
The Gift, Graffiti and Punitive Masculinity

Panda McGlone

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Abstract

This dissertation looks at the relationship between The Gift, Graffiti and Punitive Masculinity. I give a brief overview of how the gift operates and the influence it has on art and creativity, while also looking specifically at how graffiti exists in this gift sphere. I then look at punitive masculinity, drawing on the work of Nancy Macdonald for a graffiti specific perspective and Allen G Johnson for a broader overview of how punishment is used between men as a form of social control. I then look at the writing of adrienne maree brown and Mariame Kaba who discuss cancel culture and how this is often a learned process from the punitive justice system. I will look at how local authorities and the media other, and attempt to cancel graffiti writers, and then how graffiti writers other, and attempt to cancel each other. Finally I take a speculative look at what a graffiti culture would look like if this punitive approach was replaced with one of mutual aid and care.

Prologue

This dissertation will distil my thinking and reading over the past six years. I would like to introduce myself and give some background as I feel it adds context, but I am doing it now to allow the ideas and thinking to take the forefront in the rest of the writing. My name is Panda McGlone and I am a Glasgow based street artist. I create work under the pseudonym OhPandah. I got the nickname Panda when I was 10 years old by a group of skaters in my hometown of Paisley. This was in the year 2000 and was also the year street art started to become mainstream. I remember saying to my mum about Banksy and her being like 'Who?' and within a few months he was all over the news. It is interesting to think back to this time. I am writing this in December 2023 and Banksy hosted an exhibition in the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow earlier this year. I went three times. Although I would caveat this by saying despite my admiration for Banksy, I prefer artists such as The London Police, Flying Fortress, Galo and many many others who continue to excite and inspire me on a daily basis¹.

My mum was a single parent and I grew up in a scheme in Paisley called Glenburn. I don't think it was the roughest scheme but it definitely had issues with drug addiction and poverty, like most schemes in Scotland. When I was

young my mum was an active member of the tenants and residents association and I remember attending meetings with her and sitting at the back dunking mints into cups of tea. I once met the then leader of the Scottish Socialist Party Tommy Sheridan at a meeting.

I always felt slightly different from the other boys in my scheme, I had my mum and my big sister, but my mum had left my dad when I was two so I didn't really know how to be a boy. It's strange to think back to this time because I was definitely trying to be a boy, I would play football sometimes and I remember buying car magazines, although on reflection perhaps I was buying these because they featured naked women. Puberty was a strange time for me, I became really hairy, something I knew came from my dad. I felt like I had to hide my body from my mum and my sister and I didn't really have anyone to talk to about what was happening, I was full of teenage hormones but with no clear guidelines of how to be a man. If anything, I felt like all men were arseholes.

Around this time I felt very afraid of the other boys in my scheme. I was a wee skater kid and they would chase me and my friends. I felt unsafe, and I was scared to express myself. By this point I was already involved in graffiti culture, the skaters who called me Panda were all

1 - See Appendix 1 for a list of artists I would recommend checking out.

graffiti writers and I would spend a lot of time in a shop in Paisley called The 7th Chamber, which was a shop that sold spray paint and poppers.² This was a very formative period of my life, I discovered the music of Loki in the shop.³ I smoked weed for the first time there and I also got drunk properly for the first time leaving the shop one day. That was the beginning of the rest of my life...



Fig 1. 'Rachel, Mum and Me' Family Photograph, (1999)
Personal Archive

Introduction

In this dissertation I will look at graffiti as a culture with two opposing forces shaping the work that is created and also the values and attitudes that the participants hold in regards to the artform but also society as a whole. The first of these forces is known as the gift, which was popularised by Lewis Hyde in his book under the same title. The gift can feel like an esoteric thing but my own understanding of it, which I will expand on in the first chapter, is that the gift is an energy, a disposition or a way of thinking about the world. In its simplest form the gift is about sharing. The gift operates in the spirit of abundance, more for you is more for me. The second force is what I have termed punitive masculinity. I have come to this term after reading Nancy MacDonald's book *The Graffiti Subculture*⁴ which focuses on masculinity within graffiti culture. I am then using the word punitive after reading the work of adrienne maree brown and Mariame Kaba, specifically *We Will Not Cancel Us*⁵ and *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*⁶ respectively. These books both focus on punitive justice and push for abolition of the prison industrial complex, capitalism and patriarchy.

I recognise it is important for me to state here that I have been immersed in the culture of graffiti and street art from a very young age, which has afforded me experiential knowledge and insight that those unfamiliar with this culture might otherwise not have access to. Graffiti is often framed by the mainstream media as a problem to be solved as opposed to a culture with its own language, rituals and values. This framing can undermine the artwork that is being created, the relationships fostered amongst artists and also the therapeutic benefits of this culture.⁷

2 - Rest in Peace Helen.

3 - Darren 'Loki' McGarvey, rapper and Orwell Prize winning author of *Poverty Safari*.

4 - Nancy MacDonald, *The Graffiti Subculture: Youth, Masculinity and Identity in London and New York* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

5 - adrienne maree brown, *We Will Not Cancel Us: Breaking the Cycle of Harm*, Emergent Strategy Series, 4 (Chico: AK Press, 2020).

6 - Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice* (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2021).

7 - I don't have the scope to expand on this here but I'm just putting it out into the universe. At some point I will study art therapy and go on to research the therapeutic benefits of graffiti and street art. Look out for the publication.

Lastly, with this dissertation I would encourage graffiti writers themselves, to question their own positions within the culture, in the hope that collectively we can move towards a more supportive, generative way of creating and relating to one another.

The Gift.

*The Gift*⁸ by Lewis Hyde, explains that the gift is a way of life. It is about sharing with others what we have been freely given. Hyde looks at communities and societies throughout history, expanding on ethnographer Marcel Mauss' essay *The Gift*⁹ which is considered the seminal work on gift exchange. Mauss posits that gift exchange has built in obligations, the obligation to give, the obligation to reciprocate and the obligation to receive. With these obligations historically forging bonds between clans, groups and households, Mauss explains, "To refuse to give, to fail to invite, just as to refuse to accept, is tantamount to declaring war; it is to reject the bond of alliance and commonality."¹⁰ This level of obligation is in stark contrast to the prevailing culture today, which, especially in the West, is one of individualism and maximising self interest, cultivated and facilitated by an economic model based on infinite growth and the continued marketisation of our social interactions. We are encouraged to think 'what can I get from this situation?' Rather than 'what can I give to this situation?' Today one might think of gift giving in terms of one person giving to another, and then that person returning the gift. However, Hyde explains "reciprocal giving is a form of gift exchange, but it is the simplest."¹¹ When gifts are exchanged only by two people the flow of the gift is limited, he continues:

