QUESTION: *How do I find catharsis, or avenues towards catharsis, for myself and potential audiences, within my writing, research process and performance.*

CONTEXT.

I have been developing a solo piece of theatre work for my final module of my masters.

The work, titled Towers, is a topical piece theatre that could be described as agitprop. Some elements of it could also be described as Brechtian in that it uses projected images and slogans to highlight points being raised, but I would say it is not purely Brechtian in that it uses character to invoke a sense of realism. It is also opposed to Brechtian models in that I am hoping to use elements of catharsis to realise the aims of the work. Brecht is opposed to such devises and I’ll explain a bit more as to why this is later.

In a pre-pandemic setting I had decided to push the writing and research of the work towards an idea that we have much more in common than what separates us. And if I could achieve this successfully, then a catharsis may be found by analysing the key topical issues that separate us as a society today and breaking them down to a find a commonality of purpose among them.

However, once the global pandemic manifested, I realised I was going to have to abandoned some of this direction of analysis. But I didn’t abandon the initial core work and writing.

There was a character in the early experiments of the work who was a survivor of The Grenfell Tower disaster and I was struck that the neo liberal practices that I believe caused Grenfell could also be applied to reasons such as why the UK and other similar neo liberal societies have the highest death rates in relation to the pandemic.

But obviously such observations were drawing me further and further away from any elements of intended catharsis.

As part of the project development I had to devise a project plan for presentation in an exam. As part of the project proposal I left in my intentions to push towards catharsis, yet at the time of proposal only had the vaguest of ideas of how I may drive myself and an audience towards this.

I knew I’d be asked questions around this, as the goal seems over ambitious in the current social context, and I had to admit on answering these questions I wasn’t yet sure within my process how I was going to aim for this.

This actually left me quite unhappy at the end of the exam so I decided to conduct a thorough research of

What catharsis is.

What are its benefits.

have I used it effectively in past work.

How can I cause it to manifest in this new project?

And what are its benefits.

CATHARSIS. WHAT IS IT.

I think first it is worth examining what catharsis is in a classical and philosophical sense.

DEFINITION.

The process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions.

IN DRAMA.

The word itself is Greek in origin and originally meant "purification" or "cleansing" or "clarification.”

Catharsis is also a term in dramatic art that describes the effect of tragedy (or comedy and quite possibly other artistic forms) principally on the audience (although some have speculated on characters in the drama as well). In the case of my own writing and on this project in particular, which features biographical elements, I would argue it will manifest via parts of the creative process. I’ll discuss more about this later (the effect of unburdening)

Aristotle’s Poetics (the earliest surviving work of dramatic theory) uses catharsis for the first time as a metaphor as opposed to a practical term. In it Aristotle compares the effects of tragedy on the mind of a spectator to the effect of catharsis on the body. As in that a form of cleansing has occurred.

However, there has been constant debate over the Aristotelian definition of catharsis and scholars such as Cambridge professor G. F. Else prefer to find clarity of the term alongside Aristotle’s concept of Anagnorisis.

Anagnorisis originally meant recognition in this context, not only of a person but also of what that person stood for. Anagnorisis was the hero's sudden awareness of a real situation, the realisation of things as they stood, and finally, the hero's insight into a relationship.

*So in short this leads us back to the idea that catharsis equals clarification.*

BRECHT.

However there have been several highly prominent attempts to subvert catharsis in theatre. Most particularly from the aforementioned Bertolt Brecht.

Brecht viewed catharsis as bourgeois and designed dramas which left significant emotions unresolved, intending to force social action upon the audience. Brecht then identified the concept of catharsis with the notion of identification of the spectator, meaning a complete adhesion of the viewer to the dramatic actions and characters. Brecht reasoned that the absence of a cathartic resolution would require the audience to take political action in the real world, in order to fill the emotional gap they had experienced vicariously.

Within my own writing I often from a highly politicised aesthetic. Yet despite employing some Brechtian techniques I would argue catharsis can still have a politically galvanising effect when placed alongside these more classical interpretations.

ANGELA CURRAN.

