

From Sickness to Light(ness)

– I must find a Cure

I was given a copy of the fifth issue of Blether at the 8th World Congress for

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People Who Stutter in Croatia in May 2007. I browsed through it and stumbled over an article by Frank Geoghegan-Quinn. In his 'Am I bovvered?' column he mentioned words like 'cure' and my teenage-idol Robert Smith. Dealing with one of my former favourite pop groups and their songs somehow revealed parts of my own life and **my way** with stuttering.

'Stammering is not an illness and therefore does not require to be cured – by therapy, by drug or by device. It may require to be managed, accommodated, reconstructed or made room for using any number of techniques, methods or therapies but attempting a cure can only lead, in my opinion, to a cul-de-sac of frustration, anxiety and missed opportunity. It is far better in my view to think and talk about healing', Frank wrote in this article.

The topic of stuttering is quite a controversial one, and I think the problems start with definitions. If one considers stuttering only a physical disorder, eventually leading to repetitions of syllables and words etc., then I think that there is no cure. Cure – in contrast to 'healing' – may even sound a bit absolute as if things are just black and white. As with everything, things start to get interesting when we get to shades of grey or colours. Grey values might be the emotions we have while stuttering, the pain and embarrassing feelings, or the joy we feel when we conquer our fears.

Anyway, let me get back to 'The Cure'. I became in touch with them when mastermind Robert Smith and his compañeros accomplished their commercially most successful album 'Disintegration'. During 1989 and 1990 I was also sort of disintegrating. Well, not really myself but my home-country, the German Democratic Republic, mostly known as East Germany. When something – such as a state – dies it has tremendous effects on its inhabitants. It was 'Lullaby' which made me a Cure fan, and in Autumn 1990 I even tried to look like Robert Smith. Well, at least my hair



looked similar, but he had no opportunity to wear fancy GDR model glasses, and I did not like his make-up! I started to collect their records and found the 1982 album entitled 'Pornography' quite soon. Smith, aged 23 then, wrote a set of eight songs and I would be joking to call these songs happy and easy-listening. Titles like 'A Thousand Years', including positive lines such as 'It doesn't matter if we all die', or the weird 'Pornography' itself may take the listener to a place

where she or he doesn't really want to go. Maybe, maybe not. Almost 17 years later, it looks like a cure to my own stuttering. The name of another song, 'Siamese Twins', could be related to the relationship between me and my stuttering. 'Cold' and 'A Strange Day' were my favourite ones, and the already mentioned song, 'Pornography' – the last one of the album – contains the line 'I must fight this sickness, I must find a cure' at the end.

Later, I often wondered how a 23 year old man could write songs like this. Well, it was and still is sort of a self-therapy for him. This therapy of 1982 seemed to be successful since at the end of 1982, and in particular 1983, Smith (he wrote all songs and lyrics) came back completely changed. Songs like 'Let's go to Bed', 'The Lovecats' or 'The Walk' (from their 1983 album 'The Japanese Whisper') seemed to be from Smith's Siamese twin brother who tries to enjoy life. It was pure pop, colourful and with a trace of self-irony. No-one would have thought what Smith admitted later, that he was thinking about suicide just months before.

Well, let's take a step ahead in time. At the beginning of the new millennium, in 2000, I purchased my last Cure CD. I realised I had enough of this cure. Smith's and his group's music gave me a lot but it was time to let them go. I realised that only much later. The Cure helped me to see music from a different angle, to get a bit out of the mass movement of the



people around me, although in the former GDR the so-called 'Grufties' formed almost a mass

movement themselves. In some way it almost seemed to me that Robert Smith must have gone through similar experiences as I did with my stuttering. Perhaps there is even a need to go down to the very bottom of one's being to find one's soul. Helplessness, depression and the deep wish to have change in one's life might be the basis for real happiness and contentment eventually.

Sure, it does not necessarily need to be The Cure that finds your path through your own history of stuttering. It could be anyone or any other group as well. What's important is to become aware of the various links in your life and to see life as a big network, a big puzzle with everything in place ... every moment, every picture, every colour. It also means that one is well advised to get away from black-and-white-thinking. The first step might be a grey-value-thinking, the next step being thinking in colours. Sooner or later we may even recognise the millions of pastels, bright and neon tones. And yes, there are water and oil colours and dozens more. Everyday is a new composition of colours and stuttering might be our brush. It is up to us whether and how we use it.

After all, we may even realise that there has never been sickness in stuttering, and sure, where there's no sickness, there's also no need for a cure. It only needs the will to see the light behind the shadows.

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The picture of Robert Smith was taken from the website www.lankelot.eu/index.php/2007/05/11/1819/.

Last but not least, I mustn't forget to thank Robert Smith and The Cure for sharing their music.

And yes ... after all these years I still like the song 'Fight' from 'Kiss Me, ...' (1987) most.

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