"When I give to someone from whom I do not receive (and yet I do receive elsewhere), it is as if the gift goes around a corner before it comes back. I have to give blindly. And I will feel a sort of blind gratitude as well. The smaller the

circle is – and particularly if it involves just two people – the more a man can keep his eye on things and the more likely it is that he will start to think like a salesman. But so long as the gift passes out of sight it cannot be manipulated by one man or one pair of gift partners. When the gift moves in a circle its motion is beyond the control of our personal ego, and so each bearer must be part of the group and each donation is an act of social faith."¹²

Hyde is describing the flow of the gift here, which I think is useful because neoliberal gift giving culture has been so ritualised and formalised, as to have become quite far removed from the spirit of the gift, this has happened by creating expectations around how gifts should be given. Gifts have become a form of showing affection, of showing value and care, but showing is the appropriate word here, they are to show these things, as opposed to actually being those things, these rituals have become a replacement for genuine care for each other. I am thinking about birthdays, Christmas and other holidays here. These are times when families, friends, parents and partners will all attempt to show their love and affection for each other, by buying gifts for one another. This could be seen as a continuation of our rich gift giving culture but unfortunately, largely due to neoliberal capitalism, these moments have become steeped in excess and materialism. At these times people are attempting to capture a sense of love and care for their family member or partner, they are trying to condense complex emotions and sentiments into transactions, encouraged and facilitated by a market economy that needs to keep growing. This leads to strange dynamics where people are spending thousands of pounds on gifts, as a way to show just how much they love someone, as if a monetary value could be placed on love. These gifts are the transactional replacement for genuine relational love and care for one another. There is also an expectation that if you buy someone a gift, you should have to return a gift

8 - Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2007).

9 - Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge Classics, Repr (London: Routledge, 2004).

10 - Mauss. p.17

11 - Hyde. p.16

12 - Hyde. p.16

with an equal or greater value, as to give something of less value would create an imbalance and offence could be caused, these dynamics are not what the gift is about. This is a corruption and a diversion from how the gift operates, when it flows naturally each gift is an act of social faith, there is no expectation of it returning directly to us, we have to give freely which is how this relational social trust is developed.

Hyde continues to discuss this shift away from a gift exchange which enhances social bonds and trust, towards a total commodity exchange, where everything is transactional and obligation free. Hyde states:

“It is the cardinal difference between gift and commodity exchange that a gift establishes a feeling-bond between two people, while the sale of a commodity leaves no necessary connection. I go into a hardware store, pay the man for a hacksaw blade and walk out. I may never see him again. The disconnectedness is, in fact, a virtue of the commodity mode. We don't want to be bothered. If the clerk always wants to chat about the family, I'll shop elsewhere. I just want a hacksaw blade.”¹³

This example may seem extreme but I believe it points to something we have all encountered within consumer culture. We often see people valorising uber drivers, not because they shared with them great insights about life or went above and beyond what was expected of them, but because they didn't speak at all, they observed the unspoken (anti)social contract of the uber driver/customer transaction. When we think of ourselves and operate in the world as consumers, we have some level of expectation that things should be provided for us. There is a level of service which we expect which I think leads to a sense of entitlement, we deserve to be served by another. This expectation and othering of service workers leads to dehumanisation. We are no longer relating to each other as equals, in these moments we have created small sites of alienation and subordination. This leads to the mistreatment and abuse of workers all over the world.

While this is true of commodity exchange, Hyde explains that a gift exchange ‘establishes a feeling-bond between two people’¹⁴, and this feeling-bond is innate within art. We feel compelled to create, and when we do, people can feel that we are creating from a place of intrigue and curiosity. We are not creating art to sell it on the market, this might be what happens eventually, but it is not the sole purpose of making the art in the first place. I believe when we create work from this place, it resonates with others, it speaks to them on a relational level, not at the level of commodity.

When we take art seriously, synchronicities can start to happen in our lives. I believe these synchronicities are the gift in action. They are signs pointing us in the right direction, hints to the fact we are aligned with the gift. When we start to open ourselves to these signs and subsequently follow that internal feeling, things start to align. We start to feel inspiration come to us, and practising becomes easy. We feel like we have a natural ability to do the thing we are drawn to do, and there are these magical moments where something will happen and we don't know where it came from, a happy accident some might say, but when we understand the gift, we know this is no accident. I believe we all have a path we are supposed to follow, a path that some of us will have been lucky enough to feel as children, naturally gravitating towards certain things, our curiosity leading the way. If I was to ask you about these interests and why they mean something to you, you would struggle to put it into words, they often just do, on an internal level, the level of resonance, the level of the gift. Hyde explains this internal knowing is how we come to know gifts:

“...I think, a gift – and particularly an inner gift, a talent – is a mystery. We know what giftedness is for having been gifted, or for having known a gifted man or woman. We know that art is a gift for having had the experience of art. We cannot know these things by way of economic, psychological, or aesthetic theories.”¹⁵

13 - Hyde. p.58

14 - Hyde. p.58

15 - Hyde. p.283

When I was young, I would see graffiti in the streets of my hometown Paisley, and on the train lines when going to Glasgow and was always struck by how impressive it was that these artists were creating something out of nothing. In graffiti, style is extremely important and the construction of stylistic letters is one of the most integral parts of the culture. Each writer picks a name (or often a name chooses them)¹⁶ and the goal is to get that name up¹⁷ as much as possible in the most stylistic manner, perfecting and exploring new styles along the way. When we look back to the start of graffiti culture, and also throughout the years and today, we will see a variety of styles and innovations that I am sure no one really knows where they came from. We can follow the trails of influence, and building blocks along the way, with each artist inspiring the next. But largely, so much of this culture has arisen out of the gift. The first person to put an arrow on their tag, probably did so as a 'happy accident'. When we see graffiti in the streets, we can sense the gift within it, we can't explain it, but we have an internal resonance that it has been given freely and that it is part of a larger network of gifts, gifts of inspiration.

Hyde explains this here: "...a gift can only be answered by telling Just So stories. As Whitman says, 'the talkers talking their talk' cannot explain these things; we learn by 'faint clues and indirections.'"¹⁸I believe that graffiti embodies these faint clues and indirections, purposefully obscuring itself and often hiding in plain sight. It is there for those who wish to see it, but this is often a process of discovery. Graffiti doesn't try too hard to explain itself, over the course of its history there have been very few documentaries that really delve into the inner workings of the thinking and methodology behind the culture. In the same way the "the talkers talking their talk' cannot explain these things', the writers writing their names cannot explain graffiti. When we see graffiti it doesn't tell us what it is, we have to experience it, this can be as a member of

the public, but it can also be as an active participant. It is this level of engagement that the spirit of the gift really starts to reveal itself. It is to understand something at this experiential level that one can really start to get an understanding of how rich a culture is. Once you have felt this richness, you will feel connected to it, because you have felt the gift within it.

In the seminal documentary *Style Wars*; one of the few that does actually give a comprehensive overview of the thoughts and feeling of writers; graffiti writer Skeme is filmed with his mother discussing his motivations for painting:

"It's for me. It's not for nobody else to see.

