

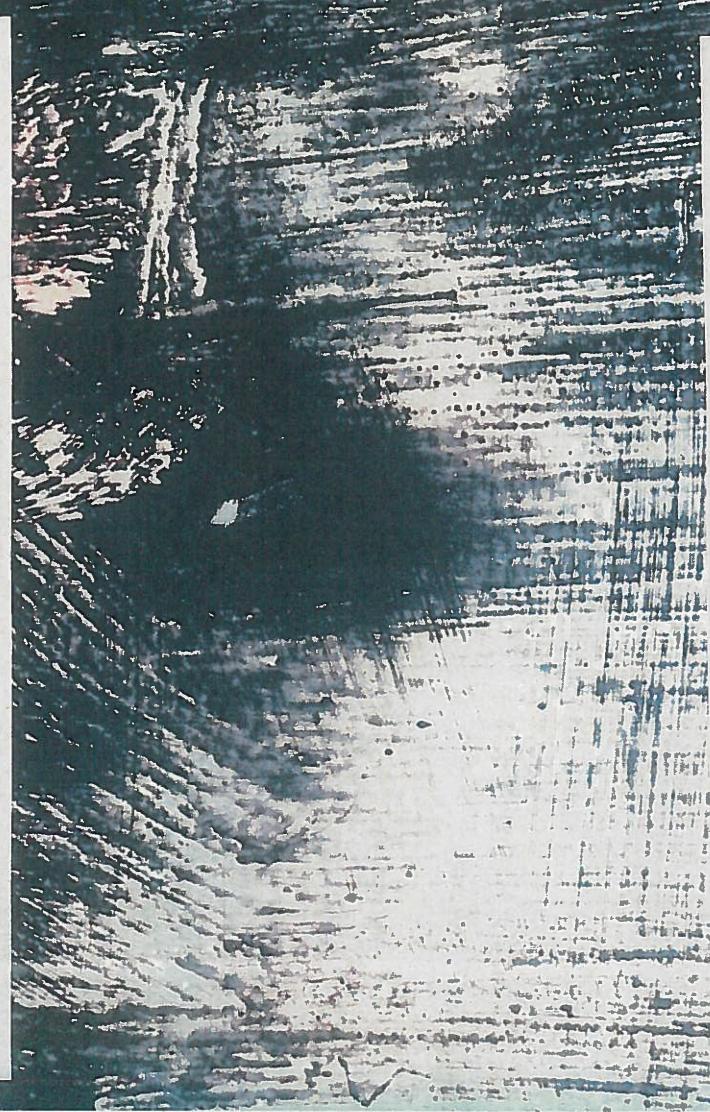
Is it a urge we all have?
A desire to create waves
A dream to run wild and free

What stops us?

Are we scared of what we may find?
Are we afraid of who we may become?

'A Year in the Wilderness' collects words and images
from the first twelve issues of my 'Wild' zine plus specials
created for zine fairs over the same period
These are the things I found whilst wandering off the
beaten track

These are my thoughts on a life in constant flux



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A YEAR IN THE WILDERNESS

"I think true wilderness can still be found, but it's hard to reach and dangerous when you get there, which is probably why it still exists".

– Michelle Paver

This book is for everyone who struggles to express themselves and those who help them find their way. As a born introvert there were so many people who showed more faith in me than I'll ever have. To Paul, Kerry and William at In-Situ. And Moz at That 0282 Place. To Lyn for the years of friendship and putting up with my northern mumble! To Crash and Jess for the zine love. And to Helen for the loan of the masks, new 'ways of seeing' and for not looking at me as though I was warped when I showed her that first issue!

"Reality doesn't impress me. I only believe in intoxication, in ecstasy, and when ordinary life shackles me, I escape, one way or another. No more walls". – Anaïs Nin

GENESIS

'Wild' came from a desire to expand my horizons. I'd done a series of 'Torso' zines which focussed on how my body was changing. From there it was a natural progression to ask the question: if my body is ageing what is happening to the places which surround me? Are they also showing signs of dereliction? And is this impacting on how I feel about both my body and the outside world.

'Wild' was a way of talking about living on the outskirts. About how the town I live in seems to be growing and encroaching on the green perimeter. Overstepping boundaries. And how it was strange that other places had become wasteland. Unwanted and unloved. It was about promises and failure.

