

LUMPEN

A journal for poor and
working class writers



Issue 002
Jan 2020





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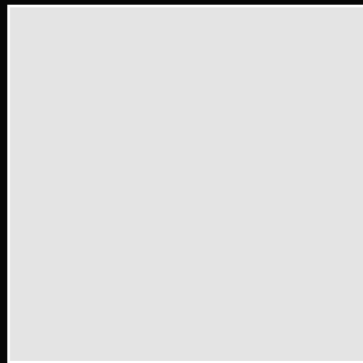
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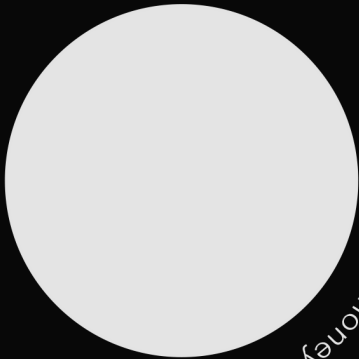
We printed this issue using an online print service because printing co-ops aren't affordable to us. All workers still got paid. But sadly, there was at least one boss involved in the process of publishing this journal.

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Spare pages



cost money

*LUM
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Editorial

This is the second issue of Lumpen. A journal for working class and poor writing. It should be obvious why that is needed. Now more than ever (strange how that phrase always applies, *now more than ever...* it's almost as if need is growing exponentially, day after day... like a tumour, or mould.)

Anyway, as much as I loathe to start on a sour note, or to trot out hackneyed phrases, need will keep growing, especially now that the big old bastard big ugly B has taken office. I'll save us from any more bile about that recent calamity, as I want instead to talk about Lumpen, about art, about writing, about story-telling and why these things are important, *now more than ever*.



Lumpen is new and made up of myself, Hannah and D. Hunter. We are still finding our feet. And the form this project should take. If we were a stage in my human life, we would be at the point at which I swapped from

Mayfair to Golden Virginia, moved from reading Cosmo to French existentialism, stopped snogging boys and started shagging men, all the while continuing to drink Lambrini in the park.

That might make us sound a bit confused. Or more accurately, like we are growing. Which we are. We have had events and readings in Birmingham, Manchester, London, Sheffield, Leeds, Machynlleth, Bristol... all over this pot-marked island, because part of this is about building a real life community of people to share, support, and collaborate with each other.

In my day job I work with lots of people labelled as *vulnerable* or *unfortunate*. People with trauma, addictions, people with *mental health issues*, people living in poverty.

- A lot of the vocabulary to talk about the people I work with,
- I find *problematic*, ergo the italics, and unfortunately the
- language doesn't exist for me to talk about them in a way that can move around the mad/sane, patronising, and sad little binaries we operate in.

But from these people, I have seen so much great work, great writing, painting, drawing, music and stuff that I can't categorise except to say mixed media, which sounds too much like a gallery panel besides an art carcass. None of this will ever make the gallery wall or Penguin's publish pile unless it is under the charitable '*look we helped this mental/unfortunate person make this thing! Aren't we nice and isn't it novel!*'

Variations of this attitude extend to a whole class of people as poor culture has forever been repressed, censored, appropriated, ignored and degenerated. As with the eating of oysters or the wearing of Kappa trackies, poor people

are continually told how shit their culture is only for it to be reevaluated by cultural gatekeepers, taken and repurposed for the rich in some kind of cultural vampiricity that reveals how barren their own landscape is.

So firstly, Lumpen is a place to publish work that isn't being published elsewhere, and tell stories that are not otherwise being told, in a way that gives people true ownership and agency over their work. Not to make the writer feel *empowered*, or as some charitable adventure, but because the publishing world is narrow and new pastures are necessary for readers and writers alike.

Part of the reason this is necessary is the apparent inability of editors, publishers, curators, and whoever else the taste-makers are, to make independent decisions about what good work is. You will not get published without a 'publishing history', your picture will not get hung unless it's been hung before. Somebody must first sanctify you as worthy. Someone with clout and from a purely statistical point-of-view (I don't want to sound bitter here) they probably won't be from a working class background.

This is indicative of a culture that, while seemingly based on myths of individual genius, is itself totally distrustful of the independent mind and almost incapable of maverick thought. This is indicative of a culture that is totally lacking in guts, made up of people terrified of judgement and conformist in the most terrific way - they are too afraid to have opinions of their own.

So secondly, Lumpen must make its own decisions about what's good and what's not and refuse to be drawn into taste-making practises based on a totally dysfunctional meritocracy.

To attain that all-important 'sanctification' it is more and more necessary to be sane. It is necessary to be so sane, to be so well-functioning, to be so individualistic and ambitious as to be terrifying.

To receive recognition or readers for your work you are required to take on new injuries of labour, to mash your head with social media, to package and marketise yourself, to get a website, (don't business cards seem sweet these days), to network, to smile, to be charming, charismatic, or sexy.

It is necessary to think of yourself as a product, to stand so far away from yourself, to look coldly at your Instagram feed, and deduce who you are when you are for sale. BY ● GOD YOU'VE TURNED YOURSELF INTO A SAUSAGE! This ● is part of the reason that university art degrees focus as ● much on how to be a marketing professional as they do on teaching artistic skills.

The truth is there are lots of writers, artists, musicians, and other *creative* people who are not able or willing to participate in this and there is a certain irony to a poet who pertains to tell some kind of truth posting filter-heavy photographs on the world's biggest illusionist platform. The result is we don't get to read, or see, a lot of work of value.

The art worlds have long leached on the succulent leg of working class culture, and the establishment of *the creative industries* as exclusive, delineated, monetised parts of life is deeply tied to the long process of directing working class tastes and leisure time.

With the arrival of the industrial revolution and the

emergence of an urban class, the appearance of a vibrant, well-organised working class culture of the city was an inevitable threat to the oppressor classes. This was suppressed before it could properly flourish and replaced with mass produced, planned culture which was largely a bastardised version of previous rural poor tradition. ● ● ●

Dances, stories, poems, and music were collected, mined, censored, edited, stolen and deformed before being reproduced in line with middle class values and distributed en masse with a view to creating a unifying, national culture of respectability, emotional restraint, and patriotism.

The celebrated Cecil Sharp prolifically collected thousands of folk songs and dances during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Disregarding the 'dirty' songs completely, and cleaning up anything that didn't fit his dour taste, he irretrievably deformed the character, and denied the wit and candour of working class peoples. These stolen tunes were then peddled back on the streets, and thought of highly by the middle classes for their 'authenticity' (doesn't that sound familiar). Sharp aimed to 'flood the streets' with his collections, in an effort to turn the working classes away from 'coarse music hall songs' and 'civilise the masses'.

This is a very small example of an ongoing historical process to disown us of our culture, to carve out art and creativity from the core of our lives, to take it away, wash it with something caustic, put it behind glass, and sell it back to us. This is accumulation, and the myth of *culture* as something that we should navigate, purchase, consume, and invest in, instead of something that we are constantly making and participating in. ● ● ●

Is a good joke art? Does building a house make you an

artist? Can a brickie be an artist? Why is a poem art and not a letter sent by your dying nan, or words scratched on a bus stop? Where does art reside?

The most automatic association with art is the gallery, this is where you pay to access art. This is where objects, officiated by the surrounding atmosphere as TRUE ART are transformed.

On my year-ten visit to The Hayward my friend Charlotte left her bag and some school clothes in a heap on the gallery floor and we came back to find people contemplating and drawing them, thinking they were an exhibit. Obviously we thought this was mad, and proof that art people were wankers and weirdos, while one of the posher kids in our class told us that actually the art was really good, we just didn't understand it. We were kicked out and proceeded

- to draw cocks all over the coach and write messages about
- the particular ugliness of our teachers; which you could argue had as much artistic energy as any of the other stuff we'd seen that day.

There is nothing wrong with drawing the bag and school clothes, they probably created an interesting form, I'm sure they could be interpreted by a certain mind to say all sorts of deep things about life and I know what contemporary art is, and I appreciate the idea; but the next idea is, why can't that happen on the street? Why can't we start designating stuff for ourselves? Why do we have to go to cold alienating places? Why do we have to be given permission to be artists? Why do we have to be given permission to look at something closely, and consider it art?

This relates to *Lumpen*, and to the work I want us to get, because it's partly about cultural confidence. Sometimes

the idea of what 'art' or 'literature' is gets in the way of us making our best work. The value judgments of a top-down culture seep deep inside us, and people who are great at telling stories, when they get to writing them down, come over all Virginia Woolf, take on a 'writerly' tone, use words that aren't at home in their mouths, and leave out the ones that worked, because that's what 'good art looks like,' and in this way we ape our oppressors, and lose our hearts.

We must try and find ways to mend and re-integrate creative work into our lives, as full as they may already be with work of all other kinds. How can we work and share things that avoid being in a passive consumer relationship? How can we be disruptive, and avoid corporate castration? Where do we find true, honest, heartfelt work that feeds us in a neoliberal cultural desert?

There are so many ways by which our stories have been ignored and erased. There are so many ways in which this continues to happen. We need to build more and more ways to tell them and share them, to create a community of recognition. As a move against alienation. As a move towards knowing and understanding. And not because we should all be famous writers, not because we should all have blogs or Instagram our poems or dilute our work so we can write for Vice.

We should write and share and tell stories because they are the things of our lives, they are things we have made from our sorrows and our joys and our banal observations, and they should work against, always and forever against, the nasty disinfected white-light gallery slack-jaw culture of the art world, of the literary world, of all the worlds of large and lofty places, we work against that with our own work, towards building not another 'world' but a place. A place

where we can be together and know and be known, a place without crooked mediators, a place to be emotional.

To return back to the start, and the aforementioned calamity here is a note from Hannah on the cover image for this issue:

On the 11th hour, some individuals found that cord and pulled it - releasing perfectly gold parachutes from their sacks. However, whilst some lucky sods landed safely in nice 2-up-2-down quaint little houses or lovely wide-beam boats on the river Lea, some poor fellows found themselves rolling around in Dudley North. Confused, they began begging every balding middle manager to do the right thing, for the future, for us all - Vote Labour, they said. These parachutes, carefully steeped in gold leaf, have become the currency for survival - but make no mistake, since laden so heavily with dense metal, they offer little room for much else.









The City Fox.

Olie Martin

When you're poor and walking, you tend to spend a lot of time looking at the ground. This doesn't result from some kind of pervasive sadness - not to suggest that this sadness does not exist - but, rather, you are looking for coins, bank-notes, cigarette(ends) - anything.

Sam found enough cigarette ends to make a few rolls. You look down, not *merely* out of despair but as a result of a remarkable ability that human-beings - indeed most beings that survive the process of evolution - possess - to adapt to new environmental conditions. You could think of Sam



and others like him as City Foxes, moved out of their natural habitat. In a way, it is the same for us, except we possess intellectual and practical capacities beyond the foxes that have allowed us to *build* new environments.

'Goin' Down Slow', because it felt that way. We adapt, look down when down and look up when up. Some don't *look* in any direction as they have no need to. Everything - things *needed* and things *wanted*, which is an important distinction - is already given to them. The City Fox was moved from his land as we, using our intellectual and practical capacity, created a new, giant, *concrete*, mental, tarmac jungle-forest-in-itself. Not everything fits together though, as with Sam and as with the Fox.

- Carrying a sleeping bag, and a shoulder bag containing various works of fiction, social and political theory, some
- stolen canned food and the clothes he had been wearing
- for around two months, Sam walked through this artificial reality. He looked down and, now and then, looked up. He could see faceless mannequins and wondered which were real humans and which were not. The definition behind this distinction is impossible to understand and only possible to *feel* by those who know how to feel. Hunger stops your ability to think straight but Sam could think of Raskolnikov, as Raskolnikov was hungry as well. The difference between them was that Raskolnikov had God to save him in the Siberian labour camp but, as Nietzsche told us, God is dead. We killed him. We were meant to replace him with the new man but does the same order not exist? Same orders, different names: the same genocides and poverties and miseries and wars and greediness and slaves.

Sam was the greatest man alive by his way of it, in this particular moment, as he had no stake in those worldly

games aforementioned. Is this “the next man” - the man who wanders cities today as Nietzsche wandered the Alps? Speaking of the mass of untruths to those that believe them as truths, to mostly deaf ears and blind eyes? In any case, there was no God to save him. On Sundays, walking miles as he did daily, he almost entered several churches that he passed, before feeling sorry for the occupants, those sinners and hypocrites (which we all are, Sam thought), that were desperate for a conclusion to the true brutality of the existence we have created. A brutality we are all aware of but which most of us attempt to distract ourselves from through various vices and virtues.

