



SCUM
VOLUME 1

WELCOME TO VOLUME ONE OF SCUM.

SCUM IS A DIY COLLECTIVE OF ARTISTS, ACADEMICS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, FILMMAKERS AND WRITERS. THIS IS OUR FIRST MARK. WE AIM TO MAKE ALL VOLUMES OF SCUM ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE, IN BOTH PRINT AND ONLINE. OUR COLLECTIVE PRACTICES ARE OPEN ENDED (1) WE ARE NOT LIMITED TO ONE INDIVIDUAL, OR GROUP OF PEOPLE. SCUM EXPECTS TO GROW IN NUMBERS (2) WE ARE NOT BOUND TO ONE POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND REJECT THE CORPORATE BRANDING OF LIBERATION POLITICS AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS (3) WE AIM TOWARDS COMPLETE DISSOLUTION OF GENRE AND THE ART FORM. THIS VOLUME IS A STARTING GROUND, A PLACE OF EXPERIMENTATION AND DISCUSSION, ALWAYS KEEPING IN MIND THAT WE SHOULD QUESTION AND CRITIQUE THE STRUCTURES AND ATTITUDES WHICH DIVIDE US.

MORE TO COME,

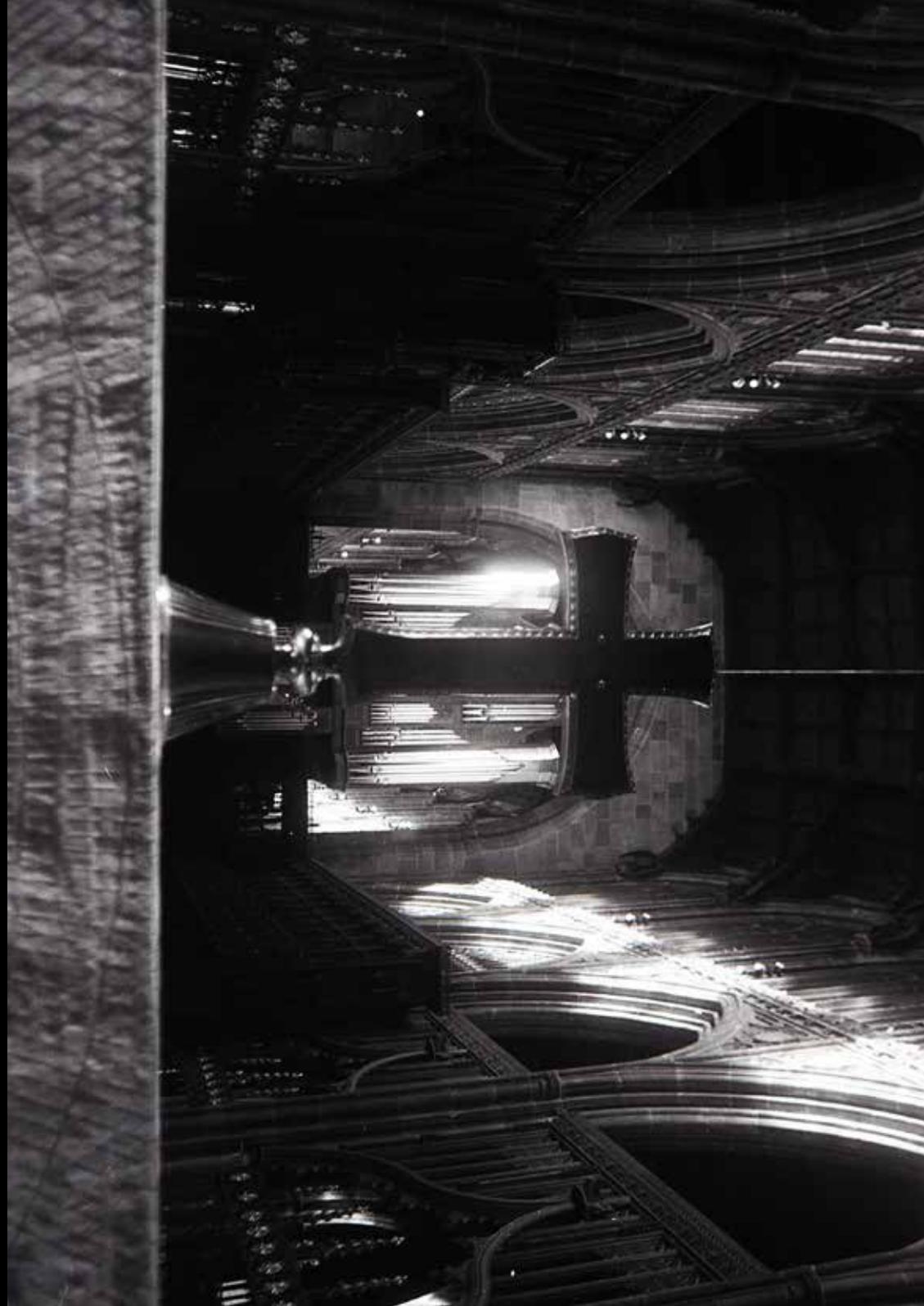
SCUM

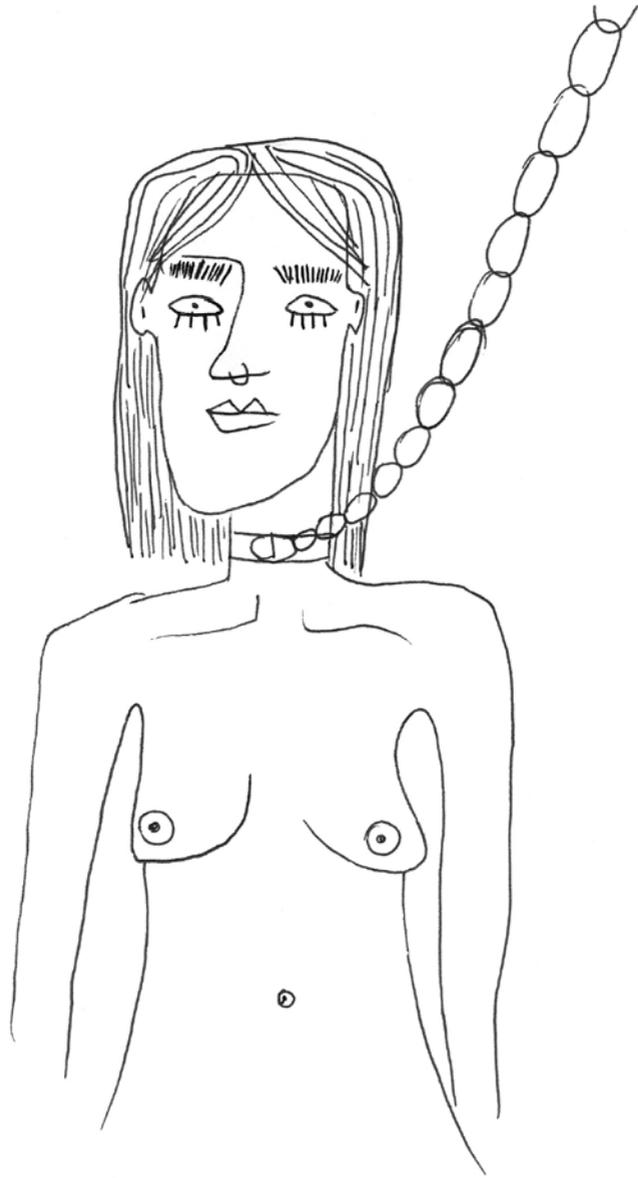


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You keep me on a leash
But I'm not yours to pull





'THOUGHT ITSELF IS A MONSTER'
Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995)



Portrait of Gilles Deleuze (1987)

Gilles Deleuze was born in 1925, married translator Denise Paul Grandloun at age 31, and jumped out of a window in 1995. Often seen as difficult, or even downright impossible to read, Gilles Deleuze's work is to be experienced. Its obscurity is part of its purpose. Deleuze turns philosophy into a creative act, akin to art or science.