I don't care-- I don't care about nobody else seeing it, or the fact if they can read it or not.

It's for me and other graffiti writers, that we can read it.

These other people who don't write, they're excluded.

I don't care about them, you know?

They don't matter to me. It's for us."¹⁹

Most artists hope their art will have an audience and within graffiti that audience is other graffiti writers. Other writers are important because they have experienced what it is like to create this art, they will have experienced that moment when you stumble upon a new line or connection within a letter or character and you have no idea where it came from. They will have studied the culture and understand the aesthetic norms, which allows them to make stylistic judgements based on a mutually understood visual language. This internal structure of validation and rejection of the mainstream has allowed graffiti to remain largely true to the gift. There is a lack of outside pressure and influence and this allows emergence to take place.

16 - The name Panda was gifted to me, but I feel it chose me.

17 - 'Getting up' is a core tenet of graffiti culture and is the process of painting or writing your name as much as possible across the city or area you live in.

18 - Hyde. p.283 - 284

19 - *Style Wars*, dir. by Tony Silver (Public Art Films, 1983).



Fig 2. 'Skeme and Mum' Film Still, *Style Wars*, (1983) Director Tony Silver

As well as being culturally outwith the mainstream, graffiti writers have largely been economically excluded from capitalising on their art. This has definitely changed in the past few decades but for the most part graffiti writers have not been able to support their art via their graffiti practice. In *The Gift*, Hyde explains there are three main ways modern artists support themselves, they get a second job, they find a patron to support them or they sell their work on the market. So largely graffiti writers will fall into the category of working second jobs.²⁰

These second jobs might not actually be jobs in the labour market as we would normally imagine. Some

graffiti writers exist outwith this normative structure of employment, often finding themselves involved in lives of crime. It is hard to know exactly the demographic split here, but because graffiti itself is a crime, writers might be more inclined to partake in other illegal activities. Hyde expands on the benefit of working a second job to support your art:

"...The second job frees his art from the burden of financial responsibility so that when he is creating a work he may turn from questions of market value and labour in the protected gift-sphere. He earns a wage in the marketplace and gives it to his art."²¹

20 - Although rich parents might replace patrons these days?

21 - Hyde. p.278



Fig 3. 'Barry 'Twist' McGee' Detail of Mural, (2010) New York

Here Hyde is differentiating between the market and the gift-sphere, the latter of which he believes true art resides. Artists don't have to compromise on their art if they are working a second job, at least artistically. There are obviously capacity issues at play here, the more time you spend working your second job the less time you have to work on your art but graffiti writers are extremely hard working. It is interesting that graffiti writers have

no financial incentive to create work, especially when it comes to tagging, but that is likely what keeps it pure. Legendary graffiti writer and artist Barry 'Twist' McGee echoes this sentiment in a 2012 video, 'It's still one of the last things that I think hasn't been, like, corrupted, [LAUGHS] ...to me. There's still drones and drones of kids that still do it.'²²

22 - Barry McGee: Tagging | Art21 'Extended Play', dir. by Art21, 2013 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5byVU2nhBQ4>> [accessed 10 November 2023].

This makes me think about conversations around things like Universal Basic Income.²³ Opponents of such initiatives will often say that people won't work if you remove the financial incentive. Obviously the thousands of people who engage in charity work every day fly in the face of this sentiment, as well as the endless hours of care largely undertaken by women across the globe. These examples demonstrate there are other motivations at play and I believe the gift is the largest motivator when it comes to making art.

I would argue that people can sense graffiti is powered by the gift, and this pulls them towards it. There is a rejection of the pursuit of fame and fortune.²⁴ With the culture largely operating outwith the capitalist system which creates a mystique and intrigue around it. The archetype of Peter Pan comes to mind here, a character who is able to avoid the responsibilities of adulthood.²⁵ Graffiti creates a space for participants to stay young and reject societal pressures to grow up or mature, at least by more conventional standards.²⁶ This rejection of social norms feels like a core tenet of graffiti, but leads me to the internal contradiction that lies within the culture.

Punitive Masculinity.

In contrast to the gift, another force is at play within graffiti culture. I have termed it punitive masculinity, which is the enactment of control, mediated by punishment, on other men within the culture but also features across society. The main aim is to maintain a status quo and reduce any ambiguity surrounding masculinity, with less ambiguity, there is more 'safety'.²⁷ However, this safety comes at the expense of self expression and true freedom. Graffiti writers pride themselves on rejecting authority, but due to this desire for 'safety' they impose their own strict rules and authority on other members of their community. Good Guy Boris writes in the exhibition text for *Splash - Rules of Vandalism* by Moses and Taps:

"At first, when graffiti was new and independent, the people who started it were creative. Not bound by rules or codes, they where[sic] fascinated and free to create. The freedom of expression that the pioneers of the artistic movement had, lasted as long as more people joined the movement. Like in any other cultural movements, created by a man, rules started to appear, graffiti stopped to develop and creativity started to decrease."²⁸

23 - Universal basic income (UBI) is a social welfare proposal in which all citizens of a given population regularly receive a minimum income in the form of an unconditional transfer payment, i.e., without a means test or need to work, *Wikipedia*, 2024 <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Universal_basic_income&oldid=1197214785> [accessed 22 January 2024].

24 - At least in terms of the phenomenon of celebrity as we know it. Perhaps writers just replace this pursuit with infamy and poverty. (Check out *Infamy*, another great documentary)

25 - There is a New York graffiti crew called 'PPP', which stands for 'Peter Pan Posse'. The eternal boy archetype is of interest to me but again this is something I will explore in more detail in the future.

26 - It is interesting to note the socioeconomic history during the rise of graffiti culture. This itself could be a whole paper but young adults are struggling more and more to meet the markers of adulthood set by previous generations. I type this as a 33 year old mature student, living in a rented flat, with no mortgage, no partner, no children and a precarious working situation. And people wonder why I paint the streets!

27 - I was fortunate to speak to Nancy MacDonald on the phone a couple of years ago. Nancy told me that writers don't like ambiguity and it resonated so much. I think this is true for men on a wider level, ambiguity is dangerous, we might like the 'wrong' thing and be mocked or attacked for it.

28 - 'SPLASH - RULES OF VANDALISM - Exhibition by Moses & Taps™ - The Grifters™' <<https://shop.thegrifters.org/pages/plash-rules-of-vandalism-exhibition-by-moses-taps>> [accessed 14 November 2023].



