

than the laughable caricature of the establishment psychiatrist presented here – a tweed-clad, semi-retired, sneering lecher more interested in his golf handicap than his cases, with political views well right of UKIP. Predictably, this cliché-ridden bad guy cleaves to and hides behind the medical model, which our profession has peddled onto a now addicted population, generating vast profits for Big Pharma, to whom we are all prostitutes or pawns.

The protagonist, Robert Austell, sees himself as an everyday jobbing psychiatrist, but is portrayed from the outset as a defeated cynic, deploying ineffective treatments to the chronically miserable, and coping through vivid fantasies of murdering his patients and colleagues. Through a meeting with a good-guy mentor (also laughably caricatured, with his long ponytail and absence of underpants beneath his smock), Austell quits the 'senseless grind' of his NHS clinic to work in a research programme studying the potentially therapeutic uses of psychedelic drugs.

The drugs themselves, which include ketamine and MDMA, are irresponsibly described as 'totally physiologically non-toxic'. To accept a claim like this requires faith in the author's accuracy – a faith undermined when the text is spattered with errors of

grammar, spelling and even geography (you can't see the Golden Gate Bridge from Big Sur).

Sessa nails his colours to the mast right at the outset, in his acknowledgements (a 'massive shout' here, a 'big up' there) and his chapter titles ('Making the Score', 'The Come Up' etc.). The thesis he presents, in long authorial rants from the mouths of his cardboard characters, is that psychedelic drugs reveal one's true self and hold much greater promise in treating mental illness than establishment drugs, but have been suppressed by world governments fearful of the social change they drove when used more widely in the 1960s.

This world view is not new, but this novel is highly unlikely to convince anyone who doesn't already hold it, especially when it drips with such evident contempt for mainstream psychiatry and, indeed, mainstream medicine.

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