

PSYCHONAVINGATING THE (SUB)URBAN IDYLL

PERVASIVE FILMMAKING IN ANDREA ARNOLD'S *BIRD* (2024)

Matthew Rogers: matthew.rogers@falmouth.ac.uk

British Popular Culture conference: Friday 6th June 2025

MATTHEW ROGERS

SENIOR LECTURER - FILM AND TELEVISION

- Buckle up...!
- This is my 1st (pure) Film Studies paper
- Transdisciplinarity is at my core as an academic
- An attempt at a (completely mad) original transdisciplinary framing is at the core of this paper
- Unsubstantiated conjecture is definitely on the horizon
- Please god I hope there are none of my future dissertation students in the room..?



RE-CENTERING THE HUMAN PART ONE

BROAD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Starting Point:

- What might be getting lost in the current fascination with artificial intelligence?
(Please note: the not shortening of the term 'artificial intelligence' to the more cutesy AI is 100% intentional)

Relevance within Screen Culture:

- How does screen culture present, articulate and celebrate inherently 'human' qualities as distinct from non-human, machine or artificially intelligent qualities?



RE-CENTERING THE HUMAN PART TWO

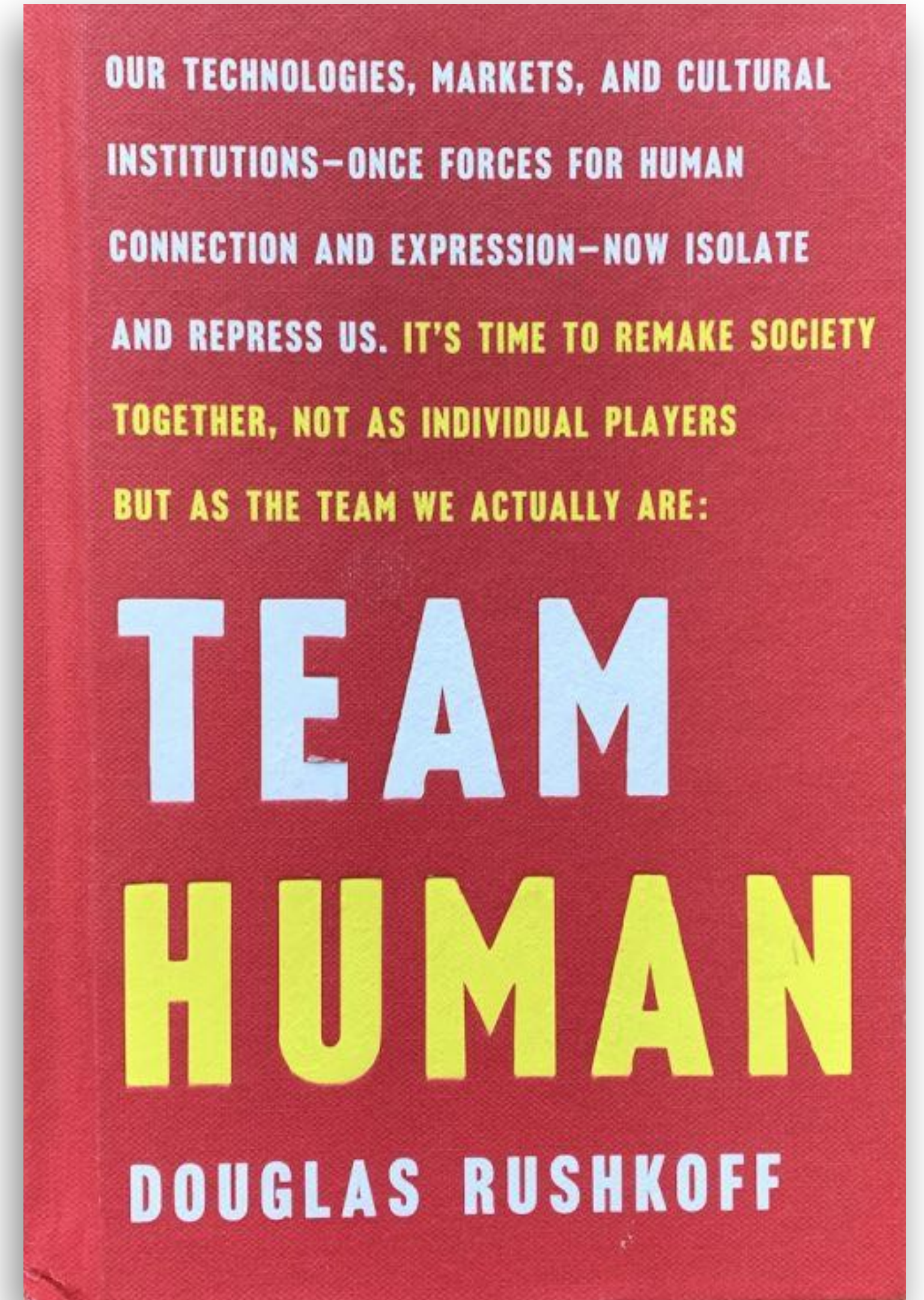
APPROACHING PRECISE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Consideration:

