

4.48 Psychosis

4.48 *Psychosis* was first performed at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs, London, on 23 June 2000. The cast was as follows:

Daniel Evans
Jo McInnes
Madeleine Potter

Directed by James Macdonald
Designed by Jeremy Herbert
Lighting by Nigel J Edwards
Sound by Paul Arditti

(A very long silence.)

— But you have friends.

(A long silence.)

You have a lot of friends.

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer?

(Silence.)

a consolidated consciousness resides in a darkened banqueting hall near the ceiling of a mind whose floor shifts as ten thousand cockroaches when a shaft of light enters as all thoughts unite in an instant of accord body no longer expellent as the cockroaches comprise a truth which no one ever utters

I had a night in which everything was revealed to me.
How can I speak again?

the broken hermaphrodite who trusted herself alone finds the room in reality teeming and begs never to wake from the nightmare

and they were all there
 every last one of them
 and they knew my name
 as I scuttled like a beetle along the backs of their chairs

Remember the light and believe the light

An instant of clarity before eternal night

don't let me forget

I am sad

I feel that the future is hopeless and that things cannot improve

I am bored and dissatisfied with everything

I am a complete failure as a person

I am guilty, I am being punished

I would like to kill myself

I used to be able to cry but now I am beyond tears

I have lost interest in other people

I can't make decisions

I can't eat

I can't sleep

I can't think

I cannot overcome my loneliness, my fear, my disgust

I am fat

I cannot write

I cannot love

My brother is dying, my lover is dying, I am killing them both

I am charging towards my death

I am terrified of medication

I cannot make love

I cannot fuck

I cannot be alone

I cannot be with others

My hips are too big

I dislike my genitals

At 4.48
 when desperation visits
 I shall hang myself
 to the sound of my lover's breathing

I do not want to die

I have become so depressed by the fact of my mortality that I
 have decided to commit suicide

I do not want to live

I am jealous of my sleeping lover and covet his induced
unconsciousness

When he wakes he will envy my sleepless night of thought and
speech unslurred by medication

I have resigned myself to death this year

Some will call this self-indulgence
(they are lucky not to know its truth)
Some will know the simple fact of pain

This is becoming my normality

100

84

91

81

72

69

58

44

37

38

42

21

28

12

7

It wasn't for long, I wasn't there long. But drinking bitter black
coffee I catch that medicinal smell in a cloud of ancient

tobacco and something touches me in that still sobbing place
and a wound from two years ago opens like a cadaver and a
long buried shame roars its foul decaying grief.

A room of expressionless faces staring blankly at my
pain, so devoid of meaning there must be evil intent.

Dr This and Dr That and Dr Whatsit who's just
passing and thought he'd pop in to take the piss as
well. Burning in a hot tunnel of dismay, my
humiliation complete as I shake without reason and
stumble over words and have nothing to say about my
'illness' which anyway amounts only to knowing that
there's no point in anything because I'm going to die.
And I am deadlocked by that smooth psychiatric voice
of reason which tells me there is an objective reality in
which my body and mind are one. But I am not here
and never have been. Dr This writes it down and Dr
That attempts a sympathetic murmur. Watching me,
judging me, smelling the crippling failure oozing from
my skin, my desperation clawing and all-consuming
panic drenching me as I gape in horror at the world
and wonder why everyone is smiling and looking at
me with secret knowledge of my aching shame.

Shame shame shame.

Drown in your fucking shame.

Inscrutable doctors, sensible doctors, way-out doctors,
doctors you'd think were fucking patients if you
weren't shown proof otherwise, ask the same questions,
put words in my mouth, offer chemical cures for
congenital anguish and cover each other's arses until I
want to scream for you, the only doctor who ever
touched me voluntarily, who looked me in the eye,
who laughed at my gallows humour spoken in the
voice from the newly-dug grave, who took the piss
when I shaved my head, who lied and said it was nice
to see me. Who lied. And said it was nice to see me. I

trusted you, I loved you, and it's not losing you that hurts me, but your bare-faced fucking falsehoods that masquerade as medical notes.

Your truth, your lies, not mine.

And while I was believing that you were different and that you maybe even felt the distress that sometimes flickered across your face and threatened to erupt, you were covering your arse too. Like every other stupid mortal cunt.

