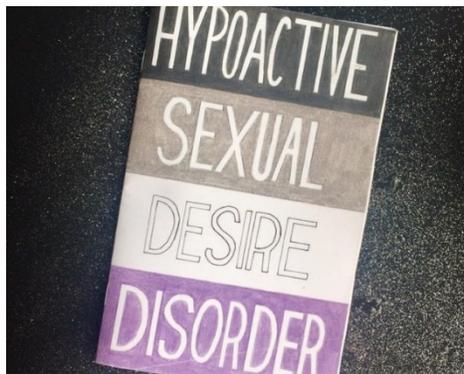




Against Allo-Sanity!: Twoey Gray's Anti-Patho(Logics) of Refusal

Review by Sarah Cavar

Twoey Gray. *Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder*. Self-published, 2018.



The above image depicts the cover of Twoey Gray's *Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder* zine. The cover features the title of the zine, handwritten in all caps against the colors of the asexuality flag: from top, black, gray, white, and purple. The zine is laying against a dark background, maybe a floor or table.

Pathology demands *path*. Defined as a *track, a personal direction, and a scheduled course of action*, normative social life is dictated by paths that precede us and articulate the boundaries of our dreaming. In *Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder*, Twoey Gray illustrates ace Madness not only as an identity, but as a genre and a methodology of resistance against paths of compulsory able-bodymindedness and compulsory (hetero)sexuality.

Composed of original poems, black-and-white illustrations, and DSM fragments, Gray's zine is both an intervention into discourses of ace Madness and an invitation to refuse heterosexuality through a refusal of sexuality itself. That is, the diagnosis of "hypoactive sexual desire disorder," rests on the presumption that non-sexuality itself constitutes a health problem.

If, then, Gray experiences "persistently or recurrently deficient (or absent) sexual fantasies and desire for sexual activity [...] causing clinically significant distress or interpersonal difficulty" (DSM-V 2013, cited in Gray 2018, n.p.), then her sapphic desires – "cautious longing" for women offset by "what might be required of [her] body" – were insufficient in marking her as a healthy queer subject. "Sex insists that you're curable. / sex has a solution!" Gray (2018, n.p.) writes, indicating allo-queerness for its imbrication in sane sexual hegemony.

A narrative of aceness entwined with Madness link Gray's life events, parading like the names and side effects of numerous medications identified in the zine as "Kwik Fix Drugs." Notably, these drugs – whose myriad side effects include "loss of sexual appetite" – are not distinguished from the "sex enhancing pharmaceutical(s)" (Gray 2018, n.p.) whose advertisement she parodies later in the zine. Gray instead draws a parallel between the psychiatric drugs' perceived ability to regulate moods marked as bipolar, and the sex-enhancing drugs' ability to "increase / female libido and sexual (avail)ability" (2018, n.p.). The normative medical consumer may indeed avail themselves of a bounty of medications to regulate their ways of being in the world, and, as we see, an unwillingness to (literally) consume a normative life-path is, in itself, suggestive of pathological deviance. If demands for psychological and sexual



normativity foreclose Mad queer futures, then drugs aimed at normalizing both moods and sexual practices animate that foreclosure.

In her indictment of *all* “Kwik-Fix Drugs,” Gray further indicates the practice of forced treatment as *in and of itself* as a project of violent normalization, regardless of specific target or reason. The intentional ambiguity between her narrative of Madness and her narrative of asexuality disrupt mounting demands for a healthy (sanitized, neoliberal, and consumable) queerness. A Mad ace approach identifies these demands as, indeed, comparable with cis heteronormative notions of sexual maturity and responsibility – the idea that participation in culturally-normative sexual practices is a prerequisite for health (Kim, 2011, 481) and thus, personal autonomy (Meerai, Abdillahi, and Poole 2016, 21). By fusing the “lack of sexual appetite” attributed to her medications for bipolar disorder with her asexuality, Gray destabilizes the binary between healthy-sexual-diversity and unhealthy-psychopathology. She is once again disrupting contemporary queer impulses to dissociate from ongoing histories of pathologization. Here, Mad and queer/asexual activism are as inseparable in text as they are in Gray.

Gray and her comrades collectively refuse both sexuality-as-“rehabilitation” (See Kim 2011, 486) and asexual acceptance predicated upon normative “health” (Kim 2010, 158) – that is, they Madden asexuality. Twoey, in her own voice, remixes the sources of her own pathologization, staggering the supposedly-divine pronouncement of the DSM across pages and bookending its extracts with her own writing and art. In this undermining of the DSM’s epistemological polish, Gray disrupts the domination of written prose over poetry and visual art, while also critiquing the role of the DSM in commercialized health “care.” Her zine opens with the lines “sex sells and sex is sold / sex was being sold and i didn’t buy” (Gray 2018, n.p.). Gray indicates a pathology perceived not only in a refusal to *practice* sex, but also in a refusal to *buy (into) it*. After all, a refusal to buy into existing sexual paradigms is for her also a refusal to buy into a feminized reproductive mandate.

Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder takes what may be the ultimate Mad ace radical position: one which does not only refuse to regard “health” as a personal moral imperative to which individuals (in this case, aces) must bend, but which also refuses to create the conditions for normatively - “healthy” (as determined by the medical profession [See Kim 2010, 166] futures. Gray links herself to the hysterical, unruly, and “undesirable” woman of bygone eras. Indeed, both the faceless line-drawing of Gray as a young child, and the ace of spades that concludes the zine, stand in stark contrast to the soft, orgasmic glow of the Kwik-Fixed woman. Threading ace and Mad ways of knowing with a literal deconstruction of the DSM, Twoey Gray (2018, n.p.) upends normative notions of health, “ad”-ding in its place an opening:

I could show you my smiling teeth
and advertise: It costs nothing!
but it’s not really free.
in truth, it’s a hefty investment.
one you can grow old with.
an asset to keep in your back pocket
so when accused of deficit,
you might know your worth.



Works Cited

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