

Depression as Relational

by shy* play

I struggle with depression. It feels like it looms over me, always ready to kick in. Even in my most joyous moments, depression lurks in the background. They call it “the state of depression.” “You are depressed.” “I am depressed.” How many times have I repeated these words to myself: “Am I depressed?”

Depression as a state defines itself as a “mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest”. Do therapists ever listen? In my experience, therapists come to the couching event with presupposed ideas about neurodiversity as a pathology. I typically leave the sessions with a newfound insight about my childhood traumas, an individualised sense of self, and, in the best case scenario, a prescription for citalopram. But what they don’t want to hear is that depression is not a state, but an expression that always actualises itself anew and in-difference.

To call depression a state is a misnomer. Depression, at least how I experience it, is always a multiplicity, like water, sometimes in the stillness of a lake or in the tumultuous waves of a storm. It moves, always moves, but never on its own. Depression expresses itself in an infinite number of ways, and the trick is to become attentive to its manifestations. I call this trick: “But listen to what I have to say”, referring to the psychologist. I tell them, “depression moves through me; I’m the audience of depression, never knowing for sure how it will produce me.” But they refuse to listen, instead they continuously ask me about my religious past, my precarious lifestyle, my gender, and my complicated relationship with my parents, seeking the state of depression’s inherent cause(s). “You are depressed.” “I am depressed.”

Depression never comes without desire; it is not devoid of movement, as many would say. Depression is desire in motion! Depression as a multiplicity pushes me to be part of neurodiverse sociality formations. Depression pushes me to write this. Depression encourages me to create, but always recognising the times when depression pushes me deep into what often seems the confinement of my bed, or the times when I feel totally out of sync with the world to the point that my movements struggle with what seem like alien gravities. I tell psychologists that depression is relational; it emerges in the event always anew with the various pasts that the process of bodying has to negotiate, including the memories of my youth but never at its Cause.

shy play* understands just that and has as its mission to create new conditions for sociality formations away from neurotypical demands because neurodiversity is relational and desire will always produce itself in difference, where new pasts, habits, and subjectivities emerge.