This led Sam to another question, as he found a pound coin and bought a can of strong Polish lager - is there a “real” happiness? Is happiness something metaphysical? Science today suggests that all metaphysics are rooted within the physical realm, as even the Buddha suggested all those centuries ago but, in any case, the only way in which a lay man can understand happiness - is in a metaphysical sense, beyond its biological foundations - on a superficial, bodily level. As a child, Sam had felt happy, perhaps because material reality had not become an enhanced concept of comprehension to him. As an adult, he had felt it too; lying in bed or in the sun with the only woman he had ever loved - surely this was material? It must have been in some way but, for Sam, the importance was that these moments exist above and beyond the human constructions that kept people like him looking down, merely to play the game at the lowest level. In love, there was no connection to the Hyperreal World - it was nature as pure as nature can be today. Is there more strength in the man who runs the country, Sam thought; the leader who was privately educated, who never worked or struggled or had to fight the elements to survive? Polished in life just as in image!

The strong survive with the bare minimum, like The City Fox - one of the dead-God's creatures that is dying but trying to adapt and live - through its material will - in whatever way it can.

One night, Sam was with his lover, on a hallucinogenic (she wasn't) in Hackney, walking to McDonald's late at night as she was hungry. Sam almost cried, for some reason, at the countless rows of buildings and then he saw The City Fox, on a wall outside of a house, skinny and with cataracts. They looked at one another. Sam stopped, as did his hungry lover. He and the City Fox looked each other in the eye for what felt like an eternity and, in this psychedelic moment, Sam felt as if there was some kind of cosmic-connection - he was reminded of a dream:

- Such is life.
-
- Such as mistaken children shrug, as their parents despair just as many Gods look back, sombre and tearful.

At failed promises of so many heavens and so much carnage wrought in their names and images. "Brother", a holy figure said to Sam:

"I can't tell you who I am or what I am."

Sam was in a cold sweat, shaking as the bed rattled.

"Brother", he said,

"We are all guilty."

And with deep black eyes, wracked with sorrow and wisdom, a sparkle grew around him as stars shone around the crater of some kind of destruction in which he stood. He cried in the faces of innocent children that grew through the cracks in dirty pavements. Up from the dirt, towards the

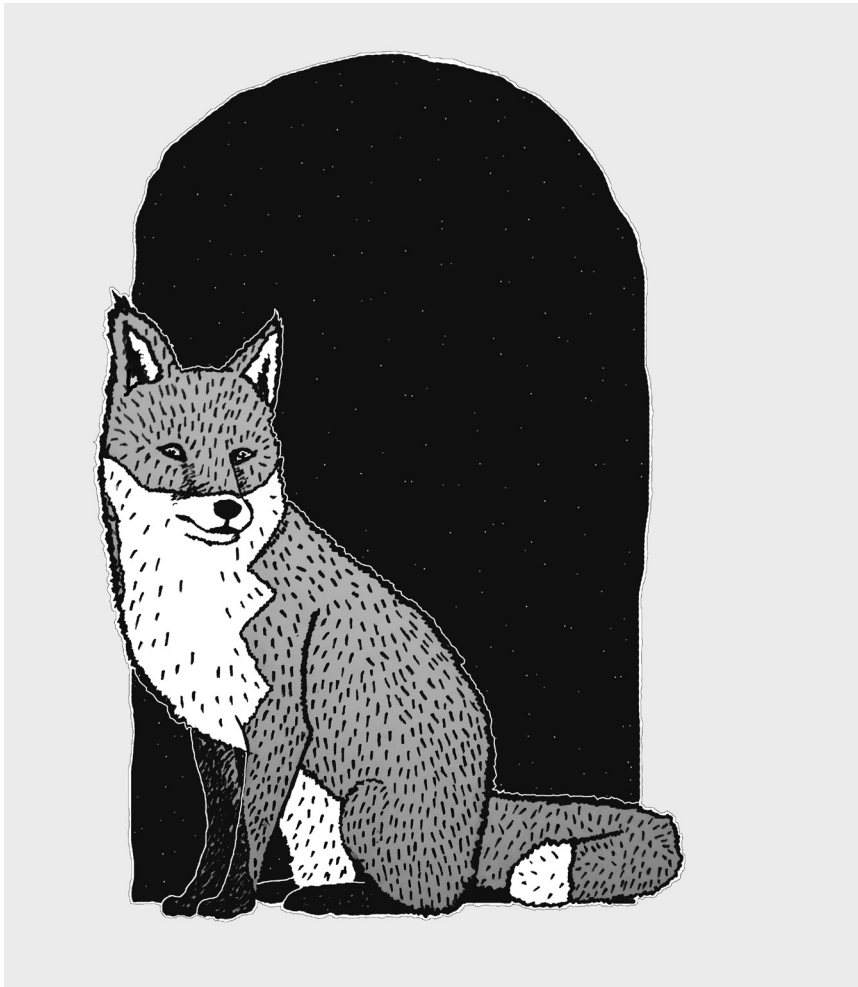
light, the sun, like flowers and then into the rain that both caused distress yet kept them alive. He cried as he could see the sparks would fade once the age of fear, hate, envy and love set upon them. He cried golden tears as no stars shone through the muddy skies in cities.

Tonight, Sam went to his spot at the public park outside of London, surrounded by some woods for shelter and he set up his sleeping bag. He had a gallon of water, some soap, a knife and some canned foods along with his books and the tobacco he had collected. He was then able to think of nothing as the gentle, warm, summer raindrops crept softly through the trees and landed upon his face, which lay upon the bag of books, uncovered by the sleeping bag. When he did think, he thought of sleep, and he eventually entered slumber, with half a bottle of White Ace beside him, downed to the extent that the oesophagus could handle. He was woken at around seven by dog-walkers that looked through him. He went to the train and back to the city, amongst all of the mannequins, to take it all in, to think, write, observe and keep an eye on the pavement. He was 'Goin' Down Slow', as was The City Fox, as was everything, at least as we *knew* it. Who was right? There are few answers any more; they are merely being withheld by two measurements: time and currency. It is all going down slow, or moving towards a direction that will render us useless. Sam felt sorrier for the City Foxes and the Gods we had murdered than for those that played the games we are told to play, thinking that they were real, living for them and denying themselves any time to think before they died for it, whatever it was. He saw The City Fox again and again. He hoped The City Fox would be okay and that he would eat well enough tonight. He hoped that the next epoch would look after her subjects in a more compassionate manner. He hoped that the sombre, holy figure he met in that dream would eventually smile and that

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children would eventually grow to know the love of life only.

Sam had Howlin Wolf's 'Goin' Down Slow' playing on repeat in his head. This was rooted in one of those final episodes of 'The Sopranos' in which it was implied that Tony's downfall was imminent. David Chase left it ambiguous but, now that James Gandolfini has left us, we can be sure that Tony is indeed dead and that the Howlin' Wolf was correct in his prophecy.





There's Nothing More Permanent Than the Temporary

Gee

Last night I dreamt that I was in a large festive hall that resembled a working men's club adorned with tinsel; my grey womble of a father was sat at a table alone with a bitter while all around people joked and smoked. I raised my glass to him, feeling a warm sense of relief and affection, and said "Jeremy Corbyn's prime minister after all eh, Dad?!". Some hours later, with my marigold hands deep in a sink full of industrial degreaser and catering equipment, I confess my weirdo dream to a seemingly less exploited male colleague..... "I guess you were pretty sad when you woke up and realised it couldn't happen!". After work I stop in the offy for some beers, crossing the road to avoid the pub that I'm priced out of, and see the Daily Mail front-page screaming that a mad Marxist is going to raise our taxes by



£80 billion. I walk home through the red light district that is my road, give a cigarette to a woman on the night shift, put my key in the door and try to remember that the belief that electoral politics will break our chains is nothing but a cognitive distortion anyway....

When you read this, the election will be over. So, how, tell me, will our lives have changed? This election that they say will consist of British people choosing between socialism or barbarism. Leave or remain. Red versus blue. Hard-left, or hard-right. Meat or veg. Cocaine or cannabis. Arsenal or Chelsea. Another exercise in choosing between what sometimes seems like polar opposites and sometimes like picking the least worse scenario. The kind of choice that people like me have had to make our whole lives. If this is voting, then clearly the underprivileged classes are the most well-equipped.

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Nearly five years ago I went to a vote counting night in Doncaster, when this shitty choice was between Miliband and Cameron. Although I wasn't a member of any party, some people I knew from 'activist' meetings in Donny who were members of the obsolete Trade Union and Socialist Coalition had given me a pass: to be one of the people that is supposed to be there to make sure votes get counted properly. I went mostly for kicks, drank a lot of wine for free, and with the firm belief that there was no way that people could be so stupid as to vote the Tories in again, I shouted at Miliband to remember us when he was Prime Minister, wielding a 'No Cuts' sign in front of his platform in a charity shop dress and doc martens spray-painted as red as my naive young heart. Since then, I have often found myself thinking: what is the name of the feeling one gets when you know that the discourses of media, politicians, academics, and everyday people are discussing one's everyday life

experiences? The feeling of an endless number of talking heads discussing everything that influences one's well-being and livelihood, debating the morality and validity of my experiences? When I know that instances in my life are the subject of journal articles and parliamentary debates, what is the name of the feeling that acknowledges this and feels profoundly alienated from the discussion? Fuck knows. Maybe I don't have the vocabulary, or maybe there just isn't one word. Maybe I'll write about it now...

Not long after the Miliband election shit, I found myself in a war with the Jobcentre in Scunthorpe, drinking cheap wine in a Portuguese cafe-bar in the area where I grew up. This street had been dubbed "foreignation street" by some choice dickheads at school. Due to its abundance of European mini-marts, world barbers, Polish and Lithuanian bakeries, middle eastern takeaways, betting shops, and cheap shared accommodation perfect for the immigrant workers of the nearby food factories. Here I met my friend who I'll call X. I was having a glass with Celia - a 40 odd year old lesbian with a heart full of Garcia Lorca and a life full of alcoholism and bitchy production line supervisors - when X walked in, introduced himself, and changed the course of my life.

We started a relationship some months before the Brexit referendum, when we found ourselves as optimists drinking with a multitude of different nationalities and me feeling like we could be a real part of a REAL European union. A union based on class and shared interests.... I was a live-wire 21 year old idealist dosser and him a 29 year old truck driver from Athens. We moved between feminism and phallocracy, squatting a first floor flat let by one of the dodgiest landlords in town. A year with no central heating, a hole in the bathroom wall, furniture we acquired for free, living at

the mercy of employment agencies and the DWP. We had a myriad of unacknowledged mental health problems but we didn't give a shit because somehow, in this god forsaken long-since-dead industrial town, we had found each other. We cared about each other. He was continuously exploited by companies expecting him to work at the drop of a hat for not much more than the price of a hat per hour, while I wrote short stories about benefit sanction suicides and sent them to my work coach. We smoked the most god-awful skunk and spent too much money in the nationalist corner shop that believed coming out of Europe would be the best thing for their business. I hate to admit it but the next four years' political Brexit discourse of "SHOULD WE STAY OR SHOULD WE GO" permeated somehow into the smallest corners of our life together, an insidious voice in the background of our minds creating even more uncertainty and division in our relationship while we lived in an already difficult situation.

My mum died of cancer when I was 12 and it had a deep impact on my family. My dad was the kind of working class Marxist that read *Das Capital* while working in packing houses and he did the best that he could, I guess, as a man in his circumstances of a suddenly-lone-father to six children. Raising daughters in this capitalist shitbag of a system proved difficult however. My older sister had a beautiful daughter with an irreversibly damaged and aggressive man that would later sell class A drugs to X. We lived in streets marked by dealers, addicts, homelessness, industrial decline, and people who fought their way out of this environment. I was given a job by a second-generation immigrant in a Chinese takeaway and she found work from a first-generation immigrant in an African food store. These women were our saviours in some ways, paying us cash to top up the peanuts given to us by the Jobcentre. It was

the only way we could rent and survive, unable to rely on unreliable male partners for income.