Where science creates explanations for why the world took one path over another, philosophy instead creates concepts that engage with and elaborate the many possibilities inherent in the world. Concepts are not simply ideas or thoughts, but tools and weapons to be used in changing life.

Deleuze focuses on multiplicity – objects are always and already multiple, they are combinations of lines and speeds existing in time, always in a process of becoming something else, not just “things” in static space. The first line of *A Thousand Plateaus*, written with Félix Guattari, captures this; “Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd”. To say that *A Thousand Plateaus* was written by “two people” ignores that each author was already multiple people.

Deleuze and Guattari implore us to make maps, not tracings. Maps are made by interacting with the world and highlight points of entry and escape, they can be scribbled on, redrawn, torn up- they are a type of performance. Tracings, however, attempt to make a constantly changing world appear stable and static, they claim to be reality and neutralise the world by reducing it to arbitrary universal laws. By mapping, we can finally break from thought modelled on hierarchies and the State, and find entirely new ways to think.

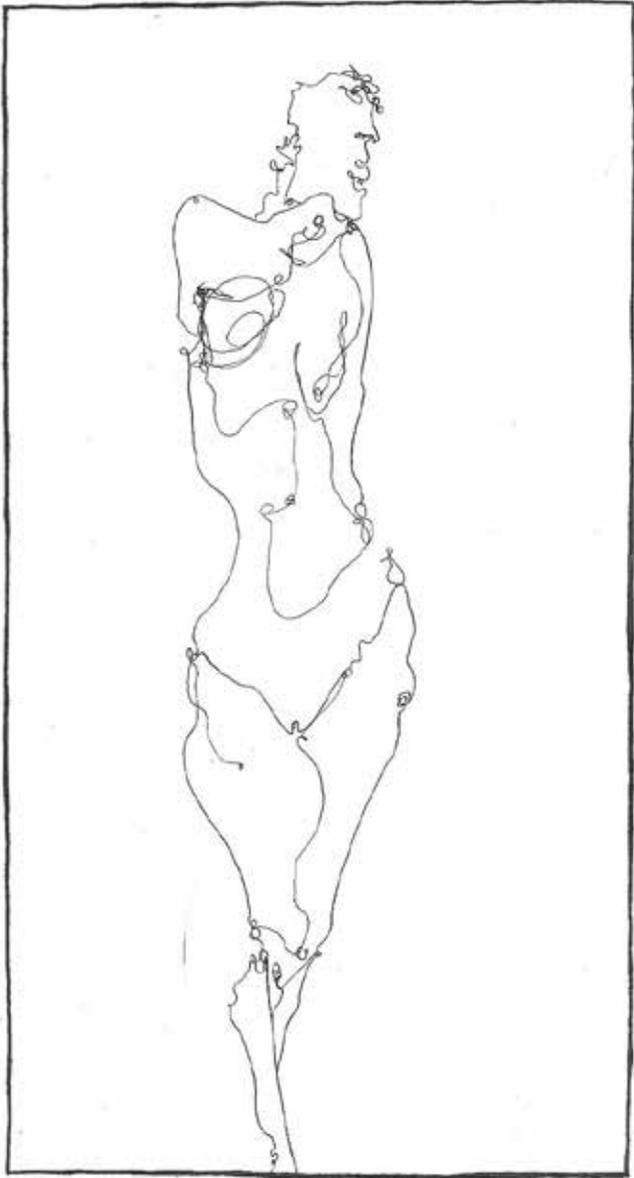




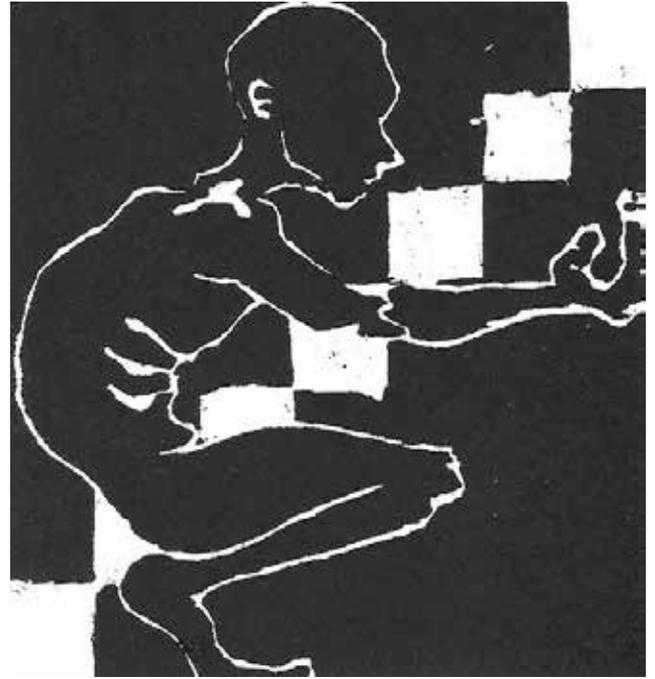
If it's about **YOU** and
YOUR point of view
YOUR career
YOUR family
YOUR children
YOUR education
YOUR friends
YOUR way of life
YOUR liberation

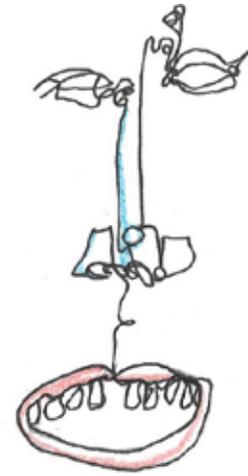
It's not community if we are all
watching ourselves on
tiny silver screens





GEREMONY





SO YOU'LL CALL MY TEARS FROM
BENEATH MY MUNDANE GRIEF AND RUN
THEM INTO THE GROUND. SEE, I KNOW
THEY SCARE YOU TOO. A TIRELESS
DESIRE TO PERFORM WETS THE AIR
THAT RUBS CHEEK AGAINST WALL,
BEFORE WARNING THE MIRROR TO STAY
MUM OR BE SEEN. EVERY DAY IS SO
FAMILIAR I FORGET TOMORROW IS
DIFFERENT. AND THE NIGHT IS
KIND- THE KINDEST YET- BUT I HAVE
NEVER REINCARNATED BEFORE THE
SUN'S RETURN. SHE REMINDS ME OF MY
MOTHER, DISGUISED THE SILENCE OF
MY FATHER WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE LIGHT,
A TENDER DISPLAY. I HAVE FELT THE
BEAUTY OF THE MOON, AND FIXATE
ON ITS DISTANCE. AND THOUGH I
KNOW MY IDEALISM PUT ME HERE, I'LL
WAIT FOR HIS SMILE. CURSING YOUNG
HOPES EACH NIGHT 'TIL THEN, AND
HUG THEM TO THIS DAUGHTER'S FRAME.

