

Marine World. Africa. USA.

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Iniquity is invariably described as a sea. Accordingly, as people strive to live life in a way which is morally good they may describe this experience as piloting a ship through dark or choppy waters. Thus, this builds on the established metaphor of sin as a sea, but changes it slightly by making it a sea we must traverse. Not only a sea which we must traverse, but a sea on which we are currently sailing by virtue of living our lives. There is nothing but the sea, and our vessel upon it. Seemingly, our mother's open legs line one shore, and the other is lined with coffins.

Freud described female sexuality as a "dark continent". A dark continent which one would only imagine is flanked by choppy iniquitous waters. One may infer that within these waters live a host of aquatic creatures. Among the mammalian life present there would unquestionably be a preponderance of dolphins. An iniquitous sea is the primary habitat for the dolphin, as they are known both to have sex for pleasure, and to rape. I believe this is what Kool AD had in mind when he said, "Kool A.D., Swag, Swag, I'm a Dolphin".

When I listen to Kool A.D.'s *Marine World Africa USA*, a 2013 hip-hop masterpiece, I imagine I'm adrift in a raft on the aforementioned sea. The sun is setting, leaving an orange and yellow wake. The sea caresses the horizon with lavender hues. With no land in sight, I worry what dangers the night will bring. Suddenly, an unsettling roar bellows from the deep! I brace myself, digging my fingers into sides of the raft. The sound grows louder, and ever clearer. The futility of my situation sets in, and I loosen my grip on the sides of the raft. I'm but a small man, in a small craft, facing leviathan. I surrender to my inexorable fate.

"Wait... What's this now?" Startled, I realize this isn't the roar of some aquatic beast, but the low dirty rumble of hip-hop bass. That deep thunderous sound, specifically crafted to resonate within adipose tissues, and jiggle them out of their confining intimates. My body gyrates uncontrollably as I lay flat on the floor of the raft. Then suddenly the sound stops, and a gentle splash sounds to my left. Slowly I hoist my shaking body up onto the side of the barge, and gaze over the edge. To my surprise there floats innocuously not a primordial sea monster, but a dolphin. It's wearing a 59-50 cocked back and to the right, and a preposterous number of golden chains (preposterous even by dolphin standards). "Swag," he says. And with that he beckons me into the water.

I recall fondly my first experiences when experimenting with hip-hop. As a lower-middle-class white male from a dysfunctional home, it follows both demographically and statistically that I would have turned to drugs to cope with the tumultuous nature of my coming of age. Drugs are a gateway to hip-hop. I remember hearing hip-hop in my childhood and shrugging it off discontently as a cat in rain, but something happens after smoking your first joint; a switch is flipped and hip-hop suddenly makes sense. Maybe there's some sort of intrinsic antecedent interwoven in the particulars of any given musical genres' soundscape that can only be unlocked through drug use. If so, then drug use by the listener would provide a context to the music, implicit by virtue of music being a product of an artists' mind and mental processes. Music is shaped by higher minds. Higher minds speak a language which sobriety can't recapitulate. The nuances and idiosyncrasies of these two languages are such that direct translation between them can't rightly occur. DJ Harvey (a house musician) summed this up eloquently when he said, "You can't understand the blues until you've had your heart broken... and you can't understand disco until you've had group sex on Ecstasy." Thus I came to understand hip-hop; thus I became a drug addict.

I recall fondly my first sexual experience. I was 19, and my friend had invited me and several of our closest friends over to celebrate his 21st birthday. As the night progressed people came and went, paying their respects and acknowledging the milestone which years of underage debauchery had precluded. As the resident DJ for events within our friend-group, I had catered this evening's festivities: French house music (a favorite among our compatriots as getting intoxicated together always lead to a desire to dance), and golden-age hip-hop (something middle class white people approve of universally). I had decided to stay the night, as my untempered drinking rendered roads an unnavigable blur, and as the last patrons left I found myself and my dear friend alone in his family home. I changed the record to the hyper-sexual French-techno of Sebastian Tellier's *Sexuality*, and with it the pretense of a joke illuminated a deep-rooted mutual desire which social convention had rendered unutterable. Sebastian must have been equal parts drunk and aroused, because the experiential combination of these two sensations rendered me immersed in the music in ways hitherto unknown. He was feeling it too, so we held hands, and dove deep into the depths of an iniquitous sea. Thus we gained a new appreciation for French house music; thus we became sodomites.

