

## The Body Politic

- The drawing illustrates a moment of recognition and realisation that all the happenings in the world were not unconnected to the way I lived my life. I was seventeen at the time, it was the summer holidays and I was taking some time out to travel around England and Scotland with my boyfriend. I had previously perceived my world to be one where I could live outside society, creating a probably romanticised lifestyle of self-sufficiency and non-harm. My interests lay in ecology, especially trees. I did not want to live the nine-to-five routine. What happened was an 'in your face' moment, a sharpening of the focus on reality as it is for other people, non-humans, the earth. What caused this moment? Half a tab of acid, taken in a good environment, probably at a point where my reading and searching for something else were coming together together. Was what I experienced for real? I think so. There have been other moments and I left the few drugs I took, in my teens. A long time ago.

The words in the picture are random recollections of that time and on reflection there is a similarity between this and the cover of the latest Radiohead album 'Hail to the Thief'; though with none of the artistic skill. Their artwork may be an influence, subconsciously, of what was depicted in those words, as their music has featured a lot in my playlist and (for me) the essence of some of Radiohead's music captures and expresses the feelings of what happened then and what is now.

The words signify negativity, human suffering, a dark world. What I felt physically continued over a period of a couple of days. I could not breathe properly; the air was heavy and thick with pollution (I was living in the countryside away from traffic); I was underground amongst all the detritus of humanity. While it appears bleak, out of this first engagement with this 'other' reality arose a shift towards a need to be more participatory, to be able to contribute more.

While doing the drawing there was a strong resonance with a more recent activity, sitting on Westminster Bridge with a group of NVDA activists, blocking the traffic at the onset of the American/British war against Iraq. There was the same sense of bleakness, but in that moment, with the police forming a line in front of us, it felt as though it was the right place to be. The right action to be taking. What emerged was the same awareness of suffering, not just for where the bombs were falling, but everywhere. However whereas the first event felt like a

realisation of what was out there, this latter one had a deeper sense of connectedness with others, a feeling of being very much a part of the world, paradoxically, a sense of peace and a deepening of the understanding of pacifism.

Thinking about the experiences of other people, I cannot remember what was said by those outside my own group. What I do recall is what they had drawn and the visual images provoked a memory of what they had spoken about. The age at which we had the experiences - in our teens was picked up on - and I have run out of time to write more.

blood pollution P  
deATH H E  
Fear I V hurting E  
Fighting L pain } O  
darkness P dying lies  
E

UNDERGROUND

AIR

