You're Wasted Life

WHAT IF ALL THAT THINKING WAS A WASTE OF TIME?



An interpretation of Adam Phillips' essay,
"On Not Getting It" from his book *Missing Out*.

Note I

Any of you meatsacks actually enjoying this? Life I mean. Bit fuckin' exhausting isn't it? Like ya ever do any fun shit now just to do it? Everything's gotta be strategic. We've taken all that "A Brand Called You" shit from the '90s and really swallowed it up. (Like your mom.) "What's the purpose of



this? What's the end goal of that? What'll I gain doing thon?" "Always on" is tough going. Our stupid little brains are frazzled trying to keep up, trying to understand, trying to "get it" all the time. What if we just wanna lie back and get to chillin' like Skeletor (i.e. a villian)?

Well, the Good News is, Jesus has risen. Jokes. Nah, the good news is if you're sick of the relentless drive to constantly get it, you're not alone. Meet Adam Philips.



This spaghetti-haired thinkin'-about-thinkin' motherfucker's got your back. He's like, getting it ain't all it's cracked up to be. In fact, there might be fewer dickwads in this world if we didn't all try so hard to get it. When this wily ol' word-slut talks about how **"the will to understand — our second nature, as it were — was sometimes a distraction from, or an evasion of, something more valuable or even more pleasurable"**, it chimes with a sort of internalised push for mastery. We all gotta be obsessed with something these days. But lemme ask ya, are you really enjoying those podcasts about Japanese cottagecore jazz fusion recommended by malnourished ex-E4 presenter Sebastian McPoshboy? Course not. Deep down you'd rather be dancing to Wham!'s "Club Tropicana".

Point is, choosing to get shit, over just enjoying shit, sucks ass. Makes me think of video games. With my adult glasses and carpal tunnel it'll probably come as no surprise that I used to love button-bashing a Playstation controller. (Alas, finger-bashing eluded me.) I'd spend hours on my own (by choice! Shut up!) playing video games and that shit brought me so much joy. But now I've got this crusty old Xbox One collecting dust beside a book called *The Expressive Power of Video Games* that I bought to pretend I know what the hell "object-oriented ontology" means. Like who gives a shuck? It's like I've replaced the pleasure of gaming – and not just *Leisure Suit Larry* (if you know, you know) – with understanding it. Trying to get it. Sure I dabble with the odd session of *FIFA* but it's not the same. No one ends up crying and 11 year old Maltese kids online are fuckin' unstoppable.

So what does it mean if someone prioritises getting it over everything else? It means they've become a bellend… also known as a hipster. Assuming they're still a thing? Are they? I dunno. Maybe Gen Z has a new name for them. Or unalived them (fingers crossed.) But it's them insufferable hipsters who are synonymous with knowing loads but actually loving nothing. And it's a miserable way to be. Helpfully though, Adam Philips Seymour Hoffman (oh yeah, from now on I'm making up names for him) smashes their bottle of natural wine and suggests **"we might then want to learn not getting it, or unlearn the supposed need to be the kind of people who always get it; who get the joke whether or not they find it funny; who get the poem whether or not they think it is a good one; who get the point so they are in a position to evaluate it."**


We discovered Korean barbecue in this town.
Before the Koreans?
Oh sure they cook it, but they don't get it.

Note II

"What is this shit?" Wait. "What is this?" Wait. "Maybe it's..." Wait. "Keep it down over there." Wait. "I like this."

Is that a poem? Probably not. Whatever. I'm gonna call it a poem. People like to use the term "meta" these day but they don't really know what it means. And neither do I. But I think what's about to happen here is sorta meta. Here goes... I'm going to tell you what my poem is about so you understand it, and what my poem is about is not having to understand poems. Marvel Cinematic Universe baddy Adam Warlock Philips kicked off this navel-gazing round table by implanting the following question into my brain: **"What do you say about a poem — or about and to a person — if the project is not to understand, if the intention is to not get it? If you don't want intelligibility, what do you want instead?"**

Do you binge box sets? I don't. I tried *West Wing* but that dialogue... It was like *Dawson's Creek* for politics but without the excitement of seeing meme-crier Dawson go toe-to-toe with disappointing-career-path Joshua Jackson. Anyways, that's not why I stopped watching. I stopped 'cause ain't nobody got time for that. Fuckin' *time* man. 155 episodes...no chance. Yes, like every other neolib phantom I'm trapped in this hellhole that demands relentless productivity and sucks away time. And lemme tell ya, I've been sucked. I've been sucked real good. So when a friend gave me this text by some billy goat creature called Georges Perec that had no narrative, no plot, no structure

and was just pages and pages of everything they'd seen in a day, I whispered to myself a Paulie in *The Sopranos* style "get da fuck outta here". For some reason though I gave it a shot and something magical happened. I shat myself. No, but what did happen was that the text didn't satisfy my instinct to get it but it didn't frustrate me either. It just, like, removed the instinct. It chilled me the fuck out a bit. Which is sweet 'cause as Amy Adams Phillips says when it comes to a text, **"its form does not dictate its function; what determines its function is what the reader wants it for. What does it get you out of?... What mood, what state of mind does it release you from? Where is my mind?"** Nah kiddin', that last bit's the Pixies.

Still, there's more to ponder in this little word cluster-nugget that Adam Fill'er-up tossed into our face... Let's talk death. Dying is bound to be shit craic, right? For now though, fuck that dying person. Let's spare a thought instead for the poor sap who finds themself in a hospital ward in front of said dying person and has to come up with the right thing to say. "Busy today?" Now cast your stink eye back a few lines and see that Adam the amateur ornithologist (that bit's actually true) questions intelligibility in not only a poem but a person. So how 'bout to this future corpse we say, erm, nothing. If death was Mike Tyson in Nintendo's *Punch-Out* then words are like taking him on with PaRappa the Rapper. Puny little words don't stand a chance of capturing death or comforting the dying. That's why those who have to face the balls-deep scenario of being with the terminally ill on the reg have a saying: "Don't just do something, stand there." What? I can't be serious?


How “a


am" I?

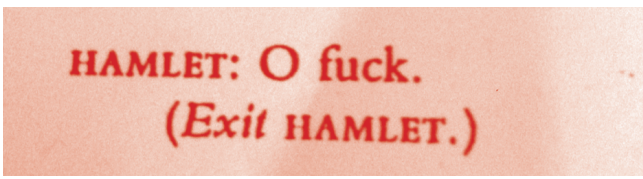
Note III
PART 1/2



Dunno if you heard but there's this thing now called "Artificial Intelligence". It was discovered by Haley Joel Osment who had the ability to see ghosts. One of those ghosts was Stanley Kubrick who handed him a script by Steven Spielberg. Osment was busy though having AIDS on *Walker, Texas Ranger* and didn't have the time to review a full script. So instead he asked his friends Mulder and Scully to use their computer to *summarise* it and Artificial Intelligence was born. But AI's not so smart. Slavoj Žižek and Theo Huxtable were eyeballing summarising tactics years ago. At the risk of getting too

academic Žižek believed the inclination to summarise for efficiency is what scientists call "bad" while Theo thought it was "good".

