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| ***Fury***by David Morley | **Poetry**  Broad General Education |

**Unbeaten Heavyweight Tyson Fury Reveals Dark Side to his Personality**

**Donald McRae, *The Guardian*, Sat 5 Nov 2011**

**T**yson Fury steps out of his back door on an ordinary morning in Morecambe, near Lancaster, with three black bags of rubbish in each huge hand. "Hello, mate, it's binmen day," he says quietly in greeting, before nodding towards two refuse collectors approaching his small corner bungalow with wide eyes and eager expressions. Emptying the dustbin of the unbeaten British and Commonwealth heavyweight champion is clearly a highlight of their day.

"Are you fighting again soon?" one of the awed men asks as he looks up at a giant who is 6ft 9in tall and weighs 18st. "Yeah," Fury says. "Next Saturday, in Manchester. And live on Channel 5. Should be good."

"Amazing," the binman murmurs.

I am more amazed that, having arrived at his home, Fury offers me such a limp handshake. There is no knuckle-crushing welcome from a 23-year-old boxer hyped as a Gypsy hard man intent on claiming glory for the travelling people he is said to represent. Instead, the big man leads me diffidently round the back. Halloween is over but a massive plastic pumpkin still blocks the front door of the house he shares with his 21-year-old wife, Paris, and two children, Venezuela and Prince.

The sight of a two-year-old girl jumping around happily, and a four-week-old baby boy sleeping in a pale blue pram, prompts a discussion of their exotic names. "One night, while I was sleeping," the fighter says, "I thought of Venezuela. My wife is called Paris. I'm Tyson and [gesturing to his son] he's called Prince John James. If the girl had a normal name it wouldn't fit in, would it? I wanted to call the boy Patrick but the wife didn't want it."

Paris gives me a knowing look. "Ask him what name he really wanted for our son …"

"Jesus," Fury interrupts.

"That got a quick no from me," Paris sighs.

"Jesus Fury," the fighter says wistfully. "I like that name. A lot of Mexicans are called Jesus."

Does Fury have a desire now to visit Venezuela, as the country gave him his daughter's name? "South America?" he ponders. "Nah. What could I get in South America that I couldn't get here?"

"A good tan," Paris suggests.

This knockabout fun, however, is framed by darkness. It is not just the darkness of Fury's past or even the fact that his father, a former pro heavyweight called "Gypsy" John Fury, is currently serving a prison sentence for an assault which cost another man his eye. Something more distressing is embedded in Fury.

Yet, before revealing himself with unsettling candour, Fury continues conventionally for a man whose own name stems from his father's fascination with Mike Tyson. "Boxing is a dying sport really," Fury says. "Years ago the world heavyweight champion could be said to have reached the highest pinnacle of sport. Even in this country boxers were heroes. Think of Henry Cooper and Frank Bruno. No footballer was bigger than Frank Bruno. I don't think it will get back to that – never in a million years. People look to celebrities now.

"In British boxing today, Joe Calzaghe's gone. Ricky Hatton's gone. David Haye's gone. But I'm hoping I can bring it round. When I beat Dereck Chisora [at Wembley Arena in July] 3.2 million watched it on Channel 5. I've got an outspoken personality which gets people thinking, and my style of fighting is aggressive. Everything's on the line all the time. In my fights there's drama. So that can help."

Fury's Commonwealth title defence next Saturday against the Bosnian-born Neven Pajkic, who is now Canada's heavyweight champion, is being promoted along traditional lines. "I went ringside with Pajkic," Fury remembers, "and said: 'Oi, you and me, let's have a fight.' He chucks this dirty ring towel at me and says: 'C'mon let's fight now.' Everyone's jumping in and holding us back. It was pantomime.

"But I went on national TV in Canada and said exactly what I thought of Pajkic. I'd watched his fight and thought it was rubbish. From there it went really personal. He started calling me and my family names. I know this is terrible and I shouldn't say it, but I'm in the mode to do serious damage. When I go in there I'm trying to put my fist through the back of his head. I'm trying to break his ribs and make them stick out the other side. I don't like this kid. This kid has said some terrible things."

Fury sounds ominously Tyson-esque here. Of course the reality is different. He may have relatively fast hands but the Englishman is not a destructive hitter like the heavyweight force who gave him his name. Fury is a decent operator who is still inexperienced after just 16 professional contests. But, having interviewed Mike Tyson in his bleakest years, I feel the same chills when Fury talks alarmingly.

"There is a name for what I have," he says, "where, one minute I'm happy, and the next minute I'm sad, like commit-suicide-sad. And for no reason – nothing's changed."

