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# NAMING THE UNNAMED: DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY IN CHARLY COX'S INSTAPOEMS

Irene Martínez Misa

Universidade da Coruña

[irene.martinez.misa@udc.es](mailto:irene.martinez.misa@udc.es)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4863-9164>

**T**his article examines Charly Cox's Instapoems "funny" and "a voice I know," in which she explores the themes of depression and anxiety, respectively. Even though mental health is becoming more present in public discourse, there is still much stigma associated with mental disorders. Drawing on her lived experiences, the Instapoet shares her unfiltered journey dealing with both conditions, her internal conflicts and the impact that depression and anxiety have on her daily life. The analysis considers how Cox's raw and relatable style empowers readers by validating their own challenges and creating a sense of solidarity among those facing similar mental health issues. Furthermore, her work transcends personal expression, as it fulfills a social function: it confronts the stigma surrounding mental health and encourages open conversations about these often-taboo topics.

**Keywords:** depression; anxiety; Instapoetry; mental health; Charly Cox.

## 1. Introduction

The World Health Organization defines health as the “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (“Constitution”). This implies that, for an individual to be fully healthy, there needs to be a balance between the three dimensions. While physical health has historically been the one that has received the most attention, mental and social well-being have often been overlooked. Even though the three aspects are equally important, for the purposes of my article, I will focus on the second one: mental health. According to the World Health Organisation:

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. (“Mental Health” 2022)

It is worth mentioning that a person’s psychological state is not only influenced by biological and psychological factors, such as their genetics, personal beliefs and traumas, but also by external elements like cultural norms and the socioeconomic background. Despite the fact that mental health has a great importance and impact on our lives, Alvina G. Lai and Wai H. Chang claim that it “remains a largely neglected global issue” (2022). Nonetheless, in recent years, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, its significance has become evident. The virus both triggered and amplified mental health problems due to multiple stressful situations, such as being afraid of infection, losing a loved one, or losing one’s job, among others (United Nations 2020, 6-7). Since then, the need for psychological support is more urgent than ever.

Mental health conditions have long been a part of human history (Farreras 2019, 245), even if they were not always acknowledged or accurately diagnosed. Evidence of such conditions and treatments goes back to 6500 BC (245) and, depending on the time period, they have been attributed to supernatural,

psychological, and physical causes (245).<sup>1</sup> Thus, humans have been struggling with mental health disorders for millennia. However, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that psychology emerged as a scientific discipline (Jenkins 2021, 154) dedicated to researching, understanding, and treating mental health conditions. Along this line, as Duane Schultz (2013) observes, “[t]he intellectual precursors of psychology are ancient [...], but the modern tradition and form of psychology are little more than 100 years old” (1). Nevertheless, even with this progress, a century of scientific inquiry has not been sufficient to dispel the misconceptions surrounding mental health; consequently, it remains a highly stigmatized topic, even for those struggling with psychological disorders.

Mental health is one of the pillars of public health. In recent years, studies have demonstrated that the rates of mental health conditions are increasing (“Is Mental Health...?” 2023; “Mental Health Pressures” 2024; Wu et al. 2023); hence, it is safe to say that there exists a global public health crisis. Regardless of the seriousness of the problem, people struggling with a mental health condition are targets of social stigma (Zamorano et al. 2023, 23), that is, “the general population, based on their shared beliefs about the illness and the negative emotions it generates, acts in a discriminatory manner towards people with psychological problems” (23). Therefore, individuals grappling with a mental health illness may find themselves in a situation where they do not fully acknowledge their condition or deem it difficult to articulate their experiences to their loved ones.

Nonetheless, while the stigma persists, there is a growing awareness regarding mental health. Fredrika Thelandersson (2023) claims that from 2015 onward, discourses about mental health in

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<sup>1</sup> “Supernatural theories attribute mental illness to possession by evil or demonic spirits, displeasure of gods, eclipses, planetary gravitation, curses, and sin. Somatogenic theories identify disturbances in physical functioning resulting from either illness, genetic inheritance, or brain damage or imbalance. Psychogenic theories focus on traumatic or stressful experiences, maladaptive learned associations and cognitions, or distorted perceptions” (Farreras 2019, 245).

