

THE LANGUAGE AND ECONOMY OF CRAZY

*STIGMAS SURROUNDING MENTAL ILLNESSES IN BLACK
COMMUNITIES*



Chapter 1.// *Crazy*: Pop-Culture or Science fiction?



Nike commercial - Dream crazier

crazy | 'krāzē | *informal*

adjective (crazier, craziest)

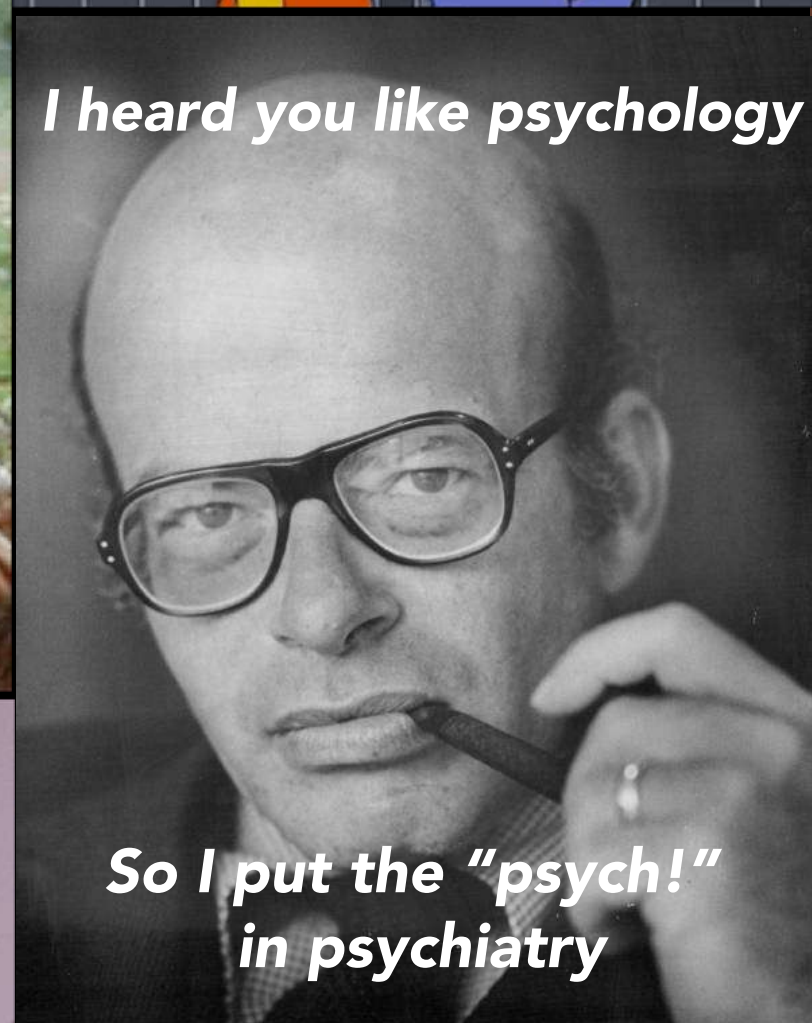
- 1 mentally deranged, especially as manifested in a wild or aggressive way: Stella **went crazy** and assaulted a visitor | a **crazy** grin.
 - extremely annoyed or angry: the noise they made was **driving me crazy**.
 - foolish: it was **crazy to** hope that good might come out of this mess.
- 2 extremely enthusiastic: I'm **crazy about** Cindy | a football-crazy bunch of boys.
- 3 (of an angle) appearing absurdly out of place or in an unlikely position: the monument leaned at a **crazy** angle.
 - *archaic* (of a ship or building) full of cracks or flaws; unsound or shaky.

adverb [*as submodifier*] *chiefly North American*

extremely: I've been **crazy** busy.

noun (plural **crazies**) *chiefly North American*

a mentally deranged person.





Dr. Rosenhan on the "Rosenhan experiment" conducted 1969 - 1972
Findings published in journal "Science", circa 1973, titled "*Being sane in insane places*"

Chapter 2.// *Post traumatic slave syndrome*: A state of “being”

II

My head is heavy

even my conditioning is conditioned

by frank nòbòdì

Mama le Papa.
Standing in a queue, hand-in-hand, these
lovers.
Who can scribe, describe, the freedom in
love?
He who wields the pen mightier than the
sword wrote no words, but threaded their
threadbare scalps.¹
My head is heavy.
With ideologies and memories bestowed
upon my neck of atrocities, birthed colonies
along the ley lines of black mind; Black
child, what is PTSD to my community
when we can simply forget?
My head is heavy.
With strategies of becoming non-
threatening civilian, rules of engagement in
a war against "*Oh he speaks so well, he's
not like the others, not Rastafari, he's
bespoke*", but I be spoke with callous lips
that tote the marijuan smoke as I retreat to
my wilderness poached.
My head is heavy.