Theo first. In vintage Theodore style he wanted to hang with his buddy Cockroach rather do his homework and read some rusty old text by Willy Shakespeare. But he also wanted to pass the test. What's the son of a predator to do? Enter Cleland Notes. These cheeky pocket-sized books (if you got freakishly big pockets) summarised the text in plain English so you and Cockroach can kick back and chillax with your brother-in-law Lenny Kravitz. But Theo's mom, Claire (American sitcom's own Stacy's mom), was having none of it. "Booooooooy," she probably said. "You best get to reading Shakespeare cause those shitty Cleland Notes might mean you understand the plot but you won't know diddly about the nuance and subtext Shakespeare was laying down on the page." And Žižek's in her corner. Here's Adam Phillips Head Screwdriver talking about Žižek talking about Shakespeare: **"'To be or not to be, that is the question', becomes something like, 'What's bothering me now is: shall I kill myself or not?' What Zizek calls the 'obscene satisfaction' of these translations is the sheer bathos of their banality; to understand here is reductive in the sense of reducing in complexity."** What we got here ladies and jerks is a case where trying to get it means we don't get it.


HAMLET: O fuck.
(*Exit* HAMLET.)

Reducing complexity so we can be more efficient and ultimately more productive is a fucking BINGO for CEO parasites. But you gotta wonder if it's part of the reason we all got fucked up, wired nervous systems now. The shit's punishing. We've got no time to occupy abstract space let alone the time to think about what that fuck that even means. When folk talk about how scary it is that Haley Joel Osment's supercomputers are imitating humans maybe we're missing the real Black Mirror plot: how computers are making us like them. Your old, creepy-around-female-students Computer Science professor would explain like this: "it's all binary." Not just the programming of ones and zeros though. Like literally we're living the binary. The 1980s documentary *Short Circuit* lied to us and instead of occupying a world alongside the affable and charming Johnny 5 we exist in a digital culture that's described by Marxist academics' wank-bank stalwart, Franco Berardi, as "the point of arrival of the epistemological binarization and purification of language and of social behaviour." Ever spend an hour with a chatbot? After 30 minutes of trashing your keyboard you eventually wither, become a sub and accept that you've gotta adapt to its language. Here's two choices motherfucker, pick one. Well, I guess I'm picking one.





Did you know the dude who wrote that Euro 96 anthem ("Three Lions on the shirt, blaaah, blah, blaah, blah, blah, blaaah") has a poetry podcast? Now I know as much about poetry as Ed Sheeran knows about writing an original song (mee-ow!) but I do get a kick out of how Frank Skinner (said Euro 96 anthem scribe) really jizzes his pants when he gets vibing on a poem. I like it! 'Cause yeah, I'll admit, I've been know to jizz over a juicy combination of words myself. So I'm with Žižek and Theo's mom: frick "reductive"!

But I see you public school Bourdieu fanboys at the back of the class with your hand up trying to argue that maintaining complexity is just a way to refuse accessibility and safeguard elitism. Awww shit, here we go. First of all, your dad's an investment banker, stop trying to pretend you and Chuck D are out there fighting the power. Secondly, we're not talking about linguistic competence as a tool of dominance here. Course that's a thing. Nah, we're talking about the emotional registers that language can evoke. And in that context, size matters. There's getting it with a scrawny, feeble, paltry little "i". But then there's getting IT with a big, stonkin', honkin', chodey mother-fuckin' "I". This is when getting it ascends towards feeling it. Like you've been kicked in the guts... or nuts... or Seymour Butz. You weep openly and begin to pen Drake lyrics (RIP Drake).

Note IV
PART 2/2

Read this:

"A few months back he invited me to come to his studio. We were standing around talking, when all of a sudden he said to me, 'Do you want to see me earn twenty-five thousand dollars before lunch?' 'Sure,' I said, having no idea what he meant. He picked up a large open bucket of paint and splashed some on a piece of canvas stretched on the floor. Then he picked up another bucket, containing a different color, and splashed some of that on the canvas. He did this four times, and it took him perhaps two minutes. When he was done, he turned to me and said, 'Well, that's it. I've just earned twenty-five thousand dollars. Let's go to lunch.'"

Oh damn! Can't believe you did that. You just read from Donald Trump's *Art of the Deal*. What you gonna do next, hit the sunbeds? Buy a red hat? Get a snowmobile? (To navigate Greenland! Duh!) You've changed.

Is Donald's story about the painter true? Fucked if I know. The same guy said thin people don't drink Diet Coke so he's not exactly Augustine of Hungry Hungry Hippos. But this sorta shit does happen. People frolic in the art market in the hope their $25k will become $25 gajillion. Then they blast off in a phallic looking tin silo with Katy Perry doing backing vocals. "Swish Swish Bish." There's another reason though we might fork out 25,000 pound coins for a painting. (Ok, it was dollars, what the fuck do you want me to do, a live currency conversion or something?)

Imagine you're flipping through one of those glossy art magazines. *ERRRNT!* Why the hell would I be doing that? Fair enough. Well let's say you're in Harvey Norman (you know, Go Harvey Go!) and they've got magazines dotted around the showroom to convince you that purchasing a marble side table will transform you into the type of person who reads long-form contemporary art reviews instead of streaming highlights of *Man v Food*. So you sit back on the Live Laugh Love embroidered cushion, open the mag and spot some stone-faced, nepo baby abstract expressionist who's touted as being the next shit-hot superstar artist. And you want to have some of that sweet shit rub off on you. You scope the canvases they've blown their paint-load over, desperate to claim, "I get it. I so get what this is saying." This is where Žižek sets aside Claire Huxtable and moves from a warning against being reductive to a warning against "overinterpretation".

If anyone knows what the hell's going on in this painting it must be the artist, right? So Žižek says we try to have an "affinity" with them even if it means making up some cock and bull story about how deeply we get the painting. Overinterpreting and getting it: it's all the same slop according to Wilson Phillips superfan, Adam: **"What Zizek calls 'the attitude of over interpretation' is a self-cure for the fear of what I am calling 'not getting it'. Overinterpretation is getting it with a vengeance. It betrays an anxiety, so to speak, of not being close enough to, not being of the same mind as, the one supposed to know."** So what Phillips is trying to say is: why bother? Let's all just go to Ikea, buy the framed black and white photo of a pier, put it over our sofa and get the fuck over ourselves! Maybe.

Now, I gotta say, I really do stem over that "getting it with a vengeance" line. Because I don't think it's just about overinterpretation. There's also getting it as a weapon. And it's everywhere now. (Like your mom.) Proving you get it the mostest is how culture wars and social media point-scoring battles are fought. "Educate yourself." How 'bout you SMD? (Study More Diligently!) It's a real shitstorm out there. And those aren't my words, those are the words of the aforementioned Italian lothario, Franco Berardi ("Bifo" to his cat), who does us the honour of actually defining what a storm made up of shit is: "In the semiotic dimension that we may label a 'shitstorm', the goal of semiotic emission (the intention of the participants in the chat) is not to produce meaning, but to compete and to win. The enunciation is nothing but a weapon."

