

Mental Health

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Bipolar Britain

1st symptoms – the great British depression

Britain has depression
Not just because of recession
Because it's trapped in the hive of its own mundane routine
It used to dream of being America
Now it is more like Wales
Staying inside watching other people's dreams on reality tv
Brought up on advert fast food sponsorship
Hosting the olympics but most are over weight
Blood pressure racing rush hour misery
Getting pissed the national past time
Everyone is so boring and sober
England falls over itself
Vomiting into gutters
People died in the war so youth can say they are bored
This depressed England won't get out of bed for the world

2nd Diagnosis; eccentric England psychosis

We are a picture perfect postcard
Americans wish they had our castles
We are James Bond drinking martini
Working Harry Potter magic
Eating jelly and ice cream at street parties
A desired destination for tourists and foreign workers
Milk with your tea?
A land of pristine shopping malls
Mary Poppins raises the kids
Posting love letters in red mail boxes
Strawberries and cream?
Oh I do like to be beside the seaside
Waiting patiently in endless queues
How do you do?
Well don't mind if I do

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[By Michael Brown](#)

Sonnets From 'Psychotic Cycle'

i. A change in medication

I don't think I invited madness in
but doctors told me to take one less pill
and now my mind's reneged, first fast, then still,
refusing to comply, I cannot win.

All flux, process, where certainty had been.
The news plays Helmand's wasteland, earth and stone
the bullets shudder air and flesh and bone;
un-named, the people who have shot the scene.

I'm longing to respond, find words to meet
the images rebounding, but the change,
does not allow a feeling so complete
to form, no matter how I rearrange
my thoughts, but I am dedicated still:
may I control my senses through my will.

v. On the tube to work everything became significant

Would living my life in another's dream
resemble this? Now someone's calling me
through adverts, shouting messages, you see
they thrum like secrets in my head, they seem
significant and true and while my boss
suspects I'm doing drugs, this ad: 'New You!'
predicts my resurrection on the tube.
In life there is a line, and I have crossed.
Though I may sound unclear, bewitched, confused,
this sense I've found is life's profound connection.
New layers of sound become a symphony,
commuters' coughs and shuffles are all fused.
This subterranean orchestra's perfection,
conducted by a force we cannot see.

ix. The hospital

'No one will hear my call.'
An original thought. Here, everyone hears
and comes running. All you want is
privacy, somewhere to let it out.
Instead you must employ some self-control.
Move only where's expected. Take and swallow
what they give you. Sleep, sedate tomorrow.
Somnambulant. Under obs. Buried whole.
When I was first brought in I didn't guess

to hold myself together. To get out.
I was a glowing vehicle and a mess
I cried to all my inmates, had no doubt
I was imprisoned monstrously; attacked
by men who pinned me down, injected; racked.

xi. For Gloria who I've met in hospital

If I'm good they might let me home today.
Gloria, you help me with your knitting.
Guarding your words, while others cry. Emitting
a steadiness, you have no words to say
who you are, where you come from, waiting on
a hostel room that isn't ever free.
Your eyes are like warm fires, beacons for me.
Your knowledge of endurance is hard won.
I wait and watch your fingers looping wool.
I hope, and hear the clicking of your work.
I'll face the doctors feeling I'm at school,
a final test to see if madness lurks
and wonder if you'll talk to them at all
or if you'll stay in silence. It's your call.

xiv. In poetry group

In moments, halting, trying to make do
I search for words to conjure what it's like,
for sentences to sound, to tell, to strike
the chords of life I felt and sang and knew.

I find it hard to watch TV, the news.
I have not been to work and seen their eyes,
I know I need to face this world, my life.
I'm building myself up through words. I choose

consensual reality, but crave
a way to tell the places I have been
and others too. The gifts my travels gave
are full, experiential. What I've seen
will stay with me and change me from within.
I don't think I invited madness in.

Stigma

The real mark, the one that doesn't fade
Is not what people think or say,
But the stain inside,
The sick cell in the bone,
The constant damaging fear
That this machine is faulty
This thinking can't be trusted.