In The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism Angela Curran examines Brecht’s criticism of Aristotle and tells us Brecht believed it lacked critical reflection “drama should have a certain social and pragmatic function to effect social criticism and his criticism of Aristotle was that Aristotle’s account of the essence of tragedy involves the view that tragedy must be a representation of certain kinds of actions. We have seen that these recommendations essentially ignored ways in which ancient Greek tragedy can act as social critique.” However, in regards to Aristotle’s perspective on working with emotions Curran tells us, “In Aristotle we find a more sophisticated account of the emotions as constituted by judgements, something that is central to understanding the role that emotions play in our critical reflections about character in art.”

It’s in this middle area of emotion and critical reflection that I believe areas of catharsis can be induced or examined. I’ll discuss more on methodology as we progress.

CATHARSIS IN PROCESS. DEEP WRITING.

Before that I’d like to consider catharsis for myself in the creative process. Which although not planned resulted in some parts as a catharsis for audience.

In recent years my work took on a more biographical element. I wrote and performed a solo show relating to my experiences with mental health and I followed this by writing a play that dealt with trauma and some elements of this were taken from my own experiences.

Although unaware at the time of conception, it could be claimed in both cases I was following a process of experimental disclosure.

Joanne Frattaroli who specialises in psychology and social behaviour has conducted research in the area of writing about trauma (also known as experimental disclosure) and the impacts of expressive writing on student’s exam results and performance.

Although not suitable for all, it is now well documented that writing about meaningful topics, important life events, trauma and feelings can have positive impacts for certain practitioners.

This writing approach could be directly linked back to Freuds ground breaking work in using talking as therapy. At many levels disclosure around such things is considered normal and healthy. In her paper experimental disclosure and Its Moderators she tells us, “Freudian explanation of the benefits of catharsis suggest that the inhibition of thoughts and feelings regarding an upsetting event is harmful and that, consequently, expression of those inhibited thoughts and feelings can reduce stress and improve a host of physical and psychological health outcomes.”

She goes on to tell us both writing and talking about deeper felt experiences, “helped because it allowed people to gain insight into what had happened to them,” and that it has a self-regulating effect in that we integrate and make sense of these events in relation to our sense of self and that “experimental disclosure can be thought of as a mastery of experience. It allows people to observe themselves expressing and controlling their emotions.”

In my own experiences of disclosing deeply personal stories and detail regarding my experience in mental health I have to say it has so far been nothing but positive. When I wrote a stand up comedy show about this I was approached many times by people with shared experiences.

In fact when I was earlier struggling with these issues I would regularly ask is there nowhere I can go or a group I can join that has people in it with the same experiences as me. At that time 15 years ago there was nothing. I now teach creative writing to people with shared experiences at a local facility called recovery collage who use art and education to benefit recovery from acute mental health issues.

Just recently at a comedy show I was booked to play I was approached by a magician who was performing before me. He said, “I’ve seen your work online, please let me hug you.” He then did and told me straight off 6 years ago he had tried to kill himself and it was important we talk about these things.

I don’t find encounters like that intrusive. I think shared experience documentation or chat can have deeply cathartic impacts for all involved.

EXPRESIVE WRITING AND EXAM SUCCESS.

Frattaroli has also gone on to conduct research on the effects of expressive writing on students attempting Graduate Entrance exams in America. It was found again to have positive impacts on reducing anxiety, depressive tendencies and have positive impacts on overall exam performance along with a more satisfied perspective on exam results. Again, for similar reasons as previously mentioned.

SHARED EXPERIENCE.

Besides catharsis in my own process I also want to talk about possible cathartic effects on an audience. Shared experience is said to have cathartic effects on groups and individuals. And sharing meaningful or even traumatic experiences is again considered a perfectly normal thing to do.

I’ve used it biographically and in my latest project I intend to look in-depth both at current pertinent social topics and issues and of course the current global pandemic.

It’s fair to say our current global situation is both traumatic and is perhaps going to alter society in ways we can’t yet fully perceive. I want to hold power to account yet at the same time I am sympathetic to peoples confusion, or differing viewpoints as I feel most are often under and avalanche of misguided or deliberately misleading information and criticism can be aimed at both left and right in regards to their political representation of ordinary peoples needs.

