these times of boycotts and unreasonable and irrational censoring. A film that has to give credit to a government or a prime minister, even as it explores the consequences of a poorly managed pandemic, will inevitably be targeted by that very same government. In different times, perhaps the film could have been made closer to the truth.

While a movie that creates sympathy for victims of caste, religious and other oppressions has its place, the lens needs to shift towards those who perpetrate these human rights violations and force them to look inwards.

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BOOK REVIEW

Beyond pathologising: Youth, psychosis, and care

SHEMA ABRAHAM

Neely Laurenzo Myers, *Breaking Points: Youth Mental Health Crises and How We All Can Help*. University of California Press, 2024. Pages: 270, INR 3143 (paperback) ISBN: 9780520400610

Psychosis is often considered a break with reality. *In Breaking Points: Youth Mental Health Crises and How We All Can Help,* Neely Laurenzo Myers delves into the lives of young American adults undergoing first-time psychiatric hospitalisation for psychosis. The book is the result of over three years of fieldwork at Shady Elms, a psychiatric emergency hospital in North Texas. Through her ethnographic work, she portrays the rupture psychosis brings to the relational, moral, and social existence of these young adults, particularly the damage to their moral agency. Moral agency refers to the capacity and resources to aspire to a good life in accordance with one's moral compass. It involves autobiographical power, being perceived as a worthy person, and having supportive relationships. Young adults often refuse treatment because they fear it will lead to labelling and undermine their moral agency.

The book also addresses the intersectionality of mental health. Psychosis risk is unequally distributed across the US population, with Latin American and African American individuals being diagnosed at higher rates. Factors such as immigration, racism, discrimination, and social exclusion may contribute to increased psychosis risk. The author sheds light on how the American cultural ideal of independent adulthood aggravates mental distress among young adults. The pressure to "have it all" — to be healthy, attractive, successful, and autonomous — creates enormous strain. Psychosis disrupts the attainment of these ideals, further exacerbating shame and isolation.

The book consists of seven chapters. The first chapter, "Work hard, play hard", explains how cultural expectations regarding autonomy, achievement, and socialising can adversely affect vulnerable youth. The aphorism encourages young adults to manage their lives independently while balancing work and leisure, often without guidance from elders or clear rituals to mark adulthood. Hyper-individualism and substance-use norms create a precarious environment. Substance use often becomes a means of seeking belonging or coping with inner distress, while adverse childhood experiences and marginalisation further increase vulnerability.

The second chapter, "Into the Mythos", presents psychosis as a relational and moral crisis precipitated by sensory overload, social isolation, and the absence of shared narrative frameworks. Individuals actively create alternative meanings to preserve moral agency and belonging. However, in the absence of culturally sanctioned frameworks, such as community expectations or role models, meaning-making can become isolating and further erode social recognition. The author argues that psychosis

outcomes are culturally shaped; where shared mythos and relational support exist, psychosis may be accommodated, whereas their absence leads to pathologisation and social exclusion.

In the third chapter, "Dangerous", the author portrays psychosis not as an abrupt rupture but as a gradual relational and moral decline. Early signs of distress are often ignored, particularly among ethnoracial minority groups already navigating stigma and precarity. Structural barriers, delayed care, and stigma often result in crisis-based intervention, disproportionately affecting African American and Latin American youth. Whether care begins through police intervention, family coercion, or voluntary admission, it frequently involves loss of autonomy and moral injury, undermining trust and future help-seeking.

The fourth chapter, "Disorientations", discusses the traumatising aspects of psychiatric hospitalisation. Rather than facilitating healing, hospitalisation often produces moral and narrative rupture. Through humiliation, coercion, and loss of autonomy, moral agency is threatened. Institutional practices such as forced separation, opaque procedures, and coercive treatment often intensify disorientation, while patients learn that compliance becomes necessary for survival.

Chapter five, "Users and Refusers", shows that acceptance of psychiatric care depends largely on whether care preserves or threatens moral agency. Stigmatising labels can undermine dignity and flourishing. Young people become "users" when care supports dignity and social functioning, while "refusers" emerge when treatment threatens identity and agency. Recovery, therefore, should be understood not merely as symptom reduction but as the reclaiming of narrative control, social recognition, and self-respect.

Chapter six, "Homecoming", discusses reintegration into society and family life after hospitalisation. Homecoming often intensifies suffering rather than providing healing, as home may become a site of surveillance, coercion, or overprotection. Discharge frequently occurs without adequate social or relational support. Infantilisation and excessive monitoring can adversely affect recovery and self-esteem. Treating young people as morally adequate adults is essential for successful reintegration.

Chapter seven, "Turning Points", argues that psychosis should be understood not merely as a clinical crisis but as a moral turning point in the transition to adulthood. Challenging narrow biomedical notions of recovery, the author emphasises relational care, shared decision-making, family support, and meaningful social roles. Ethical and effective care should prioritise trust, dignity, material support, and belonging, rather than focusing solely on medical compliance or symptom reduction.

The book provides a nuanced and empathetic account of the lived realities of young people experiencing early psychosis. It also underscores the necessity of a holistic and sensitive approach to care, seeing mental health through an intersectional lens. However, the author could have delved deeper into how larger socio-political realities, such as capitalism and neoliberalism, contribute to the mental health crisis. Another possible drawback is that its strong emphasis on social and cultural dimensions may obscure the biological and clinical aspects of psychosis. Additionally, the concept of moral agency may implicitly rely on normative ideals of adulthood, such as independence and success. Overall, the book is a valuable read for mental health professionals, anthropologists, social workers, policymakers, as well as those struggling with mental health issues and their caregivers.

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