Katy Perry's biological father, Grayson Perry, hangs out on Channel 4 but he also makes some art and he also writes books about how guys cream themselves over their own muscles too much. These are the dudes online who'll start a fight about anything. Even if it's a noble cause they'll make it toxic. They'll argue they really get feminist theory but not to support women, just to win a flame war against some other Reddit dweeb. Perry makes the point that if they actually wanted to support feminism they should shut their pieholes and lateral lunge their way over to doing some unpaid domestic chores. And he does that shit wearing a dress so kudos.

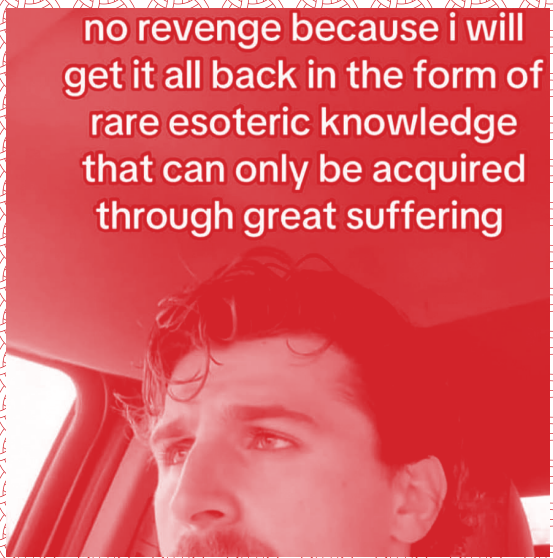


There's another clusterfuck that can happen when we have our pointy "getting it with a vengeance" heads shoved too far up the culture war's hole. Say I'm busy phoning LBC radio with a real zinger my brain thought up to prove that professional gurner James O'Brien and I are of the same mind. Well I might be missing out on the bigger picture. And that picture is a portrait of Steve Bannon armed with a blindfold in full leathers ready to buttfrig the world. Do you know delightful ickle Steve? He said, in his words, with his mouth: "The longer they talk about identity politics, I got 'em. I want them to talk about racism every day. If the Left is focused on race and identity, and we go with economic nationalism, we can

crush the Democrats." So while we play get-it ping-pong to show how close we are to the flavour-of-the-month *New Yorker* columnist, these clowns are out there shaping the actual world. Want another hit? Listen to slithery Republican Karl Rove spit his despotic verse: "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality — judiciously, as you will — we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do." Hey Karl, the The Jerk Store called...

A query... Do you think when people are narcissistic assholes their therapists explain it away by saying they're "perfectionists"? Anyways, I was thinking about how my therapist said I'm a perfectionist and can't help wonder if that's a sort of getting it with a vengeance too. As 1990s Arsenal centre-back Tony Adams Phillips says, we confer a kind of **"omniscience and super-knowledge"** to peeps and then want to be close to them. So when we decide to create work that's our chance to prove we get it, we share their super-knowledge. Like this turdburger of a zine I'm serving up to you here for example. Deep down I dream that if I get it just right, if it's perfect, then maybe the omniscient comic Jerry Seinfeld (should he be inexplicably rummaging the public bins in Ireland and stumble upon a copy) would love it. That'll show my detractors, that'll be my "vengeance". No soup for them. Eh, eh. Of course the flip-side of that perfectionist coin, as McCauley says to Lieutenant Vincent Hanna in Michael Mann's epic *Heat*, the flip side is that Jerry might hate it. And that means I don't get it, I don't get comedy.

Like so many other humourless writers I'll be cast out and forced to work on *Ted Lasso.*



Note V

"If you can't see the knobjockey at the table, you're the knobjockey." Or something like that.

Even if you've got mad skills in straddling that meat nobody wants to be the knobjockey. So we slap on our poker face that says we know, we see what's going on, we get it. And it stings to high heaven if we're caught out. I'm not talking card games here though, I'm talking life. Come with me my friends while we throwback to the last note or section or whatever where Professor Adamski ran his mouth about our **"anxiety, so to speak, of not being close enough to, not being of the same mind as, the one supposed to know."**

In 6th grade, when puberty was all the rage, I got called out for not knowing what a period was (via a cunning verbal ruse that weaponised ice hockey periods). My stinky little classmates, Pete Dennis and James Salwitz, did know, and I gave my best college try to convince them I did too, but to no avail. They asked too many questions and I crumbled – I didn't know what they knew. And that's the story of why I now get night terrors when I see a Bodyform ad.

But sometimes the fear of being seen to not understand has bigger consequences than finding a tampon triggering. Just think of those semi-senescent turkey-necked C-suite nincompoops (stolen from @jakebackpack) that failed to call out the GOAT charlatan, Bernie Madoff (pronounced: Made-off with yo money... YEOW!!), 'cause they were too chicken-shit to admit they didn't get how he was

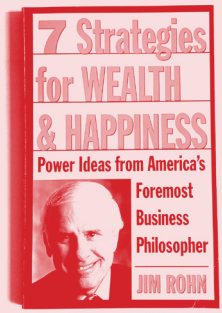
making all this scratch in case they'd look stupid for asking. So they just sat there across a boardroom table, saying nothing. All the while Madoff was diving into $65 billion worth of assets like a featherless Scrooge McDuck.

Which brings us to *Judge Judy*. Ever watch? You should. That cheeky little dominatrix is always warning thirsty, over-60 year old women not to "hitch their wagon to the star" of some googly-eyed male gremlin slouched over the defendant stand. But that's totes what we do when we decide to outsource getting it. You see, when we're not sitting there zipped-lipped for fear of being called out as the dumb-dumb (à la Madoff's lackeys) we're trying to work out ways to get our own piece of that succulent money-pie. But what to do? I am but a simple country boy. ("Give me Mr. Jingles boss.") So we let other people do the getting it for us. Just think of all those cases where artificial value is dependant on collective getting it. You know, like the entire fucking art market for example. It absolutely relies on an outsourcing of getting it. In this case, rather than overinterpreting to try to get it ("NOTE IV" folks, keep up), we hitch our wagon to some expert's star and we take action. Really, really stupid action. Wanna buy a Banksy? You're god-damn right I do. So what if it's no better than the street art in an episode of *Fat Albert*? Someone must get why it's worth so much and that's good enough for me. And someone gets Bitcoin, right? Like that guy in *The Social Network* movie who played the rower in the multiverse and there was two of them. He gets it. "Gimme five bees for a Pandacoin", you'd say.


aren't
you talkin' to me?

