day.

The result was a genealogical adventure, researching my ancestry and getting in touch with three half-brothers, from two different mothers. I also have two sisters-in-law and two nephews. The lonely little girl was not so lonely anymore!

One of my brothers was adopted at birth, while the other two only knew our shared father for a few years before he left. I no longer speak to my father myself, because he is so terrified of owning up to his mistakes or admitting he feels lost in this world that, instead, he takes out his pain in the form of abuse to those closest to him. I am of the firm belief that he is autistic . . . but try telling him that. The label would not be freeing for him; sadly he would see it as damnation.

Pen pal number 269

Hello all,

my name is Caroline, I'm 38, and have high-functioning AS. I'm a history writer and researcher, and a local history fan.

I love classic British films, as well as horror, and a lot of classic sitcoms.

I'm a huge music and books fan. I mostly collect non-fiction crime books.

Would love to write to someone in the UK — all welcome!

On finding my brothers, I discovered I am not alone with my neuroses. My father's mother's genes have affected so many people, and it has ended up being my job to shed light on the neurological inheritance we have been left with. Thanks to the power of the Internet, we have now found each other, and explanations.

I find it remarkable how our father has allowed himself to sink under the weight of his personal setbacks. I tried pointing out to him that these things are genetic, and studies have shown, for instance, that a girl cannot inherit Tourette's unless both parents carry the genes. But he would not hear it. I tried to show him that I could understand him, relate to him, and perhaps we could support each other. He took it as an insult, which I found deeply hurtful. After all, if he found such diagnoses so awful, what on earth did he think of me?

I am most definitely not my father. My path has gone the opposite direction. Rather than hide in my own depression, I have established a small independent publishing house for fellow writers with neurological conditions, called Conditional Publications. In 2010 I gathered together twenty other writers and artists to produce *Check mates*, the first ever collection of fiction, poetry and artwork about obsessive-compulsive disorder, compiled, edited and published entirely by people with OCD. There are tales of realism, horror, sci-fi and fantasy, and all of it is the truth told by those who know the subject best.

Our website provides uncensored, named or anonymous, testimonials from sufferers and survivors of all related conditions, and I cannot stress enough that we are making pretty much nothing out of the project. We're either donating profits to charities or re-using them to fund further books and awareness-raising projects such as rubber wristbands and bookmarks. This is a company built on passion and common goals.

The point? I look at people like my father and see that we can be our own worst enemies, through the shame we might sometimes feel for supposedly being "different". We allow doctors, sensationalist documentaries and celebrities to speak for us to a public who have no chance of understanding us unless we tell it like it is.

I appreciate this is not easy. It took me years to come to terms with these things myself. But those of us who feel able: I really hope we can all do our part to speak up and help stamp out ignorance. This doesn't have to be in the form of grand gestures; our ordinary daily interactions are just as important as publishing books. These days, when people at work notice something a little quirky about me, I force myself to talk to them about it. Most of them are surprisingly understanding. Those who aren't . . . well, I finally have enough understanding people in my corner not to let the others bother me so much!

I envision a world that is reborn with each new generation accepting others just that little bit more, until one day terms like "neurotypical" are antiquated, and people embrace "neurodiversity".

I can only imagine how much pain in my family might have been avoided if people had understood — abandoned children, abusive marriages, going back generations. And now I'm a mother myself, with a responsibility to my child, who also displays some symptoms and struggles with ignorance within his school environment. I know one of his teachers finds my husband and me exhausting, irritating, with all our letters and meetings — but who cares? I will not allow my child to grow up thinking there is something inherently wrong with who he is.

Perhaps he finds it hard to be quiet, but at least he has things to say; perhaps he finds it hard to sit still, but at least he has energy and imagination; and perhaps he finds it hard to interact equally with other children, but he wants to be a singer one day, and his diva-like inclination to "perform" will help him achieve that dream. There is always something positive to take from these things.

What I'm saying is: we can't fix the past . . . but we all hold the power to create a better future. What better time to start than the present?

Dear Goth and *AU* readers,

I started a charity job in November where I volunteer at an animal shelter. I sit with some of the cats in a "chill room" on a Wednesday. It's a room with a sofa, plenty of climbing space and toys for the cats. It allows them to stretch their legs and get used to a home environment. I also go in and clean all of the cats out every Friday.