If you were a cynical social manipulator
What better weapon?
The flowering cancer seed of doubt
Will stop more rebellious acts
Than a thousand police with riot shields

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It's In The Genes

The eternal battle
of nature v nurture
is long lost.

It's just there,
deep in the DNA,
the mad and bad.

Byronic heroes,
tortured creatives,
desperate depressives.

Nature roots out unfit
but these - so 'fit', so 'hot'
are desired as mates.

The blood line continues
even if they perish
by their chosen poison.

And those who survive?
Not Vincents or Virginias,
but those with an antidote.

They become torch-bearers,
handing on batons of
creativity v self-destruction

Until the flames grow
Into unquenchable life,
self-sustaining Promethium fire.

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the lady from the weather observatory

he was standing in the road when I first heard him talking to no one in particular
there was nothing to set him apart he was dressed normally
nothing odd strange or peculiar that would make you avoid him nothing
until he spoke

why is it that the snow hangs about in the top of the trees he asked
the question was directed to everyone who passed and because he looked normal
some people tried to answer some answers were long some short some dismissive
he ignored them all

he kept asking the question like he was waiting for the right answer
but because he had not heard it he just kept trying eventually the lady from
the weather observatory stopped and explained about conservation of energy
temperature and convection

he listened people passed by the woman went on said she was happy to explain
knew all about these things found them interesting she said it was her job
the man smiled you know so much he said tell me why did my wife die
and leave me alone

she looked sad you didn't want to know about the snow did you she asked
yes the man replied I want to know so many things I ask till I get an answer
it is just that I have to keep asking and the questions get harder
and the answers stop coming

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The Bean Bag Olympiad

It is bright red
– an unknown colour
in this pastel place –
and brand new.
It slumps in the corner,
a sulk of polystyrene beads.
Its loop of fabric handle
cocked like a lone ear.

There's one in each of the
Counselling Rooms.
I'd thought they were
for kiddies –
to play on.

But no.
She offered it to me today
– to hit –
instead of the wall,
the windowframe,
myself.

These professionals
really haven't grasped
that self-harm is *exactly*
what some of us want to do.

They might find it hard to cope with,
I mean, what sort of a caring image
does it put out about a place
that has its clients walking away
with bruised heads and bleeding hands,
from beating at the walls
and themselves?

But a bleeding hand
is so much easier
to bandage, heal, cosset,
feel compassion for,
than a broken mind.

And I crave
a simplicity
of healing.

I know *she* has an image of me
crawling,
sobbing,
across the nylon fawn of the carpet
to beat at the red ineffectually
with wayward swings
of my arms.
Quickly tiring.

Slower and slower.
Then sinking
into a heap
beside it
– a sob bag.

I have an image of me
in an enormous stadium
– cheering crowds,
sunshine,
huge TV screens,
intense commentary
in umpteen languages
outlining my previous achievements
at this event.

A hush
as I step forward
to liberally chalk my hands.

I am dressed
in dazzling lycra.
I saunter up to the bean bag,
spit on my palms,
brace myself,
bend my knees,
grasp the handle
and swing swing swing
and release
with a huge grunt.

Freeze-frame on me
– grinning,
exuberant,
arms up to the crowd
while the commentators scream:
"New Olympic and World record!"
"Maximum points for style and grace,
so important,
in the women's events"
as the red dot
of the bean bag
disappears
out over the West stands,
past the Olympic flame
and still rising.

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Weather Change

The mist came swift as a Morecambe tide,
and I was lost.

A view of sweating rocks,
drenched lichen, yellow moss; my stride
a falter through house high stone blocks,
an oozing path, dripping ferns and bracken.
How the sea must feel to the passenger
tumbled from the night time deck,
as the sea's hand closes tight around his neck.

There is a graveyard beyond that invisible wood;
this stream leads where ancestors wait;
terrible cliffs; steady rain, a predator's footfalls.

So it was that time the weather changed, and light faded,
inside a flat,
in the transformed city.

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