MOUTH FULL OF ASH

AND IT WAS AT THAT POINT THAT I
REALISED I AM BORED WITH MY SELF.
CHASING ITSELF IN INTROSPECTION.
NEVER TIRING; NEVER REALLY
ACCEPTING. I AM TEDIUM. THESE
FORMATIONS- CONSTRUCTS- ARE
STATIC. THE PEN DID MOVE. THEN
THE WILL EXISTED. HE TAKES A
BREATH - AND PERSISTS. DO I HEAD
TOWARDS MY SELF? HERE'S TO HOPING
THE END HAS NO NAME. UNDEFINED.
UNDISCOVERED. THIS WAY,
PROTECTED. THAT WAY SANITY LIES.
MOUTH FULL OF ASH. PRONOUNC-
ING 'IS'; SWEEPING THE PAST INTO
PILES. VISIBLE BUT NOT TANGIBLE.
AT ANY MOMENT ANNIHILATED TO MAKE
WAY FOR THE SIGH.

LEFT ON CANAL STREET

WHEN IT FEELS NECESSARY
BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN SHIT
TAKE WHATEVER YOU WANT AND LEAVE
MEANING IN THE DAYTIME
SHE FOUND HER INTRIGUING
IN A SENSE NOT WORTH ANALYSING
BENEATH THE FLURO LIGHTS
OF SHALLOW ENCOUNTERS
A FANCIFUL DISTURBANCE
BROUGHT NOSTALGIA OUT THE WOODWORK
MORE VIVID NOW IN FRUITION
STRINGS UNTANGLE
AS SHE LEANS INTO HER OTHER WORLD

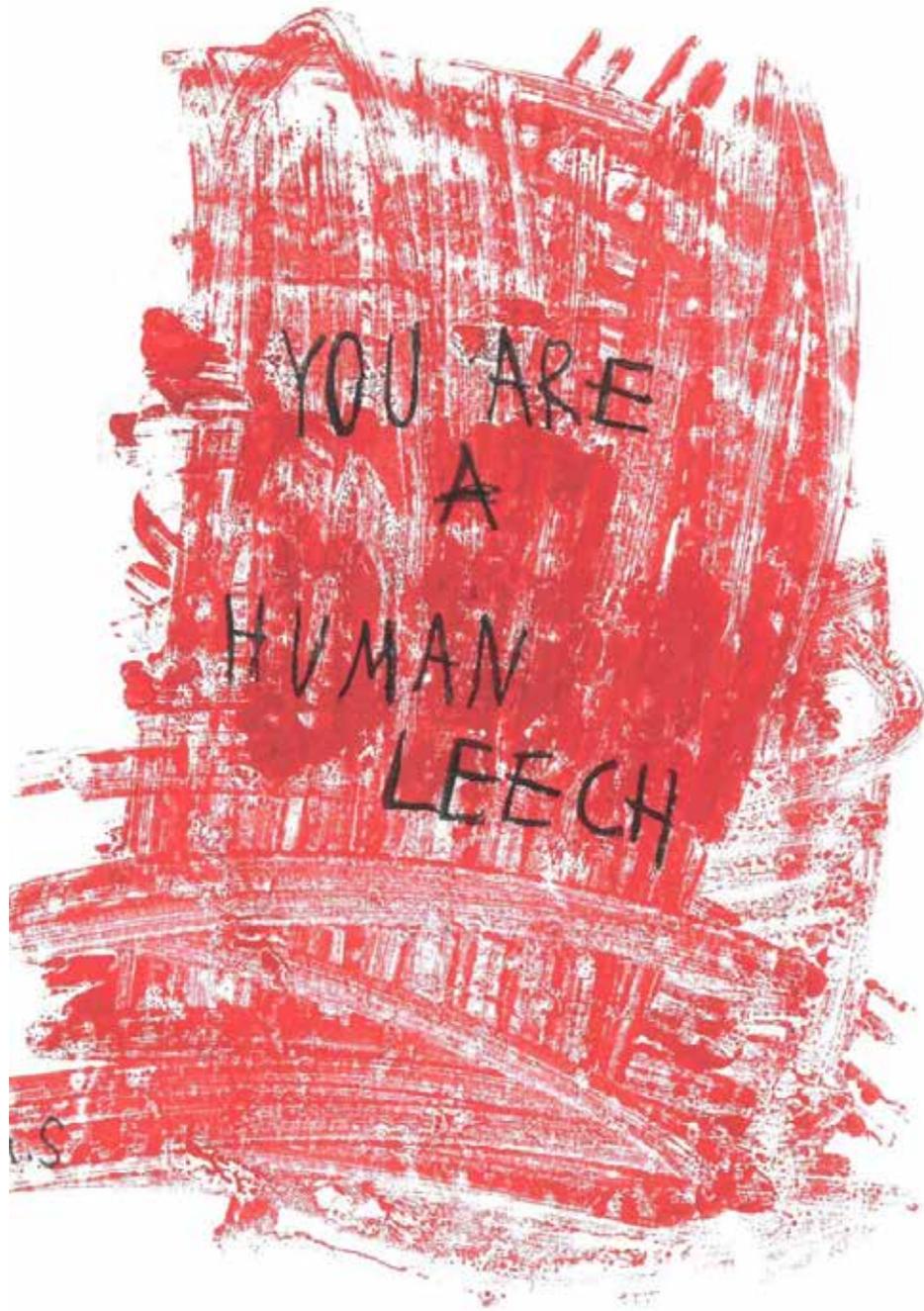
THE ONLY ONE HERE WITH A HEART

HOW MUCH ENERGY MUST I SACRIFICE
OR GIVE UP TO THE COMPLETENESS OF
THINGS?
COLD AIR JITTERS AROUND ME
AS A CHILD REGRETTING ITS RAGE,
THROWING UP OBJECTS
IN THEIR METALLIC SANCTIMONY;
THEY HAVE LIVED AND DIED
BEFORE I LEARNED.
TO KNOW THE QUIET OF A THING MADE
WHOLE,
I AM ALWAYS MORE IGNORANT THAN
BEFORE.
AND, THIS WAY, I WILL FOREVER GO,
TO THE REALM OF LIQUID,
DUSTLESS FORMS.



