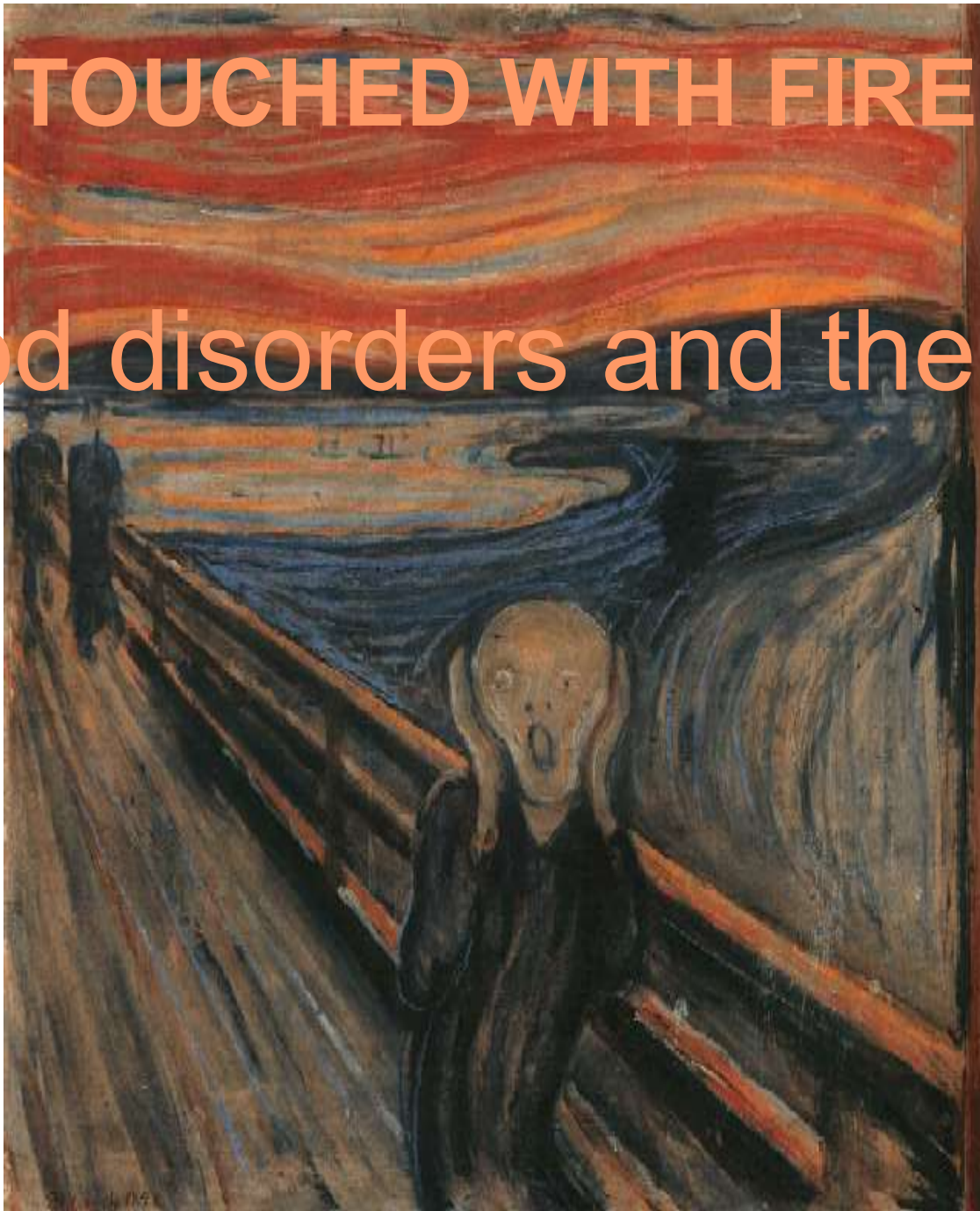


# Touched with fire

Femi Oyebo

TOUCHED WITH FIRE

# Mood disorders and the arts



**Edvard Munch**

**(1863-1944)**

**Bipolar Disorder**

**'The Scream'**

**"Disease and  
Insanity were the  
black angels on  
guard at my  
cradle".**

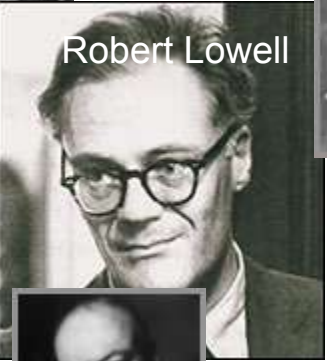
Van Gogh



TS Eliot



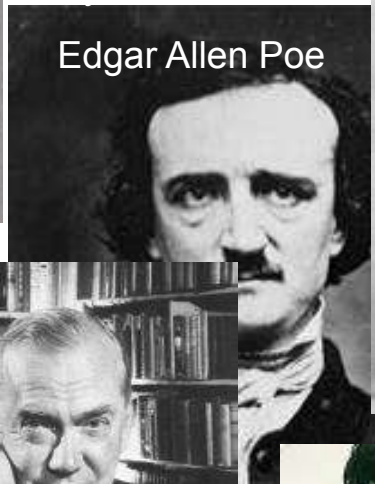
Robert Lowell



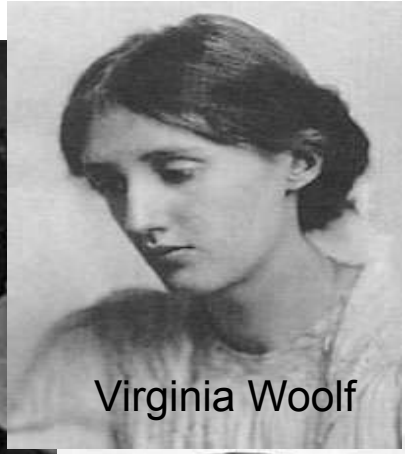
John



Edgar Allen Poe



Virginia Woolf

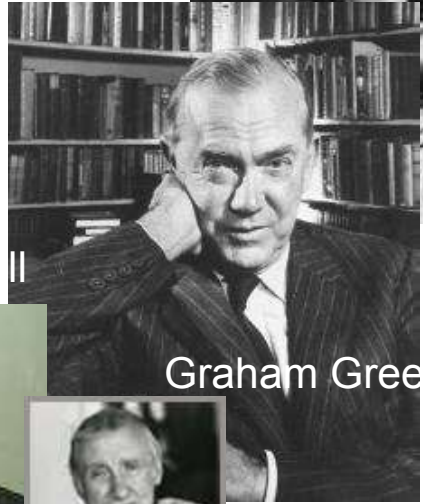


Beethoven

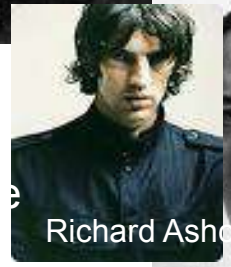


ain