In that year, I recall being locked in a Jobcentre room by G4S after I kicked off about them not releasing my homeless friend Kevin's benefit payment. The security guards put us both into a room that couldn't be opened from the inside and called the police, so Kev rammed a door open through force due to his pervasive claustrophobia and alcoholism. When the police arrived we were gone, so instead they hassled another homeless guy Dion who was waiting outside. I mention this story mostly because Dion is the same age as I am now: 25. I didn't really know him, except from his begging in town. He was heavily involved with class As and spice. At the time of writing, he's currently in jail for murder. He somehow killed a fifty year old homeless guy in an episode of psychosis in an argument about drugs, while squatting an ex-council building in the centre of town that had lain empty for fifteen years. If there's one story that makes me think of the effects of austerity and cutbacks to youth, mental health, and addiction services - it's his and the deceased's.

Though I had no mother of my own, from sixteen onwards I'd found mother figures in anti-cuts campaigners in nearby ex-mining towns of South Yorkshire. A mother of a boyfriend had a spare room of classic radical literature. It was here that I learnt about my personal experiences mirroring the systemic nature of women's oppression and how my life wasn't weird or abnormal. I learnt that some things that had happened to me were not my fault. It's one thing to have your life validated by forty-year-old books however, and another thing to have it validated by present day people. This I would find out when I entered the world of education for a second time.

X encouraged me to study again. We rented a static caravan from another of the most dodgiest landlords in town and I did an access to higher education course in the daytime and was the sexiest, fastest fry-cook in north Lincolnshire in the evening, although I do say so myself. X lost the only job he'd had with a contract in Britain due to Brexit. The company - GBA transports - said they didn't believe he'd come back to Britain when we went to Greece for Christmas and refused to pay him his entitled holiday pay. His union, RMT, were slower on the uptake than the snails making trails through our caravan. I wrote a long, detailed grievance letter myself and eventually they paid him some of what he was owed. Now, I see major unions like Unite who donate shed loads to the Labour Party talk about a desire to end freedom of movement and I see through their bullshit for what it really is - more pandering to the racists amongst my class who

- still believe that foreigners bring wages down, rather than
- the bosses. When I see pro-brexit 'left' guys I think of the English warehouse workers that had the audacity to shout "HAIL BREXIT" at X while he was waiting to be unloaded, dying in a bay somewhere last year...

During this time in the cold caravan park, in which one of our landlord's business's profile on Companies House declared him to have capital of half a million, we both got taken to court for racism by a white Conservative MP who was a member of Conservative Friends of Israel. He came door knocking for votes when it was round one of Corbyn versus Theresa May, and I was mightily pissed off that day. Pissed off that college students weren't entitled to jobseekers or universal credit. Pissed off that I was working for a fiver an hour. Pissed off that X was entitled to nothing but zero hours contracts. Pissed off that we were paying £75 a week for a 1970s model static caravan that needed

a £50 gas bottle every two weeks. Pissed off that my sister was getting fucked about by DWP and her ex-partner that refused to pay child maintenance, even though he was making a pretty penny from both his PIP and his drug money. Pissed off that my friends and family were living in a cycle of depression. Pissed off at the state of everything. I told him and his conservative pals that they were Israel Defence Force supporting scum who supported genocide - the kind of rhetoric I'd learnt from some years being the token working-class female associate of 'socialist worker' guys- to relieve some of my daily stress. They and the North Lincolnshire mayor guffawed, laughed, swore and shouted "Corbynista! Corbynista!".

Now I find myself at a considerably low-key university, studying psychology in the North West. My first year was spent with impostersyndrome, feeling like a subject of clinical psychology rather than a student of it, due to the things I have seen and/or experienced in my own life or through my family/peers. The socioeconomic factors that contribute to mental health problems have not been considered worthy enough to study so far though, it seems. I find it really hard to sit through two hour lectures in claustrophobic rooms with no windows, surrounded by people who haven't long since left college. The teaching strategy seems to fit only one learning style and it certainly isn't mine. In my jobs I have needed to be active, multitasking, busy, and hyperkinetic. The opposite of listening to one person talk about a power-point presentation for hours. Giz a job, I find myself thinking, I can do that.

There's a plethora of studies that show a strong correlation between being of a lower-class background and mental health struggles. I came back to university I suppose because I know this and I want to do something about

it. Maybe I wanted to prove scientifically that being poor is a fundamental factor in depression and anxiety, that psychosis and 'personality disorders' are the after-effects of trauma. Before I came here, I jokingly dreamed, while frying chicken balls, of making £40k a year therapizing the rich and saving enough capital to invest in having a small business of my own - my own fast food place - where I could employ people who needed work the most: ex-convicts, homeless, single mums and sex workers looking for an exit route. I don't believe in 'Arbeit Macht Frei' like Ian Duncan Smith does, but I accept from my own experience on the dole that too many months at the Jobcentre can make you feel less than worthless.

So why, when I started writing this, was my mental health so preoccupied with the leader of the opposition? Last night

- my gyros shop boss who struggles to pay his bills
- joked that his accountant told him that he should employ
- 16 year olds only, as he would only have to pay them £3.50 an hour. It was only a joke and he's a good man but it is a good example of how our class enemies think. Forever trying to get as much labour out of us as they can for as little a wage as possible. I told him that if Corbyn got in, he'd scrap the youth rate and on top of that he'd have to pay me £10 an hour! We smiled at McDonalds being forced to pay this but the truth is that it's been ten years of austerity and it's all I've known since I was a teenager. The idea that all of the barriers we face could fall down overnight with one man is such a tantalising, wistful, and actually rather evil dream to sell to the youth it occurs to me now.

Imagine seeing neoliberal austerity ravage your country for more than a decade. The people riot and strike and some start to hope that a coalition of socialists can put a stop to it. They don't and they can't. This coalition has to jump

into bed with the devil before they implement anything. So, you move away from this crisis, to a country that has more welfare and work. Here, though, wages stagnate and welfare is crippled. Division permeates this country in the same way as it did your own. Austerity worsens. The rhetoric again is of EU Exit, immigration, and cutbacks. The same shit everywhere. As before, the people here put hope in a 'socialist' leader. Maybe things will be different here or maybe things will be exactly the same...

Nevermind. Those of us entitled to vote will roll the dice and vote. To save the NHS without actually having to fight *on the streets* for it, the country will vote. We will take the bus that goes closest to our destination.

There is a Greek proverb: Ουδέν μόνιμότερον του προσωρινού, "*There is nothing more permanent than the temporary,*" which I have found has been an increasingly evermore fittingly painful description for many aspects of this life. In love, in work, in pain, in debt, in trade, in government. In austerity, prosperity, and recovery. There is nothing more permanent than the temporary.

Whoever is prime minister when you read this, it shall be temporary. The effects may last a lifetime but their term will be short. Or their effects may be short, but their term will last what feels like a lifetime.... No longer an optimist, I am able to forget the takeaway dreams of yesterday and accept that until the entirety of parliament is torn down and rearranged: there will be nothing more permanent than the temporary solutions of either.

Icecube

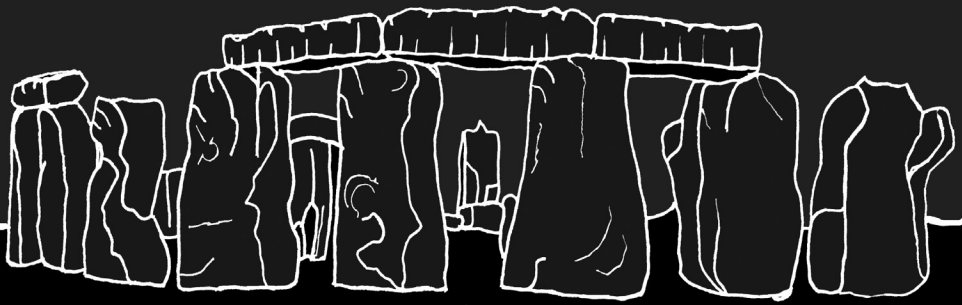
Sarah Jane Baker

There once was a girl named Theresa.
In her youth, she was known as a teaser.
She May, or May not, have been very hot,
But not even Corbyn could defreeze her.

He's
Nice
Isn't he?



What did
We do
before jobs?



Princes Park. December, on a Monday

Dan Melling



You're walking to work.

You're walking to work for someone you don't like so that their boss's

bosses can get rich off your labour.

You're walking to work and you need to stop

the Marxism. You're getting worked up.

You're walking to work and you're walking

because you can't even afford the fucking bus.

Because the fat cats at your company make money doing nothing

while you work ten-hour shifts and can't even pay

your fucking rent which is extortionate

because the fat cat's fat cat mates

have bought up all the affordable housing

but

you need to stop the Marxism and get to work.

You're walking to work and actually the sun is really nice, just poking over Princes Park gate.

You're walking to work and the sun's really nice and the air is too, it's that kind of dead crisp air you get on sunny

December mornings. You're walking to work and the sun's nice and the air's dead crisp

you wouldn't be seeing this if you didn't have to walk to work so maybe

it's not that bad that we have to do this every morning every fucking morning



no

fuck that.

You're walking to work and you resent it.

You resent every fucking second.

You're walking to work and you're enjoying the cold
but when you get there you're still going to have to see
fucking Mike who thinks he's the fucking king
because he manages a Subway in Liverpool.

You're walking to work so Mike can tell you
about how he drove to work in the Nissan Skyline
he had imported from Japan because the engine is illegal
over here

blah blah

fuck off.

Fuck Mike.

- Class traitor.
- He'll be against the wall after the revolution.
- But forget the revolution for now.

You're walking to work.

You're walking and the sun's coming through Princes Park
gate

like it must have shone through Stonehenge,
years ago when Stonehenge was being used for whatever
they used it for. You're walking to work and the sun's nice
and there's Aphex Twin, something
off Selected Ambient Works, playing
from a downstairs window

and you can smell weed and you can smell crack
and imagine sweat and a good time
and it's shit that you have to work
to make some fat cunt rich
and the people in that room can sit
and bond with music and chemicals and each other

but no

it's nice that you live in an area where people bond,
even if it's not with you and it's nice that the police
aren't kicking in their doors yet.

You're walking to work and the air's crisp
and the sun poking through Princes Park gate is nice
and you imagine how it must have been watching the sun
poking through Stonehenge
when it was fresh all those years ago
with all your mates around, really bonding.

You're walking to work and there's an old woman on the
meridian
that separates Princes Road from Princes Drive.
She's wearing only a thin night-dress
and there's a box of Alpen under her arm.

You're walking to work and there's an old woman on the
meridian
and she looks confused and she has no shoes on.
She's picking something up
and collecting them in her Alpen box
and they're dog-shits covered in frost.
You're walking to work and there's a woman
on the meridian and she's collecting frozen dog-shits
and putting them in an Alpen box and she looks confused
and the sun's poking through Princes Park gate
like it must have at Stonehenge and it's going to start
melting
the shit and you're walking
to the meridian and you're bending
over and you're picking up a softly melting piece
of dog shit and dropping it into her Alpen box.

Those Gentrification Seeks to Destroy, It First Drives Mad

Alice Wolf

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- When talking about mental health, we usually talk about it very much in the context of an individual illness, be it ourselves or someone else. It goes without saying that there is no definitive cause of mental illness. It can cultivate from one or many factors and experiences in a person's life, but environment is a major one.

With shelter being one of our most basic needs, it is inevitable that inadequate, inconsistent housing or none at all will have a detrimental effect on our physical and emotional welfare. So what happens when we are displaced? Not by war or natural disaster but by something much more familiar to people in the West which is packaged to us as an aspiration.

Gentrification is typically defined as the arrival of wealthier residents and business owners in lower income neighbourhoods. Its definition is to "refine or make better".

To conform to middle-class tastes. The term was first coined by sociologist Ruth Glass in the 1950's to describe what was happening in Bethnal Green following the Second World War.

With this in mind, we can ask, is gentrification really such a bad thing? Surely if it involves regeneration and brings money into deprived areas, while lowering crime rates, then it makes an area a much nicer and safer place to live? Well no. Much like people who said Thatcher did wonders for the economy, you have to ask yourself: For who?

Gentrification can happen slowly or creep up behind us with such alarming speed, it's hard to figure out what the fuck just happened. One day your high street looks as it always did. The next you notice someone opened a Brewdog in the archway of the train station, and the following week you go to the local café and have egg and chips served to you on a first edition copy of *The Grapes Of Wrath* by a 20-year-old with a fake lisp riding a unicycle while playing the piccolo. It would be hilarious, but beneath the Nathan Barley-esque ludicrity lies corporate and state violence that is committed to erasing the least profitable members of the community.