public spaces have become more common (80). They have taken a more positive approach and gained prominence in public discourse as mass media and celebrities are increasingly becoming more outspoken about psychological conditions (Hoffner and Bond 2022, 1; Stentiford et al. 2023, 1069). Likewise, in terms of literature, Instapoets are also taking part in the destigmatization of mental health disorders. By describing their inward perspectives and challenges in their work, the authors comfort their readers, who might feel understood and encouraged to seek help, as all of them might share similar experiences. Indeed, a plethora of Instapoets are racialized, part of the LGBTQ+ community—or allies—, and young women (Mackay and Mackay 2023). Thus, by transforming their own experiences into poetry through accessible language, Instapoets not only appeal to diverse and transnational audiences, but they also give voice to historically marginalized communities (Knox et al. 2023, 4). With this in mind, the aim of this article is to analyze two Instapoems that focus on depression and anxiety through the work of the British Instapoet and mental-health activist Charly Cox. By resorting to various stylistic devices, Cox describes her own experiences coping with both conditions, gives voice to those who are not able to express how they feel in their struggles with their mental health, and sheds light on the illnesses for ordinary people who might have never struggled with these disorders.

## 2. Is depression “funny”?

Depression, also known as depressive disorder, is “a common mental disorder [that] involves a depressed mood or loss of pleasure or interest in activities for long periods of time” (“Depressive Disorder” 2023). Even though virtually anyone can be affected by depression regardless of their age, ethnicity, and gender (“Depression” 2024), there are certain factors that make people more prone to develop the condition. Accordingly, women are more likely to be diagnosed with depression than men (“Depression”

2024)<sup>2</sup> regardless of their “[ethnicity], culture, diet, education and numerous other potentially confounding social and economic factors” (Albert 2015, 219). It is estimated that 5 percent of the adult global population suffers from depression,<sup>3</sup> and, of this total, 6 percent are women and 4 percent men (“Depressive Disorder” 2023), which represents a significant disparity. A similar situation happens with members of the LGBTQ+ community, as they are twice as likely as cisgender, heterosexual people to develop depression (Argyriou et al. 2021, 925; “Depression” 2024). As for the ethnicity of those who struggle with a depressive disorder, while ethnic minorities tend to show lower rates of the condition (Budhwani et al. 2015, 34), they report a higher chronicity (Bailey et al. 2019, 604). Ergo, even though virtually anyone can develop depression, certain risk factors make some individuals more susceptible than others.

A survey carried out by Maddy Reinert et al. has shown that, in 2023, “23% of adults experienced a mental illness [...], equivalent to nearly 60 million Americans” (2024, 8), and more than 5 percent of adults and 13 percent of youth (between the ages 12 and 17) reported having considered suicide (8). These alarming figures reveal the magnitude of this problem and the prevailing need for intervention. Nevertheless, mental conditions do not affect everyone equally; factors such as gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation play a major role. In terms of gender, women consistently report lower levels of mental wellbeing compared to men regardless of their socioeconomic background, age, and disability (Churchill et al. 2020; European Institute for Gender Equality 2021; Riecher-Rössler 2017). Discrimination also has a detrimental impact on the mental health of racialized individuals (Williams 2018, 468) and, in the case of Blacks and Latinxs, when they suffer from a mental condition, their symptoms usually last longer and tend to be tougher and more incapacitating compared to other ethnicities (466). Similarly,

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<sup>2</sup> “Because men may be less likely to recognize, talk about and seek help for their feelings or emotional problems, they are at greater risk of their depression symptoms being undiagnosed or undertreated” (“Depression”).

<sup>3</sup> It is very likely that the percentage is higher, since it only counts those who have been diagnosed.

members of the LGBTQ+ community are twice as likely to develop a mental health condition compared to cisgender, heterosexual individuals (American Psychiatric Association, “Mental Health” 2017, 2; Semlyen et al. 2016). What is more, racialized transgender people face a significantly higher risk of suicide than their white counterparts (American Psychiatric Association, “Mental Health” 2017, 2). Thus, while no one is immune to developing a mental health disorder, certain factors significantly increase the likelihood for some groups.