In his paper Social sharing of emotion, post-traumatic growth, and emotional climate: Follow-up of Spanish citizen's response to the collective trauma of March 11th terrorist attacks in Madrid. Bernard Rime concluded in regards to the sharing of experiences by the community affected that, “This study contributed to shed light on the paradox of the verbal expression of emotions. It confirmed that talking about a vicarious traumatic event incurs the cost of maintaining negative emotional arousal, even though it opens at the same time on a good deal of positive effects such as social integration, reinforcement of social support and positive affect, reinforcement of positive social beliefs, and the creation of a more cohesive social climate.”

So it would appear both Brecht’s notions of galvanising action (via expressive anger) and Aristotle’s theory of cleansing and clarity have both been met in Rime’s study. And I would hope demonstrates they can sit naturally together.

MY WORK.

Within my own practice I’ve come upon an idea that although much of the writing for my new project comes from a place of galvanising anger or a need to react, to demonstrate or to metaphorically galvanise to action through character and writing. (The work does cover) populism, social injustice, culture of outrage, political division and the pandemic. I still want to induce feelings of catharsis for the audience.

One way I hope to induce this is by including real life responses to a unifying question. I have tried to devise a question that is unifying, nonpartisan and examines a more human and less political diatribe or focus. I devoted a lot of thought as to what are people experiencing right now? What are they trying to do? And I felt a common answer was to survive or cope with an unprecedented situation. So that was the question I put to around 25 people on social media. But I sent out two different versions of it in an (admittedly non scientific) form similar to Frattaroli’s work with students. That is I presented a wider perspective for some and a narrower one for others.

2 QUESTIONS.

I’m going to include a document with this presentation where you read peoples answers in full. I feel if any real scientific data was to be gathered from this experiment then I would need at least over 100 participants which is not practical in current circumstances.

But, to get a quick look at what came back I put positive thoughts in italics, negative thoughts in bold and expressions of anger in red.

Possibly due to the nature of the question there was very few expressions of anger.

It was about an even split of negative and positive expression. The most common way this manifested was people fluctuating regularly between negative and positive thoughts.

In doing this exercise and research I am now definitely going to include interviews with the public in the final Towers show. Probably at the climax as the research has revealed the benefits of sharing experience.

I’m going to have to experiment with a variety of questions for this to have the most potent of impacts.

COMEDIAN. 24 HOURS IN ISOLATION.

While completing this paper I was asked to contribute two pieces of writing for an online project around isolation called 24 Hours in Isolation. One from the perspective of a nurse and one from the perspective of a comedian.

For the piece by the comedian I focused on trying to generate something cathartic and arrived at a metaphorical piece that revolves around shared experience. I’ve included it here in these notes. I think it was successful in it’s aims,

 COMEDIAN.

I worry that people think comedy comes from a place of cruelty. I don’t think it does. I think it celebrates life more than anything. I actually think it’s all about empathy.

I’ll tell you a story. I once had this dreadful mishap where I fell into a ditch at the side of a path. Actually, it was more of an open sewer. I was covered in pungent stinking mud and god knows what else. Totally covered in shit.

So, I began the long walk home and after a bit a man on the other side of the street saw me, and he started to laugh. I thought, how dare you! I’m covered in shit and it hurts. This has really upset me. It actually hurts.

Then I walked a bit further and another man saw me and he laughed too. This time I was less angry, but I still thought fuck you! What is wrong with people. They’re laughing at my pain.

Eventually I passed a person and they said, I hope you’re alright mate. But you’ve got to admit that is funny. I’m assuming you fell into the ditch in the park? We’ve all been there.

And that’s when I got it! These people weren’t laughing maliciously. Everybody I passed could see I was going to be alright. And because I was going to be alright, it was alright to laugh. You know why? Because they’d all fallen into the same ditch.
Then the weirdest thing happened. The mud and the shit began to absorb into me. Into my skin, my bones, right into my very being. It became part of me. They were right. I was going to be fine. Fine with added shit.

Right now, our entire planet is climbing slowly out of a ditch. And it will be alright to laugh again. Because we know we’re going to be alright. But not only that…there’s a hell a lot of empathy that’s building up out there. Empathy… with added shit.