It is property developers and landlords that deliver the death blow, and the reason behind why you would pay more for a crumbling garage in London than for a terraced house in some parts of Newcastle. It's why in one of the wealthiest parts of London Grenfell burned to the ground because they covered it in lethal cladding so it looked more attractive to the people in the luxury flats facing it.

The economic growth gentrified areas may experience seldom benefits the existing residents, most of whom will be

in private rental properties or social housing tenants. These are usually the first victims as landlords hike up rent prices and council properties are sold off or demolished. When this happens in an area with a large ethnic or immigrant population, they will be forced into another deprived area where people struggle even more for adequate housing and resources, leading to accusations by the far right and tabloid press that they are “flooding” the country, when what is happening is that the space in which they are allowed to exist gets increasingly smaller.

Gentrification is often accompanied by an increased police presence, which, as anyone who has been racially profiled by police or had a loved one die in their custody will tell you, will certainly not make everyone safer. While crime rates may indeed fall, it's not because it solved the problem, it just pushed it elsewhere. The so called protection is only

- for the new arrivals and does not offer improved outcomes
- to those who were there before. We also need to remember that gentrification does not eradicate poverty, it just hides the people who are experiencing it further in the shadows.

The effect all of this has on mental health isn't fully known, as we have only just recently started to try and understand it. A 2017 study by Sungwoo Lim and Pui Ying Chan from the New York City department of Health and Mental Hygiene was one of the first to look at the effects of gentrification on the mental health of citizens. New York is one of the most burgeoning examples of gentrification and it is thought that nearly 1 million people are at risk of being priced out of their homes. Lim and Chan looked at which mental health conditions were causing displaced NYC residents to present at hospitals and emergency rooms. At the top of the list was alcohol and substance misuse, schizophrenia and other types of psychosis, along with mood and anxiety disorders.

They found that before the displaced group were priced out of their homes, the hospitalisation rates were similar to those who were able to remain. However, following their displacement from gentrifying areas to lower income neighbourhoods, the hospitalisation rates nearly doubled. While it would be impossible to identify gentrification as the sole source of mental health difficulties in the displaced groups, its influence cannot be ignored when we compare the figures before and after.

It's not just about the stress we endure when we are pushed out of or no longer recognise an area we have known our entire lives, it is the forced removal of our resources when this happens. Katie Morgan, a character played by Hayley Squires in Ken Loach's film 'I, Daniel Blake', is a single mother who is forced out of social housing in London and relocated in Newcastle. A lot of people found the idea of a local authority moving someone over 300 miles away unrealistic, but honestly, it isn't. As a domestic violence project worker, I've met an increasing number of Katie's in my time. There have been another two women added to the list in the period of time it has taken me to write and edit this article. They are gaslighted by housing officers into giving up their tenancies, told that they shouldn't be thinking twice about relocating if they are serious about keeping themselves and their children safe. They are promised a place at the top of the housing list if they agree to move out of London, and told to pack their bags the second they comply.

Any safety or support networks they may have had are suddenly removed: the neighbour they knew they could run to for safety, the family members who would help out with child care or transport so they could go to work or appointments. They then arrive on a train in a city they are completely unfamiliar with, with no knowledge of the

services that are available, how to get furniture and clothes for the kids, and will often wait for weeks on end to get any kind of income as they wait for benefits to come through. Without resources or emotional support for the trauma they have endured, they become targets for other abusive people who find them already vulnerable and isolated, and so the cycle continues.

Gentrification isn't just detrimental to the residents it displaces, it is harmful to its new residents too. Some will face longer commutes, and are subject to the same ever increasing rental prices they may initially be able to afford, facing ruin should they be made redundant. With their small businesses, franchises and disposable income, they may not be first thrown under the bus by gentrification, but they are obviously waiting in line until someone richer comes along.

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- Like austerity, gentrification is violence on the working class. Neighbourhoods which are singled out for it are looked upon as something of a "blank canvas" that they can brand and exploit, rather than consider the needs, desires, or the value of the lives of the people who already live there. They tell us that it will be better for us, that more investment will be put into schools. They don't tell us that our pubs and live music venues will close as the people who bought the expensive apartments next to it are now complaining about the noise and the riff raff hanging around outside. That our drug and alcohol services will be protested as they don't want a needle exchange in their nice area as they don't feel safe being around addicts while they travel to their friends intimate little dinner party where they'll drink expensive wine and snort cocaine off the marble kitchen island. And that local authority residential children's home they want to build next door? No, they're writing a strongly worded

missive to the local councillor about that. They already sponsor an African child who they interact with via letter twice a year, they don't want a whole bunch of depressing poor children moving in at the end of the street making them feel anxious. They'll convince us to give up public spaces to the highest bidder, telling us it will be used to build "affordable housing" then build penthouse suites in the old brewery buildings which start at £350k.

With no front-line services, lack of decent housing, and towns at the mercy of corporations and developers, gentrification paves a smoother road for further sanctions on the poor to be imposed. Communities filled with people with unhealed trauma are easier to control because traumatised and exhausted people blame themselves for bad things that happen to them first, rather than the people causing it - and when every bit of your energy is focussed on trying to meet you and your children's basic needs, you are unlikely to be in a position to fight the establishment. Until the day you push back a bit and find there is suddenly all this attention on you but no one to come to your defence because you shoplifted, or you rioted or you lied on a form.

When we look honestly at the harm it causes, I'm always astounded that the left are not committed to fighting it more, but what I have found is that it makes people uncomfortable. Because as much as they loathe to admit it, many are complicit in gentrification or benefit from its implementation. The ethical middle class are often concerned with their carbon footprint, but not so much the social one they stamp on working-class communities.

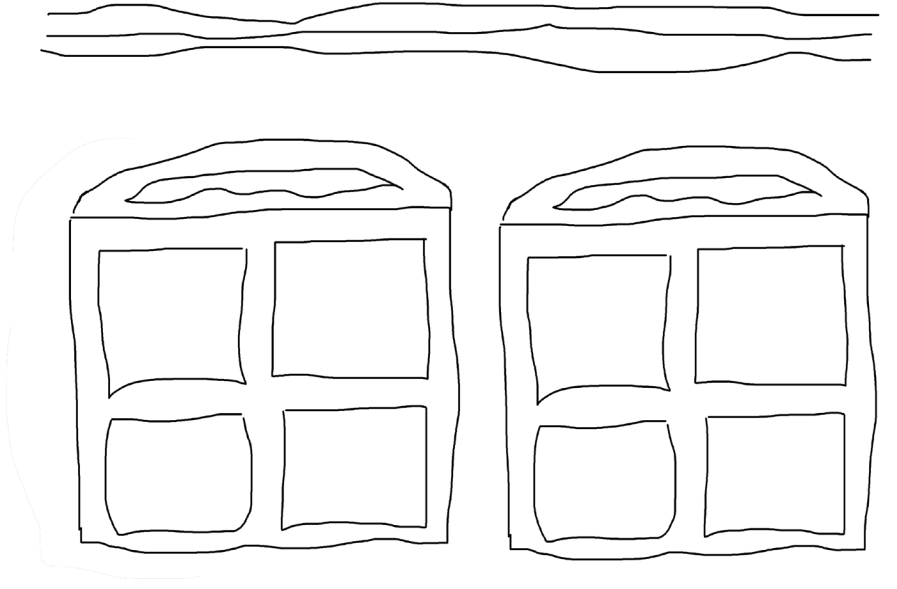
Gentrification is not to be embraced and there are alternatives to it that do not include snatching the last resources of the Working Class, nor letting communities

rust away with forgotten people inside of it. Where we occupy, not gentrify our neighbourhoods. Where economic and social abundance does not mean the displacement and further marginalisation of the people already there. Established residents get to decide what they need and are resourced to build their own systems, where change from within - and not economic segregation - is the strategy employed to improve the health and well-being of the community.

The neoliberal sanitisation of our streets often seems encroaching and inevitable, but we are not defenceless. We never have been. Weeds, not roses, break through concrete and grow over ever oppressive structures eventually and our roots are wide and relentless. Organise and support rent strikes. Demand more social housing. Fight every little closure that they try to sneak in through the back door and

- realise when you may be part of the problem. Those little
- battles, the tiny local campaigns to stop proposals to shorten library opening times or close a swimming pool in what you call the rough part of town, or for improved fire safety in local authority tower blocks may not seem interesting, edgy or trendy enough for your attention, but that is what makes them so important. Gentrification pulls out the beating heart of real communities and tries to replace it with dazzling aesthetics and false promises that destroy us all eventually. Anything but resisting it with every living cell of our being is madness.







Dissonance

Jo Magpie

The word I keep coming back to is 'dissonance'. I am not sure if this is the right word, really, but it is the one which pops into my mind most readily when I experience the feeling I am trying to get at by using it. There is a level of dissonance between my inner world - that world where there is a synthesis between my lived experience, my politics, and the world I see around me - and most of the social movements I have participated in.

I was politicised in my mid-twenties in the mid-noughties. By this point I had been in stable housing for several years but, despite not having experienced more than a few nights on the streets, had been technically homeless and living in various kinds of homeless hostels from age 15, before getting placed in social housing age 20. I was still struggling to pay bills, but had long since learned to micro manage my



expenditure so that I never went without food or alcohol, and hadn't lived on Sainsbury's Economy white bread and tomato ketchup sandwiches since I was about 16.

A few years earlier I had discovered a life of travelling and counter-culture in the form of providing free labour at festivals in exchange for living a constant party life, often with free food. I was hitch-hiking from one field to the next from mid spring to early autumn, and was living in my tent for large portions of the year. My basic assumption was that I would never have any money, and so I was trying to learn to live without it. After years and years of unemployment, mind dumbing jobs and eeking out benefits payments or minimum wage, this was incredibly empowering.

- My gateway into radical politics was therefore anti-consumerism - basically a less developed take on anti-capitalism. If you had asked me at the time what I thought about capitalism, I would for sure have told you I hated it, but without being able to offer any nuanced critique or cite any texts or theorists. I simply knew that this was a name people used for a system which had always fought me and everything I loved, and that I had survived in spite of it, not because of it.

I first heard the term 'climate change' at Glastonbury Festival in 2007. I was providing free labour for a veggie cafe there and serving most of the meals for the field site crew. There had no doubt always been political stalls in that field, but I had never really noticed them before. This year I was in the process of gaining political awareness after getting involved with volunteering in a radical social centre in Brighton earlier in the year. It had opened my eyes to a huge number of things. The politics of Eco-Anarchism chimed a lot with my love of the natural world and disdain

for the social and political system we are living in.

The 'climate change' sign was hanging from a stall staffed by someone I had met at the social centre. I stopped to talk and looked at the flyers and brochures. I am certain this was the first time I had ever really noticed such things at any festival I had been to in the preceding nine years. I covered the fact that I didn't understand most of it and was completely unfamiliar with the ideas, especially since the two people on the stall were chatting away as though it were all very obvious, and it was the 'normal people' around us who needed to be educated - mostly white middle-class hippy types, Guardian readers and Green Party members I presume, but these were not labels I was familiar with at the time. I nodded along and mirrored the language they were using as much as possible.

I took all the leaflets back to my tent and worked my way through every inch of them slowly until I felt I understood the ideas.

The social centre was vegan and had a dominant culture of veganism. I had become vegan just before I started working there and this helped me to fit right in. I had always loved animals, was quite obsessed with learning about wildlife as a child, and had been vegetarian from age 9 to age 12, before my life turned upside down and my mental health took flight for 15 years. What very few people know though is that I first became vegan not because of animal rights, but as a means to control my food intake - part of the resurfacing of the ghost of a teenage eating disorder during a mental health relapse. My politicisation changed the focus of my veganism, but it didn't begin it.

One thing I remember about my initial time in that social

centre was that all the social codes were different. I have moved through many different subcultures in my life and have always been good at absorbing new cultural codes, so this was no great obstacle, but it is interesting to reflect on now.

I was used to cultural codes based on fashion - music and clothing - and the different ways people used language. I had been in the heavy metal scene for years before getting into festivals where the hippy thing was much more common. I had a lot of friends who were into free parties and electronic music that I would take drugs with. I could move between these worlds fairly easily.

This new world had political codes. People wore different things and spoke and behaved very differently. Some people

- wore ripped clothes and patches and smoked weed and
- drank lots and lived in squats and took ketamine and this
- all felt pretty familiar, while others wore clothes that most of my earlier friends would have derided for being 'normal'. People were different ages. There were young punky girls and older men who wore normal looking trousers and shirts. I didn't know how to speak to some of those people. I hadn't developed political vocabulary yet, and everything I could think of to say sounded somehow childish.

