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invite in. go steady crazy

Agnieszka Forfa

Abstract

An intimate non sequitur poem/non-fiction narrative of plants, nature, ritual and spirit in mental health and trauma healing, and the limits placed on ‘non-normative’ minds within a capitalist framework.

Keywords

Plants; Healing; Crazy; Mental health; Trauma; Nature; Ritual

When the sick rule the world, all writing will be short and succinct, no paragraphs will be longer than two sentences so we can comprehend them through the brain fog the well bring to us daily – Dodie Bellamy

invite in. go steady crazy

In April 2015 I join the on-line dating site Tinder.
My girlfriend and I have just opened up our relationship, and
I think about whether I should say I'm Crazy on my profile.

A couple weeks later, I'm planning my first Tinder date. And thinking about the many
ways in which I leave/want to leave life.

I make a list: things that will keep me alive.

It's short.

Or at least I think so. I pause to consider if other people would think so.

Poetry

Dog

Weed

Laura 2x

TV

Sleep

I think about adding water to the list. But I can't decide, and since therefore water doesn't
feel completely genuine, and I need this list so badly to feel genuine, I decide not to add
it.

It's 10 months later, and I take a break from writing to go outside.

It's nighttime and I'm not at my place.

I tilt my chin up, find the moon and claim its shine on the top of my head.

I make a list:

Sit with a fist sized stone on your chest, breathe deeply

Place your feet in a running creek; envision energetic entities floating out of your feet and
into the water, down the stream. Thank the water

For the throat: borage leaves and flowers

For the heart: hawthorn blossoms and berries

Invite in lavender when you really need sweetness

Slow down to the pace of houseplants

Sit in front of a tree, try and imagine you are the same thing

Dig a hole beside the tree, bury your psych pills there and come back when things feel hard. Thank the tree, because this is not a gift

Sit with a rock. Think about what this bone of the earth might say to you

If the pace of the plants still feels too fast, slow down to the pace of the rock

Imagine you are a rock lying in your bed. You've got lots of time. Sigh

I go back inside thinking *Will the rock get heavier over time?*
I find my girlfriend in bed, asleep, and ask her to sing to me until I come back.

I make promises that I will come back, mostly to myself.
I get that even here, even still, there are acceptable and unacceptable ways to cope and be through/in my madness. I continue to fold my crazytraumadepressionbrainbody into itself, knowing that for most of my life it has been easier to perform sane than to live the harder reality of being crazy.

I ask the rock *What is the long term effect of thinking of myself as broken/to be fixed?*
It answers back.
I am grateful.

I have a hard week.
I start bracketing off knowledge [] I think about accepting only what I feel into this space. No secondary knowledge. No perceptions/projections. Just what I know to be true with my senses. I wait it out.

I remember: When you call in water, you call in yourself.
So I call in water.

A couple of weeks go by, I go to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. I'm meeting a friend to watch her baby for an hour while she goes in for an appointment. I'm early. I take a walk around the exterior wall of the grounds. It's marked by plaques, which document the history. Specifically, that it was built through the unpaid labor of patients in the 1800s. It was presumed that physical rigor would settle the crazy.

Ritual (Action) One:

Imagine digging/carving into the earth beside the wall: made of brick, which is clay, which is made from soil, which is made from animals, minerals and plant life and stone. The digging, in my mind, calms me, it gives me something to do. A therapist once told me that the mind is just trying to help the crazy, but it does a bad job. Give it something else to do. So I give it the job of digging.

I remember: Stone is rock that has been appropriated by humans.
Monuments

But do we need memory forever?
Through the learning of this history, I understand that its intention is that we/us/them will do better. Similarly, I understand that I am expected to get better. That it is my responsibility to be engaged in practices (exercise, therapy, pills, etc.) that will constitute me as more healthy (aka. less crazy, maybe eventually uncrazy).

I ask the rock *What is the long term effect of thinking of myself as broken/to be fixed?*

I know these days that physical labor is exhausting for me. My bodyspirit is tired. I quit my full time job four months ago and work a couple days a week now. The need to lie in bed for hours/days is real. And that has to be ok.

I ask others to remind me that it's ok.

On one of my workdays, I facilitate a group for queer and trans crazy kin youth. We talk about ancestral trauma, make boundary circles with twigs and branches, mention leaving parties as soon as we get there, know that sometimes community/family/relationship/friendship are words that say
Not built for you
Get better first
You are too much to hold.

I wear these conversations home.
That night, I imagine myself as a rock lying in bed.

I spend a lot of time alone.
Or
I spend a lot of time alone to take care.

However, I am at times unclear what taking care of myself looks like. More often than not, I spend time alone because I feel too crazy to be out in public

pre-verbal
no body

unsafe

This means that I have developed a particular relationship with my home, it has also meant implications for access to friendships, family and community. It also means that sometimes I only hang out with my plants.

And thankfully, I have learnt how to have those conversations.

I decide that I want to take photos of my crazy friends in their homes. I want to document their experiences. I want them to be known, I want people to see that their survival is brilliance. Is genius. That getting out of bed, slowing down, praying, hanging out on the ceiling for days, is worthy of attention, and praise, and acknowledgement. I work on this project when I'm taking my psych meds. But the pills make me forget about the rock. And I want to remember how my body feels when it goes that slow. That there are lessons in this too.

Does this slowness disrupt life as usual

Is it resistance

I like to imagine a world in which schedules are shaped by the actual needs, desires and abilities of those impacted/living them, rather than economic and social regiments.

If the pace of the plants still feels too fast, slow down to the pace of the rock.

Through my depression, I also understand that I insult the human truth of happiness.

An awful amount of mental health talk is saturated with the language of hope.

I do not want to diminish the importance of hope, however, I do want to complicate what it is we are hoping for, and can we broaden our hopes, our imagining for the future?

I sing myself back and draw futures until I'm lulled to sleep. The images stay on my sheets until morning. Layer after layer of dreams. Built up. Held. Kissed like a lover.

First thing I'll do today is invite in lavender.

Agnieszka Forfa, “invite in. go steady crazy”
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References

Bellamy, Dodie. (2015) *When the sick rule the world*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.