1. The "*Pencil test*" formed part of the 1950 population registration act during Apartheid, under which every race was determined based on predetermined characteristics the government set out. In this case the texture of one's hair. In the Pencil test, the pencil was pushed through a person's hair. How easily it came out or fell out determined the person's race (Black, white, coloured), which was partially responsible for splitting existing communities and families over perceived racial lines.



Kaffir hare, self-portrait, (16 x 24)

Excerpt from "Abstract Peaces" photo journal

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22 December 2009

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Tsoku Maela

This letter serves to confirm that I had a consultation with Tsoku Maela on 17 December 2009. During this consultation it became clear that he is manifesting marked features of a Major Depressive Disorder. He appears to have been depressed for a sustained period of time, and his symptoms are likely to have undermined his academic performance. I feel that he would benefit from treatment and have recommended that he attend ongoing psychotherapy sessions. He would also benefit from consultation/screening by a psychiatrist address his symptoms pharmacologically.

Should you require further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Bales

~~crazy~~
~~crazy~~
~~crazy~~
You're not ~~crazy~~
It's all in your
head 🤖

Chapter 3.// *Dark night of the soul:* A cultural diagnosis



Rediscover, not recreate: self-portrait

What the response to HHP's attempted suicides reveals about us

By **Bulelwa Dayimani** · April 5, 2016  1306

Mo Flava was the biggest culprit. While on air during his breakfast show, the DJ asked a question along the lines of, “Why would someone so famous want to kill themselves?”

South African rapper HHP became one of this week's biggest topics after an emotional interview on *CliffCentral*. Speaking to Gareth Cliff, Jabba revealed that he had tried to take his life not once, but three times in 2015

“I was thinking while my policies (life insurance) are still active, let me just go out. Fifteen minutes in the car. Hose pope, whatever. I'm listening to Frank Ocean in the car. I'm thinking 15 minutes I should be done. An hour and a half later, nothing happens. I'm listening to the song on repeat now. I get out the car. It's time to take the kids to school.”

After that failed attempt, HHP says he borrowed a friend's car to try again. “So now I'm thinking maybe because my car is a hybrid. Let me try with an old car. I get a friend of mine's old car. I take the hosepipe from his car to mine. I try again. It doesn't work.”

In his third and final attempt, HHP again turned to a suicide assist website, which apparently suggested using helium as a form of suicide. “The last attempt, I'm fighting with my girlfriend or some shit. They tell me to try helium. I get the helium tank... I turn this thing on and I'm thinking ‘This is finally going to work’. The wifey has just gone to her friend's house and by the time she gets back, I'll be cold. The website says it should work in eight minutes and it's an hour and 12 minutes later now, so I start cursing.”



Rage. Regret. Return.

...

Great idea



Chapter 4.// *Creating a language for the unspoken*



Tsoku Maela <jay.maela@gmail.com>

to Jessica ▾

📧 Sat, Mar 12, 2016, 12:58 PM ☆ ↩ ⋮

Hey Jessica,

I hope this e-mail finds you well!

Sorry to mail you directly, but I've been trying to send you guys a body of work I've put together over the year that touches on depression and anxiety through abstract and surreal images, but my e-mails keep bouncing back. It's a server issue I've been dealing with for a while and sometimes the e-mails do go through even with the bounce back notification. I'm not sure if you guys have received it along with the files, so I'm forwarding the e-mail I sent to you in hopes that you might take a gander at it.

I'm more than willing to expound a bit more on the pieces and the concept of 'Abstract Peaces' if needs be, but with the responses and stories I've heard from people during showcases I feel that depression is a topic we need to start addressing openly.

I've actually been advised against being open about my struggles with depression and anxiety but my concern is not with the public's reaction to me, but rather the many who suffer in silence but have the courage to speak when confronted with the art.

Please take a look and let me know what your thoughts are, I'd greatly appreciate your time, but I'd completely understand if it's not for you guys.

