

Dear Zine,

How are you? I am fine. The weather here is nice. I ate a chicken sandwich for lunch. It was good.

No, but honestly, I'm glad to write to you. It's lovely to hear your voice. It's wonderful to use my hands, to engage my brain. I was about to say that it's nice to do something different; that there's only so much time that one can dedicate to masturbation when you're locked in a flat. However, I realised that for a history student, writing a letter in a time of crisis and isolation is, in itself, an almost masturbatory act. In one hand it's thrilling, yet in the other you know that the mark you leave on paper is unlikely to make a real difference. It's a brief pleasure. And sure, I know that what I'm leaving behind could grow. It could thrive. It has potential. But it won't. Masturbation implies waste. Certainly, that's the basis for its biblical rejection. The basis of teenage reprobation. That is why it is a sin. I know this because my grandma had a budgie called Onan. She called him that because he always spilled his seed upon the ground. He also shat a lot, but she couldn't find any support for that in Testament, old or new. My point is that these letters won't grow into anything. They are wasteful. Nobody will read these and wonder about the time in which they were written. However hard I fanaticise that they might.

But it feels different from when I was young. It's all different when we are young. When we are told not to waste. That sin makes you go blind. Surely that is the least sinful, the least wasteful time of our lives? Now, a wank is a wank is a wank. No more or less that it is. An onanism *qua* tossing oneself off. Forget blooming rose-petals, small deaths and the taste of lightening. It's bim bam, thank you Sam; a minute well spent, leaving a trail of warm sleepiness with a tint of shame in the corner. But when I was young, it wasn't just a wank. It was The Wank. The archetypal spaff, both formative and summative. Alpha and Oh my God Mega. Those first wanks shape romantic attachment, jealousy, work-ethic, smoking habits, eating habits, how long one spends in the shower and the order in which you answer a cross-word puzzle. They aren't just *petit-mort*, but reincarnation, ascension, liturgy, dogma, reformation and proselytization. There is nothing wasteful about those. They are as wasteful as the ninety-five theses; just another stained leaflet stuck to a door. They were not sinful. I was not sinful.

I'm going crazy in this flat.

I miss you all.

Love.....