

GuReviews

Higgs Force: The Symmetry-Breaking Force that Makes the World an Interesting Place

Author: Nicholas Mee

Publisher: The Lutterworth Press

Price: Hardback GBP25.00, Paperback GBP15.00, Kindle edition GBP7.20

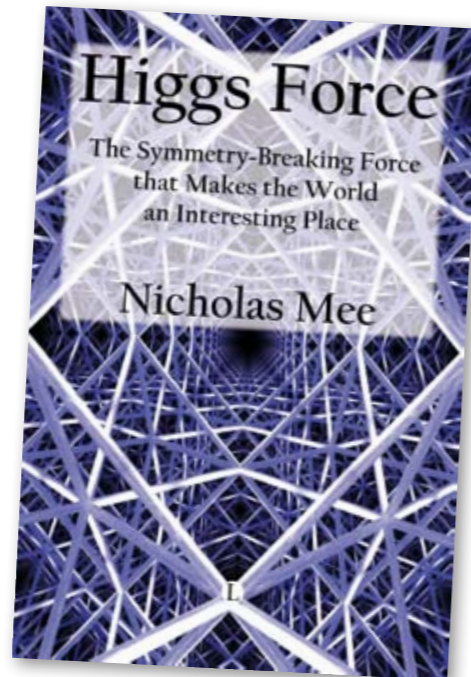
Available from [Amazon UK](#) and [Amazon US](#)

Rating: ●●●●

Every so often, physics gets sexy. The Big Bang and black holes regularly grab the headlines, and, more recently, something else has become the latest scientific superstar – the ‘God particle’. The search for this subatomic fleck has captured the public’s imagination unlike anything since Albert Einstein. But ask anyone *what it actually is* and you’re guaranteed a tumbleweed moment.

Enter Nicholas Mee, a particle physicist from Cambridge University. *Higgs Force: The Symmetry-Breaking Force that Makes the World an Interesting Place*, his first book, aims to do for the Higgs boson what Stephen Hawking did for the black hole. *Higgs Force* sets to bring particle physics to the masses, as *A Brief History of Time* taught the world about space and time.

It’s a tall order. Modern physics is steeped in complex ideas and befuddling theories. If we’re honest, Stephen Hawking’s ten-million-copy-selling book sits unread on many bookshelves: few of us have managed to get past chapter nine. Realising this, Mee takes a different tack, opting to depict an historical narrative through a textbook format. Starting in ancient Greece, he charts the intriguing characters that have shaped our present understanding of the world. There’s no shirking on detail: perplexing logical puzzles are dotted throughout to keep the reader apace with the lofty concepts covered.



Higgs Force is a noble effort. Atoms, electrons and quarks are brought to life using metaphors and colourful language. Nevertheless, by page 100, non-academics may be scratching their heads, confused and feeling as if their head is in an isospin (physicist joke). Mee reassures the perplexed by quoting fellow physicist Richard Feynman:

“You think I’m going to explain it to you so you can understand it? You’re not going to be able to... My physics students don’t understand it either. That’s because I don’t understand [particle physics]. Nobody does.”

Higgs Force is a book that does not try to make you a physics expert, nor even particle physics competent. It offers a humble insight into a discipline that few people understand, equipping the reader with enough insight to explain the ‘God particle’ to impress friends.

However, the book’s greatest strength is not in the science, but the vivid depictions of the story’s characters, who are as varied as the subatomic principles

they discovered. Michael Faraday, the unschooled prodigy who invented the electric motor; Paul Dirac, the genius whose traumatic childhood left him virtually speechless; and Robert Wilson, the American artist-turned-physicist with the charisma to lead soldiers to war.

Higgs Force is an accomplished and engaging read. Be advised: it isn’t for the faint-hearted and a high-school

physics education is a prerequisite. Lively biographies keep the pages turning in a way most popular science books fail to do. It reveals to the lay reader the importance of the Large Hadron Collider, the beauty of the natural laws and the riddle of Higgs. And it’ll likely be finished before that ageing copy of *A Brief History of Time*...