To my mind that's betrayal. And my mind is the subject of these bewildered fragments.

Nothing can extinguish my anger.

And nothing can restore my faith.

This is not a world in which I wish to live.

- Have you made any plans?
- Take an overdose, slash my wrists then hang myself.
- All those things together?
- It couldn't possibly be misconstrued as a cry for help.
- (Silence.)
- It wouldn't work.
- Of course it would.

- It wouldn't work. You'd start to feel sleepy from the overdose and wouldn't have the energy to cut your wrists.

(Silence.)

- I'd be standing on a chair with a noose around my neck.

(Silence.)

- If you were alone do you think you might harm yourself?
- I'm scared I might.
- Could that be protective?
- Yes. It's fear that keeps me away from the train tracks. I just hope to God that death is the fucking end. I feel like I'm eighty years old. I'm tired of life and my mind wants to die.

- That's a metaphor, not reality.

- It's a simile.

- That's not reality.

- It's not a metaphor, it's a simile, but even if it were, the defining feature of a metaphor is that it's real.

(A long silence.)

- You are not eighty years old.

(Silence.)

Are you?

(*A silence.*)

Are you?

(*A silence.*)

Or are you?

(*A long silence.*)

- Do you despise all unhappy people or is it me specifically?
- I don't despise you. It's not your fault. You're ill.
- I don't think so.
- No?
- No. I'm depressed. Depression is anger. It's what you did, who was there and who you're blaming.
- And who are you blaming?
- Myself.

Body and soul can never be married

I need to become who I already am and will bellow forever at this incongruity which has committed me to hell

Insoluble hoping cannot uphold me

I will drown in dysphoria
in the cold black pond of my self
the pit of my immaterial mind

How can I return to form
now my formal thought has gone?

Not a life that I could countenance.

They will love me for that which destroys me
the sword in my dreams
the dust of my thoughts
the sickness that breeds in the folds of my mind

Every compliment takes a piece of my soul

An expressionist nag
Stalling between two fools
They know nothing -
I have always walked free

Last in a long line of literary kleptomaniacs
(a time honoured tradition)

Theft is the holy act
On a twisted path to expression

A glut of exclamation marks spells impending nervous
breakdown
Just a word on a page and there is the drama

I write for the dead
the unborn

After 4.48 I shall not speak again

I have reached the end of this dreary and repugnant
tale of a sense interned in an alien carcass and
lumpen by the malignant spirit of the moral majority

I have been dead for a long time

Back to my roots

I sing without hope on the boundary

RSVP ASAP

Sometimes I turn around and catch the smell of you and I
cannot go on I cannot fucking go on without expressing
this terrible so fucking awful physical aching fucking longing
I have for you. And I cannot believe that I can feel this for
you and you feel nothing. Do you feel nothing?

(Silence.)

Do you feel nothing?

(Silence.)

And I go out at six in the morning and start my search for
you. If I've dreamt a message of a street or a pub or a
station I go there. And I wait for you.

(Silence.)

You know, I really feel like I'm being manipulated.

(Silence.)

I've never in my life had a problem giving another person
what they want. But no one's ever been able to do that for
me. No one touches me, no one gets near me. But now
you've touched me somewhere so fucking deep I can't
believe and I can't be that for you. Because I can't find
you.

(Silence.)

What does she look like?
And how will I know her when I see her?
She'll die, she'll die, she'll only fucking die.

(Silence.)

Do you think it's possible for a person to be born in the
wrong body?

(Silence.)

Do you think it's possible for a person to be born in the
wrong era?

(Silence.)

Fuck you. Fuck you. Fuck you for rejecting me by never
being there, fuck you for making me feel shit about myself,
fuck you for bleeding the fucking love and life out of me,
fuck my father for fucking up my life for good and fuck my
mother for not leaving him, but most of all, fuck you God
for making me love a person who does not exist,
FUCK YOU FUCK YOU FUCK YOU.

- Oh dear, what's happened to your arm?
- I cut it.
- That's a very immature, attention seeking thing to do. Did it give you relief?
- No.
- Did it relieve the tension?
- No.
- Did it give you relief?