SOUNDS OF THAT PAST SEASON
HUM A FAINT AND SICKLY LULLABY
TAUNTING ME AS I LOOK UPON THESE
DRAINED REMAINS.
WINTER HAS SMOTHERED YOU AND I
SHE HAS EATEN COLOUR
AND LEFT THIS BLANK CANVAS,
THIS ETERNALLY COLD PLAIN
IN WHICH I FLOAT, LUCID THROUGH AN
ASHEN FOG
SOMETHING CONJURES ME
AND AS I SWAY IN SLEEPS PALM,
I RETURN SOMEWHERE WARMER.
I AM REBORN BENEATH THESE SHEETS.





The place I grow up in is

SHIT -----I am good at
something-----I do good things---- I
move to LA----- I sit on my money and
talk about how I've made it

The place I grow up in is **SHIT** -

-----**SHIT**----**SHIT**--

--Everything is **SHIT** ----but
I am good at something-----and I

BLEED -----I use it to

**BLEACH THE
SHIT.**

The idea of art being an expression of self is problematic.
Capitalism has turned us all into individuals.

Pain is political Pain is political



Pain is political Pain is political

i)The CIA decided to exhibit Jackson Pollock's work abroad during the Cold War because it was the perfect reflection of the Western Capitalist man; free to express himself, do what the fuck he liked, as long as he served the system in some way. He could critique the system all he wanted in his New York apartment with his mass produced oil paints, beating up his wife. These foreign exhibitions made Jackson Pollock an international sensation and the USA became the leader of the free world. In Soviet Russia, abstract art was banned. Abstract and avant garde artists were

sent to mental hospitals, work camps and military service. The idea of an individual expressing themselves goes against a tyrannical system that demands collective conformity to one political ideal. Here art which expresses itself, says "Fuck You", faces two problems:

Not individual Not individual



Not individual Not individual

1) If it wants to be free and expressive and continue in this way, it must be sold to the art market, which turns it into a commodity. It's no longer a reflection of the human condition, but a nice picture on someone's wall. That someone is probably part of the social or political elite, who gets to decide aesthetic and social trends because Daddy's got a lot of money in the bank. You hated these people to start off with, now they own you.

PAIN IS POLITICAL



NOT INDIVIDUAL

2) If it wants to be individually expressive and appeal to a lot of people, it has to be socially legible. Think advertising boards and propaganda posters, day time TV and magazine covers. The problem with this is that you are conforming to the exact same structures you wish to destabilize. The authority of education doesn't let you speak to those who went to a different school to you. Class divide.

(ii)

There is a mental health crisis amongst the younger generation in the UK. You only need go to any university halls of residence in Manchester to see that. At my time in university in Manchester, I witnessed a nineteen year old boy trying to throw himself out of a four story building, a young boy hung himself in MMU Briarfields halls, a young boy jumped off a flight of stairs in UOM Richmond park, killing himself, several UOM halls of residence gained a reputation for near fatal drug overdoses, many students living here were either selling drugs from the dark web to pay off debt, or in some cases were addicted to the likes of fentanyl, amphetamines or class As, there were also cases of on campus rape and sexual assault. Almost everyone I knew, at some point, was on NHS antidepressants and had never even been put on a waiting list to receive therapy, or if they did, the waiting list was up to 18 months. You can't usually last that long when you're in a critical condition. The UK education system, NHS and government are not dealing with this "crisis" sufficiently, and young people are dying. There are both social and institutional factors to consider within this.

NHS: Due to severe financial cuts and privatisation within the National Health Service, quick fixes are used to treat long term mental health illnesses. Medication such as sertraline is given to young people in order for them to function in a work or educational environment and GPs can tick off a cured box and get on with their day. This does not alleviate the problem but enhances it. Many young people with addiction issues are put on dangerous medication they soon become dependent on instead of criminalised drugs.

Government: Due to the UK electorate mainly consisting of the older generation, it is their voices and concerns that are debated in parliament, in order to keep two parties in power. Within this, outdated views on mental health continue as the norm. "Teenage girls have a fad of diagnosing themselves with depression and anxiety" and "Why would you try to kill yourself? What a reckless thing to do, you don't understand your privilege", mental illness is an inconvenience, a fault in the works.

Capitalism has expanded into the realm of education, making it something that maims and castrates young adults, who are at the most vulnerable points of their development. The educational institution is a bankrupting force of isolation, completely separate from community.



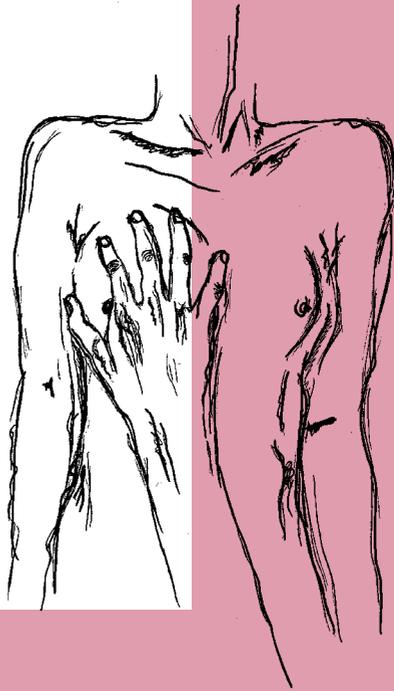
Community is where disciplines come together to fuck and create a Utopic baby that has dissolved all hierarchy. The knowledge to create, the power to conceive and impregnate - to make a utopic babies- is instead sold. It is put in fancy journals, discussed over Pinot Grigio or whatever the fuck they drink, high end divorce, elitism, cannons, hierarchies, careers, money, greed, a new starbucks on campus, or a new loan, or a new way to make it flashy and nice and something you want to buy as a passport into the job system, the hamster wheel. Also, they create something called "Time". It's all about do this do that, instead of think about it, enjoy it, eat it, feed, grow. If there are no hierarchies in education then the politician, industrial worker, lawyer, electrician, filmmaker, musician, journalist, teacher, writer, chef, bartender, artist, anthropologist, makeup artist - will all be seen as equally contributing members of society. Instead of taking knowledge, academia, theory to its full potential- social and political reformation- it is instead turned into a commodity that will eventually make you homeless or addicted to NHS medication.

The Anti-Psychiatry Movement, pioneered by R.D Laing in the twentieth century, believed madness and mental illness to not simply mean breakdown but breakthrough. The man or woman who is said to be deluded, ill, mad- may be, within their delusions, telling the truth of a divided self that has been severed and mutilated by the social and political forces and structures they operate within. Mental illness can tell us a lot about the states of being and thinking that are tolerated within our society, and how these states of thinking and being can be driven to addiction, self mutilation and suicide with the pressures of inequality, segregation, categorisation and commodification which are our everyday realities within the UK. Expression of self fragmentation is an expression of the violences and pressures of a competitive and exploitative society.