Fig 4. 'Splash Panel' *Splash - Rules of Vandalism*, (2015), Moses and Taps

Boris explains here that the pioneers of this culture were not operating on the level of control, when it began they were following their creativity, powered by a need to express themselves. This energy would continue to flow as new writers joined the movement, themselves, attracted by the gifts of the first waves of the culture.²⁹ This cycle would likely have continued unimpeded, if it were not for the fact this culture was created by 'a man'. I don't know if this is what Boris was thinking when he wrote this text, English is not his first language and perhaps the intention was to say man, as a stand in for humanity, but I like that

he said 'a' man. This points to a gendered influence on the propensity for this type of behaviour and echoes the work of scholar Allen G Johnson, who, in his book *The Gender Knot*,³⁰ explains the tendency to impose rules, stems from the patriarchal desire to control and dominate:

"Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control; to fear other men's ability to control and harm them; and to identify being in control as both their best defense against loss and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire."³¹

29 - The gift of graffiti can be enjoyed by anyone willing to engage with it. Some members of the public may struggle to see it as a gift, but this is likely due to the vilification of graffiti by the press, police and local authorities.

30 - Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, Rev. and updated ed (Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 2005).

31 - Johnson. p.50

Here Johnson is describing the system of patriarchy and how it encourages control as the primary tool for men to meet their needs, while inadvertently pitting men against each other due to the fear of being controlled by one another and the humiliation this would bring. When you grow up somewhere with lots of social deprivation and a lack of opportunities, you can feel this very acutely. There is a sense that you have to make a choice, attack or be attacked, bully or be bullied. Unfortunately these choices seem to be heightened within a graffiti context. There are constant demands on boys and men within the culture to operate in this way, and if they don't, they will become the target of others due to a perceived weakness or vulnerability.

In *The Graffiti Subculture*³² Nancy Macdonald writes:

“As a site for constructing masculinity, the graffiti subculture embraces a doctrine of confrontation and achievement. Writers confront risk and danger and achieve, through this, the defining elements of their masculine identities; resilience, bravery and fortitude.”³³

This insight into the construction of masculinity, through the act of creating graffiti struck a chord with me. When I began painting the streets in 2019 I quickly found myself painting bolder and more adventurous spots around the city. I would write long reflections when posting them to Instagram and in one I said:

“My street stuff is all about the risk - reward balance. These spots are potentially high risk but the reward of them being seen by more people, even if it is only for a short time, is what makes them seem worthwhile for me.”³⁴

In graffiti and street art there is a desire to be seen by as many people as possible. This was definitely true for me but there was also an internal motivation to be seen by my peers, predominantly male ones, who could be categorised by their status as ‘real’ graffiti writers. I would paint bolder and more public spots to show them I was brave and courageous. I could feel a desire to be legitimised by my peers.

Legitimacy can be gained through specific actions within graffiti, with different actions holding more legitimacy than others. For instance, putting up stickers wouldn't be deemed to be that legitimate, but painting trains would be considered one of the most legitimate actions.³⁵ I found myself feeling a sense of pride when one of these train writers would praise my work, their opinion holding extra value within the culture and thus legitimising me by proxy of their support. I believe it is good to have a reverence for people and artists that we respect but I am interested in why these particular actions are revered above others.

Macdonald states ‘individuality is complemented by conformity – to stand out, one must fit in and to fit in one must work diligently through established stages of illegal activity.’³⁶ There is a set path for graffiti writers, each starts off as a ‘toy’ and it is the duty of the writer to put the work in to remove this label, usually by getting up as much as possible, but also by becoming stylistically proficient. However, how you get up, and what is classed as style are constantly up for debate and this is where these rigid rules come into play. It is constantly evolving and shifting with the times, but those that make up the culture are constantly shaping the social and stylistic norms within it. If the current, socially or stylistically approved path is not followed, conformity will be enforced. This enforcement

32 - MacDonald.

33 - MacDonald. p.101

34 - OhPandah, ‘My Street Stuff Is All about the Risk - Reward Balance. These Spots Are Potentially High Risk but the Reward of Them Being Seen by More... | Instagram’ <https://www.instagram.com/p/B1eSE_nFnJm/> [accessed 10 October 2023].

35 - Legitimate could also translate as masculine here. With a masculine way of doing graffiti being seen as the only ‘real’ or legitimate way to do it.

36 - MacDonald. p.132



Fig 5. 'Frodrik and OhPandah' Street Art, (2021) Glasgow

can be subtle at times but also overt at others. It can come in the form of denigration, bullying and verbal and physical aggression. This also leads to self censorship within the culture. It is safer to conform to this path than it is to challenge the stylistic or social norms.³⁷

This concept of a path that shapes social norms is used by Allen G Johnson when he talks about the system of Patriarchy. He explains that systems stay the same because people have a tendency to opt for the path of least resistance, he uses an example of a male student at a party who witnesses a drunk female student being ‘taking advantage of’.³⁸ He explains at this moment the male student could do a wide variety of things but:

“...of those that do occur to him, usually one will risk provoking less social resistance than all the rest. The path of least resistance in such a situation is to go along and not make any trouble, to not risk of being accused of siding with a woman against a man and thereby appearing to be less of a man himself, and unless he is willing to deal with the greater resistance that would follow, that is the choice he is likely to make.”³⁹

This social resistance pushes us towards behaviours that we might not condone or feel comfortable with, but because there is a social cost for speaking out, many men rarely do. The threat of violence and the removal of masculinity is also prevalent within graffiti culture, calling

into question another writer’s manliness or willingness to defend themselves is a way to make other writers conform to a particular set of behaviours. The idea that you are afraid is a form of social death and homophobia is also used regularly, with the term ‘art fag’ a common insult. In his article *Why Homophobia Against Straight Men Matters* Owen Jones explains: ‘so many straight men are victims of homophobia because it is principally about policing the boundaries of masculinity, rather than repulsion towards gayness per se.’⁴⁰

Policing is the correct choice of word here and is at the heart of punitive masculinity. Our current justice system is a punitive one and punishment is widely used across society. We grow up with punishment as a given. In schools we are punished, in work we are punished, and due to this we learn to punish others. Punishment is used as a tool of social control. Mariame Kaba writes about the US: ‘As a society, we have been taught to embrace social control, which is often enforced by people with guns, because we have been taught to fear each other, and to acquiesce to authority.’⁴¹ We fear the threat of violence, but we also fear the social exclusion that comes when we don’t embrace social control.⁴²

It has been by reading abolitionist thinkers like Kaba that I have arrived at the term punitive masculinity. I believe the term toxic masculinity⁴³ has become reductive and feels disconnected from the wider systems that influence and

37 This safety again comes at the expense of self expression.

38 This is paraphrased from the book and I feel it would be more accurate to say sexually assaulted.

39 Johnson. p.31

40 Owen Jones, ‘Why Homophobia against Straight Men Matters’, *The Guardian*, 17 May 2022, section Opinion <<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/may/17/homophobia-against-straight-men-lgbtq>> [accessed 11 October 2023].

41 Kaba. p.21

42 I would argue that every time a graffiti writer makes their mark on a city, they are going against society’s desire for social control. Which is why it is so sad that they then in turn attempt to enforce their own social control over each other.