It's difficult to know how things would have gone if I hadn't quite soon begun a relationship with someone who was very well established in that club, and who was generally very patient in explaining things to me whenever he saw that I didn't understand something. I thought he was the most intelligent person I had ever met.

Years later I thought back to this time as I sat with him at his parents' dinner table and listened to their family effortlessly

dip in and out of conversations about party politics, social movements, growing food and specialised history topics, and it suddenly hit me that he always had access to this knowledge, he has been surrounded by discussions like these his whole life.

I remember a friend I had met in the club looking wistfully at the shelves of books in the bookshop and saying he wanted to read every single book that was there. I glanced along the rows of titles and spotted one or two that grabbed my interest, but the majority were well beyond me. I had no idea what they were about and they may as well have been written in another language.

It is useful to reflect on this as I feel fairly confident that I would now be able to skim read most of those books and give a nuanced critique of them. I still haven't been in any formal higher education, so this can only have been achieved by the hoovering up of all the knowledge I could get my hands on. For years I went to every single action camp any part of the Anarchist Left put on, went to as many workshops as possible and read and absorbed all the texts that were distributed. I was only able to do this as I had already found ways of surviving with very little money, which freed up time to dedicate to political development. Squatting and dumpster diving were normalised parts of my social movements, and these were things I was already familiar with.

Being an activist and an Anarchist became my main identity. I made friends and participated in many social movements. The actual feeling of dissonance came much later. Burnout is very common in all the social movements I have been part of until now. Activism is often motivated by a complex blend of shame, frustration, anger, and guilt. The

exact makeup of this motivation will differ from person to person.

People drop out of social movements with alarming frequency. But we are Anarchists, right? We do what we want, when we want. We don't pressure each other to do things or not do things. If someone doesn't want to be involved, that is up to them.

Over time I started to notice that the fabric of the relationships in the social movements, in the social centre, and the networks I was part of, is very thin. If someone is struggling, they can often just fall between the cracks. Some people get sick, mental, or physical, or both. Some people turn out to be undercover cops. Some people you don't see for years and then they pass you on the street and they have different social codes and a different accent and you realise

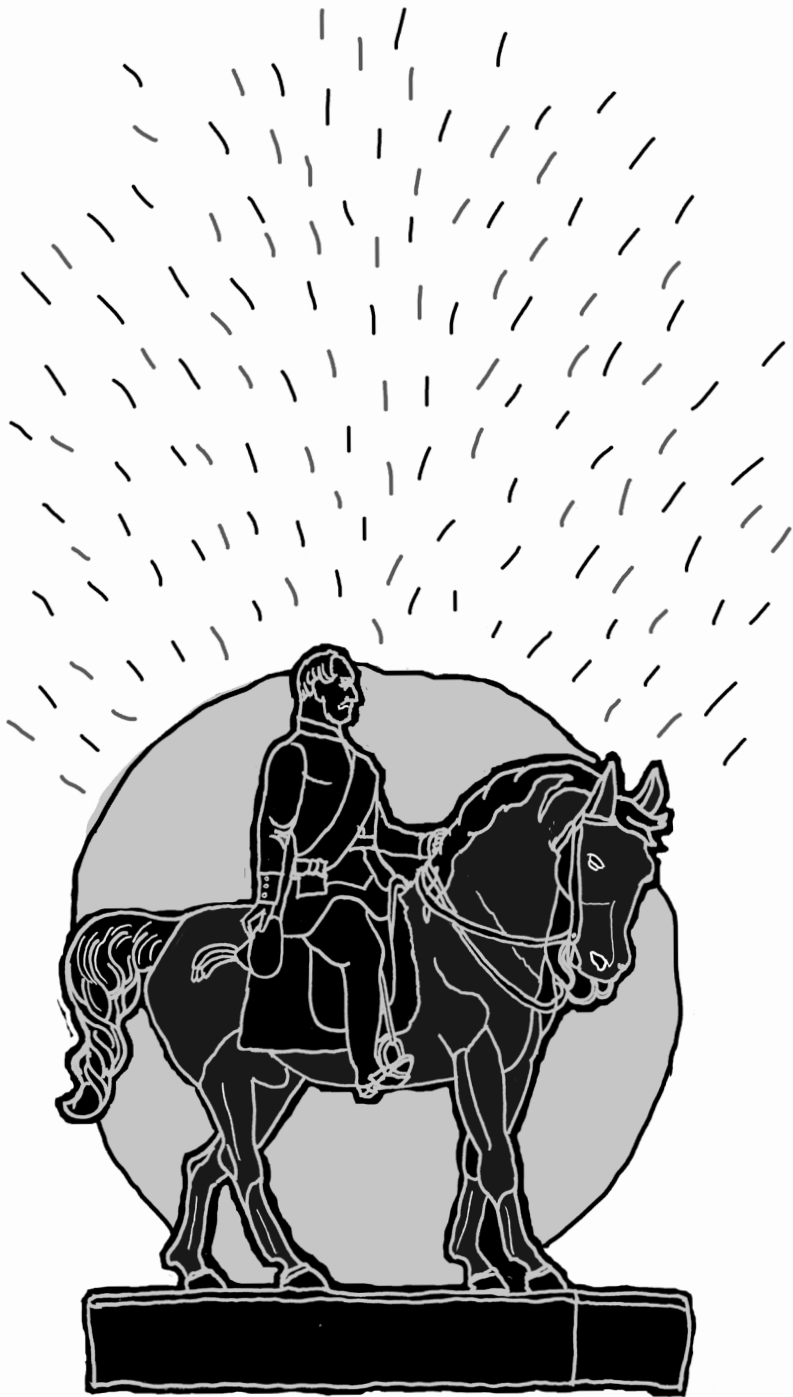
- that the whole time you knew them they were actually living
- out some kind of social enactment or something - a fun adventure game.

When I think back to some of the friendships of earlier periods of my life, I feel a deep loss. A while back I came across an old friend in a pub in town. It had been so many years, I couldn't believe it was her. We lived in a hostel together for over a year. We stayed close friends after that, but we have always had different interests and subcultures and we drifted apart. We have been living in the same city, but inhabiting different worlds. She didn't recognise me at first - "You're not wearing any makeup!" was the first thing she said. I haven't worn makeup in many years now, but she knew me at a time when I wouldn't even look at myself in the mirror without it. She knows all my hang ups, all my insecurities. She grabbed me and started singing that song she used to sing, "Lean on me, when you're not strong..."

She started rocking me back and forth like she used to. Of course I started to cry. I cannot imagine ever developing a friendship like this with someone from my political scene. It was based in struggle and mutual support. I knew she always had my back, and I always had hers. I have no doubt that if I went even now to her doorstep, wherever that is, she would immediately take me in. This is what comradeship should be about. This is the kind of strength we need to build into the social fabric of our political movements; without it we are weak, easily divided, and will continue to lose people from our movements when they need support.

I constantly hear classist remarks in my social centre. I am not read as being lower-class, and so people will just say things around me. It is more than just the comments that get to me though, it is the fact that homeless people sit outside the door all day and do not feel like it is their space; that someone had the cheek to hang a sign in the window, facing out at where they sit, saying drug dealers are class traitors. It is that when a couple of women came in to go to a feminist meeting, the guy working there followed them through the building and said to keep an eye on them, because they are "women of the street".

This is where the dissonance comes from: it is the chasm between the political views people claim to share and the actions and words that they bring. It is the cracks people fall through. It is the reason that Anarchism is currently a scene, and not a political movement. It is the gap between the potential of what I know we are capable of, and where we are at right now.





Luke Kelly In Wolverhampton.

Dominic Beard

Luke Kelly fixed steel
On a Wolverhampton building site
Sacked for asking
For a higher wage.

I wish I knew the place.
Must ask around.
Some rough geriatric
Supping Smiths
In the afternoon
Foam circle moon.

I wish I knew the place
To make a pilgrimage
Declare it, and the bus route there,
Sacred.



Not to hang a plaque
Or erect a monument
A concrete lobotomy
Trans-orbitally administered
Acupuncture needle to the
memory.

No doubt it has become
The site
Of an office block
Home for the elderly or fast
Food establishment.
But the route remains. People
Still walk those same paths
Just the sights have changed.

But I still don't know.
So I'll settle for Albert
Sat on his steed
Legs on backwards
Moved in the seventies
Traffic improvement.
It's here I declare a monument to
Kelly.

For his puffy, ashen face.
Cap to cover the shaved spot
Scalped, peeled and sliced
Out the crabs in his brain.

This is his unquiet grave
Corpse-absent yet spirit-bound.



Parenting Class, the Lion Outside

Ellese Elliot

Last night - I was woken out of my dream by a lion like scream. My partner, sleeping on the sofa in the front room of a one bed flat, asked me, "are you OK babe?" Wedged between two sleeping cubs, aged four and one, I stay silent. I am so full of rage. I am under so much pressure. It was I, the working-class mother, that screamed. I dream I am under pressure, I dream I am full of rage, as my cubs constantly pull at my main, step on my paws, swing from my tail, and hear my roar.

Que guilt-sadness-understanding-blackout-

But it is not they who make me roar. Not really. It's the conditions that, we working-class mothers find ourselves in, that makes us roar. And we have had enuff. The isolation that occurs between these scribbled walls, is painful. There is no neighbour, no extended family, nor community. We have been torn apart and they lie in-between the jaws of the hyena's in power.



My mother, the archetype queen of working class scum mum, from Soaawf End, raised I and five other cubs on benefits. She, did it on her 'own'. She tore us apart. We went through the jungle concrete and back. On an estate, full of hate, in Britain's great London we found our fate. The violence, the drugs, the stabbings, the fights, the gunshots, the screams, the kidnappings, the rapes. How could a gentle mother, be born from this shit.

Don't have kids you say... Whose going to fucking sweep your streets hey, whose gonna fill your prisons mate, whose gonna lick your loo until it shines like the stars hovering over our gutter. Fuck you! Reproduction is part of your corruption. And Fuck You Wilde, we are not all in it.

It's not all that bad though. At least we have a cave to keep us dry, a caucus to keep us alive, so we can act out this sadistic show. At least we've got capitalism, that bombs kid's in other countries, to turn tricks, so we can get on the sick. At least we've got a nice warm bath, that burns gas so bright, we might all turn into a blazing star. Oh and at least we've got, we've got, you've got, what?

"Don't you know, they offer fifteen hours of free cub care for single scrounging mums?"

But I hate the fucking state. I really hate it. They took away our mother's milk, and sold us their plastic bottles. They cut us and sold us their fucking plasters. They killed our love, and sold us their apathy. But we are not apathetic. Fuck You Cunts.

The rage I feel being dragged up through this societal ill, now to be passed on to my cubs, makes me all the more fierce. When I'm raging and roaring, I look over to another

mother so unaffordably adoring. I resentfully wish I could get one of these middle-class Mary Poppins nannies, I really do. I wish we could live in a big Victorian mansion, with a massive garden, with a gigantic waterfall, and the children would laugh and laugh and laugh. I could go next door for some sugar, and down the road for some dick, and a little further more would be my scum mum.

But hey, there is the fifteen hours, at the local shipping container, where the de 'mentors' wear their misery in their wrinkly mugs, and the other cubs all snotty and withdrawn, scrap over some plastic crap, whilst the cry of emotionally neglected children chimes through the damp sickly air. Yeah, I even nearly let my cubs stay there, because there is no where else. That temptation makes me break a little inside.