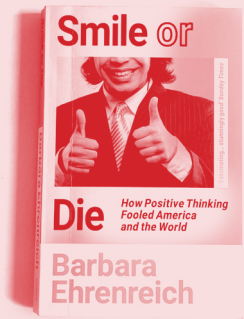
Note VI

7 Strategies for Wealth & Happiness: Power Ideas from America's Foremost Business Philosopher



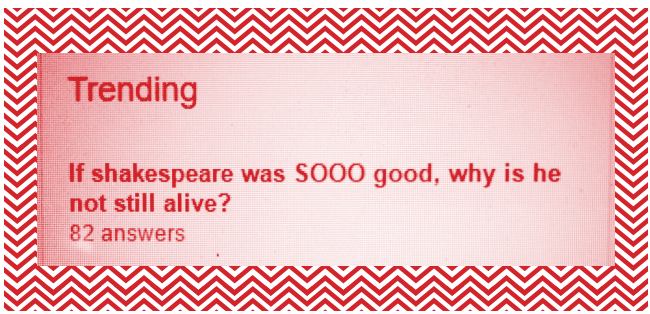
I've read this shit. Can you believe it? I've actually sat down and read this shit cover to cover. But that's nothing. Like a full-bladdered, deer-in-the-headlights *Apprentice* contestant trying to find a way to impress the withered old skin-bag and mysteriously successful tech entrepreneur (fucking Amstrad??) Alan Sugar, I've read loads of these books. But I've also read this...

Smile Or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World



And like that viral video of the IRA vs the Taliban, I pit these books against each other except here the battle is... I dunno, my entire philosophical outlook on life or something! And the fact they're diametrically opposed makes the riddle all the more riddlier. I figure one of these outlooks has gotta be right, right?

Convicted plagiarist Adam Flipit can't be bothered thinking for himself so drops in some dude called Stanley Cavell who's wasted his life studying some other fictional dude called Othello. He wonders why Othello went bat-shit crazy and whacked his own wife. Where things went wrong, Cavell tells us (oh he thinks he's so smart) is Othello's **"attempt to convert the human condition, the condition of humanity, into an intellectual difficulty, a riddle..."** This is all about certainty you see. Othello's head's wrecked trying to work out if his wife, Desdemona, is Netflix and chilling with his boy Cassio. He's frustrated AF trying to solve this riddle of Desdemona and her faithfulness so eventually he just goes fuck it, she's guilty. He knows. He gets it. He gets it hard – so hard that he's certain. (Spoiler alert, she's not.) And that certainty leads him to killing her in a pillow-fight or something.



Right, so back to our self-help books. They're about riddles, frustrations and certainties too. We're trying to get life. Like really, WTF. We're made of this space dust and we're gonna die and we're supposed to know what we want out of life? Adam Sandler Phillips pondered this all his itty-bitty self and here's how he thinks it plays out: **"It's as though frustration were an unbearable form of self-doubt, a state in which we can so little tolerate not knowing what we want, not knowing whether it is available, and not having it that we fabricate certainties to fill the void (we fill in the gaps with states of conviction)."** And that's what these books offer, conviction. Some faux-guru (weirdly, 'round here, it's often an ex-UVF member with a Tik-Tok channel) telling us with certainty what we should want and how to go about getting it. How we should live.

But there's different certainties being touted. To find satisfaction in life "accumulate wealth." No. "Give up everything". Each promising to be the solution that obliterates the pesky frustration of not knowing. And that's where the battle kicks in – which certainty to follow? Does it even fucking matter though? Nope. Like how many of us actually read these books and feel our lives transformed? Who closes the book, deletes Instagram and flies to the DRC to stop illegal mining? Nah, we might like take up Vinyasa yoga at best. You know what we really get from these books? Solace. Solace in the "I get it" moment. I get how life's meant to be lived now. This grifter with a dubious amount of 5/5 Amazon reviews has enlightened me, with certainty, about what I should be doing. But of course you finish the book and, bleh. Fuck all changes and six months later we're looking for

more solace and a shiny new "I get it" moment.

Maybe that's all fine though. Maybe what's worse (and scarier) is to really buy into the certainty. Like when some lifestyle influencer is trying to flog their latest floral serving platters with the promise we'll reach a true turning point in our lives if we can just hold the perfect dinner party.



"Hey Paul, why don't you shut that talk-box of yours? There's nothing wrong with dinner parties." Hmmm... Ok. Fine. I like wagyu beef tartare with quail eggs as much as the next Joe Slackcoat. So I take it back. I mean dinner parties might be bullshit but no more so than all the other things invented to fill life's void. And "invented" is the word to underline here. It's A-dam Shame Phillips puts it this way: **"The frustration is itself a temptation scene, one in which we must invent something to be tempted by."** So let's get

this straight. The meaningless of life fucks us up so bad we just decide to invent some shit. Yip. But also, that sounds like a lot of effort. In the words of Springfield's new Sanitation Commissioner: "Can't someone else do it?" Remember, we're the outsourcing generation baby and I sure as hell ain't gonna sit here and waste my time inventing a temptation when I could be eating more quail eggs. So we leave that to the experts. And who are the experts? Why our self-help authors of course. The ones with all the certainty who invent our fresh-from-the-oven solutions for satisfaction. A dinner party, a Tesla, a wallet full of crypto, an adopted donkey – it really don't matter – you tell me it'll wipe the floor with the frustration of uncertainty and I'm all in.



But halt! "What be ye there ye be lurking round thine corner?" (Othello 3.1.56) Careful Othello, it's a saboteur! "What form does thine saboteur shape-shift to as thine

tries to be sabotaging mine… satisfaction… in thine…" Ok, fuck that. Here's the thing. These self-help hacks seem so cock-sure in their insights on how to find satisfaction in life that people line up with the promise that they too can become cock-of-the-walk. #Cock. They, as perennial podcast performers, offer up their dogma and we, so often battered and bruised by the misery of life, present ourselves as their bottom. And fair 'nuff - there's pleasure in having some strict rules to follow in an empty world. I get it. But as Wayne Bobbit knows (anyone?… no?) there's such thing as being too hard. If we become too rigid in our pursuit of satisfaction, if we think we've finally got it – we've identified with certainty a want that once achieved will bring pleasure by banishing frustration - and are determined to not let anything get in our way, then Mystic Meg's son Adam throws up some red flags. He warns that we can become **"obsessed with what sabotages the pleasures we seek."** Surely, "I want satisfaction, get out of my fucking way," could be the 21st century anthem for the entire Western World. Maybe they'll get Maroon 5 to sing it to really rub bland, nondescript salt in the wound. It's sad though. We want to believe in (or believe we've found) a defined path to satisfaction so god-damn bad we push away anything we think will sabotage it. Friends, family, hobbies, downtime… (yeah ok, you and I both know we're mainly talking about men here)… relationships, community, compassion, self-care – outta the way, today's leg day!

"Yeah, I'm a stoic." Great. You've totally isolated yourself and everybody hates you.


And why do you want to be bigger?
So I won't have to want to be bigger anymore.