Reviewed by Dr Stu

Before I Go To Sleep

Author: S.J. Watson

Publisher: Black Swan

RRP: Paperback GBP7.99, Kindle edition GBP2.39

Available from [Waterstones](#) and [Amazon UK](#)

Rating: ●●●●●

Picture the scene: you wake up one morning in a strange bed next to someone you don’t recognise and with no recollection of how you got there.

Then picture this: you look in the mirror, and the face staring back at you is your own, but not the face that you saw when you went to sleep. The face that you see is twenty-five years older, lined with wrinkles and worry, and with many of life’s milestones now passed.

And the worst part? You have no recollection of those missing years.

This is the horrifying premise of *Before I Go To Sleep*, the debut novel from English author S. J. Watson. This fictional account – inspired by the lives of amnesiac patients Henry Gustav Molaison and Clive Wearing – is told from the point of view of the main character Christine: a middle-aged woman living in London with a husband, leading what would be a very normal life – were it not for the fact that an accident years passed means she loses her memory every time she sleeps.

The result is a central character that every day has to relearn her name, her identity, her past, and even the people she loves – before forgetting it all again overnight.

Christine’s life is one of routine, but it is also one of terrible heartache as she learns of the life she has led. As she begins to piece together her story through a series of journal entries, Christine starts to see that there may be more to her than first meets the eye – and that the people she relies on

might only be telling her half of the story...

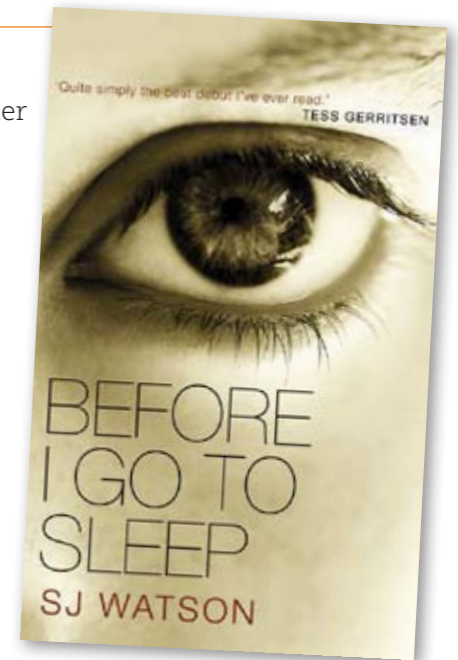
Of course, it’s not the first time the idea has been explored. In the last decade alone, the acclaimed film *Memento*, and the slightly less-acclaimed

50 First Dates, centred on characters whose memories were lost each day. However, what Watson has done is to take this premise and translate it into a cohesive and gripping novel – which is no mean feat when told from a first person perspective through a character living through such difficulties.

Darkness and anxiety pervade the entire book, and as Christine learns more about herself the tension slowly notches up building toward a truly fantastic finale.

Before I Go To Sleep is a superb book – and all the more remarkable given this is Watson’s first novel. Written after attending a Faber Academy writing course, it wasn’t long before it became both a Sunday Times and New York Times bestseller. Ridley Scott has since secured the film rights for the story. With sales of over 30 million worldwide, it’s safe to say that the writing course was a pretty good investment for Watson.

It’s a taut, page-turning thriller that you won’t soon forget. I can’t recommend this terrific book highly enough.



Reviewed by Ben Veal

The **GuReview** rating system ● WACK ●● NOT GREAT ●●● MIDLING ●●●● VERY NOT BAD ●●●●● WICKED IN A GOOD WAY

The **GuReview** rating system ● WACK ●● NOT GREAT ●●● MIDLING ●●●● VERY NOT BAD ●●●●● WICKED IN A GOOD WAY