- Humans have organic bodies - machines do not
- Human consciousness is housed inside a body - artificial intelligence systems are not
- Human consciousness is affected by their organic bodies - artificial intelligence systems are not
- Human bodies are intimately connected to the environment that they inhabit - artificial intelligence systems are not

Outcome:

- Human beings have the ability to undertake wilful acts of akrasia - to act against their own best interests



RE-CENTERING THE HUMAN

Statement

- Only biological entities can get stoned and screen culture uses stoned phenomenology in very interesting ways

Hypothesis:

- Andrea Arnold uses a set of pervasive filmmaking industrial practices *Bird* (2024) to induce the 'crossing over' conditions for a of drug-inflected phenomenology that invites the audience beyond an inert spectatorial position towards an inherently human, multi-sensory and in Arnold's case - British, socio-political experience of identity through a kind of 'contact high' with on-screen characters



PERVASIVE FILMMAKING

INDUSTRIAL CONDITIONS

Andrea Arnold describes:

- Combination of big name actors and 1st time actors (or non-actors)
- Shooting in sequence
- Actors not receiving full scripts
- Actors not told about other character's arcs or experiences
- Actors given music playlists to help them to understand and develop their character
- Cinematography undertaken with natural light
- Very few locked off cameras

Industrial conditions alone are not enough to warrant the label 'pervasive'



***I AM PROPOSING THAT ARNOLD IS ATTEMPTING
TO GET US, AS DELEUZE DESCRIBES:***

***“‘INTO ‘A STATE’ IN ITS COLLOQUIAL
USE AS ‘AN AGITATED OR EXCITED
STATE OF MIND OR FEELING’, AS
THE MOST RECEPTIVE APPROACH
TO A CINEMATIC ENCOUNTER
WITH ALTERITY”***

DEFINING DRUGS ON SCREEN

TWO TYPES OF 'DRUG FILM' - TYPE ONE

Where the overarching logic of the film could be defined as being rationally framed within a non-drug-inflected materiality but also contains at least one scene where a central character ingests psychoactive drugs which results in an on-screen depiction of that character becoming high

Examples:

- ***Hangover* (Phillips, 2009)**
- ***Wolf of Wall Street* (Scorsese, 2013)**
- ***Queer* (Guardagnino, 2024)**

DEFINING DRUGS ON SCREEN

TWO TYPES OF 'DRUG FILM' - TYPE TWO

Where the filmmakers ongoing presentation of the central character(s) and the worlds that they inhabit are depicted as being permanently refracted through qualities associated with the consumption of psychoactive drugs and/or drug culture.