(Silence.)

Did it give you relief?

- No.
- I don't understand why you did that.
- Then ask.
- Did it relieve the tension?

(A long silence.)

Can I look?

- No.
- I'd like to look, to see if it's infected.
- No.

(Silence.)

- I thought you might do this. Lots of people do. It relieves the tension.
- Have you ever done it?
- ...
- No. Far too fucking sane and sensible. I don't know where you read that, but it does not relieve the tension.

(Silence.)

Why don't you ask me *why*?
Why did I cut my arm?

- Would you like to tell me?
- Yes.
- Then tell me.
- ASK.
ME.
WHY.

(A long silence.)

- Why did you cut your arm?
- Because it feels fucking great. Because it feels fucking amazing.
- Can I look?
- You can look. But don't touch.
- (Looks) And you don't think you're ill?

- No.
- I do. It's not your fault. But you have to take responsibility for your own actions. Please don't do it again.

I dread the loss of her I've never touched
 love keeps me a slave in a cage of tears
 I gnaw my tongue with which to her I can never speak
 I miss a woman who was never born
 I kiss a woman across the years that say we shall never meet

Everything passes
 Everything perishes
 Everything palls

my thought walks away with a killing smile
 leaving discordant anxiety
 which roars in my soul

No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope No hope

A song for my loved one, touching her absence
 the flux of her heart, the splash of her smile

In ten years time she'll still be dead. When I'm living with it, dealing with it, when a few days pass when I don't even think of it, she'll still be dead. When I'm an old lady living on the street forgetting my name she'll still be dead, she'll still be dead, it's just

fucking

over

and I must stand alone

My love, my love, why have you forsaken me?

She is the couching place where I never shall lie
 and there's no meaning to life in the light of my loss

Built to be lonely
 to love the absent

Find me
 Free me
 from this

corrosive doubt
 futile despair

horror in repose

I can fill my space
 fill my time
 but nothing can fill this void in my heart

The vital need for which I would die

Breakdown

- No ifs or buts.
- I didn't say if or but, I said no.

- Can't must never have-to always won't should shan't.
The unnegotiables.
Not today.

(Silence.)

- Please. Don't switch off my mind by attempting to straighten me out. Listen and understand, and when you feel contempt don't express it, at least not verbally, at least not to me.

(Silence.)

- I don't feel contempt.
- No?
- No. It's not your fault.
- It's not your fault, that's all I ever hear, it's not your fault, it's an illness, it's not your fault, I know it's not my fault. You've told me that so often I'm beginning to think it *is* my fault.
- It's *not* your fault.
- I KNOW.

- But you allow it.

(Silence.)

Don't you?

- There's not a drug on earth can make life meaningful.
- You allow this state of desperate absurdity.

(Silence.)

You allow it.

(Silence.)

- I won't be able to think. I won't be able to work.
- Nothing will interfere with your work like suicide.

(Silence.)

- I dreamt I went to the doctor's and she gave me eight minutes to live. I'd been sitting in the fucking waiting room half an hour.

(A long silence.)

Okay, let's do it, let's do the drugs, let's do the chemical lobotomy, let's shut down the higher functions of my brain and perhaps I'll be a bit more fucking capable of living.

Let's do it.

abstraction to the point of

unpleasant
unacceptable
uninspiring
impenetrable

irrelevant
irreverent
irreligious
unrepentant

dislike
dislocate
disembody
deconstruct

I don't imagine
(clearly)
that a single soul
could
would
should
or will

and if they did
I don't think
(clearly)
that another soul
a soul like mine
could
would
should
or will

irrespective

I know what I'm doing
all too well

No native speaker

irrational
irreducible
irredeemable
unrecognisable

derailed
deranged
deform
free form

obscure to the point of

True Right Correct
Anyone or anybody
Each every all

drowning in a sea of logic
this monstrous state of palsy

still ill

Symptoms: Not eating, not sleeping, not speaking, no sex drive, in despair, wants to die.

Diagnosis: Pathological grief.

Sertraline, 50 mg. Insomnia worsened, severe anxiety, anorexia, (weight loss 17kgs,) increase in suicidal thoughts, plans and intention. Discontinued following hospitalization.