I love animals but have some really bad allergies so cats are one of the only animals I have been able to work with. I'm waiting to have surgery in August and I can't work until I have this done, so I thought that volunteering would be a great thing to do for now, although I will probably carry on volunteering even when I'm working a paid job as I'm enjoying it so much.

Some of the cats that I work with have been through some really sad things in their pasts. Whether it's neglect, abuse or just a general lack of care. You also get to see some of the owners who drop them off. Although not all of them, they show a real lack of love for the animals and it can be really heart-breaking sometimes.

We have cats who are poorly, have behavioural problems and even cats that have play therapy, as they really struggle to interact with people and behave themselves. It's a really interesting job and I feel I have a special connection to a lot of the cats. After all, they do say that cats have Asperger's!

My favourite cat that I have met so far left to go to a new home a couple of months ago. She was an oriental and loved fuss and having a good natter with everybody. She would curl up on my lap and talk to me the entire time I was there.

It's amazing to see all of the cats grow, change and eventually find a new home and happiness. We even have kittens at the minute that are so adorable. They love to eat, climb and sleep all day!

Finally, I feel volunteering is a great thing to do, but even more so if you are currently in a position where getting a full-time paid job isn't possible for you right now. It gives you purpose, you will probably be helping someone out and it gets you out of the house.

I've struggled with anxiety for as long as I can remember but being around animals can be a real help. They don't judge you and all they want are cuddles!

Sam

Hi Goth and *AU* readers,

my name is Daniel. I'm still really enjoying reading *Asperger United*. I was so pleased to read a pen-pal advert of mine and on page 11 of edition 94 (April) to see an article I wrote about seven years ago.

I've managed to keep a lot of the weight off, which I'm pleased about. But it's become a real obsession of mine, trying to lose weight. As a result I became very obsessed with calories and self-help books to try and lose the weight. I felt really optimistic at the time of this 2011 article. But since then I've become somewhat withdrawn.

I have a girlfriend. We have had 695 dates so far. I count every day that I see her. I love her so much. She is really pretty and kind to me. On the downside I don't see friends as much and I've become anxious and not able to go many places without her or my mum and dad. But I have been taking some steps to combat this, like doing more things outside my comfort zone. I have been able to go to a friend's house in Otley without my girlfriend or my dad. I went with a friend's PA to see them. Plus I've taken little steps like answering pen-pal adverts and writing one of my own.

One of my passions has been songwriting/poetry writing. I've started studying a book a friend lent me. It's called *Songwriting: essential guide to lyric form and structure.* It's by Pat Pattison. I'm learning a lot. And I've been able to write twenty poems so far, inspired by this book.

Like the article in edition 94 says, I feel things strongly like love and passion. I hurt very easily. I still want to be the best person I can be. I can also be a very outgoing and enthusiastic person, which I fear might put some people off.

Just before I finish this, I want to tell you a bit about my girlfriend. I am 43. My girlfriend is 49 (I know, a real cougar, lol). She only lives about a five- or six-minute drive from me. So she picks me up on evenings. She is only about five-foot tall. I am six foot! She's so lovely, loves animals, has two cats. We both have Asperger's syndrome and OCD, though my girlfriend's OCD hasn't been officially diagnosed. We are opposites in some ways. My girlfriend is shy and prefers to avoid social situations, while I long to be amongst people. I'm just not sure how to do it in a socially conventional way. My girlfriend likes Erasure, John Barrowman. She has seen them both in concert. We both love that song by Spagna called *Call me*.

Sorry if this sounds a bit waffly.

Love,

Daniel

Hi, my name is Alan Willis. I'm the chairman of a website and I have created this website to raise awareness of autism and for people to get to know me. I also want to make new friends.

I am a single gay autistic 37-year-old man and I went to a special needs school and was bullied due to my having development delay in communication and learning.

However, I have managed to improve my skills in both. I also been bullied on Facebook and have needed to block a number of "Internet trolls" from accessing my profile.

As a teenager, I went to a learning disabilities college and still attend one now as an adult.

In 2013 I was diagnosed with autism, "high functioning and mild learning disability".

I like socialising with family and friends, attending activities like football, cinema, bowling and a few pubs.

I also campaign for human rights. Among my varied interests are me supporting animal welfare, Playstation (*Final fantasy 7*) and watching the England football, rugby, cricket and tennis teams.