Examples:

- **The Doors (Stone, 1991)**
- ***A Scanner Darkly* (Linklater, 2006)**
- ***Enter the Void* (Noé, 2009)**
- ***Inherent Vice* (Anderson, 2014)**

BIRD + DRUGS

WARNING - POSSIBLY CONTENTIOUS FRAMING

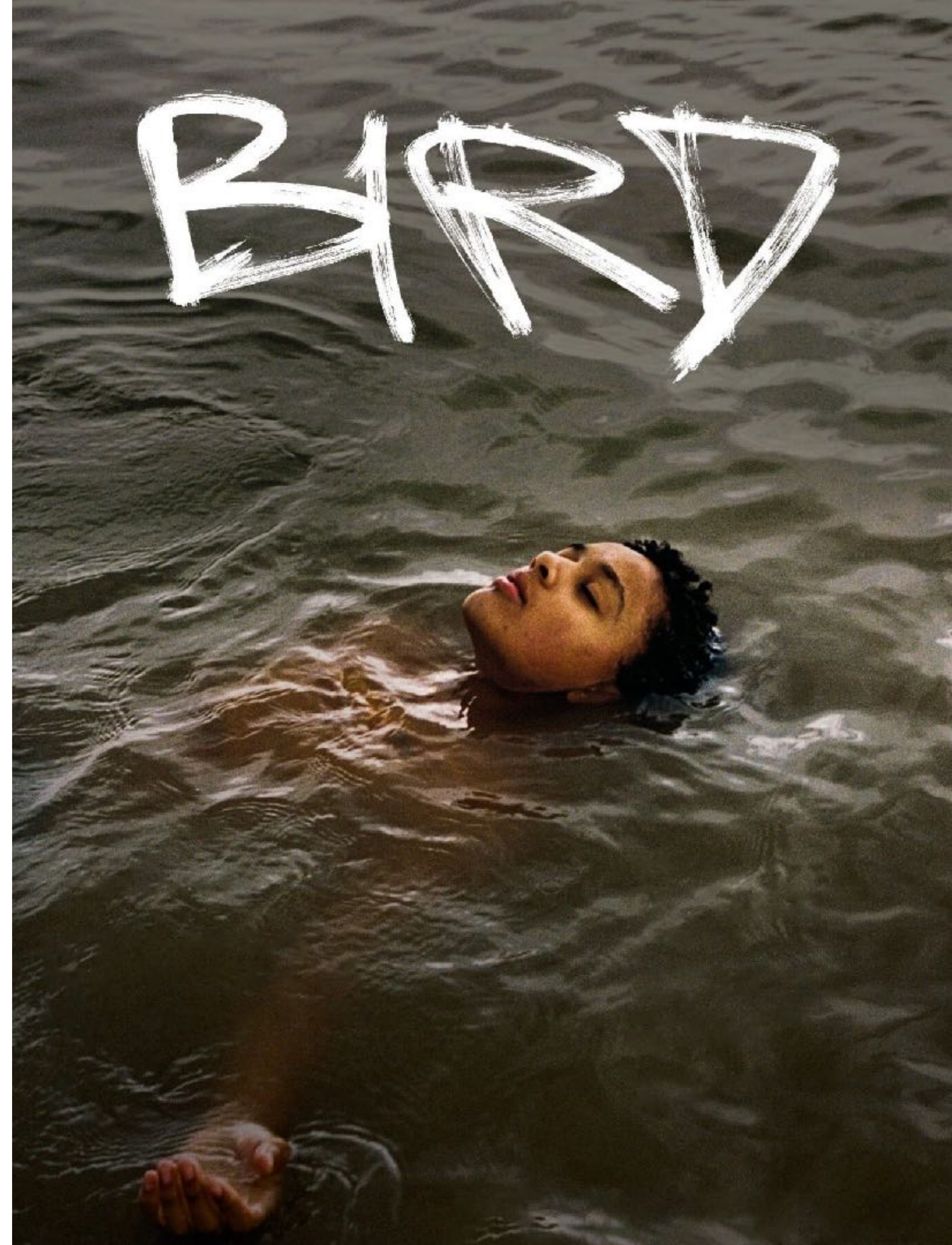
Bird (2024) is a film about:

- Youth
- Transformation
- Entrapment
- Escapism
- Parenting

Within the context of these conditions:

- Race
- Gender
- British Working-Class

However, the act of taking drugs and the suggested outcomes of drug culture is pervasive throughout the film