Zopiclone, 7.5mg. Slept. Discontinued following rash. Patient attempted to leave hospital against medical advice. Restrained by three male nurses twice her size. Patient

threatening and uncooperative. Paranoid thoughts – believes hospital staff are attempting to poison her.

Melleril, 50mg. Co-operative.

Lofepamine, 70mg, increased to 140mg, then 210mg. Weight gain 12kgs. Short term memory loss. No other reaction.

Argument with junior doctor whom she accused of treachery after which she shaved her head and cut her arms with a razor blade.

Patient discharged into the care of the community on arrival of acutely psychotic patient in emergency clinic in greater need of a hospital bed.

Citalopram, 20mg. Morning tremors. No other reaction.

Lofepamine and Citalopram discontinued after patient got pissed off with side affects and lack of obvious improvement. Discontinuation symptoms: Dizziness and confusion. Patient kept falling over, fainting and walking out in front of cars. Delusional ideas – believes consultant is the antichrist.

Fluoxetine hydrochloride, trade name Prozac, 20mg, increased to 40mg. Insomnia, erratic appetite, (weight loss 14kgs,) severe anxiety, unable to reach orgasm, homicidal thoughts towards several doctors and drug manufacturers. Discontinued.

Mood: Fucking angry.

Affect: Very angry.

Thorazine, 100mg. Slept. Calmer.

Venlafaxine, 75mg, increased to 150mg, then 225mg. Dizziness, low blood pressure, headaches. No other reaction. Discontinued.

Patient declined Seroxat. Hypochondria – cites spasmodic blinking and severe memory loss as evidence of tardive dyskinesia and tardive dementia.

Refused all further treatment.

100 aspirin and one bottle of Bulgarian Cabernet Sauvignon, 1986. Patient woke in a pool of vomit and said 'Sleep with a dog and rise full of fleas.' Severe stomach pain. No other reaction.

Hatch opens
Stark light

the television talks
full of eyes
the spirits of sight

and now I am so afraid

I'm seeing things
I'm hearing things
I don't know who I am

tongue out
thought stalled

the piecemeal crumple of my mind

Where do I start?
 Where do I stop?
 How do I start?
 (As I mean to go on)

How do I stop?
 How do I stop?
 How do I stop?
 How do I stop?
 How do I stop?
 How do I stop?
 How do I stop?
 How do I stop?

A tab of pain
 Stabbing my lungs
 A tab of death
 Squeezing my heart

I'll die
 not yet
 but it's there

Please ...
 Money ...
 Wife ...

Every act is a symbol
 the weight of which crushes me

A dotted line on the throat
 CUT HERE

**DON'T LET THIS KILL ME
 THIS WILL KILL ME AND CRUSH ME AND
 SEND ME TO HELL**

I beg you to save me from this madness that eats me
 a sub-intentional death

I thought I should never speak again
 but now I know there is something blacker than desire

perhaps it will save me
 perhaps it will kill me

a dismal whistle that is the cry of heartbreak around the
 hellish bowl at the ceiling of my mind

a blanket of roaches

cease this war

My legs are empty
 Nothing to say
 And this is the rhythm of madness

— — — — —

— I gassed the Jews, I killed the Kurds, I bombed the
 Arabs, I fucked small children while they begged for
 mercy, the killing fields are mine, everyone left the
 party because of me, I'll suck your fucking eyes out
 send them to your mother in a box and when I die
 I'm going to be reincarnated as your child only fifty
 times worse and as mad as all fuck I'm going to make
 your life a living fucking hell I REFUSE I REFUSE I
 REFUSE LOOK AWAY FROM ME

— It's all right.