 BIOGRAPHY IN TOWERS.

In the show Towers I am also planning to use elements of biography, real stories from my own life experiences. These will be positioned just after a piece of stand up comedy. To act as a direct explanation of say…why I would write such angry routines about the establishment. Again here I’m focusing on shared experience.

The one thing around catharsis I haven’t looked into fully here is the idea that laughter and comedy are also sources of catharsis. I’ll attempt here to demonstrate how I would employ this in my new show.

1. WE have the discourse from the survivor of Grenfell Tower. This is a highly emotive piece. It should raise feeling of anger in the audience.
2. As I have said I’m using some Brechtian methods in delivering the show. Next we see a projection on screen of the words “There isn’t a force in the world that can stand up to being laughed at.” Michael Moore.
3. Next the audience see this projection relating to the current governments handling of the pandemic.

(Explanation of image and joke)



I think piecing elements together like these employs both Brechtian and more traditional notions on how to induce catharsis in an audience via humour and agitprop theatre.

CONCLUSIONS.

There are many ways to induce and represent catharsis within writing, research and performative contexts. I would hope I’ve demonstrated that when you consider the idea of it and position notions of it towards your own process then avenues can be found to achieve it.

I would hope I’ve also demonstrated that moving on from Brecht’s initial ideas around galvanising social commentary; that catharsis can still sit beside such intentions and in fact the galvanising effect may even be enhanced.

I don’t feel catharsis is a let off for holding power to account. Instead I feel it has positive impacts on the experiencer that allow for more difficult situations to be processed and then reacted against effectively.

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Performance research answers in full

2 QUESTIONS AROUND COPING AND PROCESSING THE CURRENT SITUATION.

HOLLY

 QUESTION 1…**How have I been doing for the past 24 hours?**

**ES**

**I have been stressed working from home**, **days never seem to end, everything blurs into one. Feels like I'm back up and back at work, since everything is happening in the same space.** *I am enjoying the outside more than I used to, I appreciate warmer weather than I used to as well which is odd when I usually hate heat*

**SD**

Over the last 24 hours I've felt frustration and anger at what's happening in the world. *I've laughed loud and fully at things that have really tickled me,* **I've cried listening to podcasts, old songs and thinking about those I've lost, recently and in the past**. *I've been sober, eaten well, slept well and looked after my physical needs*. **I've been anxious, happy, sad, angry and really frustrated** *but I'm here, I'm out of bed and dressed, and the sun is out.*

VM

***Over the past 24 hours, I've been doing pretty much as for the previous 24 hours and the 24 before that. Indeed, I've been doing much the same every day since 23rd March which was 1564 hours ago. So the last 24 hours I've been doing very much as I had the 1560 before that. So bored, I'm now counting the actual number of hours since I last wasn't bored is how I've doing in the last 24 hours.***

*The last 24 hours have been pretty good for me. I felt productive in the morning, getting some work done to keep the stress level down. It was a sunny day and I feel the good weather really lifts the spirits considering circumstances*. **The most frustrating thing has been battling between wanting to be in the sun and needing to work for uni*.*** *I took a socially distant walk with my boyfriend for the first time which was great and really peaceful* **until my sandals began to hurt my feet, that put a bit of a downer on things***. I’ve been enjoying having the time and motivation to sit down and read for a bit also. I’ve just started a new book so that filled in some time.*

**The downside is that I miss being able to actually go places. I don’t drive so I’m stuck in my little town**, *which is a lovely place* **but the great weather is making me long to adventure out places which I can’t do under lockdown restrictions**. **Even if I could drive, it would be a lonely affair because I wouldn’t be able to hang out with my friends or family the way I used to**. *So overall, I’m feeling good, I’m feeling peaceful,* **but I’m not satisfied with how everyday life is going right now.**

MANDY.