Despite the revealing statistics of people struggling with mental health conditions, their normalization, and growing awareness, there are still cases of people who are oblivious to their own mental state. In “funny,” Charly Cox explores this matter, that is, how someone feels when they do not know what is happening to them and cannot pinpoint the problem. The Instapoem begins as follows:

I feel *funny*.  
 Not like when - the light bounces from the sky  
 And you feel heat stroke from the sunny  
 Days of closing in on jokes  
 That girl is intelligently witty she’s so *funny*  
 I feel done in  
*Funny* ‘ha ha’s speak no fun  
 In the language I have learnt  
*Funny* feelings aren’t the taste of a jovial summer’s eve descending  
 burn (Cox 2018, 1-9, italics in the original)

To begin with, the italicization of “funny” stands out. This font choice indicates that there is something different, that the term conveys a distinct meaning from what one might expect, an idea that is reinforced by the descriptions present in the excerpt. The second verse introduces a simile that helps describe the Instapoem’s central word: “Not like when - the light bounces from the sky / And you feel heat stroke from the sunny / Days of closing in on jokes” (Cox 2018, 2-4). The imagery evokes positive connotations (humor, sunlight, warmth); however, by preceding the simile with “Not,” Cox presents a contrast that emphasizes the negative meaning of funny. While the reader may not know yet what funny refers to, it is evident that something is amiss and it should not feel this way. The

next verse, “That girl is intelligently witty she’s so *funny*” (2018, 5), represents a more typical example of humor, where the term is linked to cleverness and amusement. This is the socially recognized version of funny, which contrasts with the speaker’s unsettling feelings. Cox does not identify herself with this form of humor, an idea that is further emphasized with the following verse: “I feel done in” (2018, 6). The juxtaposition of the two notions serves as a sharp contrast: the speaker feels exhausted, both physically and emotionally.

As the piece progresses, Cox-the speaker claims that “*Funny* ‘ha ha’s speak no fun / In the language I have learnt” (2018, 7-8). The first verse suggests that the lyrical voice no longer finds common forms of amusement enjoyable. The irony lies in the fact that the word *funny* is usually associated with happiness; still, in this case, the speaker transmits a darker and more negative connotation. Moreover, it should be noted that it has not always been the case for her: Cox implies that her understanding of *funny* has been redefined over time, gradually taking on a somberer tone. This feeling is defined through a metaphor. The Instapoet presents again a beautiful image that contains positive connotations (calmness, contentment, and peace) and emphasizes the idea that her emotions are the opposite of what they are expected to be.

Considering that the lyrical voice describes how she feels, what “funny” feelings are (not), and the fact that she has not mentioned anything physical, it can be deduced that she is grappling with a mental health condition. Indeed, the following verses underscore this idea:

A *funny* feeling is a feeling of a leaf I’m scared to turn  
 A *funny* feeling is me seething at a friend  
 Who didn’t mean to hurt  
 Me, I’m a bit *funny* that way (2018, 10-13, italics in the original)

The anaphoric use of “A *funny* feeling” emphasizes the speaker’s struggle to articulate her experience, as she is unable to fully express it. In the first verse, the alliteration of the /f/ sound evokes a sense of calm, contrasting with the harsh reality she is depicting. This reality is presented through the metaphor of turning the leaf, which implies a change. The leaf might be a symbol of a new chapter in

her life; nonetheless, she seems scared and anxious about what the future holds. The apprehension might be an allusion to an anxiety disorder, given that people who grapple with anxiety “may experience excessive fear or worry about a specific situation” (“Anxiety Disorders” 2023). While the metaphor holds a potentially positive connotation, Cox’s anxiety transforms it into something unsettling.

The next explanation of the funny feeling offers a juxtaposition of internal emotions and external realities. Whereas in the previous verse it seemed that the speaker might suffer from an anxiety disorder, the verses “A *funny* feeling is me seething at a friend / Who didn’t mean to hurt” (Cox 2018, 11-12) depict an irate reaction that aligns more closely with symptoms of a depressive disorder. This emotion reflects the frequent overlap between anxiety and depression, since it is common for people dealing with depression to have symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, and vice versa, given that they are highly comorbid (Zbozinek et al. 2012, 1065-66).<sup>4</sup> As Nienke J. de Bles et al. observe, individuals with depression often show increased irritability and hostility (2019, 259) and are more likely to “view ambiguous social interactions as negative” (Steger and Kashdan 2009, 289). In this instance, although the Instapoet understands her friend did not intend to cause harm, her mental condition still influences her emotional response.

As can be read in the following verses, the lyrical subject seems desperate to define the term “funny” and explain what she is feeling:

*Funny* is me cramping in the lungs and wincing  
 I’m okay  
*Funny* is the last thought before I sleep  
*Funny* is the impression of me that you’ll keep  
*Funny* is the unexplained, self-contained  
 Anxiety of breathing (Cox 2018, 15-20, italics in the original)

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<sup>4</sup> “Comorbidity can be defined as the presence of more than one disorder in a person in a specific period of time” (Essau 2020, 291).