I also like reading comics and educational books as well as listening to many types of music. I would like to hear from anyone who shares a similar background and interests.

alanwillis15.wixsite.com/mysite-3

alanslgbtautismsite634285482.wordpress.com/

alanwillis837630226.wordpress.com/

twitter.com/alanslgbtautism

bravetheshave.macmillan.org.uk/shavers/alan-willis

My YouTube channel is

www.youtube.com/channel/UCzVd2KRzHw3RQAzJIzuez3g

If sufficient material is sent in, the theme for October will be **the changing of this magazine's name** or **change in general** or **coping with change**. Vote with your contributions: the more submissions on a subject sent in (from different people) the more likely that that subject will be the theme. Writing on any subject is still welcome (though I have a feeling this one will produce lots of letters) as are ideas for new themes, and artwork. Remember, if you want to see different content in *AU*, the best way to change it is to send something in!

Birdman (*the unexpected virtue of ignorance*)

film review by **Joe**

Peculiar castings in a film such as Michael Keaton's *Riggin Thompson* surely can't be the coincidences they appear at first glance can they? That however is one of the many beauties of this mesmerising film, not because of the similar yet so-far-off differences between Keaton and his character, but the fact that the former caped crusader in the late 1980s was cast in this role is just too noticeable to gloss over! Push-come-to-shove of all interviews, panels and everything else Keaton has said about his post-Batman experiences; we don't truly know what was going through his head during life after Batman, but there's no denying that Keaton and Riggin share a fascinatingly similar trait in this film.

Actors alone, in my eyes, don't make great films, however. I always find that my favourite films are the ones that are not only technically outstanding for their time, not only have compelling three-dimensional characters, not only have an original and masterfully crafted story, but offer more underneath the surface of what we see on screen. It is said that experiences are what makes films truly stand out above the rest, which I couldn't agree more with: it's like visiting the lives of these people in a theatre production in New York sharing what they are feeling and what is going on with them in the film. It had excellent weaved-in social commentary, questioning things like "What is our place in life?" or "How do we see the world?" which affected me too. Their social commentary on film critics for example really spoke to me: my favourite scene in the film, in fact. Thematically this film for me was about purpose, relevance and perspective. That was what *Birdman* felt like for me: it didn't feel like a film at all. It felt raw. It felt real.

Cast: despite having so much to offer in terms of a multi-layered story, the acting, of course, cannot be undermined. Michael Keaton's Oscar-calibre performance truly brings to life the cynical, washed up former superhero-film-star Riggin Thompson trying to be relevant again by becoming a theatre director. Edward Norton is electrifying and delightfully erratic in his role as Mike Shiner: the confrontational, larger-than-life and edgy theatre actor whose antics on set push Riggin to his limits. Emma Stone is snarky, bittersweet as Riggin's daughter Sam, desperately wishing her father to regain relevance so she can respect him again. Zach Galifinakis impressed me particularly as the logical-yet-rushed agent of Riggen and the producer. It's like he's been acting in serious roles all his life. All of the aforementioned actors are honestly Oscar-worthy. They're all mesmerising, committed and believable.

Story: Riggin Thompson is a washed up ex-superhero movie star known as Birdman. He wants to to be relevant to society and his loved ones, and to feel like he's acting in something that is real (theatre). On top of being a theatre director/actor, handling his ex-girlfriend's persistence, his current girlfriend, ex-wife, daughter and managing a production crew, Riggin is also at war with his subconscious — a voice in his head representing him as Birdman, a cynical, foul-mouthed derogatory side of Riggin that he is trying to keep bottled up inside of him. Perfectly paced in the tight headspace of Riggin in his journey. Raises questions in life that go so deep that to this day I could still talk about them having left the theatre over a month ago. Fantastic, multi-layered characters giving us the spoilt choice of caring for any one or more of these characters. One character I personally liked a lot was Riggin's ex-wife, Sylvia, played by Amy Ryan: she was so grounded, calm and logical which was a nice change of pace from the fast-sowing, antsy, madness tone of the film. Her dry humour enhanced the film's great comedic range, she was also very wise and secretly caring too, perhaps.