Note VII



While Chomsky's got some killer bars about American support for foreign authoritarian regimes he ain't got no flow like my boy Benny "The Human Jukebox" Davis. Benny came out with a bang at the Edinburgh Fringe and boy was it ever boring as shit. But Benny sorta knew this. He pretty much admitted it. Sure he could play like any song ever (the *Sonic* theme was sorta fire) but he confessed that once you peek behind that curtain of how tracks are constructed it all gets a bit wah-wah.

Hey reader, have you ever seen me IRL? Me, Paul? If so you might assume that with my fully-fastened shirt and well-ironed chinos I must have downloaded a Phil Collins track or two in my time. Well, you'd be right. (If it's good enough for The Supremes to cover it's good enough for me!) But I'm not here to defend my Phil fanclub membership. No, I wanna talk techno. Or more to the point, I don't want to talk about it. See, on the other end of the musical spectrum I have a big squishy soft spot for dirty hardcore techno. Yet, if you ask me to name my favourite studio monitors, my favourite DJ controller or my favourite DAW my answer to all those questions is the same: I haven't got a fucking clue.

See, as "The Human Jukebox" Benjamin discovered after about 20 years of grind when it was too late to change careers, when you turn something you love into something you study it can really take the spunk out of it. And we need spunk to live. And to live. As organ harvester Adam Flips ponders when he sits on the toilet: **"in which area of our lives does not knowing, not getting it, give us more life rather than more deadness?"**



Me knowing diddly squat about techno and wanting to keep it that way is an attempt not to sully it. To keep it pure (like the drugs I take! YEOWW!! Just kidding, co-codamol makes me tipsy). To avoid willy-measuring conversations about the best underground clubs or Berlin techno vs, I dunno, Penzance techno. Conversations about *proving* ourselves. Proving we get it enough. Instead I'm just free to love it. And boy do I love it. It and your mom.

Now let's peek back through the keyhole at Flips who, as he flushes, continues, **"When does having or wanting to get it narrow our minds?"** When you think of it, if you can be bothered, getting it can be like a veil that covers the impact of "it". Here's more words: for some reason we're all supposed to keep educating ourselves for like, the rest of our fucking lives now. "Learning never clocks out", some finger-wagger might say. So in keeping up with the academic Joneses I once signed up for a marketing course. Back when I was but a pupa I was all about that shit and was hyped that the course was giving me this theoretical insight into marketing. "I really get it now", I would say to my soiled cardboard cut-out of Don Draper. But got *what*? How to manipulate people? How to exploit their vulnerabilities? How to strip them down to stats and demographics? It wasn't just the practices of marketing I was getting, I was having my world-view shaped too. My mind was narrowing to other systems and ideologies that would make me go: wait, this commodification of people craic kinda blows.

One of those old white pipe-smokers, Zygmunt Stardust Bauman, goes dark with this concept. Like 4Chan dark. But to keep things light let's explain it with a comic...



Shiiiiiit! I know. You see Bauman gives the Holocaust a big thumbs down. And because he didn't like it very much he put his noggin to work to understand how this shit could possibly happen. What he works out is that the structure

that formed the division of labour and facilitated the industrialisation of killing allowed the dudes involved to saunter home with a detached "all in days work" attitude. They were part of the team. In Bauman's own pretty little words he says "The efficiency of the final solution depended on the skills and devotion of thousands of people, each of whom did their job, and only their job, properly." Madam Phillips ain't that big on the Holocaust either (probably) and when he gets snuggled up under his novelty "Forever Jung" duvet he wonders if life would be less frigged up if we could mellow a little with all this getting it: **"…this would be a life in which getting it — the will to get it, the ambition to get it — was the problem; in which wanting to be an accomplice didn't take precedence over making up one's own mind."**

Makes you wonder about patriotism. Mull this waffle over. Before Andre the Giant there was this guy Roland Barthes who thought wrestling was the modern day opera. "It's all about buying into myths" he'd spout. And on a larger, shit, let's go national-scale, those myths apply to the cultural values and beliefs of a specific group of people. Things get fucked up though when that group of people try to pawn these myths off as universal truths. And then other losers want to be part of this saddo group, an "accomplice" if you will (will you?), so they buy into these myths and start spewing nonsensical utterances that start with the words "back in my day…". They pretend they're defending their country but really they're just defending the myth of their own gang(bang). Oh, you'd die for your county? Would you die for your city? Your town? Your village? Your god-damn hamlet?

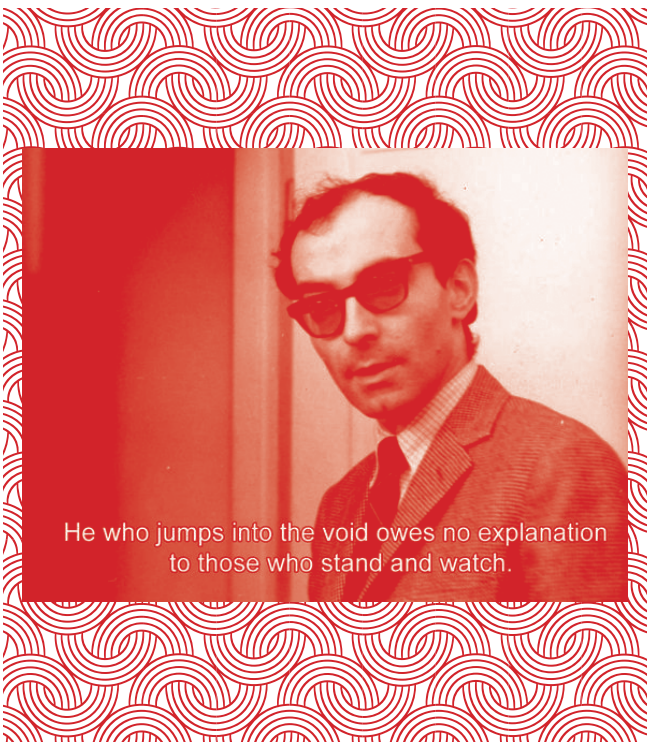

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Note VIII

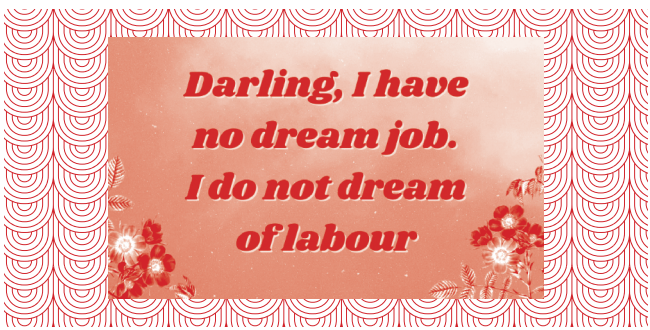
Winner of the 2014 Adam Phillips Lookalike Competition, Malcolm Gladwell, wrote about masturbating for 10,000 hrs or something and now he won't give over with the book writing. In one of those stupid books he tells the story of this 12 year old girls' basketball team who hardly knew what the fuck a basketball looked like and their hapless coach who was no better. In fact he spent his time working with computers and never even played *NBA Jam* on the SNES. What happened? Well they just didn't follow the rules. They didn't behave how they were expected, they didn't play nice. And guess what? They went out there and fucking smoked everyone. They weren't breaking the rules of the game but breaking the rules of how it was meant to be played. Awww. These girls attacked like Björk in an airport. But because they didn't get the conventions and customs of how the game is usually played they had to listen to a whole load of bitchin'. Teachers, parents and other coaches got all salty and complained that the girls were "violating the spirit of the game." No surprise says perennial book burner Adam's Ashes Phillips. In a prophetic little outburst he wonders, **"what boundaries those who don't always want to get it will have to defend. And whether they can get away with it."**