Self expression in art, usually seen to be the result of personal turmoil, divided identity and mental illness, then, can perhaps serve a larger, social purpose than individual prestige and money. Giving "self expression" a social and political context perhaps is the way forward. The "self expression" here, I soon realised a year after producing this work, is not unique. Thousands, if not millions, of young people in the UK experience what I have been through as the result of a system who yells at us to bleed for money. Limiting your expression to your own sphere of existence promotes individualism over community, something that is constructing a hyper-individualist society that works to serve an elite few. You should not cast your art as something personal, but as a way to project the social spaces and power structures that caused you, and many others in the same position, to bleed.

I SLIP OUT OF SLEEP
NOT KNOWING
I WAS ENTERING A NIGHTMARE

— WITH HIM INSIDE OF ME



Tumultuous Relationships with Men and Myself
- he must have used a silencer, for I didn't hear it fire
until after I was dead.

The finding that love does not require reciprocation
sits lodged in my throat beside the screams I coax
into tears

Flash-forward to the meaningless encounters
with the Men who recognize the back of her head
better than the front

Dissasociation
the bread and butter of this fucked up service station
Please, stop here!
And fill
this empty vessel

Because I use those times
when they are fucking me
to think of you
alibett
intermittently
between the moans that make them groan
for they don't know
that every thirst sounds like your name.

If they asked me what's the matter
I'd laugh and say
their lips contain the answer
The punchline being that the void I'm
trying to fill
is not a hole any Man can fulfill

Rather
they can add to the paraphernalia
on the windowsill of my emotions
with a glance or a grunt
or an almond-eyed smile
that sincerely beguiles
the parts of me that wish I cared

Please Mother, forgive me for fantasizing
so desperately
within the fallacy
that Men could give me something
only I could ever have.





AYA

HE TOLD ME THAT WE WERE GOING TO THE SELVA ALTA, THE HIGH JUNGLE, TO FIND HER. WE TRAVELLED TWO HOURS UPSTREAM IN DON ORLANDO'S NARROW, WOODEN BOAT. TWO ROUGH PLANKS CONNECTED EITHER SIDE OF THE LENGTH OF THE BOAT, MAKING UNCOMFORTABLE SEATS. I PREFERRED TO SIT ON THE FLOOR. I LIKED HOW CLOSE TO THE WATER THIS MADE ME. WITHOUT THE BOAT, I WOULD BE CHEST-DEEP IN WATER. AS WE JOURNEYED TO HIGHER GROUND, THE WATER SUNK BELOW THE BRIM OF THE EARTH, GIVING WAY TO THE EMERGING ROOTS OF ANCIENT TREES WHICH CONNECTED THE LAND'S EDGE TO THE RIVERBED BENEATH. THICK, BULBOUS LIMBS STRETCHED ETERNALLY WITH A REACH DEEPER THAN THE EYE COULD SEE. DEEPER THAN I ENTIRELY.

WE WERE WALKING NOW. THE SUN WAS HIGH. STILL QUITE DRUNK FROM MY MORNING SERVING OF MASATO - A THICK, INEBRIATING STEW MADE FROM FERMENTED YUCA - I CHEWED ON FRESHLY CUT SUGARCANE. AT SOME POINT DON ORLANDO BEGAN TO FALL BEHIND. I THOUGHT HE WAS RELIEVING HIMSELF AFTER ALL THE MASATO. THERE WAS ONLY ONE PATH, SO I KEPT GOING.

SHORTLY AFTER, I WAS SLIGHTLY PERPLEXED TO SEE HE'D REAPPEARED AHEAD OF ME. HE WALKED TOWARDS ME, BEARING A SMALL WREATH. ITS RINGED CONTINUITY OF THIN BROWN VINES, COILED AND INTER-WEAVED INTO TIGHT KNOTS, WAS BROKEN BY TWO ORNATE ORANGE FLOWERS, ENTWINED IN THE CROWN AT OPPOSITE POINTS OF THE CIRCLE. HE PLACED THE WREATH OVER MY HEAD.

"THIS WAY YOU WILL BE SAFE FROM THE CHULLACHAQUIS," HE SAID, TAKING CARE TO ALIGN THE STRIKING ORANGE FLOWERS WITH MY TEMPLES. HE TOLD ME NOT TO LOSE SIGHT OF HIM AGAIN, OR ELSE A BRUJO (A MALICIOUS SORCERER) COULD TAKE HIM AND USE THE JUNGLE TO LEAD ME ASTRAY. HIS HANDS WERE STILL HOLDING THE WREATH AROUND MY HEAD. HE LOOKED AT ME INTENTLY, WILLING ME TO UNDERSTAND. I HELD EYE CONTACT AND NODDED ASSUREDLY. SATISFIED, HE TURNED AROUND AND KEPT ON WALKING.

I FOLLOWED, WONDERING IF HE HIMSELF - THE FIGURE THAT HAD MYSTERIOUSLY APPEARED IN FRONT OF ME OUT OF NOWHERE - WAS, IN FACT, A CHULLACHAQUI.

THE BARELY TRODDEN PATH EVENTUALLY GAVE WAY TO PURE, UNADULTERATED RAINFOREST. WE PERSEVERED, TRAVELLING, IT SEEMED, IN NO PARTICULAR DIRECTION. DON ORLANDO USED HIS MACHETE TO CUT THROUGH THE OBSTRUCTING JUNGLE SHRUBS WHERE NECESSARY. HAVING LOST TRACK OF TIME, I CAN ONLY SAY WITH CERTAINTY THAT WE REACHED THE END OF THE DENSE UNDERGROWTH SOME TIME AFTER ENTERING IT.

DON ORLANDO POINTED AND BREATHED, "AYAHUASCA".

BEFORE US WAS A SMALL CLEARING. AND THERE SHE WAS. THOUGH NOT ENTIRELY EVIDENT AT FIRST GLANCE, SHE WAS, AT A SECOND, EVERYWHERE. BRANCH-LIKE AND COILED, THE AYAHUASCA VINES STEMMED FROM THE GROUND AND CLUNG TO SURROUNDING TREES, SHOOTING UP IN DETERMINED, UPWARD

SPIRALS TOWARDS THE JUNGLE CEILING, CLAWING FRANTICLY FOR THE LIGHT THAT STREAMED THROUGH THE CANOPY. IN THE CENTRE OF THE CLEARING WAS A FALLEN TREE TRUNK, ANARCHICALLY ENGULFED BY HER THICK TENDRILS. I PONDERED WHETHER THE DEATH HAD BEEN PEACEFUL, OR IF THIS VIOLENT CONSUMPTION HAD BEEN THE CAUSE OF ITS DEMISE.

DON ORLANDO BEGAN TO CAREFULLY CLIP THE LIANAS AT GROUND LEVEL, DETACHING THEM FROM THEIR ROOT BASE. HE THEN PROCEEDED TO UNWRAP THEM FROM THEIR AMPLE SUPPORT NETWORK OF TREES, BRANCHES AND SHRUBS, AND BEGAN TO HACK THEM INTO SECTIONS OF EQUAL SIZE. SOON THERE WAS A THICK BUNDLE OF THE VINES, JOINED TOGETHER BY A STRONG, RIBBON-LIKE LEAF. HE ALSO UPROOTED A HANDFUL OF SWORSHAPED YUCCA LEAVES.