Sitting in his armchair, wearing a vest and shorts, Fury looks at me evenly. "One minute I'm over the moon and the next minute I feel like getting in my car and running it into a wall at a hundred miles an hour. I don't know what's wrong with me. I'm messed up."

Can he overcome these feelings? "No," Fury says calmly. "I just live with them. I think I need a psychiatrist because I do believe I am mentally disturbed in some way. Maybe it was the fact that when I was a kid we didn't have a family life. My mother and father were always shouting and screaming and hitting each other. My dad had different women and different kids down the road. My mum had 14 pregnancies – but only four of us survived. We had a little sister born for a few days and she died. There had to be a funeral. That would affect you."

What happened last year with his father? "He knew the guy," Fury says softly. "They just bumped into each other at a car auction in Manchester. The guy started it. There were three of them against my father. The feller bit my dad on the face but as he shoved him back he punched the feller in the eye. And he lost his eye. He had to have the eye taken out because it got infected. The judge found my dad guilty of wounding with intent."

Fury himself does not seem a violent man. "I've never been in trouble in my life. I've not got a criminal record. Never had a fight outside boxing. So I'm very different to my dad."

He certainly appears more vulnerable than his father. "I know I've got nothing to be upset about," Fury says. "I'm British and Commonwealth champion, I'm doing OK. I've got a few quid in the bank. I shouldn't be upset. But I don't feel I've done any good at all. I thought when the children were born it would be a top thing. And when I became English champion I thought there'd be a great feeling – but no. I thought it must be because it's not big enough. Let me win the British title. But after I took that off Chisora there was nothing. At the end of the day what have I done? I've beaten another man up in a fight. I dunno what I want out of life, me. What's the point of it all?"

We talk about his wife, and children, while they sit around us. Trying to sound like a sage old soul I suggest that beyond his immediate family, there are always touching or amusing or interesting or stimulating moments in life. He is still young and his bleak perspective might become more rounded. "No," he says. "I don't think it's ever going to change. I can just see it going crazy. One loss in the ring and it's all over. So it's very serious. I know it could be all over every time I step into the ring."

Even if he says his travelling heritage means little to him, there are still experiences, and people, he should savour. "Yeah," Fury says, "but every day you're on a downward slope."

"I hear this constantly," Paris says. "But there are good days. If you'd come on a good day, you'd have been all right."

Fury leans forward. "I just want to get across how I feel."

"Sometimes I listen," his wife says, "but depression runs in his family."

Fury nods. "My three brothers are the same as me. But with us everyone is a tough guy. They don't talk like you and me are talking. But we all cry instantly. Look at me: 6ft 9, and if someone said this to me in my family I would just cry. All of us would. But nothing's talked about in our family. We just push other aside, or give each other a punch."

Fury is no longer working with his uncle, Hughie, his usual trainer. "Hughie and I have trouble getting on. But every time I've gone away from Hughie I've not looked so good. So it's a big step to leave Hughie at such an important time."

How will Fury cope if he wakes up on Saturday in this depressed state of mind? "I won't," he says. "I love boxing. It's not a horrible thing to me. I can't wait for the moment I step into the ring. I feel calm then. It's like everything has been forgotten. It's just me and him and we're going to go at it old school. But after that it's back to the reality and feeling angry – just with life. I'm looking for something different that's just not out there. But when I get in the ring I don't have this feeling I've got now. Right now, I really feel like smashing this place up."

I laugh nervously as Fury looks around his home. "I don't feel like that in the ring because, if I do, it's all over. An upset fighter is a beaten fighter."

Hearing all these swirling contradictions I try hard to believe that Fury does indeed find some strange refuge in the ring. He has the potential to one day contest a version of the creaking old world heavyweight title and, with a terrestrial television following in this country and a chance to fight in America next year, Fury's damaged sense of self might ease one day. And, for a man who left school aged 10, he speaks lucidly and piercingly about his deepest emotions.

"I love talking," Fury says, almost smiling. "It's one of my favourite things in life."

Some of the most memorable fighters over the decades have been great talkers – but few of them, bar Mike Tyson himself, have articulated the darkness within them in such a matter-of-fact manner. "I'm glad I've got boxing," Fury says. "I feel better in the ring. That's when I feel some relief."

And how will Paris feel on Saturday night? "I don't get nervous until, literally, I hear his music and he starts walking out," she says. "My stomach turns upside down. That's when you think, 'He's going in that ring against someone who wants to hurt him.' Before that it's OK because he's happy and excited and telling me he's going to win. It all changes when I hear the music but I remember to trust him. I always think he's going to be all right in the end."