'Wild' can also be taken as a travelogue; these are the places I've been. It can be seen as a comment on wastefulness and unrest – these are the things that we've left behind. Some vulgar scrawl and discarded clothes. Have our lives become so transient? This is what we do to survive. This is what we do to escape.

'Wild' is also about abandonment of childhood and normality. I wanted to touch on the fairy tale aspect of 'the woods'. I've always been drawn to the idea that the woods are a living, breathing and transformative place. So why are they always seen as dark and malevolent? Places where people go missing or end things. Why such evil when I see magic?

'Wild' will always be about contrasts. The photos themselves taken whilst walking to and from the places of isolation. It is as much about disarray as it is beauty. Mixing the graffiti of the motorway flyovers with lushness. Earth, heaven and hell. All part of me. All fighting each other to see which one will survive.



REVELATIONS:

The man felt the woods come alive.

It's spirit was all around him, beckoning.

That groan as the wind blew through the branches.

A rhythmic sway and creak that sent seeds groundward.

The creatures call killed the silence.

Stopped any resistance and made him go deeper.

He never saw it is as a transformative thing in itself but he felt 'something'.

What was it exactly?

An energy?

He wasn't sure if he believed in magic.

He wasn't sure he believed in much more than the moment.

As the man undressed he saw that he was erect.

He found it funny that throughout his life he'd been told where to go and what to do but never how to love.

Or how to be.

Life lessons always came in vague terms that were impossible to measure.

It was about fear and sin.

It was about blasphemy

But he'd found a way to escape, to question and to shed his skin.

He found joy in being willing to let time leave its mark.

Open to making himself appear vulnerable.

Desire came through death.

It came in the changing seasons.

It came in dreams crashing.

The man felt such wonder as he dived into the moonlit pool.

And complete as he caught the beast's reflection when he surfaced.

The beast's habitat was in constant flux –
the men had dreams

Gone were the brook and green aplenty

Now it could only find factory, artificiality

A constant throb

A constant fear [of grey]

Where could freedom now be found?

The monster howled in vain

Why did progress always bring abandonment?