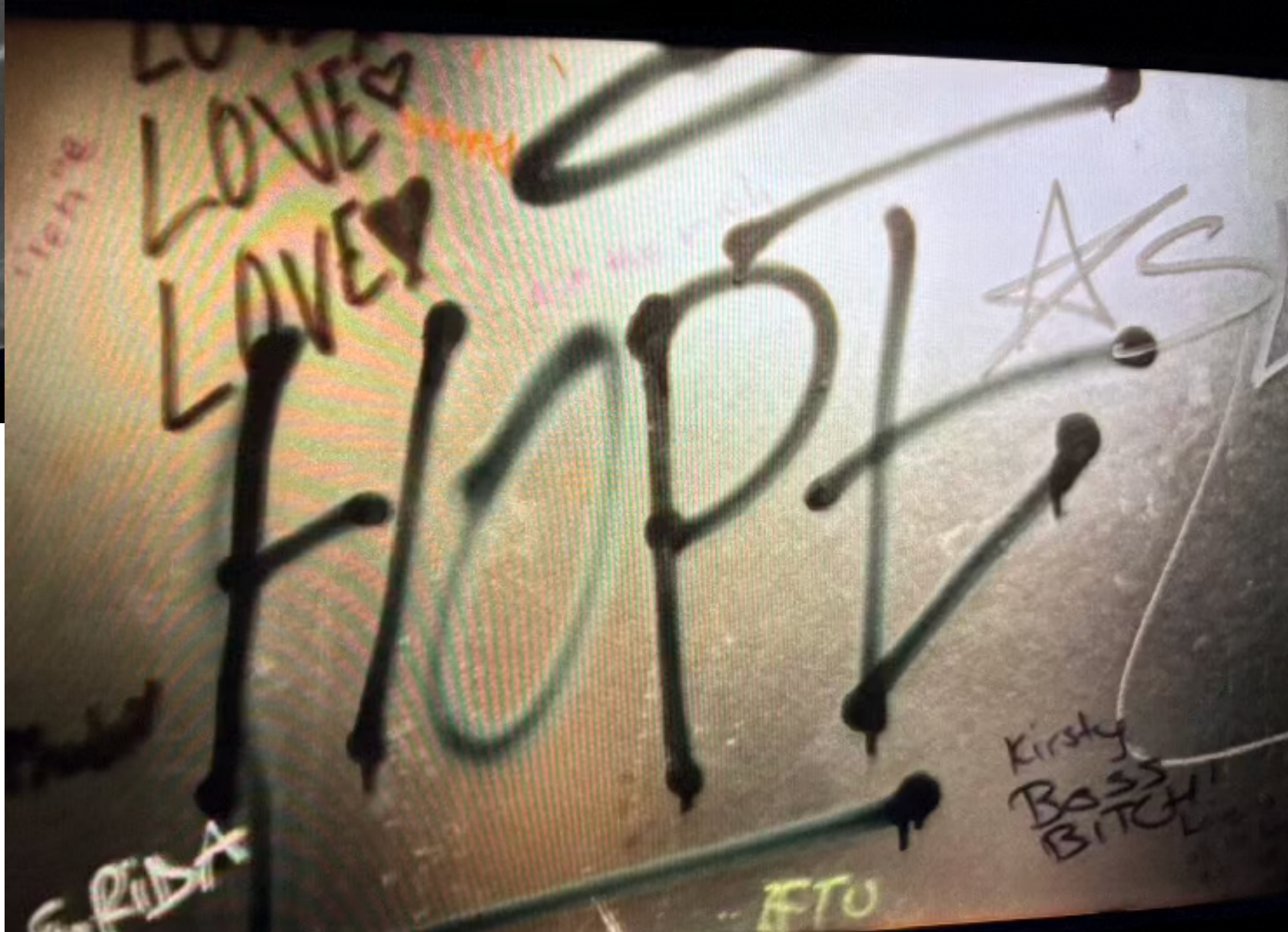
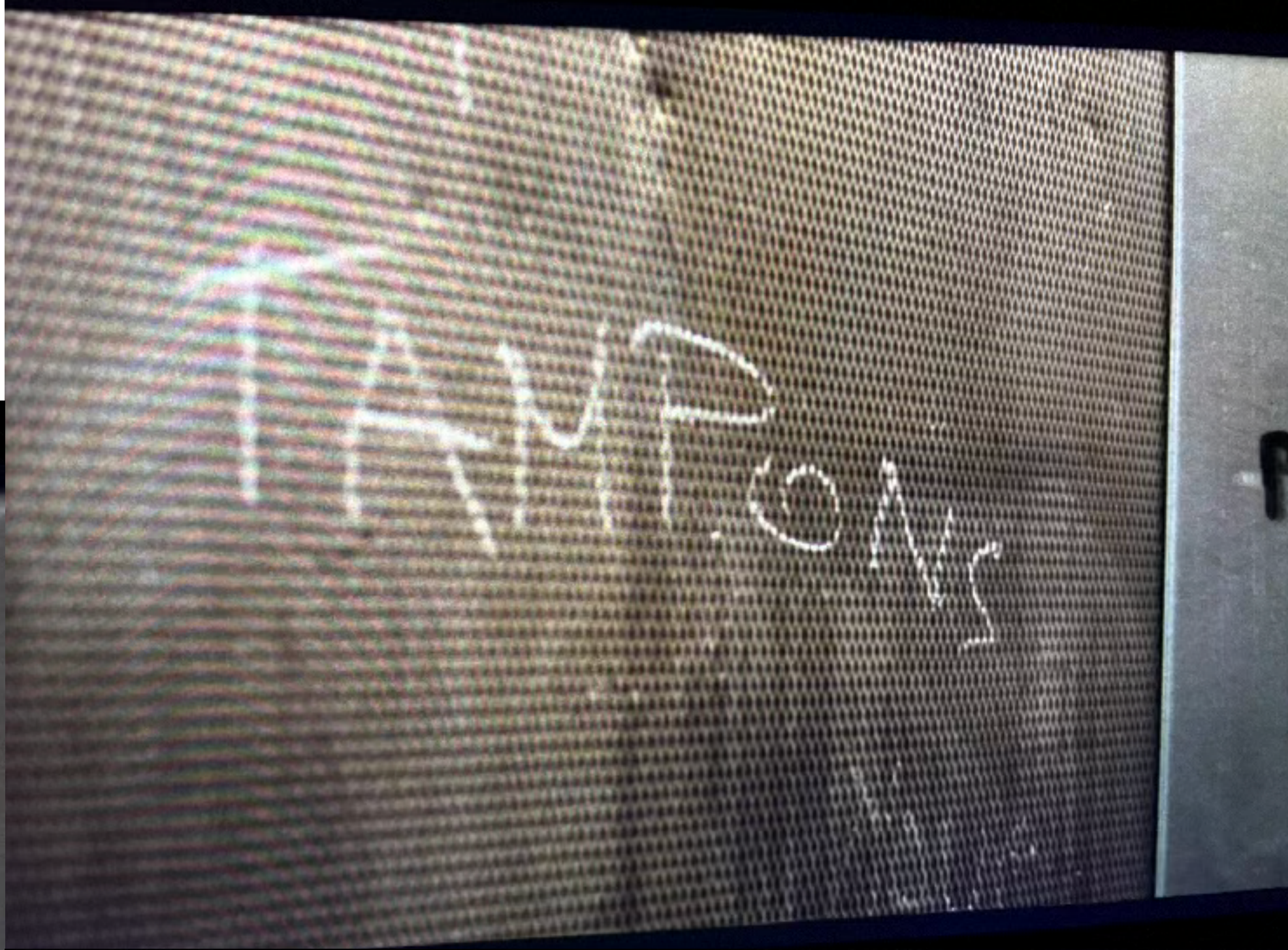
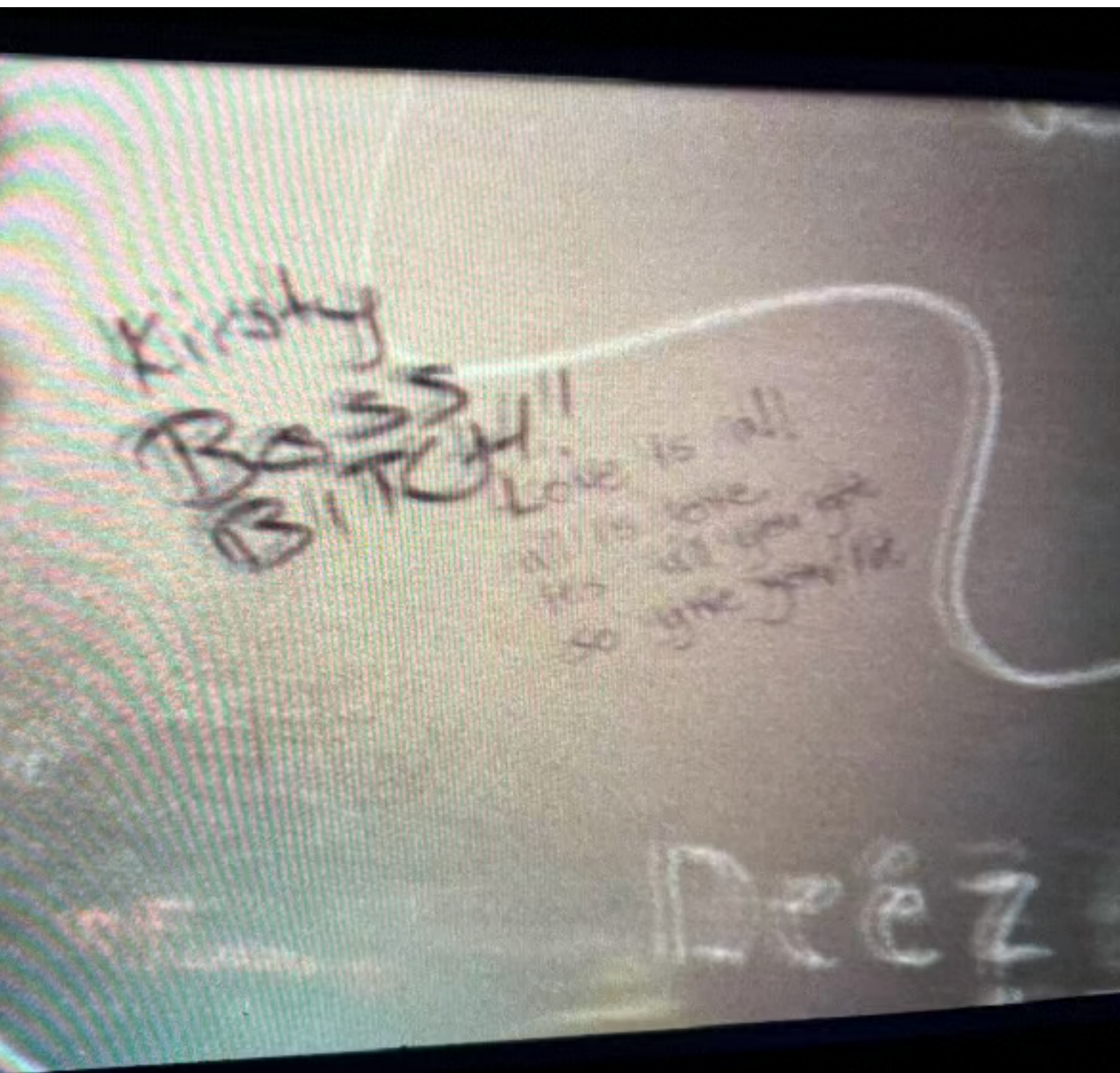
















By the author of *Journey to Ixtlan*

CARLOS CASTANEDA

**THE TEACHINGS OF
DON JUAN: A YAQUI WAY
OF KNOWLEDGE**


POCKET
80498
\$1.95



PSYCHONAVIGATION
TECHNIQUES FOR TRAVEL BEYOND TIME

JOHN
PERKINS