**Task**

Read through *The Guardian* interview with Tyson Fury. Many of the writer’s assumptions about Fury are both challenged and confirmed in this interview.

Complete the table.

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| **What the writer expected** | **What the writer saw/felt/learned** | **Evidence to support** |
| Ie. To find superstar boxer living flashy lifestyle | He’s actually just ordinary guy | ‘"Hello, mate, it's binmen day," he says quietly in greeting’ |
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**Tyson Fury, the travelling community and a legacy far beyond titles in the ring**

***The Independent*, Callum Room, July 2020**

It was June 2016, just a few months after he was crowned the heavyweight champion of the world when [Tyson Fury](https://www.independent.co.uk/topic/Tyson_Fury) contemplated ending it all.

A champion boxer suffocated by his own mental health problems; Fury’s depression had hit an all-time low. He was fighting suicidal thoughts which ultimately led to him to racing down an unknown motorway at speeds of 190mph with the intention of going straight into the oncoming bridge.

Four years on, and the WBC heavyweight champion has staged a remarkable comeback to overcome his problems and return to the summit of the heavyweight division. It is the eve of what should have been the trilogy against Deontay Wilder, who had exercised his rematch clause before the coronavirus pandemic ended all sporting events for several months.

Fury’s victory over Deontay Wilder in February marked not only a victory for himself but a victory for the travelling community as a whole. Born and raised in Manchester but originating from Irish traveller descent, the ‘Gypsy King’ prides himself on his heritage and increasingly sees himself as a champion for the travelling community and an advocate for change.

Fury’s battles inside and out of the ring have inspired those struggling both in the community and in wider society. Like others, Fury has suffered from mental health problems, turning to drugs and alcohol to help relieve the pain in times of desperation. His openness with mental health has helped to breakdown ideas of masculinity inside the community and his ability to beat his demons has given others strength, teaching them to not give up. His recovery has not only saved his own life but offered new hope to the likes of Jimmy McCrory, an Irish traveller and a legend of the bare-knuckle boxing world.

“He inspired me; it gave me that kick to get off my arse that I needed. I honestly thought that I couldn’t go on and that I was just waiting to die in my big black hole with depression,” said McCrory.

“I’m an alcoholic and a drug addict. I blocked everything in for years, a lot of my friends committed suicide, I blocked that in. I used cocaine and alcohol to block everything out. I used to snort ounces and ounces, smoking and drinking for weeks. I wouldn’t sleep then I’d do the same thing over and over again.

I thought if Tyson can do it and he’s got a lot more money, fame and distractions than I do, if he can do it for his kids and Paris then I will do the same for mine. He’s fantastic, he’s a gentleman. We get on well, we’ve had the same problems. If you’ve got the right support network around you anything can be defeated.

“I’m getting help myself but not too long ago I wanted to be dead, I tried to take my own life. I thought of doing the worst and I’ve sorted myself out now, I’m in a program, hopefully getting back fit again.”

On a daily basis, the travelling community faces discrimination which can have a profound bearing on mental well-being. The persecution and prejudice they experience often leads to the community becoming alienated. Fury’s success has enabled him to act not only as a precedent setter for travellers but an inspiration due to his positivity in the face of adversity.

“It’s like anything, there’s good and bad in all walks of life and unfortunately if something happens with a member of the travelling community, people remember the bad and they don’t remember the good,” McCrory adds.

“You might have one bad egg and you’ll be remembered for that one person’s actions even though you could have hundreds of other good travellers doing good things.

“People discriminate against me all the time because they see that persona, James ‘the Gypsy Boy’ McCrory. They think of that persona, a bare-knuckle fighter and they think I’m an animal, but I’m far from it, I’ve got a big heart.”

Growing up in a household where nobody talked about their mental well-being, Fury knows the importance of communication. His prominence in both the traveller community and wider society allows him to act as a beacon of hope for those in need and he is able to challenge the narrative by igniting often difficult conversations around mental health.

“He [Fury] shines a light on the issues of mental health in traveller men,” says Yvonne MacNamara, CEO of the Traveller Movement. “Those in the community often don’t seek the support they need due to ideas of masculinity. But equally, there is a lot of difficulty for travellers in accessing the services.

“What he is doing around mental health, the conversations certainly will open up much wider discussions and help people. Suicide rates within the traveller community are exceptionally high and it’s something we hear every other week that a young person from the traveller community has committed suicide.”