"TO WARD OFF THE BAD ENERGIES DURING THE CEREMONY".

BEFORE LEAVING THE SELVA ALTA WE STOPPED AT DON ORLANDO'S PARENTS' HOUSE. HIS NIECE SERVED US MASATO WHILE DON ORLANDO CONVERSED WITH HIS FATHER IN A DIALECT I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

ON OUR DOWNSTREAM RETURN TO THE SELVA BAJA WE RAN OUT OF PETROL; THE RUSTY PROPELLER CAME TO A HALT. THE CEASING OF THE ENGINE'S HUM GAVE WAY TO A WILD CACOPHONY OF JUNGLE LIFE. WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO TRUST THE CURRENT TO DELIVER US TO OUR DESTINATION, AT ITS OWN PACE.

"WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO BECOME A SHAMAN?"

HE DIDN'T HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THE REPLY: 'I DIDN'T.'

HE DREW A DEEP BREATH AND SEEMED



SUBMERGED IN EVEN DEEPER THOUGHT, MENTALLY DECONSTRUCTING THE COMPLEXITIES OF HIS SHAMANIC HERITAGE. WHILE HE SAT IN CONTEMPLATION, I TURNED MY ATTENTION TO THE WATER. I UNDERSTOOD THEN WHY THIS SECTION OF THE AMAZON IS KNOWN AS LA SELVA DE LOS ESPEJOS, THE JUNGLE OF MIRRORS. THE DARK COLOUR AND UNMOVING STILLNESS OF THE WATER CREATES A MYSTIFYINGLY TRUTHFUL IMPRINT OF THE WORLD ABOVE IT. I LOOKED DOWN AT MY MIRAGE, BREAKING AS I DID SO ITS PERFECTION BY PLUNGING MY HAND INTO THE WATER. AFTER A LONG PAUSE, DON ORLANDO WAS PREPARED TO TALK: "MY UNCLE WAS A SHAMAN, HE CHOSE ME. THE JUNGLE CHOSE ME. I WAS NINE, I DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE." HE TURNED TO FACE ME.

"ALIS, AT FIRST I DIDN'T WANT TO. I TRIED TO FIGHT IT. WHEN THAT DIDN'T WORK I SAID TO MY UNCLE, 'OK, BUT I ONLY WANT LEARN HOW TO DO GOOD, NOT EVIL.' I TOLD HIM 'I DON'T WANT TO BE A BRUJO, I WANT

TO HELP PEOPLE.'"

IT WAS MY THIRD AND LAST CEREMONY WITH DON ORLANDO. AND THIS TIME IT WAS JUST US. HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN WERE ASLEEP. WE SAT OPPOSITE EACH OTHER ON THE FLOOR OF HIS FAMILY HOME. I WAS FACING THE RIVER. MOONLIGHT STREAMED THICK AND SILVER THROUGH THE PANE-LESS WINDOWS.

DON ORLANDO PLACED A HAND-ROLLED TOBACCO CIGARETTE IN FRONT OF ME AND LIT HIS OWN. IT HAD BEGUN.

AFTER SOME TIME SMOKING IN SILENCE, DON ORLANDO Poured THE GLASS. I PUT MY CIGARETTE DOWN. I TOOK A DEEP BREATH. HOLDING THE GLASS WITH TWO HANDS, I DRANK. BY THIS TIME I WAS USED TO THE WAY IN WHICH THE BLACK, VISCOUS MIXTURE, THE AYA-HUASCA CIELO (OF THE SKY) RESTED ON THE PIT OF MY STOMACH, FUMES RISING UP LIKE



SMOKE ON A WET WOODFIRE, THROUGH MY CHEST AND INTO MY THROAT. IT DIFFUSED OUTWARDS INTO MY LIMBS, PERMEATING MY BEING. THIS WAS MY BIGGEST SERVING YET. I CLOSED MY EYES AND FOCUSED ON OPENING MY SENSES TO HER WHILE RESISTING THE URGE TO VOMIT.

DON ORLANDO BEGAN TO CHANT SONOROUSLY, SHAKING THE FAN OF YUCCA LEAVES IN REASSURING, RHYTHMIC BEATS. THE SWEET AROMA OF AGUA FLORIDA (HOLY WATER) MINGLED POLITELY WITH THE SMELL OF SPENT TOBACCO IN THE AIR, AS HE SANG:

"AYAHUASCA, LIANAS DEL CIELO-0000, MADRE AYAHUA-AASCA, AYAHUA-AASCA, ABRE TU ALMA DESDE-E EL CI-IE-EELO-0000."

AS QUICKLY OR SLOWLY AS THE SICKNESS CAME, IT WENT. SHE WAS IN MY MIND NOW. MY SOUL WAS BURNING WITH KNOWING. TIME PASSED.

WHEN I OPENED MY EYES I WAS LYING ON MY BACK. I HAD BEEN FLYING OVER A NEARBY SECTION OF JUNGLE CANOPY ON THE WINGS OF A RED AND WHITE BUTTERFLY. I LOOKED AT DON ORLANDO. HE WAS SITTING AGAINST THE WALL, BENEATH THE WINDOW.

"COMO TE SIENTES, ALIS?"

I REPLIED, "I FEEL IT. I FEEL GOOD. I FEEL HER."

HE NODDED, SATISFIED.

SUDDENLY, I FELT THE URGE TO KNOW HIM BUBBLING IN MY STOMACH. "WHERE IS YOUR MOTHER, DON ORLANDO?"

I SAW PAIN SHOOT ACROSS HIS FACE, SETTING INTO HIS FEATURES LIKE A GREY SKY CARRYING A STORM. BUT HIS EYES WERE THE SAME. THE PAIN WAS ALWAYS IN HIS EYES.

HE REPLIED, "MY MOTHER ISN'T HERE ANYMORE." I PAUSED, WONDERING IF I WANTED TO KNOW. "WHAT HAPPENED?"

"IT WAS MOTHER'S DAY. WE WERE ALL CELEBRATING TOGETHER AT HER HOME IN THE MORNING. SHE WAS WEARING A WHITE DRESS WITH RED FLOWERS ON IT. SHE LOOKED BEAUTIFUL. THEN SHE LEFT TO SEE MY FATHER'S SIDE OF THE FAMILY FOR LUNCH. MY WIFE AND I WERE TO JOIN THEM IN THE AFTERNOON. WHEN WE GOT TO MY PATERNAL GRANDMOTHER'S HOME, SHE WASN'T THERE. THEY THOUGHT SHE WAS WITH US. NOBODY KNEW WHERE SHE WAS. I WAS WORRIED. IT WASN'T RIGHT. I WENT BACK ONTO THE BOAT AND STARTED TRAVELLING THROUGH THE VILLAGES, CALLING HER NAME UNTIL IT WAS DARK. I DIDN'T FIND HER. I WENT BACK TO MY FAMILY. AS I WAS MOORING THE BOAT, I SAW SOMETHING WHITE GLISTENING DOWNSTREAM. I RAN ACROSS THE RIVER EDGE TOWARDS IT. AND THAT'S WHEN I FOUND HER. SHE WAS LYING FACE DOWN IN ANKLE-DEEP WATER. IT WAS HER DRESS GLITTERING LIKE DIAMONDS IN THE MOONLIGHT. SHE WAS DEAD."