Life inconsequently falling away

Colours fading in the hopelessness

Was nothing worth saving? – he felt alone again

Did he not exist? – no, to them he was nothing

How long had he been amongst them now? – it

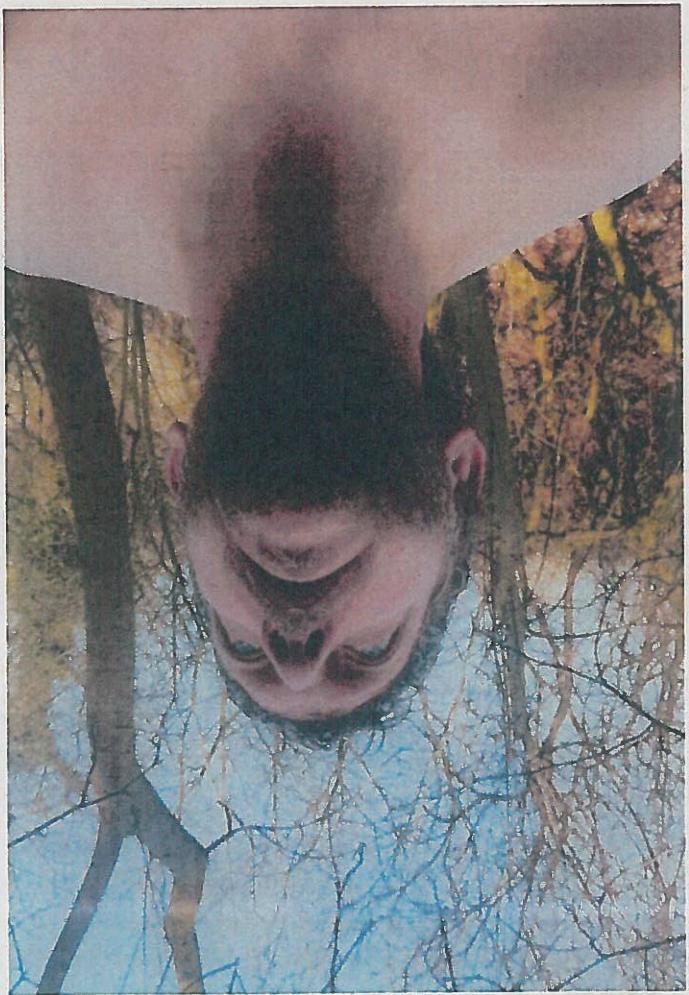
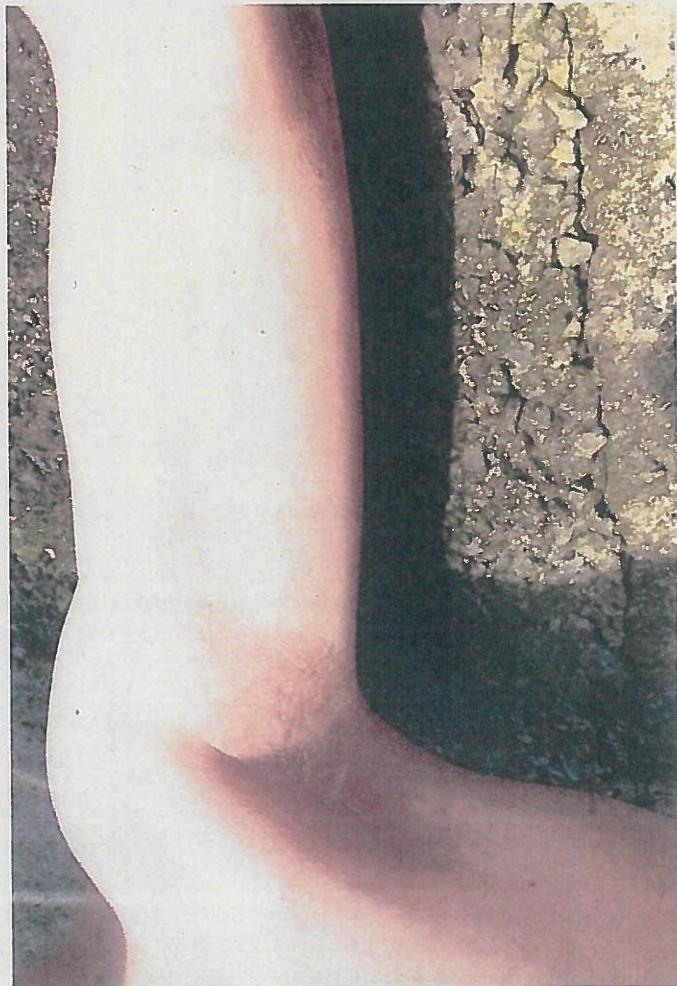
felt like eternity

They preached a future of change, of ideas

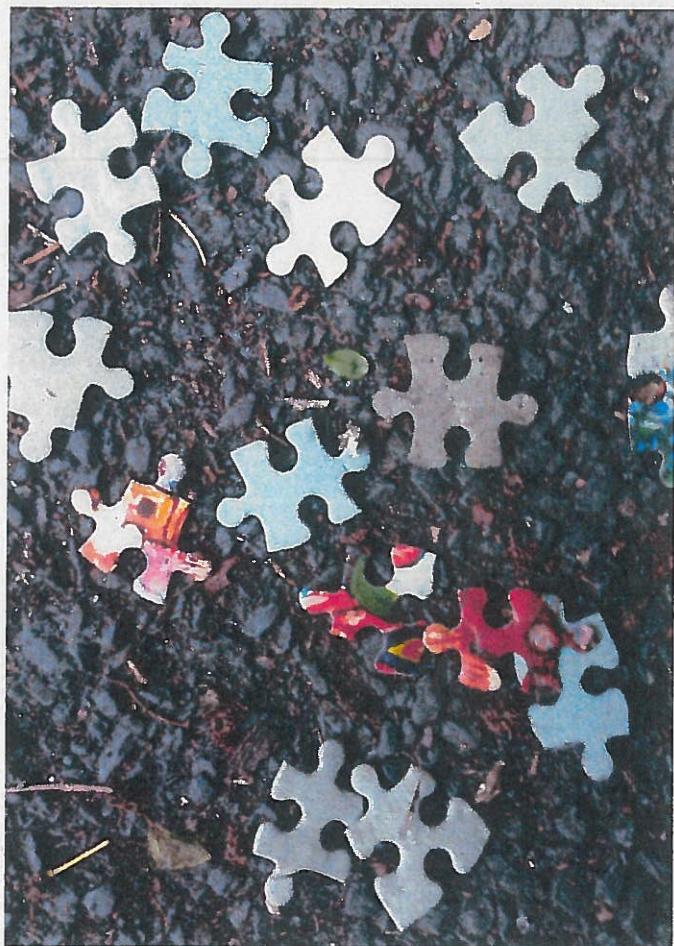
How was this the answer when it meant extinction?