As well as championing mental health in the traveller community, Fury’s well-documented comeback has helped to break down stereotypes that wider society has of travellers. He showed incredible strength and determination to make such a successful comeback which has led to him becoming a champion and role model both in and out of the ring.

“Tyson has broken the stereotype of travellers not having ambition, not working and not doing anything. We’ve seen a young man who has broken through glass ceilings. He has a fantastic work ethic and huge determination,” adds MacNamara.

 “He is a role model for not just travellers but a lot of young people who are coming from poor working-class backgrounds who can look at someone like Tyson and aspire to what he has actually achieved through sheer hard work and determination. On top of that, he has donated so much to homelessness and to mental health charities.”

Fury’s success in the ring has prompted documentaries, such as ITV’s *Tyson Fury: The Gypsy King* to be broadcast. These programs show the real lives of Irish travellers and help breakdown the misconception wider society has of the community as a whole.

“It’s a lovely documentary. These documentaries about him are really helping the community. They’re showing people a different side that has not been shown on television,” MacNamara says.

“It’s very different to say, *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings,* which we would seriously consider as a mockumentary and ridiculing. None of us know those travellers and that is not how the travelling community live.

“You see who Tyson is, very much as a traveller and you see how Paris is as a traveller woman and you see how they live their lives. The majority are like Tyson Fury, he’s an Irish traveller, his people are from Galway, that’s what the majority of people are like that you will meet.”

While the belts that Fury wins will be what the records show, his victory against his toughest opponent yet will define the legacy of his career. His comeback showed it was possible to rise from the lowest of lows to defeat your demons and helped champion change for the travelling community.

He is an icon of the community who is breaking down stereotypes and outdated ideas of masculinity to ensure a better life for his family and others. He is a champion in the ring and a champion out of it, he really is the ‘Gypsy King.’

**Questions**

1. Who is Tyson Fury? Summarise **four** pieces of information that we are given about him throughout the article. (4 marks)
2. Look at paragraph 2. Analyse how the writer’s use of imagery shows the struggle Fury was experiencing. (4 marks)
3. Analyse the image used by the writer to convey the fact that Tyson is at the top of his sport. (2 marks)
4. Read the paragraph beginning ‘Fury’s battles inside and out…’. Summarise **two** points made by the writer here. (2 marks)
5. ‘His openness with mental health has helped to breakdown ideas of masculinity’. Explain what this means. (2 marks)
6. Find a word in paragraph 10 that means the same as difficulty or misfortune.

(1 mark)

1. Explain 3 things we learn about the travelling communities from these paragraphs. (3 marks)
2. What role does Tyson Fury play in helping those in the travelling community with mental health issues? (2 marks)
3. What is wrong with tv documentaries about travellers according to the speaker?

(2 marks)

1. Look at the word choice used in the final paragraph. How does it convey the speaker’s admiration for Tyson Fury? (4 marks)
2. Summarise the point made in the penultimate paragraph. (2 marks)

**Article Two**

**'It’s scary, there’s not enough help for them, so why do Roma Travellers come here?'**

#### There are over 5,000 Roma people living in Scotland, with the majority living in Glasgow's Govanhill area.

A language barrier and cultural differences sometimes make it difficult for the Roma community to fully integrate into Scottish culture.

Rahela is faced with a cultural difference even in choosing the venue for one of her first meetings with Neil due to the fact that her faith means that she doesn't drink. The compromise of choosing a bar and only drinking coffee means that she can offer Neil the option of drinking alcohol should he desire to do so.

Introductory conversations can be nervy affairs at the best of times, but questioning someone from a different culture to you with potential for a language barrier getting in the way makes Neil and Rahela's chat stilted at times.

As well as being a slight issue during a conversation, the problem of a language barrier is something Rahela points out to Neil is an issue in her daily life:

"You can’t find a job because you don’t know the language."

Neil is obviously sympathetic to Rahela's situation, but quizzing her as to what Scots like him can do brings out a frank reply from the 21-year-old:

"Make [Roma people] feel more welcome... I teach Romanes at a swap market and privately as well. I think if the Scottish people do a bit of their part then the Roma people can do a bit of their part."

Neil also points out that there will be many people in the local Govanhill community who will believe that if Roma people come to Scotland, then it’s their responsibility to learn the language.

'[Some Roma people] find it difficult to even learn the basics. They know nothing, zero.'

Given the massive issues surrounding learning the language, Neil asks why Roma people come to the UK if there is not any help for them to better integrate into a local community.

Rahela's resignation is evident in her reply:

"I don’t know."

**Task**: Read the article. Complete the boxes below about your opinions of the Roma community.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I used to think… |  |
| But now I think… |  |