"WHY DID IT HAPPEN?"

HE CONTINUED, "AT FIRST I DIDN'T KNOW. AFTER SHE DIED, I KEPT TAKING AYAHUASCA IN ORDER TO SPEAK WITH HER. IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY SENSE. SHE HAD NO INJURIES. SHE COULD SWIM. SHE WAS HEALTHY. I WAS DESPERATE. WHENEVER I SAW HER, SHE COULD NEVER SAY ANYTHING, SHE WOULD JUST CRY, WEEP. A NEVER-ENDING RIVER OF TEARS. THAT'S WHEN I KNEW HOW SHE DIED."

"HOW DID IT HAPPEN?" I ASKED.

HE LOOKED AT ME, THOROUGHLY DEFEATED. "BRUJOS."



THEY



The simplest defence of “THEY” as a valid gender-neutral, singular pronoun is that it has been used that way for centuries. The second defence is that there is no natural correlation between the English language words “HE” and “SHE” and people’s bodies. As of yet, no Latin-script markings have been found within the human genome. However, this glosses over a curious quirk of the English language: that the pronoun “THEY” operates simultaneously as both singular and plural, traceable as far back as the first complete English language translation of the Bible. When the 14th Century Wycliffe Bible writes ‘each one in their craft is wise’, it is a pre-modern pre-empting of contemporary philosophy and biology’s preoccupation with the plurality of the human.

Estimates of the number of non-human cells, mostly gut microbes without which we could not survive, in the human body range between 30 trillion and 400 trillion, with proper “human” cells ranging from 15 trillion to 724 trillion. The false (yet popular) claim that human cells are outnumbered 10 to 1 ignores the real existential gulf, that we actually have no idea how much of us can be categorised as “human”, if any such categorisation is even possible.

This unknowable plurality stretches from within our bodies to outside our bodies, bodies which have been several since before Homo sapiens speciated from our ancestors. If human beings cannot live without shelter, water, and food, they are inseparable from the dirt that food grows in, the rivers that carry water, and the slaughterhouses where lives mass-produced by humans are ended. The life of the human is inseparable from the trees they climb, the deer they kill, the bacteria that grow on them, and the words they say. The sheer number of factors involved in the life of the human is uncountable, making the human itself uncountable and unknowable.

If the human cannot be separated from the environment they crawl in, or from the trillions of organisms who crawl inside them, the division between singular and plural pronouns breaks down. The transphobic insistence that “THEY” can only be plural is an insistence that “HE” and “SHE” can only be singular. Denying that “THEY” can apply to one person is denying that humans are plural and multiple, a violent reduction of the human down to a single object, regardless of their gender.

It is easier to control one “HE” than to control hundreds of trillions of synchronised living beings, a nervous system firing in all directions, chance encounters in the street, language shifting over thousands of years, and the decisions people make when they use that language every day.

PLUTO-SATURN

Over two thousand years ago, priests in ancient Babylon watched the skies for messages from the Gods that would foretell trouble for the empire. Over thousands of years, this practice slowly transformed into one of the most popular (and often dreaded) first date questions: “What’s your sign?” Today, the Instagram astrology meme account notallgeminis has almost double the number of followers than Babylon had citizens. Common answers to astrology’s popularity include that it acts as a source of meaning and comfort in a harsh world. However, it is often quite the opposite: being born under a certain sign is a meaningless coincidence, and all the signs are equally flawed. From Aries through to Pisces, everyone is secretly emotional, traumatised, romantically doomed, and potentially violent.

It is precisely this depressive trend in contemporary astrology that explains its popularity. There are no rational, causal effects between the position of Mars in the sky at the moment you are born and your sex life. There are also no rational, causal effects between the science of ecology and Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro’s continuation and intensification of deforestation of the Amazonian rainforest, or between the economic understanding that wealth inequality is harmful and continued devastating global poverty.

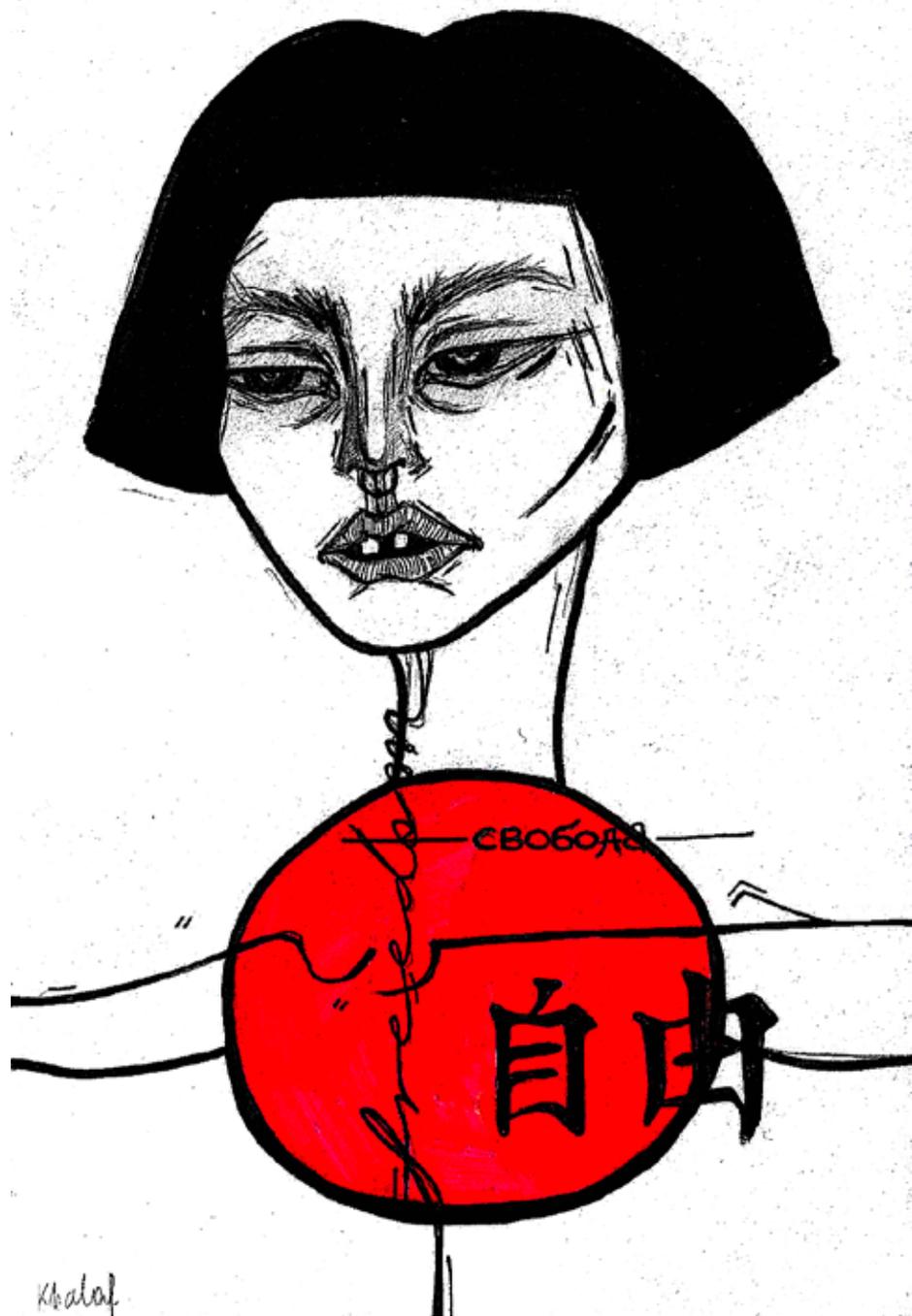
Astrology does not offer comfort and meaning. Astrology brings the stars down to Earth, but that Earth consists of working a numbing nine-to-five job, being ghosted by sexual partners, getting drunk, not turning up to lectures, anxiety, depression, and painful ecstasy when something finally goes right. Trump is president and Brexit won the referendum. The only thing more irrational than the idea that a Pluto-Saturn conjunction will bring forth radical political change is living under a society that needs such radical political change.