Winston Churchill



Graham Greene

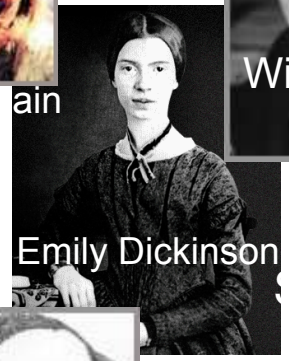


Richard Ashcroft



Schumann

Emily Dickinson



Stephen Fry



Spike

an



son Pollock



Hans Christian Anderson



Leo Tolsto



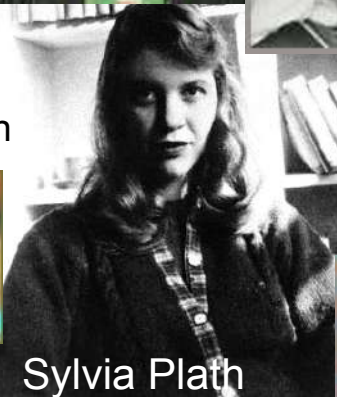
Lord Byron



Charles



Ruby Wax



Sylvia Plath



John



William Blake



Coleridge



Er

# Plan

- Brief rehearsal of clinical features of mood disorders
- William Styron's *Darkness Visible: a memoir of madness*.
- Kay Redfield Jamison's *An Unquiet Mind*.
- Poetry: John Clare; Ivor Gurney; & Robert Lowell
- Film: The Bridge