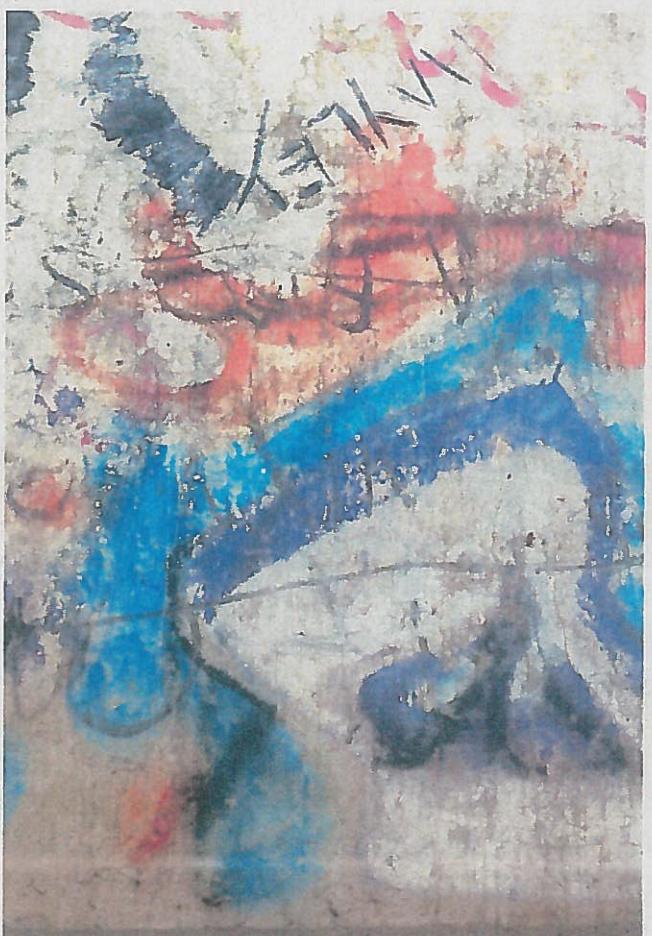
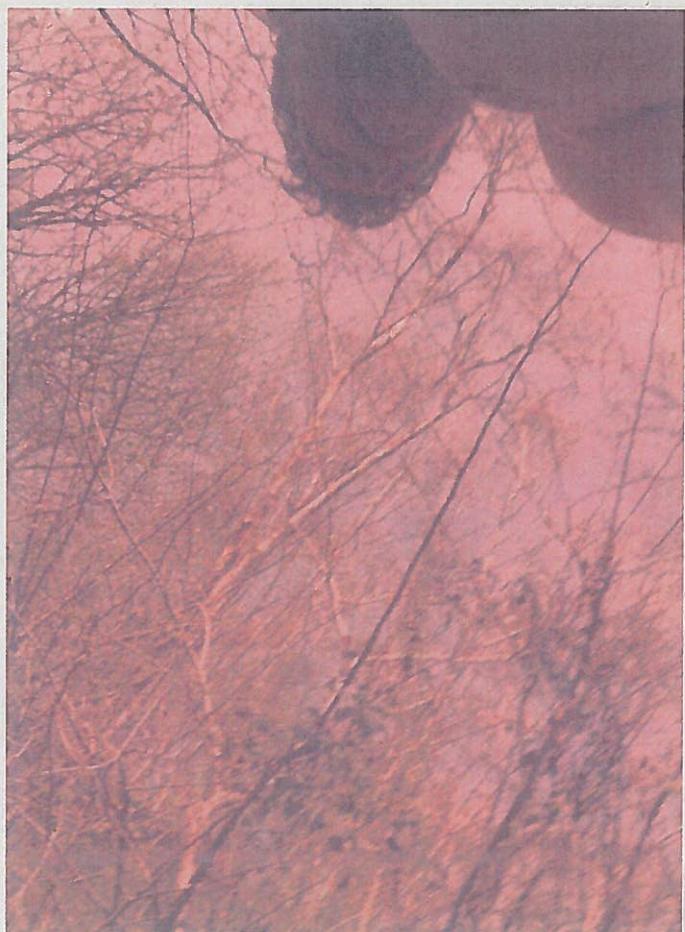
The beast howled again

In this age of enlightenment the men fell silent



STRANGER
Than
Paradise







The prophet knew his time was at hand and
wished that he could change his path

He wasn't set for this - he no longer believed
But he knew his death must come

Through sword, through semen

Through the thoughts in his head that made him feel evil
Through the thoughts in his head that made him aroused
Why couldn't they see he wasn't one of them?