If astrology “made sense”, it would cease to be as popular. Neuroscience, cognitive psychology, and psychoanalysis all provide compelling models for describing human behaviour in a rational, modern, and scientific manner. It is precisely for this reason that very few people have ever read a cognitive science textbook. In contrast, astrology travels within the unpredictability of human life and the brutality of power. “Rational” approaches to the individual, politics, and the human have been failing for decades. Knowledge of the human genome has increased, but the treatment of the humans that genome is carried in has gotten more and more dire through economic inequality, the harsh treatment of migrants and refugees, and ecological collapse going from a potential threat to a lived reality. State and cultural repression has destroyed activist movements, academia has become increasingly orthodox, and once radical art movements have been co-opted into the art industry.

The successes of rationality against these trends are quickly absorbed into the irrationality of power. Power contains its own logics, the patenting of medicines fulfils the pharmaceutical industry’s own logic of constantly acquiring more wealth, for example. But from the perspective of the marginalised outside of that power, such logic is impossible to understand, and all that is seen are huge prices for medicines and cuts to the NHS. Astrology, and other “irrational”, marginalised practices, provide a way of conceiving of the unknowable, mysterious, occult nature of human power, from within that sense of mystery itself.

Maybe the joining of Pluto and Saturn in the sky in 2020 will coincide with shifts in global politics, maybe it will not. However, often forgotten in contemporary astrology is the key principle of ancient Babylonian astrology: when the skies read doom, there will be a ritual that can be done to prevent the worst from occurring. Action overrides the Gods.





DADDY FOUCAULT: THREE THINGS YOU CAN LEARN



1. Power shouldn't be thought as oppression, it's not a big man putting restraints on you so you can't move about freely. Power relies on your participation, it says it can tell you things you didn't know about yourself and let you have a better lifestyle.

2. It is important, when seeking social advancement, not to categorise yourself. By saying you are a WOMAN/HOMOSEXUAL/BISEXUAL etc, and ascribing characteristics, ideologies, states of being, even colours to those identities, you are following the workings of a hierarchical power structure which controls us by identifying and categorising us. The key is to avoid categorisation when making yourself visible.

3. By seeing yourself as separate from power because you are marginalised, outside the problem, you have denied you are very much in it. You have the power to say "NO", you have power.

WE ARE ALL SUBMITTING BECAUSE THERE ARE POWER STRUCTURES EVERYWHERE IN EVERYTHING WE DO.

The place doesn't really have a culture it's a land full of people trying to figure out who THEY THEMSELVES are. Their culture becomes the media. The mentality suddenly becomes "I'm going over there don't fuck with me."

STUDIO SCUM

SCUM IS A DIY COLLECTIVE BASED IN SOUTH MANCHESTER CONSISTING OF ARTISTS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, FILMMAKERS, POETS, WRITERS, AND ACADEMICS.

1. SCUM HAS NO SINGLE AGENDA, EXCEPT FOR OUR BELIEF IN THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION.
2. YOUNG CREATIVES NEED TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER, ESPECIALLY IN THIS WORLD THAT REFUSES TO PAY US TO DO THE THINGS WE NEED TO DO TO STAY HAPPY.
3. COLLECTIVELY, OUR WORK COVERS GENDER, SEXUALITY, MENTAL HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTALISM, AND MANY OTHER TOPICS.
4. IN DEALING WITH THESE ISSUES, WE DO NOT RESTRICT OURSELVES TO ONE POLITICAL STANCE, SOCIAL GROUP, OR MOVEMENT.
5. OUR BODIES, LIVES, AND IDENTITIES ARE NOT CONCRETE STATES OF BEING, WE ARE INSEPARABLE FROM OUR EXPERIENCES, THE WORLD WE INHABIT, AND THE TECHNOLOGIES WE USE.
6. LIFE IS A COSMIC SPECTRUM; OUR WORK TAKES PART IN THIS CACOPHONY OF CHANGE.

MANIFESTO

7. WE USE THE ALGORITHMIC AND PROFIT-DRIVEN PLATFORMS OF TODAY'S WORLD TO OUR ADVANTAGE, PROMOTING A DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS AND PRACTICES TO PUSH YOUTH FORWARD.
8. WE STRONGLY BELIEVE THE INTERNET SHOULD BE USED AS A REVOLUTIONARY SPACE TO PROMOTE IDEAS AND PRACTICES WHICH HAVE HISTORICALLY BEEN KEPT INACCESSIBLE TO THE WIDER POPULATION.
9. THE NORTHERN ART SCENE IS OVERSHADOWED BY LONDON, AND MANY CREATIVES IN MANCHESTER AND OTHER CITIES ARE NOT GETTING THE EXPOSURE OR FUNDING THEY DESERVE, BECAUSE THEY'RE NOT ECONOMICALLY ADVANTAGED OR SOCIALLY PRIVILEGED.
10. WE NEED MORE DIVERSITY WITHIN CREATIVE EXPOSURE. THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE IS NOT LIMITED TO A PARTICULAR AREA.
11. OUR GENERATION IS A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT, DOMINATED BY AN INCREASINGLY DIRE POLITICAL SITUATION. OUR WORK IS UNEQUIVOCALLY AGAINST THE RACISM, TRANSPHOBIA, HOMOPHOBIA, MISOGYNY, AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS THAT DEFINE THIS EXPERIMENT.
12. SCUM EXISTS TO SYSTEMATICALLY DESYSTEMATISE. THE PRICE OF FAILURE IS NOT RESTRICTED TO THE ART GALLERY.



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