William Styron

**WILLIAM  
STYRON**

**DARKNESS  
VISIBLE**

**IN THE SUMMER OF 1985 WILLIAM STYRON  
WAS OVERTAKEN BY PERSISTENT INSOMNIA  
AND A TROUBLING SENSE OF MALAISE –  
THE FIRST SIGNS OF A DEEP DEPRESSION  
THAT WOULD ENGULF HIS LIFE AND LEAVE  
HIM ON THE BRINK OF SUICIDE.**

**WM 40**

VINTAGE CLASSICS



# William Styron

- 1925-2006
- Novels
  - *Lie down in darkness*
  - *The confessions of Nat Turner*
  - *Sophie's choice*
- Born Newport News, Virginia
- Paternal grandparents were slave owners
- Father suffered from depression
- Educated Duke University
- Married Rose Burgunder 1953

# William Styron

- Friends with
  - Romain Gary
  - George Plimpton
  - Peter Matthiessen
  - James Baldwin
  - Irwin Shaw
- Son is Professor of Clinical Psychology at Yale



# *Darkness visible*

- Depressive mood disturbance
  - Depression is a disorder of mood, so mysteriously painful and elusive in the way it becomes known to the self – to the mediating intellect – as to verge close to being being beyond description. It thus remains nearly incomprehensible to those who have not experienced it in its extreme mode (page 7)

# *Darkness visible*

- Mood disturbance
  - It was past 4 o' clock and my brain had begun to endure its familiar siege: panic and dislocation, and a sense that my thought processes were being engulfed by a toxic unnameable tide that obliterated any enjoyable response to the living world (page 16)
  - The pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered it, and it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne (page 33)

# *Darkness visible*

- Mood disturbance
  - That fall, as the disorder gradually took full possession of my system, I began to conceive that my mind itself was like one of those outmoded small town telephone exchanges, being gradually inundated by flood waters. One by one, the normal circuits began to drain, causing some of the functions of the body and nearly all of those of the instinct and intellect to slowly disconnect (page 47)

# *Darkness visible*

- 'It is a positive and active anguish, a sort of psychical neuralgia wholly unknown to normal life'
- 'Many of the artefacts of my house had become potential devices for my own destruction'

# *Others*

- Mood disturbance
  - Sleep deserted me. And, no longer able to stomach myself, I stopped eating. There was no revulsion but I didn't want to eat anything (Jamison, 1995)
  - Depression is like an amoeba, altering its shape to take in every corner of my life; just when you think its left one place, it turns up in another. What is it that makes me, compels, not to eat when I know I must (Shaw, 1997)

# *Others*

- Mood disturbance
  - ‘It was the autumn of 1826. I was in a dull state of nerves, such as everybody is occasionally liable to; unsusceptible to enjoyment or pleasurable excitement; one of those moods when what is pleasure at other times, becomes insipid or indifferent’ (Mill 1873)

# *Others*

- Mood disturbance

- Each day I awoke deeply tired, a feeling as foreign to my natural self as being bored or indifferent to life. Those were next. Then a gray, bleak preoccupation with death, dying, decaying, that everybody was born to die, best to die now and save the pain while waiting (Jamison, 1995)

# Depression

*Depression is awful beyond words... I would not go through an extended period again. It bleeds relationships through suspicion, lack of confidence and self respect, the inability to enjoy life, or walk or talk or think normally, the exhaustion ...there is nothing good to be said about it except for it gives you the experience of how it must be to be old... to be dying; to be lacking in grace, polish, coordination; to be ugly; to have no belief in the possibilities of life, the pleasures of sex... the ability to make yourself or others laugh... Depression is flat, hollow, unendurable... People cannot abide being around you.'*

(Jamison 1996, *An Unquiet Mind*, p217-219)





Kay Redfield Jamison

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

Kay Redfield Jamison

AN  
UNQUIET  
MIND

'It stands  
alone in  
the literature  
of manic  
depression  
for its  
bravery,  
brilliance  
and beauty'