*I’ve had a fairly good 24 hours! I’ve been shielding and haven’t been beyond the garden for about 8 weeks, but had a medical appointment today so was able to get out for a walk to the surgery. Made sure I tagged a good long walk on afterwards, just to test my eyesight. Was great to get out, stretch my legs and clear my head. I try not to get overwhelmed by current events,* but ended up reading and watching the news which just made my blood boil. *Made myself busy around the house, then did an online boxing class that helped lift my spirits. I ended the day as always with a phone call to my Mum. We have pretty much the same conversation every evening but I find it reassuring to know she’s doing alright on her own.*

CJ

**Sadly I have been very stressed over the last 24 hours down to an ongoing 2.5 year long battle with my neighbours that involves the police, victim support and your home's Newcastle. Things they have done includes blasting the same Elvis Presley song for hours on end. Hurling abuse at me through the floor and partying from about 11pm onwards often till 9 or ten in the morning**. *To distract myself I go for long walks - ten miles yesterday or watch you tube videos as I am conducting research on the Church of Scientology for a project I am looking to bring to performance provided I don't get sued off them lol*. **I find I walk around my flat in circles muttering to myself too. I have also been preparing to start the process of moving so I do not go completely insane. I also have developed a weird need to wash dishes over and over again to fill time.**

BILL.

Hi John, Happy to help if I can. How have I been doing over the last 24 hours? ***Pretty much the same as I've been doing over the last 8 weeks or so. Up and down.*** *Had some praise for work I've been doing which always lifts me****.* However also stressed by the work demands being placed on me.** *Had a lovely walk yesterday afternoon and lovely lunch today* **but have also been reacting angrily to additional demands when I've not had a break for weeks**. *Up with thought that I might be able to share some real time with family this weekend*. **Down at the thought that social distancing preventing me hugging our daughter, our grandson and my Mum might go on indefinitely.**  Hope that's enough - probably far too much

BOB.

No worries happy to help *brother All good up here Bills in the royal off his feet with cellulitis of the knee and not eating but he’s getting better albeit slowly hope you and the wife are well*

**QUESTION 2…Hi mate, i'm working on a presentation for Uni and am looking at ideas of how to generate catharsis in an audience. A unifying question or viewpoint could be one thing. So with that in mind I've been thinking about how folk are coping with what's going on as one thing all are trying to do is get through the day and process this as best we can. Could you possibly give me a quick answer (short paragraph) that answers "How are you coping/processing this" No rush not needed until at least the weekend. I hope all is well with you and yours. X**

**RC**

*Coping: Maintaining a routine that involves good sleep, nutrition, work projects and exercise most days* *then getting pissed and playing darts on Fridays and dossing about doing fuck all on Saturdays. Something I look forward to.*

*Processing: I chose early on to view this as a positive opportunity which is I suppose a privilege I was afforded by getting stuck in Australia where financial assistance was rapid and spread of the virus contained effectively. Treating it as paid down time to work on other things and spend time with family.*

**BEN.**

*If we are trying to frame this experience positively, the one thing you could say is that it’s liberating to realise how limited your control of things actually is.* **I was supposed to be getting married this year**. **Whether that will happen- and if it will happen on our terms- is very much up in the air**. *So I’ve tried to be at peace with the things I can effect immediately*. **It’s taken a little while to adjust- arguably in the first 6-8 weeks I was still in a state of shock.** **I’m someone who suffers from mental ill health who finds really regular social contact therapeutic.** **So that’s been really hard.** *But I’ve found regular, meaningful contact with people really important. I live with my partner so I’m not totally isolated. Getting my head into books or my own projects have been a highlight* **but the malaise of this situation means that isn’t totally consistent.** *I’ve been practicing yoga regularly- but not everyday- for nearly 3 years- and the days when I practise are better days. There’s an app called hour bloks which helps you organize your time which is very useful. I’m really lucky- I live with my partner and I can work from home. I’m trying to view this time as a blessing in which I can focus my attention on my creativity and self-improvement, but trying not to be too hard on myself if I’m not pulling up trees when doing that.*

HEATHER.