"Wait!" You might or might not be saying. This is all starting to jive a lot with French pastry chef Pierre Bourdieu's theories of social signaling? Well la dee da, look at the big brain on Brett! You see another little factoid worth sticking into the blender of this story is

that their coach was an Indian immigrant. An Indian immigrant who was kicking ass with this group of girls who weren't from lanky basketball families galloping after a scholarship. They weren't behaving in a way that aligned with certain social expectations and that really got up the snot holes of those on the opposing teams. When they frothed Gatorade at the mouth and spewed out an "unsportsmanlike" accusation they were really signalling that they get it (the gentleman's agreement about how much effort is acceptable) and these blow-ins to the game didn't. They were being what Mr. Bourdieu calls "twats".



Anyways, can someone tell me what the fuck an artist is? Who knows. I do know this though, they get their fair share of having to defend choosing not to get it. But before we delve into that thought-swamp let's point out that it's patronising as fuck to romanticise broke artists who create just for the love it. You think they don't know CREAM? You think they wanna be paid with good exposure to a sorry collection of 78 Gram followers? Hell not. That said, many artists do turn their back on and straight-up don't get this obsession with capital accumulation. I mean look what it did to Kanye. "O Kanye! My Kanye!" You'd think with all the evidence that too much cheddar fast-tracks your life straight into the shitter (don't Lotto winners all end up becoming coke fuelled demolition-derby cannibals or sumpin'?) it wouldn't be so controversial to refuse capitalist values the same way Mariah Carey refuses to acknowledge J.Lo's existence. You'd be wrong though. If you don't get why the term "compound interest" induces wet patches on grey suits and you also don't get why anyone would work so hard just to be able to afford the latest designer flap bag (too easy) then you could be in for a whole boatload of side eye in certain circles. Circles of jerks. Circle jerk.



Note IX
PART 1/2

What's that? "Fuck books", you say. I see. I mean I can't disagree. I mark the shit outta those guys. Underlines, annotations, folded corners. My books take a real pounding. If this was PornHub books would be a stepsister. But unlike that creepy yet unfathomably popular subgenre there's real love here. Love for words. Love for *understanding*. Someone once said how understanding is one of our greatest joys in life. I dunno who but if you do I'd wager that you're all chuffed with yourself right now. But see your little grey-matter win only proves my point. We get real moist for knowing shit. Which is why I'm a bit of a Suspicious Aloysius when major Reform UK donor, Adamant Aryan Phillips, bigs up the idea of not understanding what we're reading. **"Not being able to find out what the writer wants from the reader — exhausting the possibilities of the reader getting it — forces the reader, if he is sufficiently intrigued, to do something else."**

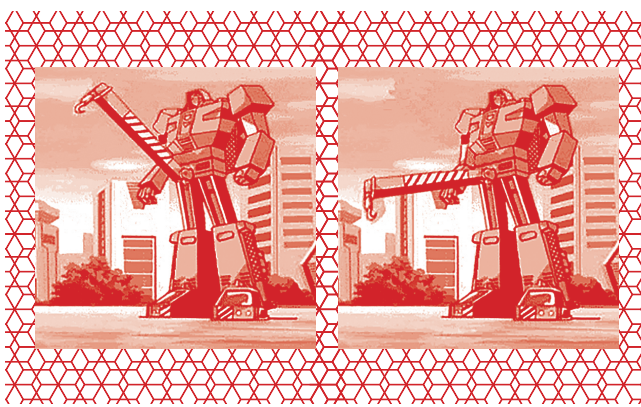
There was an urban myth at my school that might have been true about a guy who held a pencil upright on the chair in front of him and when the kid sat down the pencil vanished. Now that's an extreme example of classroom pain but there's other, more insidious, types. Like in English when you're singled out by the teacher to explain some gobbledygook from a dull-as-dishwater 19th century novel and you haven't got a god-damn clue 'cause you spent all your time giggling that the main protagonist was called "Fanny". (Mansfield Park… put it up!) But the teacher won't give over and someone at the

back shouts "spa" at you (it was the '90s) and you cement in your head that not getting it, not understanding, is an invitation for ridicule. So forgive me Ryan Adams Phillips if I struggle with this one.

But let's not give up yet. "Think Paul, think." Ghost of Saul Bellow, is that you? What the fup! Hold on, I'll explain. If you've ever had insomnia you'll know it's just swell. A real hoot. To help get my beauty sleep I was advised to read something before bed. But not something that stimulated my little brain cells, no. Something that washed over me. Something I was paying no attention to and wasn't engaging with and was just jangly little words on a page. Enter Saul Bellow. Apparently he's won an Oscar for best Pulitzer or something and is this shit-hot writer. I was given one of his books - *Herzog* - ages ago and I still don't know what the fuck it's about. For the last three years I've been reading that dusty old book when I slip into my satin jammies and I got no clue what's happening. I think he's writing letters or something? He's got an ex-wife? He's sorta grumpy? More importantly though this book knocks me out. Like one paragraph in and I'm catching hella Zs. So is this me not getting it but still getting something from the book? Does this count Mr Philips? Slide into my DMs.

How 'bout this... If the reader doesn't get the text so decides to do something else, could that something else be ignore the shit outta it? Picture this: you're in a gallery... Wait, wait, wait. Who's actually going to a gallery when our Letterboxd app is telling us we have 36 unwatched series. We haven't even started *The Bear* yet for Christ's sake! Ok, well let's say you gotta pick a

location for your Bumble date and you're hoping that suggesting a gallery instead of the thing you actually want to do (60 piece KFC Popcorn Chicken Bucket for £5.99) might appear all cultured and shit and avoid the crushing "just no spark" post-date message. So there you are in the gallery trying to read the tiny vinyl lettering on a wall beside some art and it's making the opposite of sense. "Transmogrification"? Da fuk? But the title is *Taking a Shit On the Anthropocene* and that sorta intrigues you. So rather than wasting your existence reading any more you just stroll over to the sculpture of a big pile of turd and you know what? You kinda dig it. It's got fake flies and all these wicked melting human corpses. It reminds you of a combination of *Jurassic Park* and *Terminator 2* and that reminds you of Dinobots and you decide to go see *Transformers: Age of Extinction*. So instead of standing with one's dick in one's hand, googling the wall text to try to understand, you just did something else. And that led you to see Marky Mark tear shit up with Optimus Prime while Michael Bay explodes your fuckin' eardrums. Yas! The date does not go well. They ghost you.

