

SELF WOVEN

mini mag.

I EXIST AS I AM, THAT IS ENOUGH. I EXIST AS I AM.

issue 03

The Gendered Individual

a self-made person

Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Stuart Mill, and Walt Whitman were the great philosophers of self, and they were mad for self-reliance. They gave us the chance at identity without outside influence: a self made from experience and personal insight, a self made of one's own accord.

But they left out a couple of us.

Where are the self-made women of history?

Where are the self-made people of color?

And they didn't give us all the answers.

What do their texts tell us about becoming our own people? How does that show within the context of our lives?

Throughout this mag are interviews with a couple of my self-made friends, who discuss the effects of gendered expectations and individuality on their perspectives, goals, and futures. We'll look through poems for hints at what it means to become

SELF MADE>>>>

hey, who are you?

i'm a self-made man, you know?

With the formation of a new nation came the formation of a new type of man. This man was not timid, emotional, or wavering. This man needed no charity. This man could do for himself. This man was basically Red Foreman from That 70's Show.

Manhood became the most valuable trait in a man, and masculinity soared. Even today, many young men develop their individuality within the limits of masculinity.

But the self-made man must be more than just masculine and UN-European, more than just your average bro. He must be self-sufficient, able to think on his own and make inferences about his immediate world on his own. Learning in school, nope, not good enough for Whitman. Our guys want us out in the world doing research-based learning. To be self-made, it seems, is to be a man of means, a man with power, and a man achieving the ultimate masculinity.

Let's see what Anderson Turner has to say about that.

the valued perspective
of **THE MAN**

the valued perspective of **THE MAN**

Q: *Do you feel like you're a self made person, a "self-made man"?*

A: No. No, I don't. I feel like certain aspects of myself are definitely self-made, and for lack of a better term, curated, but I live with my parents, I don't own a vehicle, I am not employed... I think being a self-made person is following what you want to do, no matter what that is. I'm not self-reliant, and I think it would be naive and narcissistic to say that I am where I am today all because of myself.

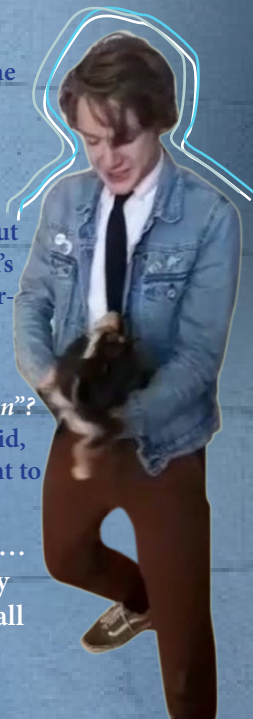
Q: *What defines your masculinity?*

A: I think masculinity is often unexamined, and uh, distorted. Um, I think that in a lot of ways, the popular portrayal of what masculinity is within, you know, TV, movies, music, is often... immature... I think a big part of masculinity is about responsibility. I think a lot of it is... strength in the face of adversity. I think a lot about it is providing? Not to say that... it's not a woman's place to provide. Just being able to... handle yourself and be self-sufficient and do what's expected of you for yourself and your family.

Q: *Can you relate to the idea of the "self-made man"?*

A: I think I can identify with the desire. Like I said, I think it's a little narcissistic or naive at this point to claim that I'm self-made... But it's a process.

"I think it would be naive to...
naive and narcissistic to say
that I am where I am today all
because of myself."



On Property and Ownership of Self.

(this is all a little new to us)

Unfortunately, the self-made woman wasn't included in much of the theorization. Until relatively recently, womxn were left out of the ideal of individuality. Marriage has been a generational social construct, and the unmarried womxn was viewed as disturbed, but the lives of married womxn were hardly ideal. Coverture, a set of laws restricting a womxn's civic identity, rendered womxn as submissive to their husbands as children are to their parents. Anything that the womxn owned on the date of her wedding became her husband's property. Anything that she earned during the marriage could not be considered her own.

In the age of self-made people, men were forced into self-sufficiency. Womxn, on the other hand, were denied it.

We are fortunate to live in an age where the world is more accomodating to womxn, but the pressure of femininity still takes its toll. In the US, benevolent sexism perpetuates the image of womxn as weaker and in need of protection. Where a man can easily enter the field of his choice, a womxn may have to face an excess of obstacles just to pursue a self-made life. For the womxn I know, it's a little harder to be self-made.

For an image of the life of a womxn of color growing up in the modern age, I turned to one of my best friends. Through her eyes, coverture might still exist, even if not in legal documents. Dacia Perez-Medina speaks for us

self-made womxn >>

Dacia Perez-Medina

Q: Can you define self-reliance in your own life?