Oliver Sacks

A Memoir of MOODS  
and MADNESS

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- 1946-
- Professor of Psychiatry, Johns Hopkins Medical School
- Honorary Professor of English, St Andrews
- Educated UCLA
- Founded Affective Disorders Unit, Johns Hopkins
- Books
  - » Touched with fire: Manic-depressive illness and the artistic temperament
  - » Unquiet Mind: A memoir of moods and madness
  - » Night falls fast: Understanding suicide
  - » Exuberance: the passion for life
  - » Nothing was the same: a memoir

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- Elation

- When you're high it's tremendous. The ideas and feelings are fast and frequent like shooting stars and you follow them until you find better and brighter ones. Shyness goes; the right words and gestures are suddenly there, the power to captivate others a felt certainty. There are interests found in uninteresting people. Sensuality is pervasive and desire to seduce and be seduced irresistible...But somewhere this changes...Everything previously moving with the grain is now against – you are irritable, angry, frightened, uncontrollable, and enmeshed in the blackest caves of the mind (page 67)

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- Elation

- I did not wake up one morning to find myself mad. Life should be so simple. Rather, I gradually became aware that my life and mind were going at an ever faster and faster clip until finally, over the course of my first summer on the faculty, they both had spun wildly and absolutely out of control. But the acceleration from quick to chaos was a slow and beautifully seductive one (page 68)

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- Elation

- My memories of the garden party were that I had a fabulous, bubbly, seductive, assured time. My psychiatrist, however, in talking with me about it much later, recollected it very differently. I was, he said, dressed in a remarkably provocative way, totally unlike the conservative manner in which he had seen me dressed over the preceding year. I had on much more makeup than usual and seemed to him, to be frenetic and far too talkative. He says he remembers having thought to himself, Kay looks manic. I on the other hand, had thought I was splendid (page 71)

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- Elation

- There was a neuronal pileup on the highways of my brain, and the more I tried to low down my thinking the more I became aware that I couldn' t. My enthusiasms were going into overdrive as well (page 72)

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- Elation

- When I am high I couldn't worry about money if I tried...What with credit cards and bank accounts there is little beyond reach. So I bought twelve snake bite kits, with a sense of urgency and importance. I bought precious stones, elegant and unnecessary furniture, three watches within an hour of one another (in the Rolex rather Timex class; tastes bubble to the surface, are the surface, in mania), and totally inappropriate sirenlike clothes (page 74)



# Kay Redfield Jamison

- Elation

- Slowly the darkness began to weave its way into my mind, and before long I was hopelessly out of control. I could not follow the paths of my own thoughts. Sentences flew around in my head and fragmented first into phrases and then words; finally only sounds remained (page 79)

# Kay Redfield Jamison

- I long ago abandoned the notion of a life without storms, or a world without dry and killing seasons. Life is too complicated, too constantly changing, to be anything but what it is. And I am, by nature, too mercurial to be anything but deeply wary of the grave unnaturalness involved in any attempt to exert too much control over essentially uncontrollable forces. There will always be propelling, disturbing elements, and they will be there until, as Lowell put it, the watch is taken from the wrist. It is, at the end of the day, the individual moments of restlessness, of bleakness, of strong persuasions and maddened enthusiasms, that inform one's life, change the nature and direction of one's work, and give final meaning and color to one's loves and friendships.

Poetry

# Robert Lowell

- Born in 1917 in Boston, USA
- Attended Harvard for 2 years & graduated Kenyon College in 1940
- Was a conscientious objector during WW2
- Suffered from bipolar disorder & was repeatedly hospitalised
- Died at age 60 yrs from heart attack



## Visitors

To no good-

They enter at angles and on the run

Two black verticals are suddenly four

Ambulance drivers in blue serge,

Or the police doing double-duty.

They comb our intimate, messy bedroom,

Scrutinise worksheets

Illegible with second thoughts,

then shed them in their stride,

As if they owned the room. They do.

They crowd me and scatter – inspecting

My cast-off clothes for clues?

They are fat beyond the call of duty....

I follow my own removal,

Stiffly, gratefully even, but without feeling.

Why has my talkative

Teasing tongue stopped talking?

....

# John Clare

- He was born to a small labouring family in Northamptonshire. His education did not extend beyond basic reading & writing.
- In 1837 he was admitted to a mental asylum in High Beach, Epping. He escaped in 1841 and walked to Northampton.
- A few months later he entered Northampton General Asylum where he lived for the rest of his life.