43 “Toxic masculinity is what can come of teaching boys that they can’t express emotion openly; that they have to be “tough all the time”; that anything other than that makes them “feminine” or weak.” Maya Salam, ‘What Is Toxic Masculinity?’, *The New York Times*, 22 January 2019, section U.S. <<https://www.ny-times.com/2019/01/22/us/toxic-masculinity.html>> [accessed 23 January 2024].

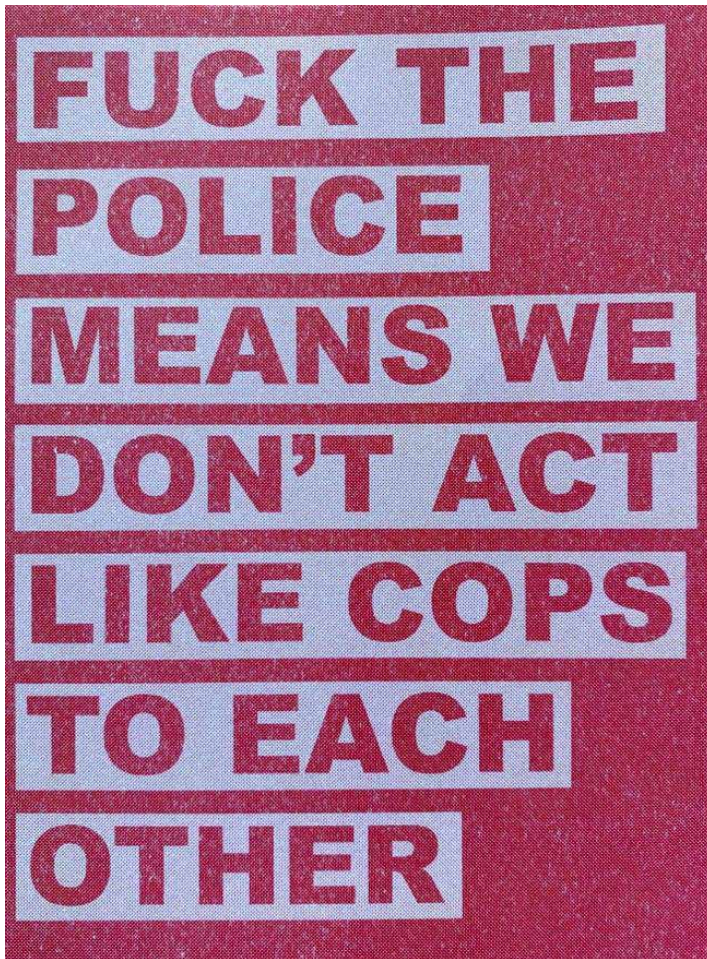


Fig 6. 'FUCK THE POLICE...' Zine, (2020)
Clementine Morigan

shape the behaviours of men, who themselves influence and shape those systems. I believe punitive masculinity more accurately points to the process in which this type of behaviour is maintained, helping us focus on the systems and behaviours as opposed to a catch all term which can at times feel dehumanising. When this masculinity is enforced by punishment, unfortunately, much like the gift, it is a cyclical system, when one person is punished, they themselves go on to punish others. I am keen to think of ways to break this cycle.

Transformative Masculinity

Within graffiti culture there is a heightened level of surveillance of other writers, people are constantly monitoring what other writers are doing and policing their behaviour if it is deemed unacceptable by the social norms of the culture or those particular individuals.⁴⁴ There is an obvious irony here, as a community which prides itself on its hatred for the police, there is an awful lot of policing going on within the community.

44 - This might be worth noting that graffiti culture is not a monolith and there are factions within it with very different views of what is and isn't acceptable. There does however, seem to be a tendency to enforce your own worldview of graffiti onto others. I myself have done this in the past and was oblivious at the time to how patronising it was.

Clementine Morigan and adrienne maree brown both write about cancel culture and like Mariame Kaba, their thinking is rooted in transformative justice. Clementine writes zines and publishes essays regularly on her substack, while adrienne maree brown has published several books, including *We Will Not Cancel Us*. I resonate with their work a lot because it feels like it holds space for people to be flawed but also to think of solutions that will actually change the problems we face in society. For instance, when we see violence in our community, we don't have to automatically turn to punishment as the solution, we can look at the factors that led someone to commit those violent acts in the first place. I think something I admire about these thinkers, is their ability, and commitment, to understanding that people are not their actions.

We Will Not Cancel Us also looks at the way social justice movements end up using the same tools of oppression within their own communities. Often these movements are trying to change the way institutions or governments work, but their structures inadvertently repeat a lot of the same processes due to an internalisation of the way these systems operate. The book focuses largely on the way that these movements internalise the patterns of our punitive justice system. amb writes:

"I can't help but wonder who benefits from movements that engage in public infighting, blame, shame and knee-jerk call outs? I can't help but see the state grinning, gathering all the data it needs, watching us weaken ourselves. Meanwhile, the conflicts are unresolved, and/or harm continues."⁴⁵

If we think of graffiti as a movement, one that is supposed to encourage self expression and challenge the social norms imposed by the state, then we can see, perhaps ironically, it also falls into this same trap. Cancelling as a tool for social control can be seen to take inspiration from the cancelling of people via the justice system in

the form of mass incarceration. The state has created a system where, if you do not abide by their rules, you will be punished and your freedom will be removed. You will be deemed a criminal and you will be judged on your actions. Putting people in prison or punishing them for their criminal behaviour doesn't get to the root cause of why they behave in that way. There is an othering that takes place, an implication that, someone who commits crime is in some way inherently bad, adrienne maree brown speaks to this notion:

Currently, a wide variety of harm doing gets collapsed into one label of "bad, disposable person/organisation" and receives one punishment: a call out, often for some form of instant cancellation...

We are afraid, and we think it will assuage our fears and make us safer if we can clarify an enemy, a someone outside of ourselves who is to blame, who is guilty, who is the origin of harm."⁴⁶

I think this binary thinking is dangerous and leads to dehumanisation, in fact the dehumanisation almost has to take place for the punishment to be administered, as they are often inhumane. Over the course of history we have witnessed scapegoats used again and again as a way to divert attention from those in power. It is much easier to point to a group of people and say they are the problem, than to concede some of your own power and to share things with others. I am interested in this scapegoating and othering that takes place because it is something that happens a lot to graffiti writers. In his book *Crimes of Style*⁴⁷, Jeff Ferrell looks at the dehumanising ways local governments, politicians and police speak about graffiti writers:

"...this psycho-pathological portrait of the graffiti writer has been elaborated through the deployment of derogatory images and catch phrases by local politicians

45 - brown. p.54

46 - brown. p.42-43

47 - Jeff Ferrell, *Crimes of Style: Urban Graffiti and the Politics of Criminality* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1996).