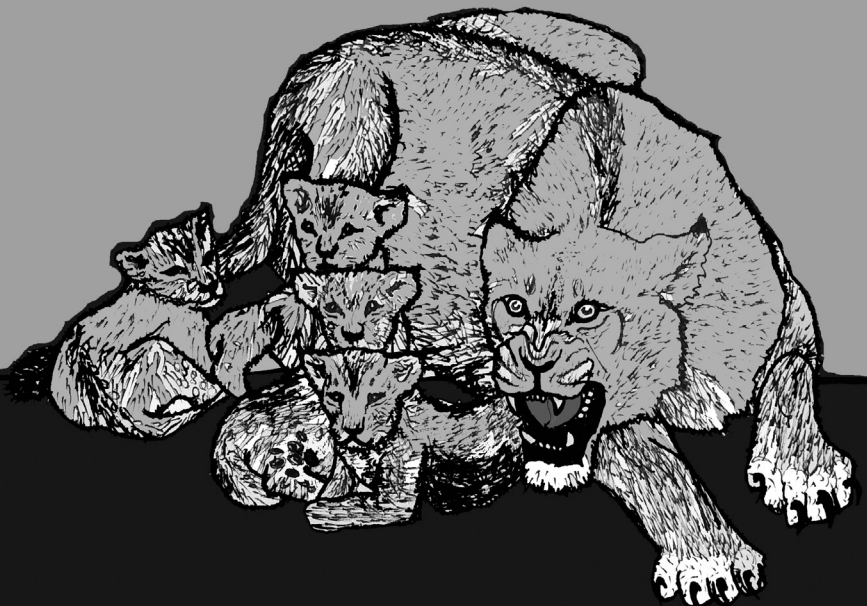
When you don't have the peace to take a shit, when it's been four years since you had a good night's sleep, for four years, when daddy lion is an unreliable alcoholic, when your neighbour is out to get ya, when your mother is as absent as your dead dad, dead on smack; you roar. And unfortunately, it tends to be in the presence of, if not at, the cubs, who in turn, roar back at you. Sooner or later the pigs come, the social services come, and your roaring cubs get the full works. There's no Mary Poppins giving you a spoonful of sugar. My cubs get the raw meat of what it's like to grow up in the gutter of tory Britain. And it's regrettably a good portion of the pie that are there.

If you see a lion roaring at her cub, understand that she is so fucking angry, and neglected, and lonely. No one wants to be that scum mum, roaring in the middle of the night, because her dreams of motherhood have become a nightmare, but what the fuck are any of you doing to

prevent it? Think about us single mums hey, or even mums with partners chock a block on the block, whilst you're on your commute, whilst you're thinking about how you're going to save the planet, whilst you peacefully take a whizz. If you think you could be my Mary Poppins, hit me up.



AFFORDABLE
CHILDCARE
WANTED.







Broke and Baroque: In Support of Reclaiming the City

Zoe Ereni

I live in treetops now, I step out onto the balcony each frosty morning I can remember to and take a picture. Since moving here I have had every form of winter thrown at me: sunbeams through blackening branches, hailstones, wind so hard it flipped the table, a torrential downpour I saw pass over half of London, a rainbow in its wake. It occurred to me that for the first time in my life I would see every graded colour into the New Year and that even in entropy, for the first time I can say I'm happy.

The council estates which enclosed my childhood were monochromatic, uniform in their despair. Walking by them now triggers a sort of retrospective claustrophobia. There were glimpses of beauty, the odd flourish of love and adornment in the occasional shoebox-flat, like flowers bursting between pavement slabs or the dignified despair of conscious street art which bursts from its frame of urban



decay. Mostly though, we lived within rows and rows of unchanging and unchangeable rectangles carved into cardboard. I learned early on that there was no chance of me affecting change on my environment; I was subject to it. I recall the mood of endless summers in representations of youth emerging from nineties cinema as a way of identifying the dreamy boredom of childhood. I was affected by it but only as someone staring out of a fish-bowl. I only remember endless winters, the baseline to which brief forays into anarchic bouts of liberation from concrete school grounds onto concrete estates would always return. Seasons were demarcated by the rolling realisations that nothing had changed, and nothing could change. Everyone I knew had parents who were either drunk or high, had each other up against walls, or they just weren't there.

- I was eleven years old during the Y2K hysteria. I remember
- watching television reporters speculate about crashing
- markets, blackouts, riots, planes falling out of the sky. I got excited; here was something which would undeniably impact everything. Besides that it was a good reason to stay out of school and I was running low on excuses. On New Year's Eve I sat in the window frame of our tiny ground floor flat watching the arrhythmic, violent little fireworks go off from the streets, and I waited for the end of the world. It didn't come. Planes flew over me, markets continued strangling the poor and feeding the rich, obfuscating their crimes by disguising themselves as indecipherable numbers on scrolling marquees, and I listened to Tara, our sometimes-babysitter, screaming at her boyfriend for the third time that week. The only thing that changed was our communal ground, splattered with the lout's clothes hurled from Tara's window by the morning.

Depression thrives where there is no light and change

cannot be enacted. When I was fifteen years old I didn't leave bed for a week. I didn't open the curtains. It was winter anyway and high rises made an enclave around our battered little house. Sometimes I woke not knowing if it was 5pm or 5am and sobbed. I wasn't sad I had missed school; that was perhaps the intention of my depression. I failed to bear witness to change; the day I had planned on passing had passed me by. There is a gallows humour which arises from the smog of metropolitan life. I hear Londoners quip about not having seen the sky in months. It is possible to live in the city and never see the horizon. It is on the horizon that change occurs. It makes sense to me now that when I was fifteen we used to climb to the top of a hill on the outskirts of the city to smoke weed and drink cheap cider. My introduction to Absinthe occurred between sundown and that horizon between the tree lines where starlight invited me into an adulthood somewhere beyond that stinking suburb. When I finally got out, I was in the back of a car driving on a cliff-side on Cyprus. Our driver pulled over and hurried us all out to look up at the glimmering dots and curves of the nebula. It was the first time I had seen any of the Milky Way with my naked eye. It became water and ran down my cheek, and the guy looked at me like I was mad.

The despair of poverty is bound to an atemporality, the inability to conceive of change. We inscribe ourselves onto time, and it is through time that our selves are given back to us. There is a reason that time is removed from places of forced confinement. Prisons, asylums, and detention centres have all exercised experiments in distorting temporality and the environment in a way that generates sensory confusion and deprivation. White Torture is a disturbing instance of the prisoner confined to a space completely removed from the effect of time or externality. The self is lost in a space which has no effect and which cannot be affected. Growing

up in drab, oppressive housing, through drab, oppressive institutions, I used to think their uniformity and endless repetition was designed to maintain despair. I believed the way state apparatus funnel the poor through systems of white walls and concrete was a weapon of a vertical class war. Now I'm watching a generation of corporate types paying the cost of a farmhouse in Wales to live in shoe boxes stacked one above the other in ugly structures of glass and steel piercing what little sky we have left. It's a new build, they say with the same fashionable nihilism with which they drink murky water and accept inflation, but it's close to work. Granted, they have fitted kitchens and you know what you're getting with IKEA furniture, but an expensive cage is still a cage, and what happens when there are so many cages stacked so high, no one can see the horizon any more?

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- It is a question of proximity which primes the nature of our alienation. Our proximity to the fruits of our labour determines our alienation from it, and our capacity to inscribe onto and perceive change within our environment determines alienation just the same. Uniformity is a way of prohibiting inscription of the self, and is a necessary component of oppression from its most violent examples (the removal of hair and names from the incarcerated) to its more benign. I learned that identity was a commodity for the state to give and take at will when I was first punished for scribbling on my school books as a child. Apparently my thoughts were not permitted to run free across the covers of these work books; they were to be confined within the margins inside, until later. The transition from one school year to another involved the arbitrary command that we decorate them with whatever we liked, as long as it was suitable. I was never good at anticipating the boundaries of such values and I was punished again. Still it intrigued me;

one year my school told me to keep my identity to myself, the next I was ordered to cover my books in it. At thirty years old not much has changed; it is making my mark, imprinting the signifier Home onto my home (painting a single wall) that has instigated my landowner to declare war with me.

Like most villages, my childhood estates also contained wise women, mad old matriarchs whose homes had an inherent mysticism. They usually hoarded things which were both a horror and delight to explore, and these hermits took pride in exploding their dank caves with these trinkets. There was an anarchic opulence to their decoration; a stubborn insistence on the baroque. Rows of tiny deteriorating single-glazed windows would be interrupted by sudden vibrancy, a small space crippled under the weight of cheap ornamental glory. There is comforting honesty in the performance of wealth in a space which undeniably has none. A revolutionary defiance of spirit otherwise crushed under the foot of authoritarian uniformity. Aesthetics are inescapably political and art is at its best when it is sincere. Inversely, it is an old trick of those with old money to understate their wealth in every way so as to avoid drawing unwanted attention. Almost everyone I've ever known with exceptional wealth works hard at hiding it. Then there's middle-class minimalism, a relatively recent disavowal of the traditional signifiers of wealth through the shirking of opulence, in favour of hiding one's possessions in multi-functioning furniture, the adoption of Nordic this and that, and the deferral of any artistic sensibilities to overpricing and mass-producing printmakers. My childhood notions about class war were blown out of the water when I learned about new builds. All they really tell us is that uniformity is one avenue of oppression whether the victim is someone dependent on council housing or a hopeful young professional reliant on luxury housing developments. The

distinction is the illusion of freedom: the former doesn't pretend to provide it and the latter does. Dozens of young professionals move into a high rise to be close to work yet no closer to the fruits of their labour. This luxury apartment isn't just an apartment; it's a lifestyle. In fact it's more than that; it is a space where the sincerity of aesthetics collapses, where wealth which at once gloats and obfuscates itself performs a dual-function. It establishes an identity for the occupant, and through his repetition, his being one-of-several-dozen in identical apartments, immediately denies him his subjectivity. As we have seen, we discover ourselves in the space we occupy. Urban atomisation is at once the worship of individualism and the denial of individuality. New builds are for people who believed that suddenly getting permission to decorate their notebooks meant liberation, that neoliberal freedom is anything more than the freedom to spend money.



The years before I left London for university were spent in a North London suburb not far from pockets of old money. They were zones of listed buildings, actual greenery, and notorious institutions. I used to climb the hill until I couldn't hear the suffering any more. I would walk beside brick I knew I had no right to be by and pray that someday I could look out of my window to a view like this.

Nowhere have I seen a more perverse symbol of the oppression of urbanism than in the instance of the Dalston residents paying housing benefit to a landlord who sold their views from their windows to Apple. The horror of people being shut into their already dank living spaces is only rendered more monstrous by the significance of a 120 square meter monument to a technocratic monopoly which has become synonymous with gentrification. Across the city, brick is replaced with steel and glass, people are

blinded with advertising which stands to replace art, and the homeless are vanished to make way for towering empty spaces. Speculative homes, a testament to the practice of speculative economics.

I'm thirty years old and I made it. I'm spending the value of a farmhouse in Wales in rent which prohibits me from accumulating any meaningful wealth. But boy, you should see my view. The idea of a view is what kept me going as I revised for exams by a broken lamp leant against a mouldy wall, the glow of TV a constant assault on cognition, the threat of violent eruption a permanent low frequency anxiety. A view, or the possibility of a view, is where I projected my escape route. A window can frame a seasonal change which might mean the difference between hope and despair. I look through a window framing a horizon of steel and glass piercing the grey and I think we should really tear down those billboards; reclaim space with one small act of defiance at a time, like those mad old matriarchs.






Reenie

Jake Hawkey

Bobbing left to right like a rung church bell,
climbing up the cobbled close glossy in rain;
your mother, slowing now for a rest, with three
shopping bags to each arm. If she were to look up
for a moment even, wiping her brow, she would spy,
halfway between Maths and the gym, your initialled
plimsolls balancing on the wet lip of the school roof.
She never spotted us up there and we all made it across!
After she passed, I learned Reenie abbreviated Irene
and her maiden name was Button. Irene Button.
The name almost as beautiful as the woman. She gave birth
to Grandad in a Welsh field during evacuation from London.
We'd visit and do the Hokey Cokey in her care home hall.
I was told as a boy, if she asks for three, just put two sugars in.






Wayne's Dad

Jake Hawkey

Was a bus driver who between shifts
drove out to the field behind the waterworks
to watch us miss the ball but lash the legs of
the other school's football team. God bless
that man, standing like a sack of cold potatoes
in a cloud of encouragement, the TFL logo
wonky on his hat like a disaffected planet.
Mum would come along and they would chat
about Wayne's mum at the Asda or the new
teacher and his curious taste for sock suspenders—
the saints on our touchline, pale under winter fog.
We score but lose and walking off I see
Wayne's dad breathing through a gigantic bogey:
I think about Mum not telling him all this time.



A Mad Revolution

Lauren Kennedy

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Whilst socialists broadly show solidarity for, or are members of disabled struggle, current structural critiques around mental health often only focus on austerity rather than the framework within which disability is placed. As such, left campaigns rarely push for more than funding for psychological treatment. Current socialist mental health discourse fails to engage with for instance, the radical roots of the Frankfurt school, revolutionary France and the Black Panther Party and tacitly accepts the Medical Model. Far from a niche issue in the movement, a failure to engage with the critical issues surrounding mental health and psychiatry risks leaving us as active participants in reproducing systematic oppression. If socialists ignore psychology because of its history of individualism, we might leave behind an integral part of working-class history and ignore possibilities for its future.