- Lines; 'I Am'

I am – yet what I am, none cares or knows;  
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:  
I am the self-consumer of my woes-  
They rise and vanish in oblivion's host  
Like shadows in love-frenzied stifled throes-  
And yet I am and live- like vapours tossed

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dreams  
Where there is neither sense of life or joys  
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;  
Even the dearest that I love the best  
Are strange- nay, rather, stranger than the rest....

# Sylvia Plath

- Born in 1932 in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts
- Studied at Smith College & won a Fulbright to Cambridge in 1955.
- She married Ted Hughes in 1956
- She killed herself



# Sylvia Plath



# Stevie Smith

- Stevie Smith was born in Hull in 1902
- When she was 3 her father left abandoning the family.
- When she was 5 years old she contracted TB and spent time at a TB sanatorium.
- She said that her preoccupation with death started at age 7. She thought that if she kept crying and refusing to eat she would die and her misery would end.
- In 1953 she cut her wrists and spent time in hospital



- The Deserter

The world is come upon me, I used to keep it a long way off,  
But now I have been run over and I am in the hands of the hospital staff.  
They say as a matter of fact I have not been run over it's imagination,  
But they all admit I shall be kept in bed under observation.  
I must say it's very comfortable here, nursie has such nice hands,  
And every morning the doctor comes and lances my tuberculous glands.  
He says he does nothing of the sort, but I have my own feelings about that,  
And what they are if you don't mind I shall keep under my hat...

- The Hostage

...I should like you to hear my confession, Father, I'm not of your persuasion  
I'm a member of the Church of England, but on this occasion  
I should like to talk to you, if you'll allow, nothing more,  
Just a talk, not really a confession, but my heart is sore.  
No, it's not that I have to die, that's the trouble, I've always wanted to  
But it seems despondent you know, ungracious too,

She sighed...

Even as a child, said the lady, I recall in my pram  
Wishing it was over and done with...



# Stevie Smith



# Anne Sexton

- Born in Newton, Massachusetts in 1928
- Gave birth to her first child in 1953 & suffered from post-partum depression. She was admitted into Westwood Lodge in 1954. Following the birth of her second child in 1955 she suffered a second bout of depression.
- She was encouraged by Dr Martin Orne to write poetry.
- She committed suicide in in 1974.



- The Double Image

...I, who chose two times  
To kill myself, had said your nickname  
The mewling months when you first came;  
Until a fever rattled  
In your throat and I moved like a pantomime  
Above your head. Ugly angels spoke to me. The  
blame,  
I heard them say, was mine. They tattled  
Like green witches in my head, letting doom  
Leak like a broken faucet;  
As if doom had flooded my belly and filled my  
bassinet,  
An old debt I must assume.

Death was simpler than I thought

The day life made you well and whole  
I let the witches take my guilty soul.  
I pretended I was dead  
Until the white men pumped the poison out,  
Putting me armless and washed through the  
rigamarole  
Of talking boxes and the electric bed.

- Clothes

Put on a clean shirt

Before you die, some Russian said.

Nothing with drool, please,

No egg spots, no blood,

No sweat, no sperm.

You want me clean, God,

So I'll try to comply.

The hat I was married in,

Will it do?

White, broad, fake flowers in a tiny array.

It's old-fashioned, as stylish as a bedbug,

But it suits to die in something nostalgic....

For underpants I'll pick white cotton,

The briefs of my childhood,

For it was my mother's dictum

That nice girls wore only white cotton.

If my mother had lived to see it

She would have put a WANTED sign up in the post  
office

For the black, the red, the blue I've worn.

Still, it would be perfectly fine with me

To die like a nice girl

Smelling of Clorox and Duz.

Being sixteen-in-the-pants

I would die full of questions.

# Ivor Gurney

- Born 1890 in Gloucester
- He began composing music at age 14 years and won scholarship to RCM in 1911. He was a contemporary of Vaughn Williams. Stanford thought he was the 'biggest of them all'.
- He served in WW1 & was wounded and gassed.
- He suffered bipolar mood disorder from early adulthood.
- He was declared insane in 1922 and spent the rest of his life at the City of London Mental Hospital Dartford where he died from TB in 1937.