I also forget to mention that this film received common praise for being a technical marvel as well. It's fair to say that I concur with that praise. The film is made to look like one long continuous tracking shot without a single camera cut, and it was done flawlessly. It gives director Alejandro González Iñárritu bragging rights while also maintaining the immersion of the film's experience. There was a scene where somebody's recording made it onto social media moments after it was filmed because the shot hadn't cut, of course: that was one of the many times where this film legitimately got me asking myself while watching "How did they do that?" That doesn't often happen with me when watching films. The comedy was bitter, but funny at the same time (maybe a little too much cursing) but still not distracting. The framing is perfect, the music helps bring to life the sprawling chaos within Riggin's head, the cinematography, lighting, editing, settings — I wish I could go on!

I came back from the cinema, not feeling happy, not feeling empty or sad or grieved. But rather I felt: amazed.

Rarely have I had a sense of fun, psychology, laughter, satisfaction and an experience like *Birdman* in the cinema. It is a highly intense film, but I highly recommend anyone to see it who has an interest in filmmaking and/or psychological studies of an interesting character. My single greatest regret writing this review is that I wish I could make it longer, but alas I've said what I can without giving anything away.

This was a film that was almost intentionally made to be talked about for years on end, and I know I will be talking about it for many years to come.

Birdman (or, *The unexpected virtue of ignorance*) gets 5 stars out of 5 for me :)

Theory of aetiology of Asperger syndrome (AS) partly due to extra-terrestrial (ET) genetic inheritance

by **Jehovian**

Extraterrestrials. Do they exist? Many people say no, but, equally, quite a few (such as myself) say yes. Why? Because the notion that we, human beings, are the only natural and intelligent beings in the entire and limitless Universe is quite beyond my credulity and comprehension. I cannot conceive of a Universe in which ETs do not exist. Therefore I take it for granted that they do exist, like many other people who accept the reality of ETs, as a given.

With respect to ETs, there are many narratives regarding their nature. Not only in respect of their deduced existence (as above) but there are also narratives from (human) witnesses who claim to have encountered them (and to have encountered their spaceships). These latter narratives are predicated upon the reality of ETs having visited planet Earth, where they encountered us, human beings. If ETs do exist then there is no intrinsic reason why they cannot have encountered us!

If encounters between ETs and human beings have occurred, then they must have occurred here on planet Earth (as above) — namely the only place in the Universe where we are to be found. Moreover, we human beings are the only natural, intelligent beings native to the whole of our Solar System. Therefore, ETs encountering us here on planet Earth must have travelled from other stellar systems. Either in our own galaxy, the Milky Way, or from some other galaxy altogether. This, then, demonstrates that ETs have perfected the means for intra-galactic or inter-galactic space travel. Which means that those ETs who have visited us must be possessed of some very advanced science and technology. Compare them with us human beings, who have only been able to travel as far as our satellite, the Moon, and who must be endowed with vastly superior knowledge and intelligence compared to that of us, human beings.

In many ways we human beings are very primitive and lacking in true intelligence (witness our inability to establish a stable, commensal relationship with our natural environment: to the contrary, we, needs-must, make our relationship with the environment exploitative). No matter, we certainly have developed a highly efficient and effective method for propagating our species. Indeed, such a method that is widespread throughout nature, especially in most areas of the animal kingdom (of which, of course, we are a part), namely, sexual reproduction. Given the manifest success of sexual reproduction as a method of propagating ourselves, it would not be surprising if ETs (their being so much more intelligent than us) should use the same method for reproducing themselves. And if ETs can comfortably exist here on planet Earth, when they have visited us, why should they not then have had sexual intercourse between themselves here, as well as their having had sexual intercourse on their own planets and on their spaceships? I believe that there is no reason to suppose that the contrary is true. So, if ETs and we human beings use the same method for reproducing ourselves (that is, by sexual intercourse) then why should not ETs and human beings have sexual intercourse between themselves? I can see no reason why not, at all! After all, there is a precedent set for such a practice, here in the animal kingdom on planet Earth. A precedent of cross-species reproduction which produces a hybrid species. Namely, the mating of a horse and a donkey, which produces a mule.