Assuming that liberation for those with mental health problems is all that a Mad Revolution could entail shows how little is known about the extent of the tyranny of institutional psychiatry. Instead, mad liberation should free all workers from the coercive, normalising power of the state and its institutions. Mental health awareness is

largely useless, unless it is used to shed a critical light on medicalised psychiatry and the alternative, 'Social Model' of mental health, bringing it to the fore of socialist awareness and presenting an alternative vision for progressive mental health work and radical policy changes.

Psychiatry as the servant of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy.

If you build the world on workers' backs, how can you blame the worker when her back breaks?

For nearly 200 years, psychiatrists have been attempting to determine a biological cause of mental health problems to no avail. Despite the fact that 'faulty biology' is commonly assumed to be a cause of psychosis and other mental health problems, childhood trauma is as much a predictor of a lifetime diagnosis of schizophrenia as smoking is of lung cancer. The small amount of weak correlational evidence that suggests mental health is due to genetics or 'bad wiring' in the brain is blown out of the water by recent advancements in epigenetics theory. Yet, this narrative, also known as the 'Medical Model' of mental health is rolled out by mental health awareness campaigners in what they claim is an attempt to destigmatise mental 'illness'. However, not only has the Medical Model been continually discredited with a lack of evidence, but it's individualistic and biological explanation of psychological distress has been shown to increase the stigma of those experiencing distress, worry, or psychosis in recent research.

Touting the biological narrative despite its lack of evidence, whereby 'disorder' is genetically inherent, has many benefits for capitalists but there are three main elements that motivate the capitalist capture of psychology. Outlining

them sheds light on how the Nature arm of the Nature vs Nurture debate functions as a political tool, these are:

1. The ability to legitimise the castigation of women, BAME, queer people and other members of marginalised communities that threaten imperialism, colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism with collective action by assigning 'saneness', or lack thereof, as a substitute for moral categorisation.

2. The means with which to deny systematic trauma and thus avoid associated criticism is being dealt to the working class.

3. To prop up the psycho-pharmacological industry and thus shore up commitment to Capitalist Realism.

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- As part of a long history of political people being branded 'insane' and subjected to imprisonment and coercion masqueraded as clinical intervention. Individuals who deviate from normality are pathologised via the Medical Model, which rests on distress as a signal of 'difference' or 'deviance' from the norm. The concept of a 'norm' here is key as 'the norm' is changeable and socially constructed, shifting frequently throughout history. For example, feudalism was a socio-economic norm until around the 15th century, though most would now view owning land in exchange only for the ability to work for a master as undesirable. But, if you'd expressed that view in 1381 you'd have been aiding and abetting the Peasants' Revolt.

Placing boundaries on norms is politically effective, because it determines what is and isn't acceptable in the political, economic, and social world. In one example, the Othering of queerness is politically beneficial in

that hetero-normative families are favoured; ensuring reproduction of the labour force and upholding gendered working roles. Resultantly, all benefit capitalist modes of production and stifle collective organising. As such, queerness is almost always pathologised as a part of its Otherness, despite the historically and geographically prevalent acknowledgement, acceptance, and integration of multiple sexualities and genders across non-capitalist, pre-modern, and non-Western cultures. Though, even the conceptualisation of sexualities and genders in the terms we find readily understandable has roots in Western European traditions. Specifically, hetero-normativity is predominantly a White imperial invention, spread through colonialism to the global south. The history of European imperialism at home and abroad carries with it a pattern of pathologising all Others; suffragettes deemed 'hysterical' and tortured, runaway Black chattel slaves framed as suffering 'drapetomania', and women who were openly sexual or performed early abortion practices considered Witches with psychic powers and burnt or outcast. Turning to more recent cases, diagnosis of homosexuality as a psychological disorder was only withdrawn from the DSM, the de-facto diagnostic bible of psychiatry, 46 years ago; while Gender Dysphoria still remains, elements of which cast transgender people as merely 'ill' rather than inevitably and reasonably reacting to socially enforced cis-normativity. Imprisoning enemies of convention might leave the established order open to revolt, but creating covert social norms leaving some vulnerable to subjugation causes people to police themselves. The marginalisation of members of society and their subsequent disproportionate pathologisation, such as women or BAME people, functions as a means to divide and conquer through an invisible force that has been described as 'Normalising Power'.

Also in the modern context, 70% of people diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) are women. Since the advent of the disorder, some practitioners have been concerned that diagnosing someone with a personality disorder was at best insensitive and deeply coercive at worst. Critical psychologists have argued that what is perceived as a 'personality disorder' is merely a collection of behaviours developed as a coping mechanism for the emotional effects of trauma, and some form of trauma is almost a guaranteed antecedent to a diagnosis of BPD/EUPD, including experiences of miscarriage, sexual assault, incest, child abuse, racist harassment and intimate partner violence. It should be noted that much of the outlined traumas are resultant of patriarchy and White supremacy and the mutually reinforcing activity of both. However, 'trouble with the law' and broadly-construed 'social deviance' are themselves part of the DSM definition of personality disorders - a vicious cycle where protesting validity of BPD as a diagnosis either for oneself or in general can be regarded as evidence for a diagnosis.

The above paragraph covers comparatively rare diagnoses, but the same charges can be levelled at anxiety and depression - notable, now, for their high and rising rates of diagnosis. It is wrong to argue that the distress, sadness, and worry - symptoms that those diagnosed with anxiety and depression experience - are a 'myth': they are extremely real, painful, and in some cases deadly. But in contrast to the Medical Model, the Social Model of mental health argues that the feelings attached to the diagnoses of anxiety and depression are an entirely normal reaction to a very sick society, or perhaps a small amount of sanity in an insane world. To be alienated from one's labour, to be made to experience the pain of racial segregation, to feel the destruction of social bonds through annihilation

of public spaces, to always have to fear sexual assault, to experience the threat or reality of violence when dancing in the 'gay quarter', to be poor, unfulfilled, and unequal will always be hurtful. To experience that hurt is not the symptom of a nebulous Anxiety Disorder or omnipotent Major Depressive Disorder, it is a reasonable reaction to threat, to powerlessness, and to a life that you always know will never truly be yours. Thus, the individual is perversely diagnosed with a 'disorder' as if something was wrong with them - with us - and not reflective of the institutions of the state and the failure of its economic systems.

Should we fund the services that harm us?

Unless we destroy it, the normalising power of the institution will forever stretch beyond its walls

In the UK in 2018, MIND reported that 40% of GP appointments are related to mental health, with 1 in 4 people reporting symptoms such as distress, worry, sadness, or psychosis (i.e. hallucinations, voice hearing) in any one year. Therefore, it becomes difficult to argue that the 'abnormalities' the Medical Model purports to define in the DSM are by any definition 'abnormal' at all. In this way, it is important to examine and critique how clinicians, whether mental health specialists or otherwise, treat those presenting with such symptoms. Whether clinicians take an approach that recognises the ubiquity of the problems as an individual or social problem, and whether they are given the tools to adequately solve these problems, is crucial in our analysis. Though it is obvious that excellent mental health services are possible, some mental health services are excellent, and one of the ways through which they can be improved is funding; simply throwing money at services that are unsuitable, coercive or actively detrimental to the

well-being of service users is not an argument socialists - or anyone - should be making.

People reporting to their GP that they are experiencing common symptoms of anxiety, stress, grief, depression, or other such problems are usually offered psychoactive drugs and sometimes, a referral to the IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) programme. In their present form, IAPT are almost entirely limited to offering cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT is reliant on the idea that the problem lies in the individual, that the individual's 'thinking patterns' are faulty, and resultantly that their behaviours reinforce negative emotions. Beck, one of the initial proponents of cognitive therapy, believed that every patient he came in contact with similarly experienced faulty thinking patterns that needed to be altered to make way for their recovery. It is easy to believe that an underweight young woman who obsesses over her weight to an extent at which her life becomes marred by low-confidence might benefit from a change in thinking. But, can we in all honesty suggest that the very crux of her issue is herself and her faulty thought patterns, which can be cured by altering her behaviour and beliefs about herself in an isolated therapy room? Or, would it be better to change patriarchal bodily expectations, cultural ascription of moral value to food, violence against women and other such predictors of disordered eating behaviours?

Like the diagnostic systems outlined in the first part of this piece, CBT takes an intrinsically individualised approach that encourages the patient and those around them to see the self as the source of the problem as opposed to the oppressive conditions in which they live. My own experience of cognitive behavioural therapy for disordered eating included me being actively discouraged from talking about

my concerns about the wider world and its impact because it 'was not relevant, but how I thought about them was'. Equally, when a fellow activist expressed to her CB therapist that the poverty she faced was a cause of her distress, she was told that such 'black and white thinking' was indicative of her disorder. While therapists can't wave a magic wand and create a utopia, the institution of psychiatry they work within must be seen as an active participant in quelling dissent and preventing the success of struggle if it deters service-users and patients from seeing the root of their distress as being structural, rather than personal.

There is usually a substantial gap between 'low-need' services such as IAPT and inpatient or day-patient stays, so many who are burdened with extremely long waits to be seen by a psychologist may find themselves waiting so long with a worsening condition, that they are eventually deemed to require hospitalisation. Those in inpatient psychiatric care are extremely vulnerable and frequently cannot access the full spectrum of their human rights, and those rights are often abrogated without due regard for balancing the rights of the patient against the harms that psychiatric care is meant to prevent or mitigate. Even the new 'rights-compliant' Mental Health Act as amended in 2007 has been shown to be largely ineffective in ensuring that nobody is deprived of their rights unless absolutely necessary, with inpatients often reporting imprisonment within the facility, forced psycho-pharmacological intervention and a total lack of privacy. Refusal of elements of treatment often results in patients being restrained, administered tranquillisers, forced or given immediate release with next to no community care, heightening risk of suicide and self-harm. The illusion of choice is present, but in practice, patients' consent is rarely freely given.

Almost all movements and events in an inpatient care setting are immediately recorded and later interpreted by a multidisciplinary mental health team. The interpretation of these after-the-fact records has long been criticised as post-hoc and fatally influenced by the diagnosis the patient received, or is being given. Consequently, non-problematic behaviours are sometimes problematised and written down as evidence – or lack thereof – of a presenting ‘disorder’. Furthermore, some behaviours that are reactions to the oppressive atmosphere within the facility are considered a symptom of the diagnosis the patient is given. Of course, this disconnect between peer norms and diagnosis norms is driven by what is considered culturally normal for the diagnosing professional and the institution of psychology as a whole. This immediately excludes behaviours which are distinct from typical gender norms, hetero-normativity, or White British culture: for example, female patients have

- reported that not shaving their body hair is taken as an
- example of failing to take care of oneself and thus indicative
- of a depressive episode.

As it is often highly difficult to leave even voluntary inpatient psychiatric care, patients are ultimately subject to a regime of coercive conformity: to be discharged, the patient must conform not to the norms of their own culture, class, or identity, but to those imposed by their caregivers, and ultimately to those of a psychiatric establishment which is Whiter, more male, more capitalist, and more hetero- and cis-normative than the context which a patient may be arriving from and returning to.

Perhaps just as bad is the consensus that all inpatients are simply ‘mad’, the mad do not have any connection to reality, and clinical staff are always both right and patient-centred. This black-and-whiteism presents acute moral

problems because it legitimises coercive therapy, including forced psycho-pharmacological treatment, and potentially coercion into nominally 'consent-only' treatments like ECT. Additionally, castigating such components as 'madness' frequently acts as a metaphorical stand-in for a moral judgement, limiting the power the Mad themselves have to react or complain.

The role of the psycho-pharmacological industry in systemic problems with mental health services should not be underestimated - and the modern psychiatric establishment has already begun to push back against a few of the grossest excesses, although without acknowledging the structural and ideological problems that have led to the problem. The clinical benefits of antidepressants are subject to intense debates, with low estimates for effectiveness at only 11%, and placebo and non-pharmaceutical effects thought to play a significant role in the supposed effectiveness of this sort of routine prescription. Whilst it is extremely difficult to provide an adequately nuanced critique of psycho-pharmacology without amassing a great deal more pages of text, it should be said that although psychoactive medication such as antidepressants and anti-psychotics may bear benefits, we do not yet understand why or how. Because of the medical model's need to reinforce its monopoly on mental health discourse, pharmaceuticals are still used widely, but if the problem is social - as I argue - then pharmaceuticals can only temporarily ease pain but are being used as a cure-all. More frighteningly, longitudinal studies have not yet uncovered the effects of such wide-spread, long-term use of antidepressants.