He looked at the vibrant green with such awe
And went deeper into the wilderness

He knew that it was useless and they would find him
Hunt him down and demand words

Hunt him down and demand sacrifice
But for now he walked further, naked

Cherishing each secluded breath

Each nettled step that proved he was human

Each sacred second there before darkness enveloped

So what defines us?

What defiles us?

Is it the dust and dirt that surrounds?

Products of this harsh world

This concrete land where we live

Maybe the desire is always there?

And with that a certain devilment

To stray off the beaten track

To stray and feel sheer joy

To stray never to return

No longer tied to the past

No longer following some tired doctrine

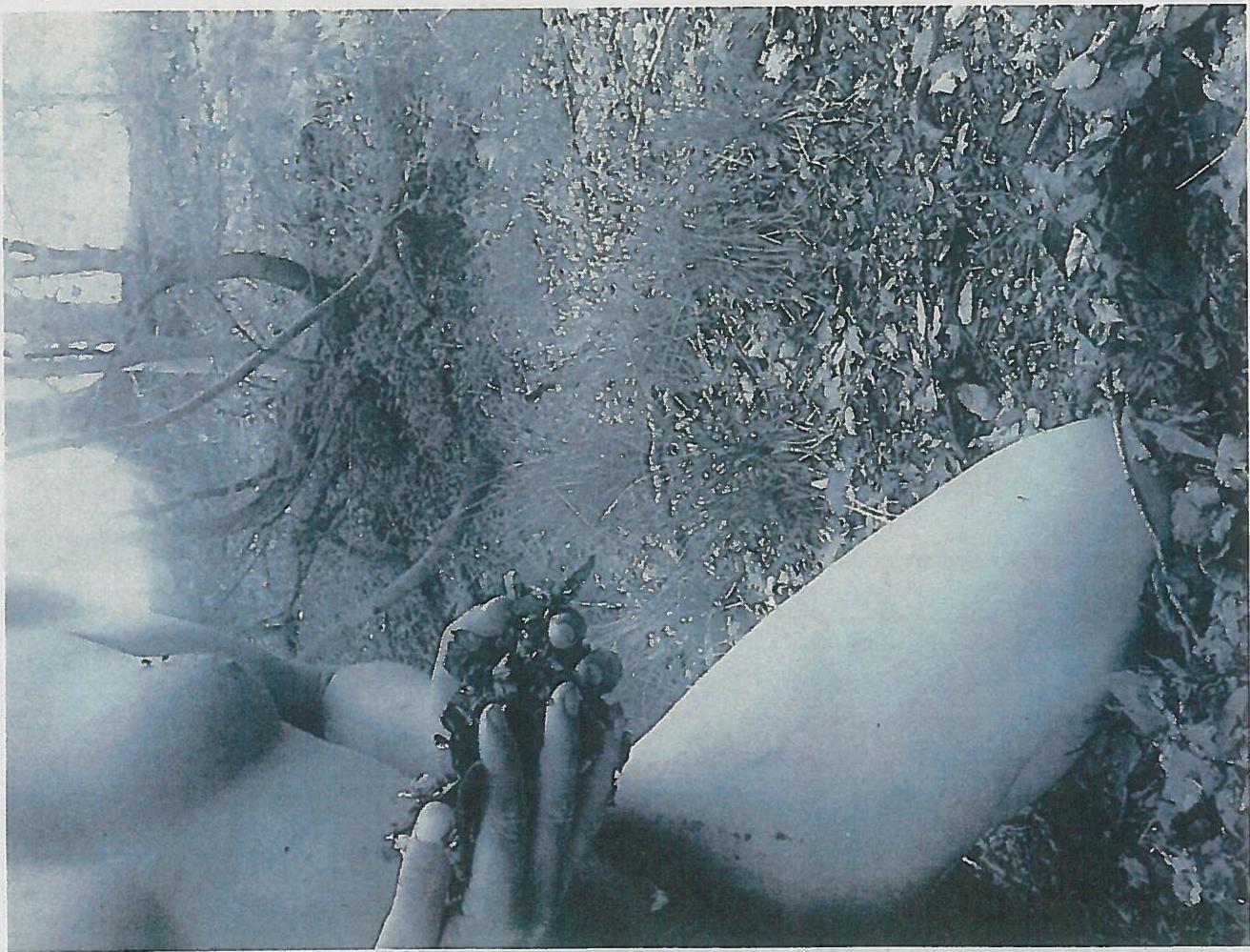
But for once acting wild and carefree

Changing beyond all recognition

Fluid and formless

Shedding skin without any concern

Is the crumbling concrete a sign?
To remind us we are bound to change
Grow old and weak
Bend and break down
But also to experience new things
With a new wisdom of sorts
What do you see other than just a body?
A male body
Not some edifice
Not something to be repulsed by
Human?
Does anyone really know what that means?
Is it just another label to define how we
should act?
To care or abuse in equal measure?
To know about death and realise that it is
on the horizon
To have no fear
But to walk ghost like through the ruins
Quiet, ashen and unashamed





The man knew he was heretic
He wanted to fuck the world over
He didn't care for anyone let alone himself
He realised that there was no hope here
He used to believe in heaven but somehow got lost along
the way
Through the sex that they found abhorrent
Through the coarse words that he spat out
What was heaven anyway?
A place for cunts who died without sinning
Or were foolish enough to atone for their desires
He imagined it as endless drone
He imagined it full of people who he used to hate with a passion
Lame and insipid - it felt more like hell to him
There must be vibrancy below?
There with those who had been condemned as worthless
Those who over time had defiled scripture
He knew he would feel their agony
He knew he would feed off their hate
He knew they would become tribe
He knew he would soon find love



They were bits of kids kicking stuff around the same neighbourhood

Early Seventies babies who ventured everywhere together

Down across the railway line to the waterfall or across the golf course; further and further afield

Adolescence made them insular and had them hanging round street corners

They grew listless and lustful

They tried to look cool

They tried to remember why they liked each other They lost touch

Maybe it's just one of those things. Time chose their friends but over time they needed to separate Go their own way and have new experiences

