

PSYCHOSIS OR HIGH SELF ESTEEM?

Doll Hospital Issue Three



Artwork by [Maggie Webster](#), Doll Hospital's graphic designer

I am too mentally ill to be a mental health advocate. I am at a nice mental health event with nice people doing nice things. But I am drunk. I am drunk and I am not nice. They are wearing t-shirts to show they work at mental health charities and are therefore nice people with nice jobs. I do not have a job. I never have a job. I am doing a PhD to distract people from this. A PhD is not a job, a PhD is barely an 'is'. I am so drunk and they are screening 'Little Miss Sunshine' to raise awareness on mental health and we think it's funny to start hissing 'TRIGGER WARNING: Steve Carrell' in each other's ears. They do not include actual trigger warnings but they do read poetry about supporting your mentally ill loved ones but no one loves me because I am too annoying.

Steve Carrell in 'Little Miss Sunshine' tries to kill himself, not for love, but for losing out on a McArthur genius grant. Sylvia Plath first tried to kill herself because she got rejected from a creative writing programme. [1] The next time I try to kill myself may or not be on the same lines. (The last three almost-kills were rubbing against that chorus so I think if I've got myself into that little death rhythm.) Sylvia was the girl who wanted to be God, ("this is a portrait of the artist as a sick colossus" says a man about her journals. [2]) But Sylvia is the girl I cannot love because I am petty and nasty and see her as competition, see her as the pretty ex-girlfriend I need to one-up. I have girl hate for Sylvia Plath, which is not altogether healthy, but I am not one bit healthy so this is not surprising.

People say her death solidified her work, a living body for a body of work, but how can I nudge that body out of the equation for people to be my best friend instead? Because the answer is not to kill myself but to kill Sylvia. Burn the book and burn the body. A slippery slope my psychosis is happy to slide down.

What a sick thing to say! You should be ashamed of yourself! Says the imaginary reader in my head because no one reads my work because it is evil and foul and bad and just altogether not good in the slightest.

The intrusive thoughts and the intrusive reader are an altogether identical structure. It is all psychosis, all psychotic, every step stub of the way. But the joke is on you (which means the joke is on me because you are not real.) Because I am ashamed of myself! I am! I am! I am!

I am ashamed of being too sick but mostly I'm too sick to feel shame so it balances out I guess.

A common conspiracy theory for the extraordinary and otherworldly is mental illness. The character is not special, they are just crazy enough to think they're special. Harry Potter is a not a wizard, he is a mentally ill muggle with a persecution complex. He did not go to Hogwarts he went to a mental institution:

"It became clear to me that the entire Harry Potter series is an extended metaphor -- a coded transcription, really -- about a boy with severe mental illness, suffering from delusions. If we interpret the story as Harry's fantasy, then the Dursleys are Harry's real parents, and the Potters are imaginary.

The Dursleys either can't cope with the increasingly-delusional boy living with them, or perhaps they are merely abusive, and it's the abuse that's making him delusional. In any event, the parent-figures constantly mistreat him, favor the brother, and inflict endless cruelty and humiliation on him. One day, Harry snaps, and Dudley (who is really Harry's brother) is severely injured, in a way requiring repeated hospital treatments. As a result of this incident, Harry is taken away to a "special school.""[3]

All art is an exercise in faith. Faith that what you're doing won't suck. Faith that you'll live to finish it. Faith that the work will last long enough to share it with someone. Faith that it's worth sharing with someone. Even if that someone is you yourself alone. But when does faith, so pure and true, turn into the dirty delusion of my own egotism, my own mania, my own psychosis. How sick do you have to be to think you're special? And how sadistic do you have to be to tell a psychotic to believe in themselves?

BUFFY:

They told me I was sick. Crazy,
I guess. And that Sunnydale
And... all of this. None of it
was real. Just part of some
delusion in my head.

XANDER:

Come on! That's ridiculous!
What, you think this isn't real
just 'cause of all the vampires
and the demons and the ex-
Vengeance demons and the sister
that used to be a ball of universe-
destroying energy? [4]

Everyone loves the co-mobid clusterfuck of ***art and mental illness*** mistakenly believing that sickness is a cup and string connection to the divine. This is psychosis for the non-psychotic. (How I wish it was my psychosis!) Olden day people thought genius lived in the walls. I think people live in my walls. I think I am a genius. I think I am the voice of my generation but really I'm just hearing voices again.

“But Florence [Foster Jenkins] and Ed Wood
were troubled, and troubling. Although it's easy
to mistake them for punk desperados, their drive
was actually weapons-grade self-deception. Wood
believed he was making great movies; Jenkins
heard an angel every time she sang, with strenuous
efforts made by those around her to stop her ever

learning that the world heard different. None of
that makes their stories less fascinating. But to go
through life as a laughing stock, in a fog of clinical
delusion, is surely, at heart, a horror movie.”[5]

I am no more a writer than I am a God. But my mind has tricked me into thinking I am both. The glee I had on a National Express coach at twenty in the realization that I was Jesus Christ himself. Earlier this month I was so overwhelmed by the brilliance of a Valentine’s card I made with glitter glue and pink paper, so convinced it would be archived in museums, held in special collections, that it lit the match of a manic episode that took days to come down from.

BUFFY:

‘Cause what’s more real?
A sick girl in an institution?
Or some type of. . . supergirl.
Chosen to fight demons
and save the world?
(smiles, distantly)
That’s ridiculous. [6]

I think I am a writer. I think I am a genius. But I think I am Jesus so to hold weight to my thoughts is to sink your body like a stone, like Virginia Woolf in that lake where she died. (She thought herself a loser even though she was the real deal and I think myself quite brilliant even though I am a sea slug so thoughts can think a lot of things). ‘Oh you have lost all your confidence!’ says my mother as if that isn’t a good thing. As if to have such confidence in such a fantasy isn’t repulsive bordering on obscene.

My craziness is what causes me to create, but it is my craziness which speaks the lie that anything I create, anything I think, is of any value. I blow my nose and threaten to self-destruct when it does not win a Nobel. And no one will publish my essays or my manuscripts and my first novel has been rejected over 100 times, and I am trying so badly not to finish the second so this sorry process doesn’t have to start all over again. The thing that sustains me is the thing that will kill me and my next automated rejection letter may be my suicide note.

References-

1. I think I read this somewhere but is this actually true? Does it matter?
2. John Carey, The Sunday Times, quoted in: Stephen Moss, ‘The Journals of Sylvia Plath’, The Guardian, 4th April, 2000
3. See—‘What Harry Potter Is Actually About. Childhood Ruined’. Tickld. 2015
Reddit, Fan Theories, ‘The Harry Potter series is about mental illness’. Hogwarts is a mental

institution. 2014.

4. Normal Again, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Season 6, Episode 17

5. Danny Leigh, 'Why Hollywood Loves Losers', The Guardian, 17th March 2016.

6. Normal Again, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Season 6, Episode 17