The anaphora “*funny* is” reinforces the speaker’s fixation on her emotional state, followed by a series of illustrative examples. The first verse of the above-quoted excerpt presents a vivid visual and tactile image, further demonstrating that mental health conditions, particularly depression, can manifest physically in the individual (Greden 2003; Trivedi 2004). The reference to the lungs is especially notable, for it may suggest that something as natural as breathing becomes laborious and painful, which, in turn, evokes a sense of suffocation. After such a description, the understatement “I’m okay” (Cox 2018, 16) proves extremely ironic, because it is clear to the reader that the speaker is suffering. It is common for individuals struggling with mental health conditions to minimize or avoid disclosing their true feelings. This behavior, known as self-concealment, is defined as “a tendency to actively conceal one’s negative personal information” (Nam et al. 2013, 38). In this case, it is evident that the speaker does not want to share her struggles, even though she is in pain.

The verses “*Funny* is the last thought before I sleep / *Funny* is the impression of me that you’ll keep” (Cox 2018, 17-18) lay bare the mental exhaustion caused by a psychological condition. These verses imply that the Instapoet is fighting intrusive thoughts and rumination, respectively. Intrusive thoughts are defined as “repetitive, persistent, and unwanted thoughts [...] that often produce considerable distress and anxiety” (Seli et al. 2017, 392). Considering the negative connotation Cox assigns to the word “funny” throughout the Instapoem, it is obvious that whatever occupies her mind before falling asleep is not favorable. In this vein, Richard M. Wenzlaff avers that depressed people are burdened with intrusive thoughts that lead to self-sabotage (2002, 146). Also here, while sleep is usually associated with peace and rest, it is disrupted by the unwanted thoughts that surface when the speaker is most vulnerable: at night when there is no distraction to help her avoid such thoughts.

Likewise, rumination refers to “repetitive, prolonged, and recurrent negative thinking about one’s self, feelings, personal concerns and upsetting experiences” (Watkins and Roberts 2020, 1). Furthermore, as Susan Nolen-Hoeksema et al. note, “rumination exacerbates and prolongs distress, particularly depression, through

several mechanisms [...] [It] enhances the effects of depressed mood on thinking, making it more likely that people will use the negative thoughts and memories activated by their depressed mood to understand their current circumstances” (2008, 401). Thus, the speaker’s preoccupation with how others perceive her, coupled with the repeated use of “funny,” suggests that she believes others may hold an inaccurate or incomplete impression of her.

The last two verses of the above-quoted excerpt, “*Funny* is the unexplained, self-contained / Anxiety of breathing” (Cox 2018, 19-20), include another reference to the physical symptoms that might accompany mental health conditions. Breathing is a natural function that living beings regulate unconsciously (Williams and Carel 2018, 147); however, the Instapoet feels anxious when breathing. Both depression and anxiety are known to cause physiological symptoms, including breathlessness (2018, 150). The description of her anxiety as “self-contained” implies that it originates within her and is not triggered by external factors. As it is “unexplained,” the anxiety has seemingly become an integral part of her life experience.

After several attempts to define what “funny” is, Cox finally reaches a conclusion:

Funny no longer feels right  
Because there is no comedy, no show in sight  
This is real life  
And the word is depression (2018, 61-64)

This passage can be viewed as an anagnorisis, as the speaker goes through a moment of revelation. After trying to explain what she is feeling, the Instapoet finally recognizes that she is struggling with depression. The font change is significant: “funny” is not italicized, suggesting that it should not be a feeling difficult to define, but rather something comical. This is a moment of honesty and self-awareness. Cox is no longer masking her suffering behind a supposedly humorous word, trying to conceal it. Indeed, the sentence “there is no comedy, no show in sight” (2018, 62) becomes a metaphorical description of her state of anhedonia; this feeling is defined as “the reduction of pleasure in current activities or events [...] or future activities or events” (Guessoum et al. 2020, 4), and it

is usually one of the core symptoms of major depressive disorder.<sup>5,6</sup> Hence, this awareness represents a pivotal moment in the Instapoem: there is a change from denial, even evasion, to acceptance. “Funny” is not something to laugh about, but a serious condition.