Happy to know they had left their mark on each other's dreams

Our lives have become boarded up

Shuttered and fleeting

Desperate with no sign of progress

Only in terms of time; day in, day out

Like some pointless procession

Point A to point B and back again

Repeat, repeat, repeat

Endless, endless, endless

We've become like animals; zombies

Uncontrolled

Only stopping to eat and fuck

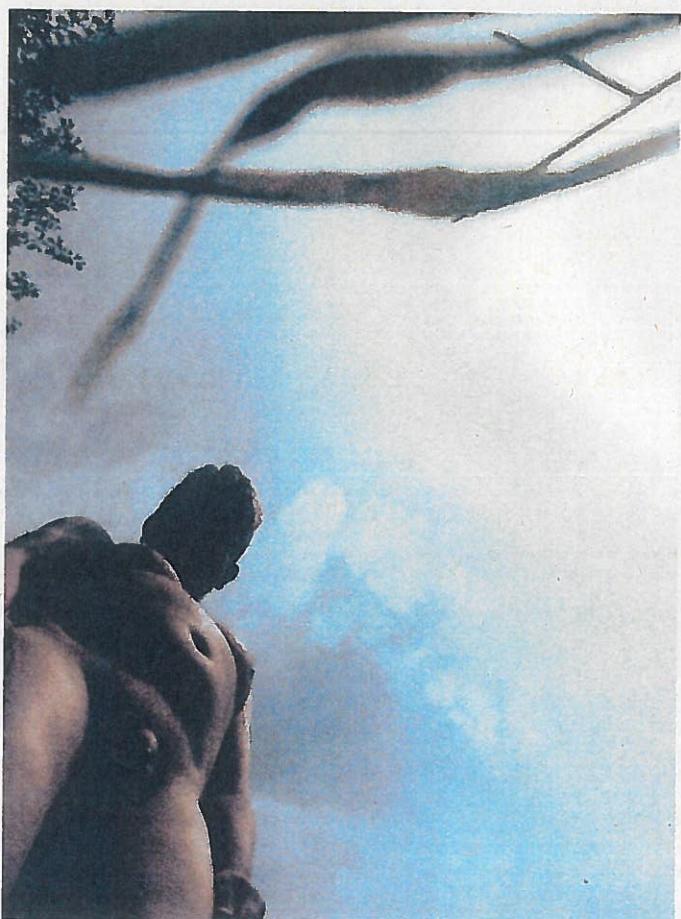
Eat and leave waste

No sense of what is around

No sense of what is on our doorstep

Dead whilst living in a state of nature

Doomed to live in a state of disarray



So what has been left behind

Left for others to find

Some scrawled tag to say I was here

I have existed

I have made my mark

For once I have had my say

Fuck this, fuck that, fuck you

It's hard to know how we'll feel when we
reach that moment we have to depart

Regrets and what ifs mingling with warmthess

Memories of times we burned bright

Not worried about what lies ahead

Realising that those left will come and go

Roaming through the woods and pastures

Milling around the arcades

Trying to make sense of it all

Trying to survive

Out in the woods the creature roams

Isolated just following its own primal instincts

Yet still fearful

Always fearful

But in the distance exotic smells and cacophony

Forbidden desires and chances

A faster heartbeat

Sure it may end up in revulsion

Sure it may end with expulsion from Eden

Sure it may end in nothing

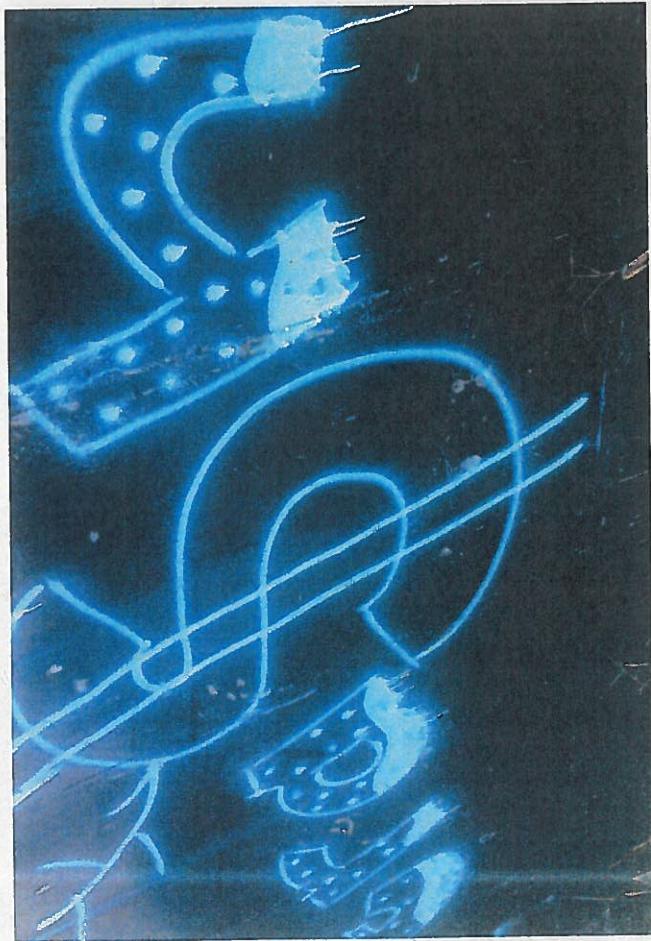
But what is life without thrill?

But what is life without the thought of destruction?