I recall, though not so fondly, that as a child the only music which graced my home was Christian in theme. Fortunately my brothers and I were ingenuitive enough to find artists within the Christian music catalog whom made music which was listenable. Secular music was avoided to protect the

soul which was permeable, and highly susceptible to corruption; such that any art (which is the language of the soul) may influence it in irreparable ways. Perhaps Saul Williams summed this up best when he described the artist's role in the following way, "A DJ spins a new philosophy into a barren mind." Barren, possessing the propensity for influence, and ever vigilant for new ideas or worldviews. This anachronistic vision my parents painted of the soul prevailed in my mind throughout my youth. Though now my scientific mind views the soul as a metaphor for the consciousness, and the existence of a divine creator as improbable. Still I often ponder how art affects my worldview. I wonder how children establish their priorities and perception of the world, borrowing syllabic modicums of another's worldview from the music on the radio. I wonder if we are so malleable. I ponder what makes us. Thus I am a permeable soul; thus I am a consciousness susceptible to corruption.

Now, as a man in my mid-twenties, my current studies in psychology and philosophy have shown that media can be a socializing agent, and it doesn't *make* someone behave in a particular way (music about drug use won't make you abuse drugs). However, in taking in new experiences the mind forms frameworks of related ideas, and when something within that framework is considered, the mind more readily accesses the related concepts. Thus, if in your mind you relate hip-hop and drug use, or French house music and sex, experiencing one will prime concepts of the other. My studies in science have shown that humanity is an ever increasingly complicated set of related variables. Sense experience happens without consent. It is continuous. And so is the mind's organization of those experience. This can lead to the idea that nothing happens in isolation. No experience is solely of itself. The mind won't allow it.

Then in swims Kool AD: the swaggiest dolphin which could ever be seen. Content to the simple facts of his life, and completely self-contained therein. There is no question of larger meaning. There is no question of relation to other context. There is only the here and now. Meaning is irrelevant. The permeable soul is irrelevant. Kool AD teaches us that things can just be: Sex can be Sex, Swag can be Swag, and Kool AD can be a Dolphin. There doesn't need to be a grander meaning. In contrast to his world we're all like conspiracy theorists: Drawing causal links between disparate phenomena when no correlations exist in actuality. Our need to solve puzzles, organize ideas, protect souls, and find meaning ignores the simple facts of what is actually going on. Swag, and Dolphins. Reality, deplete of any implications outside of itself. A constant influx of sensory experience. Out of nothing. Thus I am an irrelevant blip in the continuous process of existence; thus I am simply a man.

My permeable soul was tainted and contorted by the hubris of my youth,

by virtue of my actions and their larger meaning. Thus I became a sodomite; thus I became a drug addict; thus I am a consciousness susceptible to corruption; thus I am simply a man. But as Epictetus said, "Men are disturbed not by things, but by the view which they take of things." If so then the objective reality of the situation and that which the aforementioned terms convey are incongruent. In fact, what really happened was a young man inhaled smoke from an herb, that same man later found his way inside of another man, and that same man continues to try to find his way in life thereafter. This is the reality of things. Our value systems come into play secondarily as we mentally organize our sensory processes. Thus, the primacy of experience implies that values are applied from within; there cannot be anything innately wrong with objective experience. It is as Epictetus said. Kool A.D. by the simple factual nature of his rhetoric reminds us of the simple and factual nature of existence.

Kool A.D. has lead me by his fin farther out into the center of the ocean. I look around me and see nothing but a vast expanse of water in all directions. There is no sign of shore, and no sign of my raft. On this realization I cling tightly to Kool A.D., but as I try wrap my arms around him his form gives way and he deflates! The sound of the escaping air articulates an audible "swaaaaaaag" as he flattens and sinks below the surface. Thus I am alone in choppy iniquitous waters. There is no raft. I have no guide. Panic sets in as I feel myself starting to sink, and I kick and flail violently. As quicksand, this only serves to pull me further down into the depths. I gasp for air as my neck sinks below the surface, and make one last triumphant attempt to stay afloat kicking my legs violently. I close my eyes, and down I fall. Sinking, sinking. Deeper, Deeper. Darkness surrounds and its palpable cold sends shivers through the very core of me.

Then, that familiar bass rumbles from all around me. I open my eyes to the untempered darkness, surprised to find that I can see. The blackness of the sea apparent from my raft, must have been a vision trick based on my higher vantage point. Below the surface everything is illuminated. Below the surface I see that I am not lost at sea. I am in the back of my older brother's car taking a long drag from a fat joint. I am in my friend's bedroom fumbling with my belt and losing my tongue in his teeth. I am the conglomeration of these and other memories. Unrelated. Self-contained in disparate times. I am at home in my bedroom as *Marine World Africa USA* shakes books from my bookshelf and frightens my dog. I hear Kool A.D. as his thunderous voice calls out to the very fibers of existence.

"I'm a dolphin," he says. And so he is.