- To God

Why have you made life so intolerable  
And set me between four walls, where I am able  
Not to escape meals without prayer, for that is possible  
Only annoying an attendant. And tonight a sensual  
Hell has been put on me, so that all has deserted me  
And I am merely crying and trembling in heart  
For Death, and cannot get it. And gone out is part  
Of sanity. And there is dreadful hell within me.  
And nothing helps. Forced meals there have been and  
electricity  
And weakening of sanity by influence  
That's dreadful to endure. And there is Orders  
And I am praying for death, death, death,  
And dreadful is the indrawing or out-breathing of breath

Because of the intolerable insults put on my whole soul,  
Of the soul loathed, loathed, loathed of the soul.  
Gone out every bright thing from my mind.  
All lost that ever God himself designed.  
Not half can be written of cruelty of man, on man.  
Not often such evil guessed as between Man and Man.



# Death & suicide

- My thoughts were being engulfed by a toxic and unnameable tide that obliterated any enjoyable response to the living world. This is to say more specifically that instead of pleasure..I was feeling in my mind a sensation close to but indescribably different from actual pain

» William Styron

- The pain of severe depression is quite unimaginable to those who have not suffered it, & it kills in many instances because its anguish can no longer be borne

» William Styron

- ‘Many of the artefacts of my house had become potential devices for my own destruction; the attic rafters (an outside maple or two) a means to hang myself, the garage a place to inhale carbon monoxide, a bathtub a vessel to receive the flow from my open arteries’

» Styron, p 52

- Each day I awoke deeply tired, a feeling as foreign to my natural self as being bored or indifferent to life. Those were next. Then a gray, bleak preoccupation with death, dying, decaying, that everything was born but to die, best to die now and save the pain while waiting

» Kay Redfield Jamison

- I was cold-bloodedly determined not to give any indications of my plans or the state of my mind. I was successful. The only note made by my psychiatrist on the day before I attempted suicide was: *Very depressed. Very quiet'*

» Jamison, p 113



**SARAH FERGUSON**  
**A GUARD WITHIN**

An intensely moving account  
of her experience of psychoanalysis and of  
her relationship with her analyst'

ANTHONY STORR



- ‘I took the thirty sodium amytal which I had been keeping ... My heart stopped beating, but they put me in a respirator, and attached me to a cardiac machine in an intensive care unit. Afterwards, I thanked them, but I did not mean it’

» Ferguson, p 138



Letters

Baudelaire

I am killing myself without any sense of sorrow. I feel none of the agitation that men call sorrow. My debts have never been a cause of sorrow. It's perfectly simple to rise above such matters. I'm killing myself because I can no longer go on living, because the weariness of falling asleep and the weariness of waking up have become unbearable to me. I'm killing myself because I believe I'm of no use to others – and because I'm a danger to myself. I'm killing myself because I believe I'm immortal and because I hope. At the time of writing these lines I am so lucid that I'm still copying out a few notes for M. Théodore de Banville and have the necessary strength to busy myself with my manuscripts. I give and bestow all I possess to Mlle Lemer, including my little stock of furniture and my portrait – because she's the only creature who offers me solace. Can anyone blame me for wanting to repay her for the rare pleasures I've enjoyed in this horrendous world? I do not know my brother very well – he has neither lived in me nor with me – he has no need of me. My mother, who has so frequently and always unwittingly poisoned my life, has no need of money either. – She has her husband; she has a human being, some one who provides her with affection and friendship. I have no one but Jeanne Lemer. It's only in her that I've found rest and I will not, can not bear the thought that people want to strip her of what I'm giving her, on the pretext that my mind is wandering. You've heard me talking to you these last few days. Was I mad?

# Virginia Woolf

Dearest,

I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight any longer. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will I know. You see I can't even write this properly. I can't read. What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that – everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer. I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been.