The tone of Cox’s Instapoem varies as the composition unfolds: initially ironic, it transitions to a more resigned one as the speaker reveals her physical pain and mental distress, to eventually conclude on a vulnerable note as she acknowledges her condition. Correspondingly, the mood also varies. The irony at the beginning evokes an uneasy mood; however, as the poem progresses, it takes a more anxious and somber turn. Ultimately, the poem reflects a journey from denial to acceptance, illustrating the speaker’s painful realization that her internal struggles are not something to be dismissed, but rather a serious matter. Therefore, “funny” ends with a sense of vulnerability and honesty, as Cox moves from deflecting her pain to acknowledging and confronting it. Even though it may be difficult for individuals with depression to articulate their feelings, Cox’s language serves a dual purpose: on the one hand, it helps those who do not struggle with a depressive disorder to understand what the experience might feel like—and engage reader’s empathy—, and, on the other hand, it offers those living with depression a sense of recognition and validation. Addressing mental conditions is fundamental, not only reduces stigma, but also encourages openness around other mental health issues. One of these is anxiety, which, as previously mentioned, often coexists with depression and shares similar barriers of silence and misunderstanding.

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<sup>5</sup> Even though anhedonia is closely associated with major depressive disorder, evidence suggests that it could be independent from depression (Serretti 2023, 401).

<sup>6</sup> Major depressive disorder is diagnosed when an individual experiences a constant low mood, apathy, feelings of worthlessness, and suicidal thoughts, among many other symptoms (see Bains and Abdijadid 2023).

### 3. “a voice I know” is my anxiety

Even though millions of people suffer from depression and bipolarity, the most common mental health conditions are anxiety disorders. The most recent surveys show that, as of 2021, an estimated 4.4 percent of the global population dealt with anxiety disorders, equivalent to approximately 330 million people (“Anxiety Disorders Prevalence” 2024; Vankar 2024). What is more, women are twice as likely as men to be affected by this condition (“Anxiety Disorders” 2023; American Psychiatry Association, *Diagnostic* 268), affecting not only adults but also children and teenagers. This gap partly stems from gender socialization, which encourages and allows girls to express their insecurities and concerns, and ask for help, whereas boys tend to be raised in such a way that they do not express their fears and worries (Farhane-Medina et al. 2022, 2-3). Additionally, women’s gendered-challenging conditions, the unattainable beauty canon and the division of labor also contribute to a higher prevalence of anxiety among them (21). Although individuals’ gender has a major role in an anxiety disorder diagnosis, ethnicity is also crucial in people’s likelihood to develop anxiety symptoms. Nevertheless, while some racialized groups, such as Blacks, “are more likely to experience symptoms of anxiety, they are not more likely to receive a diagnosis” (Vanderminden and Esala 2019, 118). Indeed, Black people “report higher rates of physical symptomology (compared to other race groups), yet this group has the lowest rate of diagnosis” (117). Consequently, apart from the gender gap, there is also a racial gap that needs to be addressed and eradicated.

The World Health Organization states, people who struggle with anxiety disorders “often experience fear and worry that is both intense and excessive” (“Anxiety Disorders” 2023). Furthermore, as they further elaborate, “[t]hese feelings are typically accompanied by physical tension and other behavioural and cognitive symptoms. They are difficult to control, cause significant distress and can last a long time if untreated” (“Anxiety Disorders” 2023). In her poem “a voice I know,” Charly Cox tackles the uncontrollable nature of the racing thoughts that go through her mind as a person who grapples with an anxiety condition. The poem opens with a depiction of Cox-

the Instapoet's mental chaos: "My thoughts run through unpredictable themes / Sometimes it's two conscious streams at once" (Cox 2018, 1-2). Cox compares her thoughts, which are abstract, to a force with its own agency and movement. Moreover, the second verse further underscores this idea, since her thoughts move in different directions. This rapid, uncontrollable stream of ideas is known as racing thoughts, which entail "a subjective acceleration and overproduction" (Bertschy et al. 2020, 202). Together, these verses evoke a sense of chaos and loss of control, implying that the speaker finds it difficult to manage or quiet her restless mind.

The following verses, "Sounds fun, huh? / Sounds a bit like drugs, no?" (Cox 2018, 3-4) can be read as rhetorical questions that Cox includes to highlight her frustration over her inability to control her thinking. The inquiries are also extremely ironic, because they suggest that her chaotic mind might seem enjoyable, when in fact it is overwhelming. Furthermore, the simile comparing her mental state to drugs also indicates a sense of disorientation, possibly mirroring the speaker's state of mind when grappling with the action in her brain. The anaphoric use of "sounds" introduces different interpretations of Cox's thought process. Although framed as rhetorical questions, together with the following verse, the lines constitute an example of hypophora, that is, the lyrical voice both asks a question and answers it: "Sounds like in a predominantly losing game of tapping in our own brains" (2018, 5). The comparison of her mental process to a losing game conveys a sense of defeat and exasperation, which builds to the feeling of no control, as her anxiety spirals beyond her grasp.