Thanks again and apologies for mailing you directly (and on a Saturday!)

Best regards,

...

Using photography to destigmatise mental illness in black communities

Written by [Between 10and5](#) × on Apr 12, 2016 × in [Articles](#), [Photography](#)



12



5K



21



5K
SHARES

A young artist working in the medium of photography, [Tsoku Maela](#) has created a visual diary to reflect the different stages of depression, turning his personal struggle into something meaningful. He hopes that his work will spark a much-needed dialogue that will destigmatise mental illness in black communities. Read his written essay on the topic below, accompanied by a few select images from his conceptual photo series 'Abstract Peaces'.

I want you to take a deep breath, don't be shy, take in as much air as you need. Now hold it in for as long as you can. Feel the pressure on your chest and on your diaphragm. Listen to your heartbeat reverberate through your body. Louder and louder. You're probably thinking to yourself, "I can do this for a while longer. I'll be fine". Once you become anxious for your next breath, seconds start to feel like hours until, depending on your level of tolerance, you eventually take your next breath, and it's amazing.

To me, this is what depression feels like, except you never know when your next breath is coming.



rentawr3ck said to tsokumaela:

I (eye) have felt an accumulation of tears at your work. I usually cry at things, times, works that inspire change within myself. I am happy, and almost transcendent, while also nostalgically sad in this moment. I am relieved to have found you with aid from my professor in sculpture. I am inventing a 'Body Extension' for the pineal gland as it relates to the female. Thank you for being you and for discovering yourself constantly. I hope you are loving yourself.



Olalonpe Ige



To chat with Olalonpe and other friends, [turn on chat](#).

Hi Tsoku Just read about your work on Barongwa. You are operating at a high frequency and it is amazing to come across beings like yourself. There is an energy growing 'We are Waking' 'We are Discovering' 'We are Expressing' . It is so great to come across your work - IT STOPPED ME. You are certainly not done yet - This is the beginning



Hello Tsoku. My name is Marcella and I am a medical student at the University of Missouri Kansas City School of Medicine in the United States. I have a group presentation today for my Medicine and Visual Art class today and you are the focus of my presentation! I must say I love and appreciate the hard work you've done to get the message out there.



Hello! I'm a student at college taking photography and I'm using one of your images for my contextual analysis project. Would I be able to ask you a few questions which will help me out?



I appreciate the way you take the weirdness out of my disorder and make it a piece of art



Kristin Smith Watkins + 📺 📞 ⚙️ ✕

To chat with Kristin and other friends, [turn on chat](#).

I don't know you personally, but I discovered you work online. I am a PhD in the history of infectious diseases, who is the exact reverse of you - I came from an arts background (theater) and went into science history. I live with bipolar 2 depressive disorder, but am a high functioning so everyone thinks I'm always fine (which isn't true). I have a serious fascination with South African film, music, disease

transmission, and now mental health photography. I know I'm babbling, but your work was so profound to me- Sehlago shows the method I have tried to commit suicide for years - willing myself into atoms. It hasn't worked yet...Dr. Kristin Watkins



Alissa M <alissa.merz013@gmail.com>

to me ▾

Hi!
I totally forgot to send you the essay that I messaged you about on instagram but better late than never!

Here it is! I hope I didn't misrepresent you in any way, but if I did I apologize.

Your work really touched me and I just wanted to thank you again for being so brave and sharing your images and your story with the world. You are a strong and powerful human. I can't wait to see more of your work and your progression as an artist!

All the best,
Alissa Merz

P.S. I got an A on the essay and I wouldn't have been able to do that if I wasn't so passionate about your art, so again thank you.



MaNdau, self-portrait



Beleagured, self-portrait



Between silence and violence, self-portrait



Return to innocence (lost), self-portrait



psychotic psychosis, self-portrait



A nest for a dream, self-portrait



Seriti, self-portrait



Sehlagu, self-portrait



When I was apart, self-portrait



a brief reminder of solitude, self-portrait



Auxin, self-portrait



Waiting, Tsakane Chauke

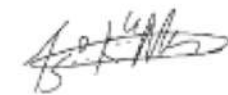
...

I'm sad all the time
But in my dreams I come alive



They call the ones in straight jackets, with
schizophrenia, depression and the ones who
dare to be different *crazy*

while we stop and stare as the world is laid to waste by the sane.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. M.' or similar, with a stylized flourish.