Randomness and non-conformity

The creature looks both ways and steps out of the shadows

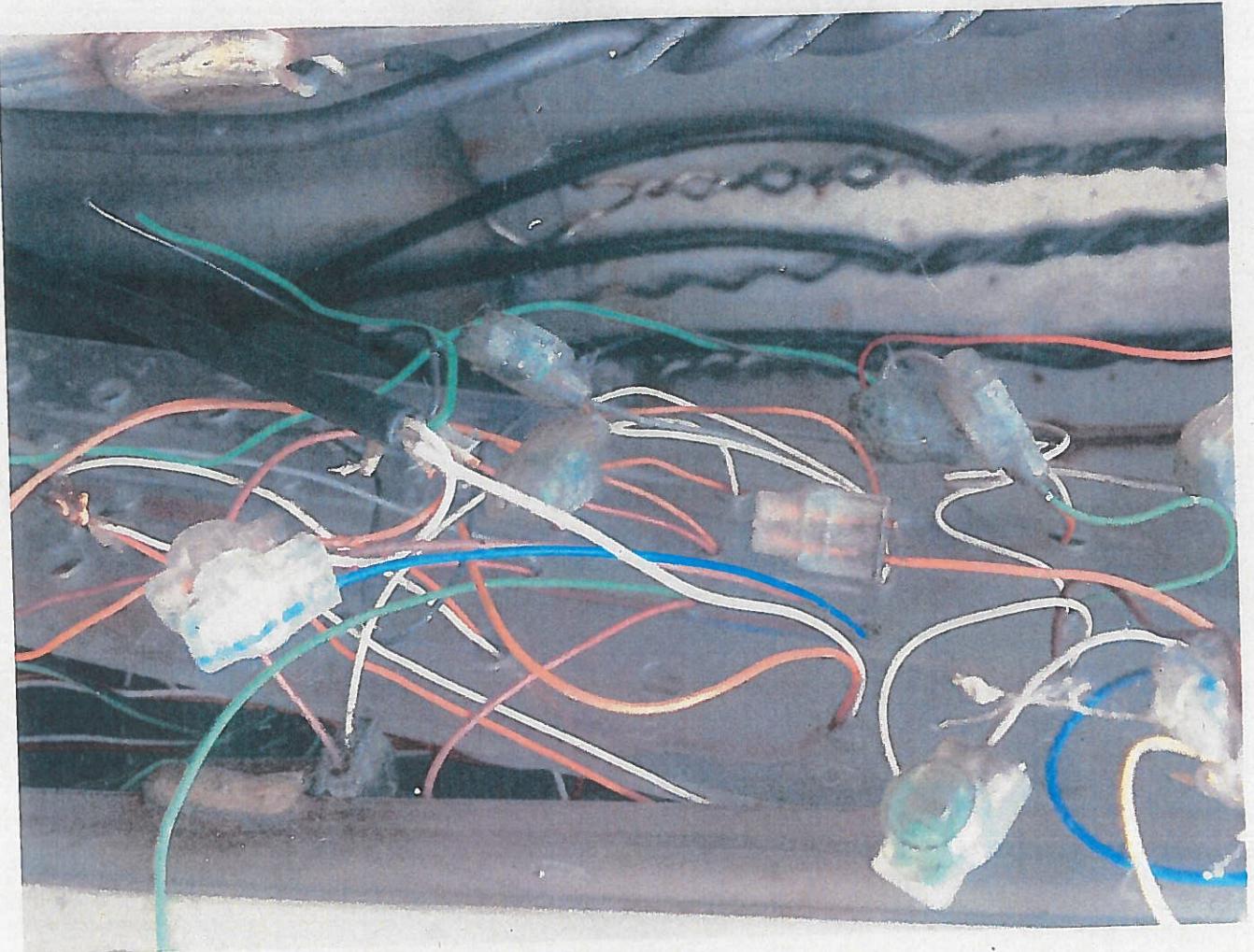




They promised us a brave new world.
Said our futures would be bliss.
Abundant, full of silver and chrome.
They gave us wires.
Things that spat out noise.
Things that became tangled and torn.
Things that corroded whilst he tried to escape.
He grew old trying.
He grew tired trying.

The motorway came offering nothing more than greyness and monotony.
He still didn't know where he was headed but could get there faster.
Things crumbled further.
And yet always an oasis in all of this.
There past the concrete and graffiti he found calm.
There near where the Quakers built their bridge he found lushness and wildlife.
Still isolated but now at one with nature.
There he shed his skin.
All artificiality gone.
There he smelt wild garlic and felt the warmth on his shoulders.
Felt a powerful resurgent energy.
There at once he became alive.
There, forever, he felt home.





So what does this modern world bring us?
The vibrancy of wild flowers with teenaged blue hues?

Perhaps we realise though that this wonder is short lived?
Our lives have become insignificant.

Our lives are full of cheap kicks and plastic.
Thrown away before the time comes.

Discarded bikes (was our childhood so long ago?)
Discarded prams (we couldn't wait to grow up and have sex.)

Discarded dreams (when did we stop imagining a bright future?)
Despite odd glimpses of colour the lustre has gone.

Replaced only with grime and slogans.
Feeling like we don't belong today.

Feeling slaves to a distorted rhythm.
Feeling nothing but numbness.

Wanting something more than just being here.