and local media. At the 1990 Metro Wide Graffiti Summit, Denver Deputy Mayor and Manager of Public Works Bill Roberts told a story about dogs urinating on trees to mark their territory, and noted that,

‘as I look at that behaviour in those lower animals and I look at the people who go around in our cities with paint cans and other things marking territory, it causes me to wonder perhaps if they’re not operating at a, at a level in the, in the animal chain not too far removed from that we observe in lower animals’⁴⁸

This dehumanising was echoed by Glasgow’s own council leader, Susan Aitken during climate conference COP26 in 2021, when asked about fly tipping and graffiti she commented ‘What takes - to be perfectly honest - a wee ned with a spray can half an hour to do, can take our team three hours to clean up.’⁴⁹ For those outwith Scotland, ‘ned’ is a word used to describe people from housing schemes, often thought to stand for, ‘non educated delinquent’. This language aims to bolster the idea that people who write their names on things are uneducated, it is the classic ‘mindless vandalism’ trope, which fails to acknowledge the rich history behind the culture. This language is also classist and misses the fact that people who participate in graffiti are from diverse economic backgrounds. I would argue that statements like these reflect the relationship between those in power, and an ownership class, with the sanctity of private property being prioritised over individuals’ right to self expression. This serves to perpetuate the idea that graffiti writers are other and should be punished for their actions.

This attitude is Glasgow City Council’s attempt at shaping the narrative around graffiti. Despite them funding a city

centre mural trail; where the majority of the murals are painted by people with a graffiti background; they still insist on using this type of narrative to vilify the culture and those that take part. In *Crimes of Style*, Ferrell explains:

“As a crime of style, it clashes with the aesthetics of this authority as well. For their part, economic and political authorities act as moral entrepreneurs as they attempt to criminalize and suppress graffiti writing. Drawing on their considerable epistemic and ideological resources, they work to reconstruct the meaning of graffiti writing as part of their campaign against it.”⁵⁰

Here it is interesting to note that it is not just political authorities who use this technique, but also economic ones.⁵¹ As mentioned previously, graffiti operates largely outwith the economic model and therefore cannot be co-opted for financial gain. This creates a tension whereby writers are operating on their own terms, and potentially impacting others ability to make money. The argument often being that graffiti is ugly and makes people unhappy when they see it, driving people away. But when we look at locations all over the world, such as Hosier Lane in Melbourne or the once iconic 5 Pointz in New York, we can see that this is not the reality, if anything, graffiti could today be seen as a sign of gentrification, as opposed to crime and social deprivation.⁵²

Graffiti gives people a sense of purpose and a sense of community, it helps to create a sense of place within an ever alienating society, providing spaces for self expression and creativity, as well as spaces to commune with other writers and artists.⁵³ It pains me when I still see these reductive arguments used against writers, mainly

48 - Ferrell. p.136

49 - Chris McCall, ‘Glasgow Council Leader Susan Aitken Slammed for Branding Vandals “Wee Neds”’, *Daily Record*, 2021 <<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/glasgow-council-leader-susan-aitken-25061550>> [accessed 17 November 2023].

50 - Ferrell. p.187

51 - See Appendix 2 for a Glasgow School of Art Statement on Vandalism.

52 - Daisy Alioto, ‘How Graffiti Became Gentrified’, *The New Republic*, 19 June 2019 <<https://newrepublic.com/article/154220/graffiti-became-gentrified>> [accessed 15 December 2023].

53 - I would love to get into some third place discourse here but that will be another paper in the future.



Fig 7. 'Trap and Dez' Film Still, *Style Wars*, (1983) Director Tony Silver

because I know what it is like to feel hopeless and lost, unsure of where my place in the world is, and feeling the mounting pressure to become somebody or something. A feeling of disconnection and isolation that adrienne maree brown speaks to when she says:

"In the past, I have lost connection to life, to wanting to live, thought it didn't much matter if I was here or not, and so it didn't much matter how I treated myself or others. When I was in that ambiguous commitment to life, I took risks with my mind and body that I couldn't imagine taking now, I practiced cynicism and hopelessness, as if they were the measures of humor, of intelligence...I **think**

everyone chooses each day to move towards life or away from it, though some don't realize that they are making the choice. Capitalism makes it hard to see your own direction."⁵⁴

I feel that this lack of care for oneself, this increased risk taking and this lack of care for how we treat ourselves and others, are all found within graffiti culture, and I would agree that capitalism pushes us towards this way of being in the world. However I also think that masculinity plays a role here and I think when, in *The Will to Change*⁵⁵, bell hooks says, 'patriarchy as a system has denied males access to full emotional well-being, which is not the same

54 - brown. p.34 (emphasis in original)

55 - bell hooks, *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, 1. paperback edition (New York London Toronto Sydney: Washington Square Press, 2005).

as feeling rewarded, successful or powerful because of one's capacity to assert control over others',⁵⁶ we get a sense that graffiti is the rejection of a broken system, but unfortunately also continues to perpetuate the same relational dynamics within it.

So this leads me to ask, how can we change this? I would like to return to *Style Wars* as I believe there is a clue within the archetypes featured in this movie.⁵⁷ Throughout the movie we see mentor/mentee relationships, between older and younger writers. First up we have Seen, who is undoubtedly one of the most iconic writers featured in the documentary, he is a style master and one of the godfathers of graffiti. In the movie he is seen guiding Duster, a younger member of his crew, as they paint a wall together, he imparts his wisdom and knowledge of colour theory with him and you can sense a level of care between them in this moment. Then we have the relationship between Dez⁵⁸ and Trap, another mentor/mentee relationship, with Dez providing Trap with outlines and guidance.

I believe these types of relationships are inherent in art and also society as a whole and are akin to father/son relationships. Unfortunately, as bell hooks reflects, "patriarchal fathers cannot love their sons because the rules of patriarchy dictate that they stand in competition with their sons, ready to prove that they are the real man, the one in charge."⁵⁹ I feel that this is extremely true within graffiti culture. Again and again we see people who have been guided by someone, begin to reach a level of ability that challenges the person who has been taking them under their wing, and this creates a rupture in the relationship.