A: *self-reliance means finding success on my own and not needing to rely on others for my mental and physical well-being. I come from a family where women had - and to a certain extent, still have - little say in their life; the amount of freedom and control they had over their own lives depended on their husband. My mom often tells me stories of her childhood and how my grandfather was (and still is) a "machista." Only HE had the authority to make decisions. So now, I would like to show people like my grandfather (and traditionalist/conservative society) that I don't need anyone... to pave a way for me in life.*

Q: What defines your femininity? Has it limited you?

A: *By being a woman, people (typically men and those of older generations) automatically assume that I'm not strong or smart enough to do things on my own, that somehow I'm weaker and more delicate. It also strings along annoying expectations. I despise being held accountable for standards that are assigned solely because of anatomy. For me personally, my femininity is defined by my ability to live my life independently and become successful despite living in a patriarchal society - especially one in which people of color are less likely to be acknowledged and nurtured. It also means defying traditionalist expectations set by my own ethnicity and cultural background to where I can have my own identity but still be respected by those in my culture and of my own ethnicity.*

Q: Do you feel like you're a self-made individual?

A: I like to consider myself one. I am where I am right now because of my own efforts and mistakes. Parents, teachers, and certain friends and experiences have all contributed to my current and past successes in some fashion. However, I am ultimately the one who decides whether or not to listen to advice and am the one to make the final decision. I have certainly been influenced, but the choices have all been mine alone.



"My femininity is defined by my ability to live my life independently and become successful despite living in a patriarchal society."

notes to self.

a brief examination of my own opinion.

in an attempt to read my thoughts clearly and without bias, I allowed thirty seconds for each question. no revision. no umms or ahhs.

do you feel like you're a self-made individual?

my future is self-made, but it wouldn't be true to suggest that i've developed my entire self on my own. i've learned more from school than from my own thinking, and i'm influenced daily by social construction. i don't think there's anything wrong with that. it hasn't stopped me from becoming my own person.

can you define self-reliance?

self-reliance; the ability to exist on one's own, to be an individual regardless of one's immediate situation. i am not self-reliant, not yet. i look to others for help every day.

what defines your femininity?

*my femininity is defined by the limits i place upon it. i've never been especially feminine—perhaps this is because of my relationship with my father, or because **as a little girl i perceived femininity as a weakness.***

so . . . about being **"SELF MADE"**

The great thinks of self prided themselves on having developed their minds independently of outside influence. Walt Whitman wrote of his experiences, of his schema forming through observation and personal analysis:

How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

But in every line of thinking there comes a paradigm shift. The voices of younger generations have unraveled the idea that a man (or a woman, or anyone else) can even possibly become

SELF MADE.

In years past, the self-made man was a WASP who brought himself up by his bootstraps, a man who constructed a life of his own through hard work. For the philosophers and poets, the self-made man made his thoughts on his own. But Walt Whitman wouldn't have been able to conceive a world where thumbs developed muscle, scrolling for hours. Emily Dickinson couldn't have fathomed an age where music was paused for advertisement, where labels on clothing marketed themselves.

Though my generation may like the idea of being self-made,
We need a new definition.

The new self-made individual is someone who makes the most of their circumstances, sets their own goals within the limits of their environment, and takes action accordingly.

"What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?" 8



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Whether we like it or not, we're all influenced at least a little bit. In everything we do, we are guided by parents, by mentors, by friends, by social scripts. As a generation, we've embraced the power of influence, and there is strength in recognition. [@kyliejenner](#) is one of the world's first "Influencers," and as scary as it sounds, the world has shifted to punctuate influence. If we each took it upon ourselves to be religiously self-made, we might miss out on the work, the art, and the voices of other self-made individuals. We grow stronger by learning from others. It's important to experience for yourself, but why not listen to the astronomer? He might know something you can't learn on your own. (Read: CAN'T WAIT KYLIE! QUEEN)



Amid Paradigm Shift: *decide for yourself*
(that's what the philosophers would want)

The texts of worldly philosophers and poets urge the public to avoid expertise just for the sake of expertise. To them, education is valuable, but individuality is priceless. In the modern context, pure individuality is nearly unachievable, unless you're into hermitism.

As Anderson and Dacia have experienced, and I've mentioned in my own notes, there is no use in claiming that we have made our own foundations and built ourselves singlehandedly -- There were countless influences. Of the three of us, not a single one is living on our own. Not one of us has developed our style, our voice, or our opinions without siphoning off of resources available to us in the age of the internet.

We are in a paradigm shift, but that doesn't mean the self-made person has died off completely.

Even in their writings, the self-made poets and thinkers would have questioned our taking their thoughts at face value. By claiming to be experts in self-making, they've somehow written off the value of their own statements. It's likely they wouldn't appreciate our taking value of *their thoughts* on self-making.

You decide: what parts of you will *you* make?



WHAT IS A MAN
AND HOW?

WHAT AM I?
AND HOW?

WHAT ARE YOU? WHAT IS A WOMAN?