My belief is that ET-human matings did happen (as above), which left a component of ET genetic material in the human gene pool. And that this component has been progressively passed on (through normal human sexual reproduction) from generation to generation. Getting, in the process, progressively more and more attenuated. At this point I wish to state the following: namely that, in two crucial aspects, ETs are, were, different from us. They are, were, of an entirely different species and of an entirely different animal kingdom, and they are, were, vastly more intelligent than us. Unlike us human beings they are, were, replete with knowledge and we're woefully deficient in wisdom! Which is where Asperger syndrome (and other forms of high-functioning autistic spectrum disorders) come in. I have AS. I believe that one of the principal reasons why I (and others with AS) have this disorder is that I have inherited (from my ancestry) a significant element of ET genetic material, which means that, mentally and interpersonally, I am not completely human. I am actually partly ET. And that means that ordinary human beings (that is, neurotypicals) are rather alien to me. And vice versa. So it is not surprising that I, and they, have mutual difficulties in social interaction. And just why we have such difficulty in understanding one another, for we are of different species and of different races. Finally, of course, ET genetic inheritance would explain the higher-than-normal intelligence of the human being with AS.

Contrast sharpens our perceptions and allows us to make comparisons, where continuity of effect (white-out conditions/sameness) blunts them, so that separation of awareness, of distinct entities, dissolves into blindness of form (homogenous blurring of one thing into another, be it internal thought or external reality).

Tony

a poem

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[1] Footnote

I don’t want to be another footnote
Clinging onto the bottom of a single page
in the epic tale of your existence
I don’t want to be in small print, another pretty line
I don’t want to be edited out
no more than a brief diversion from the plot
an extra layer of description, a quirky distraction

I want to be more than just a line,
a doodle in the margin of a page,
you draw me out and colour me in when you’re bored

Where do you see yourself in five years' time?

by **John**

"Where do you see yourself in five years' time?" An arguable trope of a question often asked by interviewers to potential employees.

The idea of the question is to gauge the employee's durability, and long-term commitment towards the company and work at hand, and is not really a genuine question of where one's expectations and future desires may lay.

But if in 2013, you asked me this very question, do I highly doubt my answer would be along the lines of, "Unemployed, living 200 miles away from my family and friends, caring for my fiancée and our 3-year-old daughter."

Personal commitments on the table for a moment, I wouldn't want to change how my fiancée and I met or our amazing daughter, it's simply the circumstances that have been frankly rather daunting and are still difficult to process on a daily basis. Not having that emotional support network in place when the times have been tough, to the point of giving up.

Regardless of this, my employment struggles have perpetually remained. However, as I sit and write this, our benefits and financial situation are in a much better place than two years ago. Without the pressure of the Job Centre, my partner and I care for each other as well as our daughter, but the fight to get where we are now hasn't been easy.

So, disillusioned with finding a job related to my recently obtained TV and film degree five years ago, I set to find and attempt to sustain "any old job", after the harboured "get a job" mantra grew tiring.

Without an appropriate resource of job coaching, my average job expectancy was about three weeks, and — much to the Job Centre's delight — I was signing on and off, until I exhausted my resources, and spent time committing to my developing long-distance relationship, and beginnings of fatherhood, subsequently moving away. The social tenancy offer came through quicker than from where I used to live.

Fingers can be pointed, blame can be expected, as well as arguable amounts of regret stemming from wasted opportunities. But all three are no use, when I firmly believe in moving forward in a positive light. In such a short space of time, I have achieved so much. In retrospect, since my diagnosis of ASD at 5 years old, I have achieved huge amounts, with gratitude forever there for my mother's love, support and understanding.

It's a shame such achievements are regarded as obsolete on something as arguably "black and white" as a CV.

Granted, I am perfectly capable of writing a great CV, as well as covering letter (with my limited field work but plenty of knowledge and experience), but when it comes to the interviewing process, no amount of notes, research, self-prompts or reminders, make my nonchalant appearance, or seeming pseudo-intellect appealing to the interviewer in question, despite disclosing my ASD before or during the interview.

So, as Jobseeker's forced me on to *The work programme* – where a good four hours was sat staring at a computer applying for jobs — my mood and all wellbeing hit rock bottom. With the difficulty of juggling my fiancée's fibromyalgia and non-epileptic attack disorder as well as our daughter, with little to no moral or emotional support in tow.

Frustration. Going to an interview for a supermarket retail job, disclosing my ASD, and then being rejected on the grounds of “poor communication skills” as their reasoning were reported back to me subsequently via *The work programme*. After such disheartening information, in the next breath, I was asked if I fancied working in a call centre.

I put on a lot of weight from being sedentary and incredibly depressed, and a particular period of about nine to ten months in 2016 had me struggling badly.

On top of the employment difficulties and indefatigable pressuring from the Job Centre and work programme, I was referred to a PIP assessment as part of the transitioning process from DLA to PIP. Needless to say, I was denied, with my partner and I compiling seventy-five pages of evidence displaying my shortcomings, which were also rejected.