— LOOK AWAY FROM ME

- It's all right. I'm here.
- Look away from me

We are anathema
the pariahs of reason

Why am I stricken?
I saw visions of God

and it shall come to pass

Gird yourselves:
for ye shall be broken in pieces
it shall come to pass

Behold the light of despair
the glare of anguish
and ye shall be driven to darkness

If there is blasting
(there shall be blasting)
the names of offenders shall be shouted from the rooftops

Fear God
and his wicked convocation

a scall on my skin, a seethe in my heart
a blanket of roaches on which we dance
this infernal state of siege

All this shall come to pass
all the words of my noisome breath

Remember the light and believe the light

Christ is dead
and the monks are in ecstasy

We are the abjects
who depose our leaders
and burn incense unto Baal

Come now, let us reason together
Sanity is found in the mountain of the Lord's house on the
horizon of the soul that eternally recedes
The head is sick, the heart's caul torn
Tread the ground on which wisdom walks
Embrace beautiful lies -
the chronic insanity of the sane

the wrenching begins

- At 4.48
when sanity visits
for one hour and twelve minutes I am in my right mind.
When it has passed I shall be gone again,
a fragmented puppet, a grotesque fool.
Now I am here I can see myself
but when I am charmed by vile delusions of happiness,
the foul magic of this engine of sorcery,
I cannot touch my essential self.

Why do you believe me then and not now?

Remember the light and believe the light.
Nothing matters more.
Stop judging by appearances and make a right judgement.

– It's all right. You will get better.

– Your disbelief cures nothing.

Look away from me.

Hatch opens
Stark light

A table two chairs and no windows

Here am I
and there is my body

dancing on glass

In accident time where there are no accidents

You have no choice
the choice comes after

Cut out my tongue
tear out my hair
cut off my limbs
but leave me my love
I would rather have lost my legs
pulled out my teeth
gouged out my eyes
than lost my love

flash flicker slash burn wring press dab slash
flash flicker punch burn float flicker dab flicker
punch flicker flash burn dab press wring press
punch flicker float burn flash flicker burn

it will never pass

dab flicker punch slash wring slash punch slash
float flicker flash punch wring press flash press
dab flicker wring burn flicker dab flash dab float
burn press burn flicker burn flash

Nothing's forever

(but Nothing)

slash wring punch burn flicker dab float dab
flicker burn punch burn flash dab press dab
wring flicker float slash burn slash punch slash
press slash float slash flicker burn dab

Victim. Perpetrator. Bystander.

punch burn float flicker flash flicker burn slash
wring press dab slash flash flicker dab flicker
punch flicker flash burn dab press flicker wring
press punch flash flicker burn flicker flash

the morning brings defeat

wring slash punch slash float flicker flash punch
 wring dab flicker punch slash press flash press
 dab flicker wring burn flicker dab flash dab float
 burn press burn flash flicker slash

beautiful pain
 that says I exist

flicker punch slash dab wring press burn slash
 press slash punch flicker flash press burn slash
 dab flicker float flash flicker dab press burn slash
 press slash punch flash flicker burn

and a saner life tomorrow

100

93

86

79

72

65

58

51

44

37

30

23

16

9

2

Sanity is found at the centre of convulsion, where madness
 is scorched from the bisected soul.

I know myself.

I see myself.

My life is caught in a web of reason
 spun by a doctor to augment the sane.

At 4.48

I shall sleep.

I came to you hoping to be healed.

You are my doctor, my saviour, my omnipotent judge, my
 priest, my god, the surgeon of my soul.

And I am your proselyte to sanity.

to achieve goals and ambitions

to overcome obstacles and attain a high standard

to increase self-regard by the successful exercise of talent

to overcome opposition

to have control and influence over others

to defend myself

to defend my psychological space

to vindicate the ego

to receive attention

to be seen and heard

to excite, amaze, fascinate, shock, intrigue, amuse, entertain
or entice others

to be free from social restrictions

to resist coercion and constriction

to be independent and act according to desire

to defy convention

to avoid pain

to avoid shame

to obliterate past humiliation by resumed action

to maintain self-respect

to repress fear

to overcome weakness

to belong

to be accepted

to draw close and enjoyably reciprocate with another

to converse in a friendly manner, to tell stories, exchange
sentiments, ideas, secrets

to communicate, to converse

to laugh and make jokes

to win affection of desired Other

to adhere and remain loyal to Other

to enjoy sensuous experiences with cathected Other

to feed, help, protect, comfort, console, support, nurse or
heal

to be fed, helped, protected, comforted, consoled,
supported, nursed or healed

to form mutually enjoyable, enduring, cooperating and
reciprocating relationship with Other, with an equal

to be forgiven

to be loved

to be free

— You've seen the worst of me.

— Yes.