As men, we do not have the tools to navigate situations like this with grace, or even with emotional awareness. We lack the ability to admit that our pride has been hurt or that our ego feels threatened, and will often revert to the things we do know, like anger and violence. hooks explains that, "Little boys are the only males in our culture who are allowed to be fully, wholly in touch with their feelings, allowed moments when they can express without shame their desire to love and be loved."⁶⁰ So as we approach adulthood or manhood, this ability to express ourselves and our vulnerabilities is subtly, but at times forcefully, discouraged. I feel this points to the duality between the two forces I am speaking about, the gift on one side, which creates a natural desire to share with others and punitive masculinity, which tells us that we must maintain the status quo or else be punished. This pressure forces men to lie and, as hooks elaborates:

"All too often we are led to believe that men gain more power through lying and compartmentalization. It just simply is not so. The stress of guarding and protecting a false self is harmful to male emotional well-being; it erodes self-esteem. Much of the depression men suffer is directly related to their inability to be whole. Even though they have been socialized to create and maintain false selves, most men remember the true self that once existed."⁶¹

I find this idea of a false self extremely common within graffiti culture, with a good example being the identity of the vandal or bomber. Again we can turn to *Style Wars* for our archetype here, this time with Cap, who could be considered the original graffiti bomber. What is interesting about Cap is his dedication to graffiti, but with a strong rejection of the artistic side of it, which he explains is about "more. Not the biggest and the beautifullest, but

56 - hooks. p.31

57 - I often wonder if *Style Wars* shaped graffiti so much that people reenact the behaviours they see in the movie, or was it just a perfect encapsulation of a subculture and the relational dynamics that naturally take place, and therefore, continue to take place today.

58 - RIP Dez aka Dj Kay Slay

59 - hooks. p.47

60 - hooks. p.42

61 - hooks. p.157

more.⁶² Cap was in a motorcycle gang from a young age⁶³ and I imagine very well conditioned in what it takes to be a 'real' man.⁶⁴ I would also argue that to get good at something, we have to be willing to fail, and with graffiti that often means failing in public.

It is my belief that Cap's attraction to this way of creating graffiti was more about maintaining a false self, one which he was in control of, one which he could defend with physical violence, as opposed to pursuing a more stylistic approach, which he would then be judged on by his peers. I don't believe all people with style are not bullies or operating on this level, far from it, but I do think that it is a good example of someone wishing to maintain a punitive masculinity within graffiti culture, as it is a game they know and can perform well. To create a new structure, without these dynamics at play, would mean certain men would lose their positions of power and have to confront the reality, that they might not be that good at painting.⁶⁵

I believe that graffiti is an inherently creative pursuit, and at a deep level this is the true motivation for those involved in the culture. Perhaps there are some who are only in it for the thrill of the illegality, but if this was the case, I'm sure they could just be out smashing windows or setting things on fire. There is a balance between creativity and crime that makes it so appealing to young men, and I believe this is because art, self expression and creativity are not included in a patriarchal worldview, but crime is.⁶⁶ This allows young men to explore mark making, colour theory, art history and every other aspect of being an artist, but within the safe confines of a strong masculine identity. Which I guess is kind of cool, as it allows those

who might not typically feel they are able to take part in art take part, but also quite sad, that we have a system that makes young men feel afraid to make art because of what other men might say about it, or worse, be attacked for it doing it.

Speculative Graffiti Communities

I would like to return to Allen G Johnson's thoughts around systems, specifically where he says 'because people make systems happen, then people can also make systems happen differently.'⁶⁷ This pushes me to think, how could we make graffiti happen differently? What would need to change for this to become a reality? What paths of least resistance would we have to create, and what paths would we have to make feel less comfortable to travel?

Graffiti writers have the ability to bring change to the world, this can be literal change by impacting the visual landscape of a city but also ideological change by impacting how others feel about and interact with it. There is a lot of power within this and I am personally inspired by writers such as Rime, Askew and Revok, who all use their artistic voice to speak to much wider issues. In an interview with Radio Juxtapoz, Revok explains:

"I was once young and like, extremely idealistic and super ignorant as fuck, you know I dropped out of high school when I was 15 years old, and I thought I knew everything for most of my life and, I probably did and said a lot of real stupid, ignorant, obnoxious shit over the course of my life, and I once kinda shared those similar types of views, that I see kids express, towards me or in reference at least to my work, on like social media. I once had similar views,

62 - *Style Wars*.

63 - 'Cap Interview | Senses Lost' <<https://senseslost.com/interviews/cap-interview/>> [accessed 15 December 2023].

64 - By this I mean a masculinity which is defined by patriarchal culture. He would likely be conditioned not to show emotion such as fear, to be willing to fight other men, and to avoid vulnerability, as this can be used against you and seen as a weakness by other men.

65 - Which is something all artists must confront, and subsequently push past if there is any hope of improving. We can also seek help and guidance which helps us to evolve at a much faster rate.

66 - Crime, but make it art. I would also say that these things can be included in a patriarchal worldview, but only when it aligns with a hyper capitalist outlook on them as a pursuit. More and more the focus is on how much money an artist is making, as opposed to the work that is being created.

67 - Johnson. p.31



Fig 8. 'Vitas Healthcare Building' Photograph, (2023) Miami Art Basel

towards like street art, or stencilling or wheatpasting or uh... or art, or really even art as a whole. I grew up in a very uneducated, suburban kinda working class family, nobody went to college or had an art degree, I mean, art was something that was for like these snobby elite people, that I just didn't understand, and it was just beyond my perception, and I once dismissed it and had made stupid snide comments about it."⁶⁸

Revok is one of the most legitimate and well respected writers in the world, so it was refreshing to hear him challenge the biases he previously held as a young man. I feel there is a lot to be gained from older and wiser writers, acknowledging where they might have been misguided or wrong in the past, as it opens up space for other writers to do the same. When we are vulnerable ourselves, we show others that it is possible. I think vulnerability will play a key role in changing things, often we are afraid to speak up, as it leaves us in a vulnerable space, we feel threatened or weak. But I feel bell hooks is right when she says, 'men who are whole can speak their fear without shame. They do not need to wear a false mask of fearlessness.'⁶⁹ I know I have personally limited myself due to the expectations of other men, I have been afraid of what someone might do or say to me when I am out painting, I have been afraid of people that might have problems with me, thinking that it might escalate into violence. These are all things that can weigh heavy on the minds of graffiti writers, and although people do speak about it, I don't see many people speaking about it publicly. No one wants to be seen as a victim, but this leads to a silencing of our collective experience. When we can't openly speak about our fears and pain, we allow it to continue unchallenged.

Since starting to read about transformative justice, something I am always struck by, is the bravery of the women who are involved in these movements. These are women who have felt the harsh reality of patriarchy, they have been physically and sexually abused, and yet

they continue to speak out against the people, and also the systems that have caused them harm. I think there is something insidious about punitive masculinity and patriarchy, where although it doesn't serve men to live with this much fear and anxiety, it is perhaps not bad enough for us to be willing to change it. Perhaps the path of least resistance is still to keep quiet. To not speak out against other men who we know are taking liberties, who are wielding power because it is the only thing they know how to do, because they themselves have felt power over them. When we do not challenge these people, nothing will change. We have to be courageous, we have to take inspiration from those who continually show up despite everything being stacked against them, the survivors, the oppressed, this is where we will find our answers. The more we challenge these types of behaviours, the less socially acceptable they will become, as Allen G Johnson writes:

"When a man objects to a sexist joke, for example, it can shake other men's perception of what is socially acceptable and what is not so that the next time they are in this kind of situation, their perception of the social environment itself—not just of the people as individuals, whom they may or may not know personally—may shift in a new direction that makes old paths (such as telling sexist jokes) more difficult to choose because of the increased risk of social resistance."⁷⁰

I don't think we should do this out of some moralistic tendency, I think we should do this because it will free us from our own misery. Patriarchy does not serve anyone other than those in power. It is a system for elites, with a false promise that one day you will be able to reap those rewards. A system that wants you to believe that your neighbour is your enemy, that the women in your life don't respect you and should be treated with contempt, that your friends can't be trusted and you are all competing against one another. This is bullshit. We need a new story,

68 - 'Juxtapoz Magazine - Radio Juxtapoz Podcast, Ep 8: REVOK and the Re-Imagination of an Art Career' <<https://www.juxtapoz.com/news/news/radio-juxtapoz-podcast-ep-8-revok-and-the-re-imagination-of-an-art-career/>> [accessed 15 December 2023].