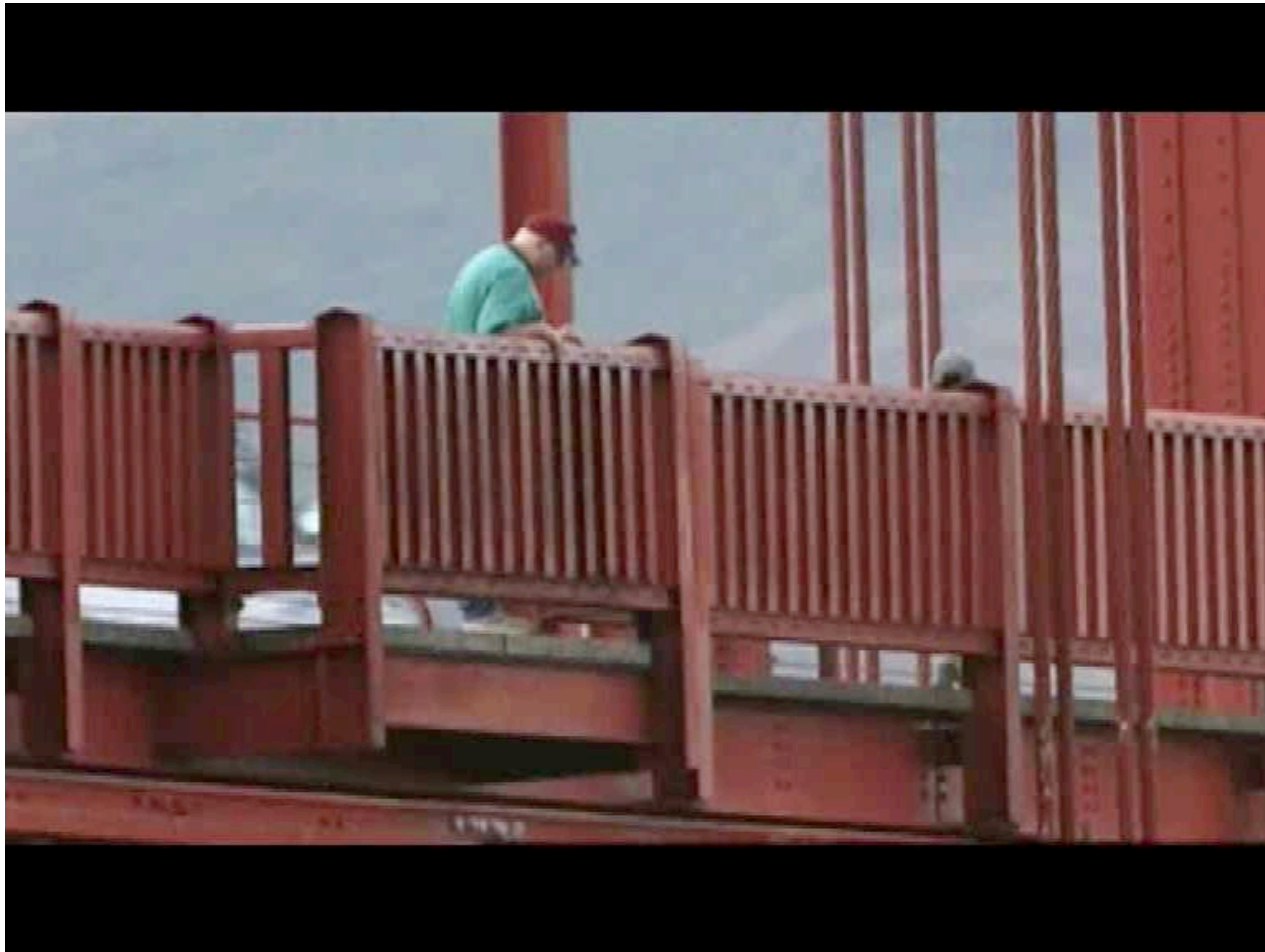
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Film

# The Bridge



# The Bridge





# Conclusion

*I have often asked myself whether, given the choice, I would choose to have manic-depressive illness. ... Strangely enough, I think I would.*

*I honestly believe that as a result of it I have felt more things, more deeply; had more experiences, more intensely; ... worn death 'as close as dungarees', appreciated it - and life - more; seen the finest and most terrible in people ... But, normal or manic, I have run faster, thought faster, and loved faster than most I know. And I think much of this is related to my illness - the intensity it gives to things*

*Kay Redfield Jamison, An Unquiet Mind*