— I know nothing of you.

— No.

— But I like you.

— I like you.

(Silence.)

— You're my last hope.

(A long silence.)

— You don't need a friend you need a doctor.

(A long silence.)

— You are so wrong.

(A very long silence.)

— But you have friends.

(A long silence.)

You have a lot of friends.

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer your friends to make them so supportive?

(A long silence.)

What do you offer?

(Silence.)

We have a professional relationship. I think we have a good relationship. But it's professional.

(Silence.)

I feel your pain but I cannot hold your life in my hands.

(Silence.)

You'll be all right. You're strong. I know you'll be okay because I like you and you can't like someone who doesn't like themselves. The people I fear for are the ones I don't like because they hate themselves so much they won't let anyone else like them either. But I do like you. I'll miss you. And I know you'll be ok.

(Silence.)

Most of my clients want to kill me. When I walk out of here at the end of the day I need to go home to my lover and relax. I need to be with my friends and relax. I need my friends to be really together.

(Silence.)

I fucking hate this job and I need my friends to be sane.

(Silence.)

I'm sorry.

- It's not my fault.
- I'm sorry, that was a mistake.
- It is not my fault.
- No. It's not your fault. I'm sorry.

(Silence.)

I was trying to explain -

- I know. I'm angry because I understand, not because I don't.

Fattened up
Shored up
Shoved out

my body decompensates
my body flies apart

no way to reach out
beyond the reaching out I've already done

you will always have a piece of me
because you held my life in your hands

those brutal hands

this will end me

I thought it was silent
till it went silent

how have you inspired this pain?

I've never understood
what it is I'm not supposed to feel
like a bird on the wing in a swollen sky
my mind is torn by lightning
as it flies from the thunder behind

Hatch opens
Stark light
and Nothing
Nothing
see Nothing

What am I like?
the child of negation

out of one torture chamber into another
a vile succession of errors without remission
every step of the way I've fallen

Despair propels me to suicide
Anguish for which doctors can find no cure
Nor care to understand
I hope you never understand
Because I like you

I like you
I like you

still black water
as deep as forever
as cold as the sky
as still as my heart when your voice is gone
I shall freeze in hell

of course I love you
you saved my life

I wish you hadn't
I wish you hadn't
I wish you'd left me alone

a black and white film of yes or no yes or no yes or no yes
or no yes or no yes or no

I've always loved you
even when I hated you

What am I like?
just like my father

oh no oh no oh no

Hatch opens
Stark light

the rupture begins

I don't know where to look any more

Tired of crowd searching
Telepathy
and hope

Watch the stars
predict the past
and change the world with a silver eclipse

the only thing that's permanent is destruction
we're all going to disappear
trying to leave a mark more permanent than myself

I've not killed myself before so don't look for precedents
What came before was just the beginning

a cyclical fear
that's not the moon it's the earth
A revolution

Dear God, dear God, what shall I do?

All I know
is snow
and black despair

Nowhere left to turn
an ineffectual moral spasm
the only alternative to murder

Please don't cut me up to find out how I died
I'll tell you how I died

One hundred Lofepramine, forty five Zopiclone, twenty five
Temazepam, and twenty Melleril

Everything I had

Swallowed

Slit

Hung

It is done

behold the Eunuch
of castrated thought

skull
unwound

the capture
the rapture
the rupture
of a soul

a solo symphony

at 4.48
the happy hour
when clarity visits

warm darkness
which soaks my eyes

I know no sin

this is the sickness of becoming great

this vital need for which I would die

to be loved

I'm dying for one who doesn't care
I'm dying for one who doesn't know

you're breaking me

Speak
Speak
Speak

ten yard ring of failure
look away from me

My final stand

No one speaks

Validate me
Witness me
See me
Love me

my final submission
my final defeat

the chicken's still dancing
the chicken won't stop

I think that you think of me
the way I'd have you think of me

the final period
the final full stop

look after your mum now
look after your mum

Black snow falls

in death you hold me
never free

I have no desire for death
no suicide ever had

watch me vanish
watch me

vanish

watch me

watch me

watch

It is myself I have never met, whose face is pasted on the
underside of my mind

please open the curtains

Skin

a ten minute film