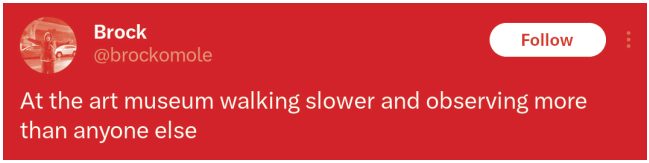


Note X
PART 2/2



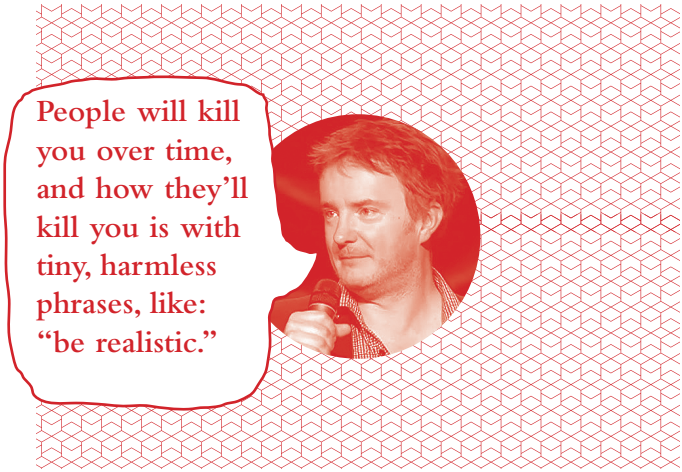
Did you read that last section or are you just flipping through this zine? If so, well done on skipping ahead, you missed nothing. It was just ramblings about how armchair fetishiser Adam FullLips thinks there's merit in not understanding the thing you're reading. Sound absurd? Hold on to your sack 'cause he only goes and doubles down. What if you're so ride or die about this not getting it stuff that you decide you're gonna teach more people how to not get it. Yep. Spit it out Adam: **"But how, it is worth wondering, would you teach someone to not get it? What would that be like teaching them to do; teaching someone how not to swim, how not to..."** Whoa Nelly! Lemme stop you there, Prince Phillip. Let's start by saying what we're all thinking. That poor bastard's drownin'. This ain't Baywatch; Hasselhoff's too old to save anyone and his son Hobie's a meth addict.

He keeps going though, yappin' about teaching **"forms of appreciation that require neither defiance nor compliance."** And I got to admit, this line kinda hit. Remember earlier when we were talking about that person in the gallery? (You skipped that? Shame on you, it was brilliant.) What if those same gallery-dodgers who fear that galleries are full of shit they won't get were told they're welcome for other reasons? They don't have to interpret the art, they don't have to relate to it or deconstruct it or be moved by it. Shit, they don't even have to look at it! What if they were invited in just for a bit of chill from the screaming toxic earth outside that's relentlessly bashing our senses while burning to a cinder? Just to be in a quiet space. A respite from what our old friend, big beautiful Bifo Berardi, refers to as neoliberal's "intensive exploitation of nervous energies [that] has unleashed an epidemic of mental suffering." And bonus: it's free! What else is free these days? Other than people's opinions and god knows we're fucking drowning in that. But before you go getting the wrong end of my stick let's make it clear: I'm not pitching galleries. I couldn't give zero frigs if you ever step foot in one. What I'm saying through the magic of #humour is, don't *not* go just because you're worried you won't know how to comply with all the bullshit around it. Remember, it doesn't matter if you don't get the turd sculpture. (Yeah you'll definitely be flummoxed now if you didn't read that last part.)



Note XI

"Be realistic" is a pretty savage put-down...



You know the way Obama killed a load of people? Oh yeah, he had a real stiffy for drones. But hey, we all make mistakes, right? And besides, he's just too gosh-darn charming to hate. I mean he fist-bumps people. Not just NBA players but normal, hideous troglodytes like you and me. Imagine getting a genuine Obama fist-bump! That excitement was awash on the faces of a group of young'uns attending an Obama talk at one of those khaki-saturated American colleges. So when a student raised the question.... Yeah ok, full disclosure, I forget the question. But, I remember the gist and it was: how could we have a more egalitarian system? And, alongside the question the kid also peppered in a little whiff of his own penchant for socialism. Now, naturally, it was all a bit cringe. I mean,

they were Americans. The people who approach strangers to say, "I fuckin' love your sweater!" But still, it had a sort of naive optimism. It carried that "HOPE" that was all over Obama t-shirts that were all over Obama supporters. But I guess it was like the hint of socialism or something that led the big O to deadass shut it down. Along with his causal drone slaughtering he now entered the realm of killing, Dylan Moran style. He hit this doe-eyed kiddo with a "be realistic".

If you've ever been served up an icy cold "be realistic" you know that unlike the 1980s John Cougar Mellencamp smash hit it does not hurt so good. Neh. It hurts so bad. That's because along with dashing whatever dream you were expressing it throws in a side of "you don't get it". I mean, you wouldn't have that stupid dream if you really got how the world worked.

And thus my friends let us ask, what if we don't get it? What if we don't know how the world works but we do know that launching 563 drone strikes killing 800 civilians seems kinda... not very nice. Setting aside his own bias after serving in the Royal Marines, Captain Adam Phillips asks **"What would the community of those who didn't get it be like? What kind of consensus would they be capable of?"** Maybe the consensus would be less evil little sky-robots spewing out Herman Hermann's "Death From Above". Or on their own doorstep maybe they wouldn't get all the socio-economic issues behind homelessness but would kinda form a consensus that people probably shouldn't have to eat out of a bin. Ok, now I'm being naively optimistic. But fuck it, I love khaki trousers!

Time for a confession: I used to work in an advertising agency. Unsurprisingly, when I got to the top I realised just how empty it was. Nah I'm joking. I never got to the top. If I did I wouldn't be here talking to you losers. But working there might explain why Atom Filips' theories on getting it and not getting it sync so much with advertising to me. When he talks about a community of those who don't get it I drift into a Kevin Arnold-style internal monologue and wonder, "what would a group of people who didn't get advertising be like?". See there's three ways to read advertisement imagery and I'm gonna bore your tits off with them right...now. So let's say for some reason you got no ad-blocker and one of those super close-up M&S food ads pops up. You know, the one that makes you feel like you wanna fuck the burger. (It could do better.) The first thing you could do is what M&S want you to do and say, "Shit, I'm slappin' one of those M&S burgers on my Revolut asap." Alternatively, aka option two, you might be tempted by the burger but you've watched *Falling Down* or been on Tinder and know that the real thing never looks like the photo so you get a Greggs instead. Or finally, numero three, you might rebel and straight-up think, "That's fucking disgusting, I don't put meat in my mouth." (No more Tinder for you then.) "Plus, a Vice documentary told me industrial farming methods are like video nasties for cows."