With such financial hardship and emotional turmoil, support was eventually found after a doctor’s referral when they seemed to be the only one to notice and fully acknowledge my ASD on my medical records.

You could argue such referrals have been “life-savers”, as signposting to a fantastic group that helps autistic people with support with employment — as well as a legal representative to help with the tribunal for my PIP — have been of great benefit to the three of us, let alone myself.

Though still unemployed, the tribunal to overturn ATOS’s and DWP’s decision to reject my PIP claim proved successful, and since then, Job Centre pressure has eased off, giving extra time and focus to my fiancée, our daughter and finding a permanent means of employment.

Such a desire to work has never stopped, having applied for thousands of jobs over the years. Freelancing and “one-offs” are one thing, but a need for a routine with the right amount of job coaching and support put in place for permanent work is something that should be seen nationwide, and not only just for autistic people.

So, where do I see myself in five years’ time from now? Hopefully employed, work where my skills, knowledge and experience can be put in to good use, providing for my fiancée and daughter, and not feeling demeaned or demoralised because of the shortcomings that plague me on a daily basis.

The positives of this are having grown thick-skinned. Stronger. Knowing that the likes of; job coaching from the Job Centre, *The work programme*, ATOS and the PIP assessment for those on the autism spectrum are in serious need of reform, for a better chance of quality careers, having voices heard, being understood and accepted in modern society.

Notes on the front cover

by **Tony**

I’m a creative genius (as I hope to show in my work) in the sense Henry Ford meant, of ninety per cent perspiration, ten per cent inspiration (spoiler alert, go to **pinterest.com/paigetheoracle/boards**). I’ve come up with various innovations, artwork, including t-shirts and poster designs, created my own language-teaching system, written philosophical observations, jokes (learnt to go beyond the literal puns I used to be famous for). I am not looking for pen friends as I’m on Facebook and Twitter, plus I post stuff on a science website and Pinterest.

The photographer, Laura Buckland, is also a genius, Editor.

The temple

by **Hermione Cameron**

It gets cold in here sometimes

Although this may be a temple
It is not always used
As such

Sometimes dust gathers

Sometimes we are more flesh
than gold

It gets cold in here

Behind closed doors
And tightly fastened robes

And you can only get so close

I wish I had been told

That the flesh that surrounds
these bones
that the body these bones have formed
is more
Than a locked door
That I am more
Than just a metaphor

That sometimes
My bones are just bones
Not marble pillars
That guard the entrance
They groan

Remind me that I am alive

Remind me that I deserve more

This and the poem on page 15
are from *Recipe for being a woman*

by Hermione Cameron

ISBN: 978 1 91240 439 1

£8.99

The rules of this magazine

(contact information for *AU* is on page 2 and again on page 20)

1) This magazine is funded by the NAS and readers' donations, and is independent of the NAS. Although it was called "*Asperger United*" it aims to be for the whole of the (reading) autism spectrum. That is, the concerns and joys of any autistic subscriber can be printed, not just Asperger's.

2) This magazine is quarterly, published in January, April, July and October. If you do not receive a copy when you expect to, please contact the magazine.

3) Pieces that appear in this magazine are credited using the author's first name only, unless the author requests something different. This is done to protect your privacy.

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You need to scroll down to the middle of the page, where there is a link to the PDF.

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13) Book reviews are the most popular thing in this magazine, please consider submitting one. They can be about any book, not just books about autism. Also, they do not have to be short (the Goth keeps most of his reviews short to leave more space for other writers). If you do not want your review to appear in other NAS publicity about that book, please make this clear.

14) Although each issue is themed, submissions on any subject are welcome. Only some of the letters and articles in each issue will follow the theme. All submissions may be edited, especially for privacy, libel, and for fitting the space available.

Who let the gods out?

by **Maz Evans**

Chicken House Publishing

ISBN: 978 1 91065 541 2

£6.99

review by **Matthew**

I picked this book up because the cover looked intriguing. It wouldn't be something that I would normally read.

This book is primarily targeted at a younger audience.

However, the overall plot is structured well and is a real page-turner.

The book is full of adventure and hilarity. It's a clever and unique story.

I enjoyed reading it and would recommend it if you want a quick read that will have you in fits of laughter.

Defo a 10 out of 10!

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