69 - hooks. p.163

70 - Johnson. p.31

one not based on heroes, one based on collective care. We can create that story within graffiti. We can support each other and stop trying to control each other out of fear. There are purists who think that without this control the culture will cease to exist. This makes me laugh because graffiti has existed for millenia and you really need to think highly of yourself to think it won't survive without you trying to rule it with an iron fist.

I think what I am describing is a truly anarchist graffiti community. A community which does not feel the need to impose strict rules and hierarchy on its members. One that doesn't have to use force to make people do what it wants. A community of mutual aid, with the purpose of elevating ourselves, the culture and our wider communities. I think this would be a true sign of resistance, we could say fuck the system, by making our own better.

Conclusion

I have been looking at graffiti as a microcosm of our wider society, in an attempt to understand the forces that inform our cultural values and shape our behaviours. I believe that graffiti, although considered a fringe activity, imbues many of the same systems and processes we see in mainstream society. We can follow the archetypes of graffiti culture and how they relate to one another to understand what forces are at play.

Firstly, looking at Lewis Hydes' concept of the gift as a positive force within the culture, I argued this is the true motivation of all artists and is innate in humans as a way of operating. We want to help one another and share the things we have been freely given. Gifts such as art and culture operate within this space. Unfortunately, this has been disrupted by the hyper individual pursuit of profit and self interest, encouraging people to act as economic actors within a life of transactions, as opposed to human beings, engaged in the pursuit of collective care, culture and relationship with one another. I truly believe that graffiti operates as part of a gift economy, with each writer giving his gift to the streets with no financial incentive, which sits in stark contrast to mainstream neoliberal capitalist values.

However, despite this rejection of the mainstream, graffiti harbours its own shadow in the form of punitive masculinity. I built on the work of Nancy Macdonald, who argues that graffiti serves as a site for the construction of masculinity for boys and men, by including the punitive nature of this construction. I looked to transformative justice advocates and thinkers adrienne marree brown and Mariame Kaba to understand how, as individuals, we can repeat the same patterns of oppression that we ourselves have been subject to. Their focus on punitive justice as a tool for social control was imperative to my thinking around these topics and I feel it has shifted something inside me in terms of the way I relate to others, and also affords me an understanding and compassion towards those who cause harm. I supported this thinking by including reflections on the system of patriarchy from Allen G Johnson and bell hooks, whose books, *The Gender Knot* and *The Will To Change* became, not only invaluable resources for this writing, but in my own path towards becoming a man that I can love and respect.

These reflections have also allowed me to unpack a lot of my own experience within the graffiti community and start to think about how we could change certain patterns of behaviour that hinder the more positive aspects of the culture. I look towards mentor/mentee relationships, as well as wise elders within the community as potential sources of progress. A maturity seems to be evolving from within the community, one which is reflective in nature, where writers, who themselves might have taken in part in the bullying or denigration of others and others styles, are now reflecting that this stemmed from a place of fear or ignorance. Looking forward, something I feel will be integral to this shift towards maturity and learning, will come from men being given space to admit they were wrong. Without this space it will be difficult for things to change.

I will end with this. I have felt the feeling of the gift after I have painted the streets. To me it feels like I am on the right path. That I am connected to something bigger than myself. It is the feeling of knowing I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing, that I am in alignment with my purpose in this world. That is a pretty magical feeling, and



Fig 8. 'Big Heid, Me and My Pink Jacket' Photograph, (2023) Personal Archive

since feeling it I have tried my best to help others feel it too. This is why I care about this so much, because I have also felt the other side of things, I have felt the punishment of other boys and men in my life. I have been chased about my scheme as a kid, I have had my paint robbed from me as an adult. These instances and the many others across my life have left an impact on me. They have instilled a fear in me that says I am not safe, and that I should try

my best to avoid these things happening again. This fear tells me it's not safe to paint the streets. It tells me it's not safe to try new things. It tells me it's not safe to wear my favourite pink jacket because it's too loud and someone might attack me for wearing it.

This is how people dress...When they're not afraid they'll get stabbed.⁷¹

71 - Paraphrased from 'A Tale of Two Cities' - Loki, *Loki The Scottish Rapper* <<https://misterlokiscotland.bandcamp.com/track/a-tale-of-two-cities-produced-by-e-n-g-creation-and-sean-el>> [accessed 24 January 2024].

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Appendix 1

Artists who inspire me:

45RPM
Aryz
Atak
Blu
Caver
Cheo
Dave The Chimp
Emily May Rose
Guy Mckinley
Kidacne
Mr Penfold
OSGEMEOS
Priestcorp
Revok MSK
Richt
Rime MSK
Roids MSK
Sickboy
Swoon

Local artists who inspire me:

Alko
B-side
Ciaran Globel
Conzo Throb
Easy Riderz Crew
Elph One
Fool Swing
Frodrik
Goretex
KMG
Mark Worst
Mover
Mskns
NedFist
Negative Destination
Rolek
Siguel
Sole MSC
Taio

Appendix 2

Dear all,

Statement on Vandalism

We are very disappointed to see that the temporary hoardings at the entrance to Stow were vandalised yesterday, creating a very poor impression of the School. To be clear, this is unacceptable behaviour which will not be tolerated in future.

We have already planned to launch a student-led project to create art for the Stow entrance, which is now moving forward. In the meantime, however, we now have an unsightly entrance, which would cost £1000s of pounds to paint over. If we did that, it would be funds that we'd much prefer to spend on student-facing opportunities.

Please be aware that the entrance to Stow is monitored by CCTV, and we can identify anyone involved in vandalism, which could lead to action in line with the student code of conduct.

We ask you to please be mindful of the needs of all students, staff and visitors to the School. If you have any ideas for projects inside or outside our buildings, please get in touch with your Head of Department or Programme Leader because we always want to do what we can to support student work.

With thanks for your understanding and cooperation,

Dr Marianne Greated and Dr Roddy Hunter

Interim Heads of School of Fine Art