"a voice I know" continues as follows: "I've accidentally genetically placed my bets and won" (Cox 2018, 6). The metaphorical description evokes a gambling scenario that adds to the speaker's sense of powerlessness. Moreover, the word "genetically" implies a hereditary predisposition to the disorder. Given that genetics account for approximately 30 percent of the risk for developing an anxiety disorder (Gottschalk and Domschke 2017, 166; Shimada-Sugimoto et al. 2015, 390), the gambling imagery effectively captures the arbitrary and uncontrollable nature of inheriting such a condition.

Despite the fact that Cox cannot avoid the disorder, she claims that “Sometimes it’s nice to look in from the outside” (2018, 10). This verse conveys the feeling of depersonalization, which commonly occurs among people who suffer from an anxiety disorder (Mula et al. 2007, 91; Sierra et al. 2012, 123). Depersonalization is defined as follows: “[A]n experience in which the individuals feel a sense of unreality and detachment from themselves. Symptoms often include a dreamy state and a sense of detachment. There may be a sensation of being an outside observer of one’s mental processes, one’s body, or parts of one’s body” (Mula et al. 2007, 91). When emotional stress is too acute, patients might resort to depersonalization as a defense mechanism. Therefore, the verse suggests a feeling of detachment and even self-observation, since the speaker is able to observe herself from an external perspective, as if she were not the one struggling with uncontrollable thoughts.

Although the speaker tries to highlight a less painful aspect of the illness, the subsequent verses show a harsher reality:

But other times it’s like being one in a team of screaming aggressors  
And trying to bat away the swarm  
That I’ve assembled  
Sometimes it’s like punching confidently bare-knuckled  
And still be the one that falls down and trembles (Cox 2018, 12-16)

The vivid imagery and metaphors present in these verses highlight the pain and discomfort associated with the disorder. The “team of screaming aggressors” (2018, 12) serves as both an auditory image and metaphorical description of the speaker’s thoughts: they are hostile, and it seems that she cannot quiet them. The image of Cox “trying to bat away the swarm” (2018, 13) reinforces the idea of a violent and chaotic scene. The word “swarm” carries a negative connotation, as it evokes enormous groups of insects (such as bees and flies) that move in unpredictable ways. Likewise, her attempt to fend off the mass of thoughts demonstrates her ongoing conflict to resist their intrusive nature.

The violent atmosphere continues with a tactile image as the lyrical voice claims that “Sometimes it’s like punching confidently bare-knuckled” (2018, 15). This simile suggests confidence in

trying to control or tame her mind, only to discover that she is “the one that falls down and trembles” (2018, 16). These verses can be read as a metaphor for her self-criticism, that is, an internal judgment and sense of inferiority for not being able to achieve her impossible goals (Thompson and Zuroff 2004, 421). Hence, the punches might be a reference to the cruel way with which she speaks to herself: to the conscious streams, aggressors and swarms. Yet, those elements are part of her mind; thus, she becomes the receiver of the blow.

“a voice I know” reflects the internal fight and the complex situations that entail living with an anxiety disorder. The tone in the analyzed excerpts varies from reflective and vulnerable to one of frustration as Cox is unable to control her racing mind. Consequently, the mood is chaotic and disorienting throughout the piece. Additionally, and even though Instapoetry does not follow a specific metric, in this case, the mixture of extremely long and short verses contributes to the prevailing sense of chaos and powerlessness often associated with anxiety. As with “funny”, the simplicity of the language enhances accessibility, allowing readers to better understand the emotional landscape of anxiety and empathize with those who experience it.

## 5. Conclusion

This article has explored the subject of mental disorders as depicted in the work of Charly Cox. Her Instapoems “funny,” and “a voice I know” address depressive and anxiety disorders, respectively. In her raw and personal compositions, the British author expresses her experiences and feelings living with a mental condition, offering an insight into her struggles. Through the use of literary devices, the Instapoet illustrates the invisible nature of these disorders and how they affect her sense of self, identity and daily life. Accordingly, poems like these might help readers to acknowledge and confront their conditions, as there are people facing similar challenges. Finally, Cox’s verses fulfill a social function: they contribute to the destigmatization of mental disorders, provide comfort and

validation to her readers, and open the door to conversations about mental health that, in turn, offer a form of catharsis.

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