**At first I was terrified . So scared that I stopped working on 13 th March a week before any lockdown . I ve basically self isolated since . Then we had Gemma and the bairns come stay with us as Gemma was so scared of Andy bringing the virus back to her house *.*** *So we had them for 8 weeks which kept us really busy* . **Sad for them though as Andy missed Blair starting to crawl and pull himself up and had no physical contact with them all that time .** *During that time we started to give the garden a makeover and it looks lovely but me and mick could kill a cactus so we ll see* . **Now the silence is deafening with the kids away . Not looking forward to going back to work as I m still scared though not as much as I was .**

**That's about it been up and down throughout** *but have stuck to the rules .*

Love to you and Lesley take care xxxx

RJA

No prob - *‘I find it best to cope by making small achievable goals every day that form a relaxed routine, such as good meals and cleaning around the house. I also always make time for self care and going for a walk or watching a film with my housemate but I also find myself needing time in my room alone to just watch tv or listen to music* **but find myself staring into space and imagining the future.** *I find writing cathartic and try to stick to writing short and upbeat poems*. *It’s important for me to only access news media when I choose to so that I am updated but not overwhelmed by the situation* **as I am already very anxious about others when on the street or in a supermarket and find** *I cope with this by walking quickly and going out later to avoid crowds.* *I think I cope best by pretending the virus doesn’t exist and that I must isolate to keep myself safe for some reason that changes depending on my mood’*

MARY

*After 10 weeks in lockdown the days seem to go past very quickly* **and I seem to have done nothing***. It seems smooth and swift like slipping through a long greased tunnel* **going who knows where**. **I’m starting to feel scared of going out. The outside world is a scary place** *so I cope by staying indoors watching easy on the mind US crime shows and napping ever afternoon .* **I seek refuge in isolation as the outside holds a terrible, invisible threat.**

FISA

**As an English teacher working with adults and young people with learning difficulties/disabilities (LDD), teaching remotely is incredibly difficult.**

**Part of my job is to observe reactions and responses in order to know if I should continue with an activity or change tact. This cannot be achieved remotely. The very essence of my job is to engage with my students and I've really struggled not being able to plan my lessons and teach them face to face.**

*I've tried to deal with the feelings of inadequacy by posting gabba videos! I set up a Facebook group called 'GOOD MORNING GABBA' which aims to get people dancing to gabba, in the morning in their Pjs to create a sense of community. Waking up early to plan the videos and seeing other people do the same has provided my head some much needed respite.*

**deleted a huge chunk of it as it was rather telling! Currently off work sick pending a formal grievance and thought I'd incriminate myself! Hence, you got the 'tidy' version!** *I'm ok thank you.* **It's a daily struggle** *but one with an end sight*. I hope you're ok too. X

PETER.

*I'm getting through this just by keeping my life as 'normal' as possible.* *Work has carried on and as I do 4 on 4 off, working one on one with a disabled chap, this hasn't really altered much due to the current situation. Beyond that, I've not really worried too much about it for myself,* **but instead been concerned for my folks and a few friends who are vulnerable**. *I think just concentrating on the day to day has helped*, whereas if I think too much about just how badly the government has mishandled this, I just see red.

ELIZA.

*I think the main things that are keeping me going is the creation of our 'bubble'. My partner and my son, our cats, our routine. We have limited the contact with the outside world, almost by accident. We slowly filtered the world out. We have unconsciouly over time removed all unnessesary forms of communication and exposure to things that don't serve us or provide some sort of positivity...or practicality. We get out news from Twitter. We don't watch the television. We smile at people when we are out and try to resist judgement as we know that most people are simply trying their best. We talk, a lot. We made an agreement early on that if one of us wasn't feeling great or struggling, we would down tools and do what we needed to get through it. The day the week, the hour. Gently. We call each other out when we see each other slipping into negative patterns. The bubble is a safe and lovely place to be, I am actually hoping that some elements of this do not change.*

