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Against the Indignities of Trump, We Are Either All Together, or We Fall

PEARLCLUTCHING AND PROFESSIONAL OUTRAGE LED US HERE. IT'S TIME TO SPEAK PLAINLY.

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Previously, we isolated a method by which manipulating the reader's revulsion at the bias of a clumsy attack is now an established technique of political propaganda.

Any legitimate criticism of a power hungry, right wing, gun loving politician is lost, because any rational person can see that what's really worrying is the bias and sexism of the writer. It's smoke and mirrors, obfuscation and, mostly, misdirection.

Take again, the example from an address given to the Birkbeck Critical Theory School in July 2016 by Jacqueline Rose, and how it dovetails nicely into the accepted working caricature of the soon to be inaugurated President of the United States of America:

"It is the curse of masculinity that men are expected to shed any sign of vulnerability, to hold themselves erect as they strut across the world's stage, above all behave as if they have always, with no flicker of doubt, believed in themselves".

What Rose describes in the politicians above is low character, not the 'real man' ideal (which is far harder to undermine and is what the men she dislikes are unable to live up to). In this way her argument takes on the mien of a heckler who, under no pressure, makes the occasional funny comment. This embarrasses the performer who, under the pressure and scrutiny of the audience, then looks stupid.

The problem with this approach is that men who otherwise might have agreed with her will pity her targets, knowing only too well (as all boys do) that they are not quite 'real men' either. Similarly, the example of men writing about women in politics cited in my last essay (focused on Sarah Palin) has the effect of causing the female reader to ignore any real criticism and think instead about how hard it is for women to break into the public world of politics and make their way under the scrutiny of the public.

This kind of gendered stereotype posturing might make a person seem edgy, but really it isn't very clever at all and it traps us in a loop, making powerful people seem tragic and sympathetic. Whilst we debate the bias of the writer, the megalomaniac skips his bumptious way to the White House.

And now, after so much of this we have a new master, one who is certainly not the figure of the 'real man' ideal. Instead, he is immune to this criticism, he assumes it as a value. He is what men become when they stop aspiring to be 'real men' (responsible, powerful, measured, inventive and culpable). Instead he, child of our time, is an undignified indulged bully who will press any class, sex or economic advantage he has to crush his opposition.

This is the golem forged under the kind of media assaults that Rose, among many others, like to throw about.

In a sense it would be better if, instead of decrying Clinton for calling Trump's supporters 'deplorable', Rose was able to see how she has actively contributed to their ignorance. They are stupid, aren't they? Not because they are frustrated with established power, but rather because they are willing to look over Trump's idiocy and indignity and still claim that's our guy!

A person does not need a degree or privileged access to knowledge to hold to values they always claimed to uphold: respect, fairness, dignity. These were values the right are supposed to believe in. Rose et al can't teach them this lesson, so focus their efforts on maintaining their own position instead. Such commentators are too ingrained with a certain intellectual method. Defending Trump's supporters from Clinton's attacks is patronising them in a way more irritating than Clinton could ever have been!

We should not simply condemn people who voted for Trump from some fantastical position of purity, but also we should not give too much credit to the so-called 'ignored' class; they have elected a demagogue! This is wrong, this is foolish! A credible person says what they think.

It is also true that only Trump's supporters can have a genuinely tragic political moment now, because they voted for something different. When it doesn't materialise there will be an opening for self-awareness to occur. Those academics (like Rose and Buck-Morris) who advised voting for Hillary would have been faced with a similar paradigm. Had she been elected, they and those like them could really only shrug their shoulders when nothing of import actually changed. All of this is a mess and none of us come out of it very well.

My suspicion is that this kind of aggressively white-knighting liberal intellectual is finished as a useful agent in society. Like an old rocker condemned to repeat the same old songs forever, they and their type are condemned to looking for another neglected sector to act for (women, gay, trans, black, etc.).

For true change, we are either all together on a clean slate, or we are thousand fragmented pieces fighting each other while our opponents agree to disagree and pursue their shared goal: maintaining wealth and power.

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Michael Eden is the Arts Editor for Trebuchet Magazine, an artist and researcher working in London and the south east, his artistic practice is concentrated on painting and he divides his time between this and lecturing in art history and contextual studies.

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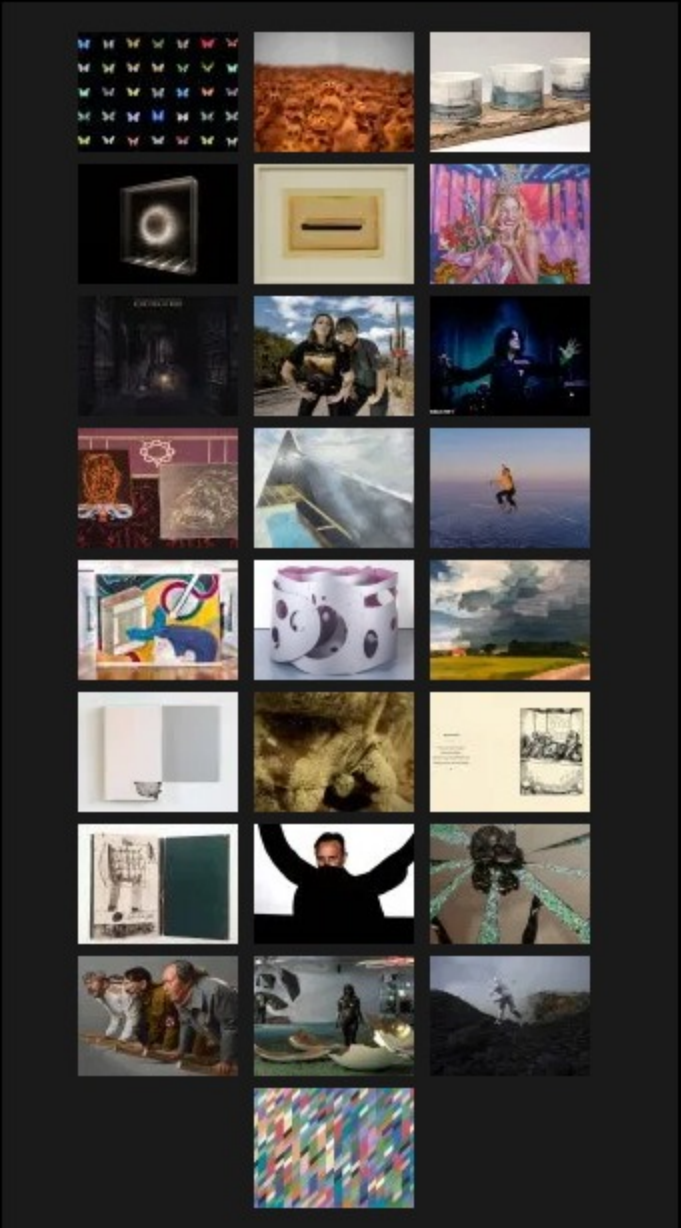
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