But the point of all that shit was to ask: what if there's a fourth way to respond to advertisement imagery? What if you just don't get it? I'm not just talking about not getting the message – that was already covered by Rowdy Roddy Piper and his funky glasses 😎 – but you don't even get the whole concept of what an ad is. To you,

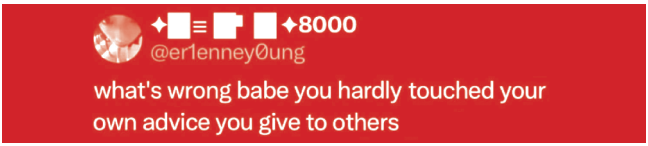
some burger just randomly appeared on your screen so you closed it and got on with your blissfully ignorant life. For absolutely no reason whatsoever let's say this whole scenario was played out in a fairytale. The advertisers would be vicious little trolls that try to poison you with temptation, try to make you look in the ugly mirror, try to, I dunno, convince you your magic tail has cancer (we see you Kingsbridge Hospital). But if you could repel all their tricks by simply not understanding what they're saying, not getting it, well then, then you be like, what's that guy, the hero in those fairytales? Jesus! Yes. You'd be Jesus. And you'd need those Son of God superpowers because the messages that advertisers want us to get, the ones that manipulate us, are so powerful that even those who create the God-damn (sorry dad) message fall for it. Here's Ronny warning us about the potency of those Silicon Valley twerps' favourite advertising tool: their shady algorithms...

That YouTube algorithm is very alluring to straight guys. It just draws you in. That's why fucking Mark Zuckerberg is trying to MMA fight Elon Musk right now. That guy fell for his own algorithm.

Zuckerberg invented that shit, and he still fell for it. What hope does the average man in America have? Just waddling down the street looking for a taco on his phone. He has no chance. That fucking guy has no chance.



Thing is though, we kinda lean towards getting the message advertisers want us to get 'cause lets face it, on some level we like to conform. There's this French egghead (literal and metaphorical) called Foucault who talks about how images are instrumental in the production of docile bodies of the modern state – citizens who participate in the ideologies of the society through a desire to fit in and conform. But what does he know? Well think of the kid at school who wore *Punky Brewster* trainers because they didn't get the memo that we're all supposed to be wearing Reebok Pump now. It wasn't just that they were wearing the wrong thing that led to their casual bullying and systematic wedgies, it was the fact they didn't even get that it was wrong. 20 years and three therapists later and they'll tell you all about the importance of conforming.



Want some more nerds? Here, shove a bit of Marx down your throat: "Commodity fetishism refers to the process by which mass-produced goods are emptied of the meaning of their production and then filled with new meanings in ways that both mystify the product and turn it into a fetish product." Advertisers are the mother-fuckin' undefeated champions of the world when it comes to fetishising a product. Just ask my discarded nutribullet. You know who wouldn't have a nutribullet? A community of those who didn't get it. They'd just eat vegetables and have orgies with folks they met online using their magic tail at Greggs while Jesus watched. You gettin' this?

Note XII

Ya know the way we all hate ourselves now? Course ya do. So you'd figure with all this quiet self-loathing we'd have the sense to just give up like the good Lord wants. Nuh-uh honey. We keep going. Because there's gotta be something, right? Erm… wrong. Way back in *Note VI* (good times) we dodged this bottomless pit of emptiness by inventing wants. But we can make up other shit too. In this case, Adam Penguin Modern Classics argues that "other shit" can be culture. He says: **"Because we're nothing special – on par with ants or daffodils – it is the work of culture to make us feel special."** All right Adam, geez Louise.

Culture and getting it, what a pair. Think of it this way: it feels great when culture welcomes us. When it picks us up on a street corner and sprinkles us with its special sauce. It's Julia Robert's dream cum true. But culture (Richard Gere if you care to carry on the metaphor) has got demands too. No, not just the hamster. Culture wants to be understood. We have to get it. And if we don't get it, culture has a tendency to slap us around like George Costanza (back to *Pretty Woman*). We learn this lesson early on through pop culture. Like when we walk 'round the schoolyard with our Discman humming Train's "Drops of Jupiter" and the cool kids in NIN t-shirts won't exchange BBM's with us. Ermm…. rude!

Culture loves telling people to fuck off. And let's face it, we'd rather be the fucker-offer than the fucker-offee. Explaining this, Atom Bomb Phillips plucks out every

psychotherapist's favourite comic book character: the Super-Ego. He says that little internal bully, whose powers include invisibility, demands **"'You must get it' (you must get it in order to qualify as a member of our group)."** For some though, it was too late... "Now tell me, did the wind sweep you off your feet?"



But forget all that shit and let's approach it from another angle. What if *we* produce the culture to feel special. We'll make something. Our redemption will lie in a painting, a sculpture, some bitchin' crochet. Let's see how that goes...

Hi everyone, what do you think of this zine I made that you're reading? "Trash. Worthless. Repellent." Oh right. That was quick. Thanks. So I guess making ain't the

solution either. Course not. In fact few things place us more squarely in the firing line of criticism than making. Because what that roasting of my zine is really saying is: "Culture; Paul, you don't get it." But there's gotta be a way to protect myself? Some ruse, some subterfuge that will allow *me* to set the perimeters for getting it. That will act as a shield for those dung-tipped slings and arrows of criticism.

[Checks under Terrence Malick's desk.] "Concept, is that you under there? Come on out here boy." Awww "concepts": that verbose word-vomit that you might have read already if you had the misfortune of stumbling upon this zine on my website. Now, armed with my concept, when someone criticises and says this zine is trash, ("Trash. Worthless. Repellent" to be exact. Ok, I can read!) then I'm gonna flip the script DMX-style and hit them back with a "Nah punk, you just don't get it. (Woof, woof. Woof. Etc.)."

So I win, right? That's it? Alas, sadly not. Much like a McDonald's employee spotting Luigi, Black Adam Phillips won't let me get away with it. Accompanied by a talking Great Dane he removes my zine's fake moustache and wig (its concept) and calls me out: **"The wish to understand or be understood — to, as we say, communicate or be accessible — might give a false picture, might be a hiding place, might be a retreat or a refuge."** He blows my cover. (While you're down there...) We're exposed; just me and my trash, worthless, repellent zine. "And I'd have gotten away with it too if it wasn't for that meddling psychotherapist and his pesky essay."




The worse your art is, the easier it is to talk about.

That's it. Our time has finally come to an end. Maybe you get what this zine was all about, maybe you don't. Either way, I hope you hated it. I know I did.



This piece of shit was supported by the Arts Council and the Arts Council's Arts and Disability Connect Scheme managed by Arts & Disability Ireland.





Printed at Way Bad Press.



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