**I do really miss hugs from my family though, especially my dad..**

JOHN

**Some morning I feel a little queasy in the stomach .I feel like something is wrong in my world . Something not quite right . It's something I cant put my finger on but it makes me feel a little anxious and on edge .** *I know I'm looking after me and my partner* . **But I see neighbours who have had parties . Lots of visitors and I want them** to get bloody ill, because why should I care and try not spread this, when nothing has changed for them . **They dont think it will effect them . Maybe not as they are in the 20-30 zone the least at risk, but they are probably the spreaders** . I get annoyed at the rich and famous more than normal with their attitudes of it doesnt really matter about them "bending" the rules as they have checked the wording and technically they are ok in there actions . I'm annoyed at their hypocrisy. Shameless self serving attitudes. I see billionaires forloughing staff at 80 % and wanting handouts for more yet they have not paid taxes for years and want to line the bastards up for the cheek of it . **I miss my friends . Family and the ability to do what I want when I want** . *I've realised I dont need a 100 pound top or trainers and can easily not treat myself for years as i have enough stuff already . I'm looking at retiring earlier than i planned* **as life seems a little more fragile and why work longer than you need just for that self indulgence.** *And I'm drinking more. Walking more. Cooking more . Loving the extra time with the dog and my partner and I'm saving money more* . **I'm hating going out to shops and im seeing little Hitler's who are middle managers who seem to have waited all there life for something like this to boss the public about .get in line . Stand in a queue . Separate please .** **Walk the route we tell you and if your not happy fuck off they do say they are doing it In the interest of safety of course** . *Not that it's the true them . I see more people for what they are the good and the bad .*

FRANK.

***Depends on the day. I have bipolar (I know you know that) so I have ups n Downs, lockdowns no different***. *Sometimes it feels like a relief, like I finally have time to do the things I feel I haven't had time to do*. **Other times it makes me ponder my dubious life choices, i.e I live on my own, no partner e.c.t.** *Alot of us mentally ill have been imaigining something horrible like this coming along, while normal optimists have been walking around with a might never happen attitude, so in a way it's almost like the catastrophising has paid off*. *So overall a mixed bag, as human we are highly adaptable it's why we have outlived so many other species, we will live, n maybe even prosper, there are many positives from this,* **maybe not enough to outweigh the negatives,** *but enough to not be a total wreck from it.*

BEN D.

*If you mean process the general situation psychologically, I’d say: “Routine, virtual collaborations/conversation and time to think, especially in the fresh air outside. The main thing for me has been trying to focus on short term things with realisable end points during the crisis, allowing me to retain a feeling of control over my own destiny.* **Whilst considering the frightening long term prospects for my work (which is seriously under threat)** *and family connections in stages, so as not to be overwhelmed. The other thing has been laughter. Hence the podcast. Finding a way to process the madness* *of the politics and social context by seeing the comedic ridiculousness in it*. *As others laugh with you at the same crazy nonsense it starts to normalise the sense of madness it stirs*, and tempers the deep anger I feel at the people in charge of our country”

BELINDA.

Aw shit, this went out of my mind with all the excitement of seeing mum this weekend. So...

*I don't usually spend all my time in my own place, about half of my time used to be spent at home the rest split between mum and dads and my OH, Tom, why lives on a farm in the borders but I was home alone from 2 weeks before lockdown so nearly 12 weeks now.* **Its fair to say that the novelty wore off very quickly i got bored of cleaning stuff that I usually ignore but I'm sure the fridge appreciated it's, what became weekly clean. Between you and I!!! I hit the bottle a few times for the first time in years! That's NOT good, but I knuckled down and quit that coz it's detrimental to my fragile state of mind. Boredom set in as did depression which I also had kicked into touch a couple of years ago and was off medication.**

*TV became my God. I'm not sure if my bum was sofa shaped or my sofa was bum shaped but I spent most of my time sitting on it*, ***only getting up to make food*** *or take the dog out.*

*A couple of weeks ago, I have in and called the GP. I'm medicated again, definitely the right thing to do coz I've leveled out and am mostly calm and functioning.*

*Even before I knew I'd be ago able to see mum and dad and Tom, I'd kinda got used to this strange world i/we find ourselves in.*

**I have lost the plot with hash smoking neighbours who in turn reported my to the housing association. Stupid idiots shout themselves in the foot with that one and I get a call from the welfare support team, recited £50 emergency grant for the lekky meter and a massive food bank delivery.** *With hindsight I probably shouldn't have lost it with her, out of character but these times have changed things and people.*

*I could go on but you said short paragraph and my concept of short/long, wee/big and time are altered possibly beyond repair!* 😉