The argument that I have laid out is not that psychiatric treatment only has the propensity to harm. Unequivocally it can be argued that therapies, psycho-pharmacological

treatment, and sometimes sections under the mental health act has saved lives and increased the well-being of many in extreme states of distress. However, the navigation of the coercive tactics outlined above should not be the bare minimum we accept for people to find the support they need: one of the basic demands of a modern psychological movement should be that it treats patients equitably rather than merely equally. We need to learn to develop a more expansive imagination when it comes to mental health and socialism, including a wider critique of the power held by institutions, including that which they exert on service users and public life. An intersectional analytical approach should be taken in which we understand that some people will benefit more from on-the-ground psychiatric intervention as it stands, simply because of the nature of the institutions of psychiatric medicine themselves. For example, a heterosexual White man is not going to have to face the institutional racism, sexism, or queerphobia of psychiatric services, though this is not to say there are not class-based oppressions that he faces within the service. The services we demand as patients and as participants in society should be equally suitable for and deliver equal benefit to the most marginalised people and the most privileged, or they are not fit for purpose. The bare minimum is not one-size-fits-most where the stakes are the health, well-being, and happiness of those driven to the margins - the bare minimum is appropriate, individualised care which reflects the patient, and which does not conflate treatment with conformity to the institution's norms.

BPD

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COPING METHODS
TO TRAUMA.

NO
FRIENDS



BUT THE
MOUNTAINS



How Capitalism Screwed the Travellers

Musa Qerecî

I have a theory on the origins of anti-Roma and anti-Traveller bigotry, as it exists in Britain and Ireland today: it comes from the development of the capitalist nation state.

The modern capitalist system did not develop overnight. It is the culmination of centuries of development, with the rise of feudalism, and then the rise of the bourgeois class against the feudal class and the development of industrial machinery. An integral part, however, of both systems, is the landlord.



The existence of the landlord was essential for English feudalism to become capitalism, and the emergence of private property became the power base of the new class of power-brokers, as much as it became the means by which

the aristocracy held onto the power they'd enjoyed under feudalism.

Traveller and Romani cultures are inherently anarchistic. You could describe our traditional ways of living as a travelling commune. We stick together, look out for each other, and we have no care for borders, or nations, or government authority. We do what we need to do.

So, when you have the landlords arising, and enclosing the common land as private property, this screws both the settled peasants who farmed these lands (look up The Diggers for an example of their resistance to enclosure), and also nomadic people who lost their traditional camping sites. If you look at anti-gypsy laws, they all seem to stem from private property, which started with enclosure around the time of the English Civil War. It's all about economic exploitation.

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Acts against Travellers and Roma were and are still often of a classist nature. One early example is Edward VI's 1551 "Acte for tynckers and pedlers", specifically targeting Traveller beggars.

National identity plays a part too. The nation state, as an entity, monopolises national identity. They claim a national identity and define what it means to be that. To be British is defined by what is promoted by British politicians and their friends in the media and business worlds. Irish politicians do the same in Ireland. It is the same everywhere. Either you fit the establishment friendly idea of identity the state wants you to have, or you suffer.

In Jane Helleiner's 2003 book *Irish Travellers: Racism and the Politics of Culture*, the idea that Travellers originated as

a holdout from Gaelic, pre-Norman Irish culture is explored. With the culture of Gaelic Ireland being more pastoral and nomadic, the invasion of Norman lords, and their imposition of the English reality of landlords, marginalised Gaelic Irish who wished to keep hold of their identity. The imposition of landlords laid the seeds for the bigotry we experience nearly 900 years later.

A genetic study from 2017 confirmed that Irish Travellers emerged from the Irish population and genetically separated between 240 and 420 years ago. The most likely estimate was 360 years ago, which would have been the 1650s. In 1641, after the plantation of Ulster, Catholic Irish gentry rebelled unsuccessfully against the English, with the resultant 11 Years War ending with Cromwell's final destruction of the Gaelic Irish system. This would lend credence to the theory that Travellers emerged as a result of Norman and English attempts to impose landlordism onto Irish society, and were marginalised as a result.

As for the Romanichal (English Roma), their story in Britain follows a similar path of cultural destruction and forced assimilation into English feudal and capitalist norms.

The Roma first arrived in Britain in the 16th century, fleeing conflicts in Europe and the Ottoman Empire. By 1530, Henry VIII introduced the "Egyptians Act", declaring that Roma were to be banned from entering England, and gave all who had already done so 16 days to leave. The punishment for not leaving would be the seizing of property, imprisonment, and deportation.

In 1554, Mary I introduced a new Egyptians Act, which promised not to punish Roma if they gave up "naughty, idle and ungodly life and company" and became settled. The

punishment for non-compliance, however, was now death. An example of this law in action was the execution of 106 Romanichal in York in 1596, purely for being Roma.

The fact is, Britain and Ireland both have long histories of working people and peasants resisting unjust authority and capitalist exploitation, from Wat Tyler's revolt, to An Gof, to the Diggers, to the anarchists who beat up Oswald Mosley, to the Marxist elements of the IRA, to Marx himself living in London as he wrote *Capital*, to Max Levitas, to *Freedom Press* in Whitechapel, to Owen and his rural utopias, to the co-operative movement, the general strike, the great unrest, trade unions, the socialists in the suffragette movement, Big Jim Larkin, James Connolly...

- If the people of Britain and Ireland took their source of national pride from this history, they'd revolt and try to overthrow the government and the rich. It would be dangerous. So instead, the powers that be have a common interest in not teaching us this, but instead imposing their own version of our history that conveniently leaves out anything that isn't endorsed by those in power.

We have 2 aspects here: first, the capitalist desire to monopolise the economic exploitation of what used to be common land, and second, their use of the nation state and a sanitised, mainstream national identity to crush resistance to this monopoly.

So, given that Roma and Traveller culture is in direct conflict with the capitalist norm, we are defined as outside of the "acceptable" ideas of what it is to be British or Irish. Thus, we are discriminated against. A flourishing, large, happy community of Roma or Travellers would be dangerous for the capitalists. It would present a working and successful

model for living outside of capitalism and outside of the nation state's power.

Ireland has a unique dynamic here as, in the past, these tactics were weaponised against the Irish as a whole by the British. Settled Irish people were victims of this, as were Travellers. Settled Irish people and Irish Travellers fought side by side for independence from British rule. But when the war ended, what does Ireland get? Another nation state. Just like the one they overthrew. Except instead of being ruled by British colonial landlords, it is ruled by native Irish landlords. And just like Britain did with Britishness, the Irish state monopolised Irishness, and once again, Travellers were othered despite many of us fighting to establish the Republic in the first place.

The oppressed had become the oppressor, and they oppressed their comrades in arms. Ireland did not regain its culture in the independence struggle, but rather an anglicised pastiche. The new Irish state was driven by the English norms of landholding capitalism, with those whose lifestyle bore more similarity to Gaelic norms being marginalised as they had been for the prior 800 years. 900 years after the Norman invasion of Ireland, the situation of the traveller has gotten worse.

It serves the powers that be for them to whip up hatred against us. They made up crude stereotypes, or lent legitimacy to existing ones, made laws against us, and told everyone to hate us. Sure enough, a few hundred years later, it is working. We are marginalised and hated through no real fault of our own.

Abdullah Öcalan talks about these concepts and how they apply to the Kurds in Democratic Confederalism, and I

see a lot of similarities. The states we live in deny we are a people while simultaneously oppressing us because we are a people. They want us to submit to their will and give up our identity, and replace it with one that suits the state and capital.

This is a big part of why I'm a Libertarian Socialist. With nation states, there will always be racism. We can only defeat racism by abolishing capitalism and the state, and instead live in a truly democratic society, like what the people of Rojava are trying to build.

This is why, as anti-fascists, we should also be anti-capitalist and anti-state, because God knows, the status quo is its own form of fascism, and as a Traveller or Romani person you experience this first hand.

-
- Saoirse don lucht siúil
-

Foucault's Panopticon and the Jobcentre

Emily O'Sullivan

'Come in,' she said, and my Mom and I walked behind the Council worker into a small office. Its glass doors faced into the reception, and made it seem pretty futile as we followed her from one room into the next. As we entered, there was a wall of staleness. I pulled a face at the cheap tomato soup smell, and she asked us to pass over our personal details.

I looked around at the building as they discussed the minutiae of Council Tax. It was shaped hexagonally, and all of the offices had the same transparent doors looking in on each other. In the middle of the respective fish-bowl offices sat the reception, manned by an unaccompanied woman. It lacked natural light, the ceiling was high, and there was an overall, indescribable dullness in the air.

This wasn't the first time that I had noticed such an atmosphere in these places; a few weeks before I had started claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and had experienced a similar architectural oppression. After telling the Jobcentre security guards my reason for visiting on the day of my first appointment, I made my way upstairs. The meeting 'rooms' were simply a collection of desks in an open-plan space; various work coaches milled around photocopiers, chatting away to each other.

Only a small board separated the desks, which were attached to one another in groups of four. As such, those who were having meetings with their work coaches were completely exposed to others; not only were they explaining their personal situations to the member of staff assigned to them, but they had no choice but to share them with the other 'Job Seekers'.

This begins to represent what is essentially a Catholic Church style confession - with considerably less privacy - where the guilty party admit that their usefulness to society is not currently at the level expected from them in front of their fellow confessors, and most importantly, the employed individual who sits before them ticking boxes on the computer.

-
- In this 'one-on-one' meeting, I sat beside a woman who spoke of how she needed urgent dental work. She stated that she couldn't get help with the costs as her partner was the sole claimant for their JSA, but that there was no way that she could afford to pay for it. Having already overheard her recite her personal details, I listened in on the response from her work coach, which may as well have been 'tough shit'.

This sense of Kafkaesque dehumanisation is so apparent within these environments, but is very rarely discussed. Every glass room that you sit in, all of the rooms that you wait in before you wait in other rooms. The open offices, the transparent doors. It would be foolish to overlook the fact that these things exist in the way that they do by design, and that the purpose behind this design is seemingly humiliation.

I

This manufactured humiliation can be linked to Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, in which he discusses the concept of Panopticism. It is difficult to ignore how much his theory (which was adapted from Jeremy Bentham's) resonates with the way that the British social welfare system functions. Whilst it is complex and can be interpreted differently, there are some basic notions that are worth drawing from.

The idea of the Panopticon varies with each form of social discipline that it is applied to, but it is always a 'pure architectural and optical system,' classified by 'the analytical arrangement of space' (Foucault, pp.203-205). In layman's terms, the building itself is intentionally used as a means of creating and upholding the power of any given authority. The fact that surveillance is so interwoven into the architecture means that an individual essentially asserts this power onto himself.

As Bentham states, in an ideal scenario, the individual in question is under constant watch from an authority figure. However, this can prove almost impossible, so the 'next thing to be wished for is, that, at every instant, seeing reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, he should conceive himself to be so' (Bentham, Letter I).

In short, you can't be watched by somebody all of the time. However, the illusion that you are being watched all of the time is enough to control your behaviour. This is easier to understand when applied to a social institution, and Foucault uses the example of a prison. This prison inhabits a circular building, but it can also be octagonal, or any shape that allows the cells to be inward-facing.

In the Panopticon, one set of windows or bars faces inwards (to what is essentially the courtyard), and another gives the inmate a view of outside and access to sunlight – which must enter the cell in a certain way – and as such, all that is needed is a supervisor or observer in a central tower. In fact, the observer in the central tower is not even required to be present; rather, he should be thought to be so.

The inmates do not know who watches them, and when these acts of surveillance take place, but are constantly under the impression that they are observed. As such, 'power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, [and] gazes' (Foucault, p.202). Power is, therefore, exercised through the specific use of architecture.



II

Understandably, it may seem that applying this to the Jobcentre, and a local Council building, is grasping at abstract philosophical straws. Yet Foucault insists time and time again that the panoptic schema 'was destined to spread throughout the social body' (ibid., p.207). There are few limits on its application within social institutions.

Whenever an authority wishes to impose a particular type of behaviour onto a group of individuals, he states, 'the panopticschema may be used. It is – necessary modifications apart – applicable to all establishments whatsoever' (ibid., p.205). And whilst it may originally have been developed to explain power relations within prisons, hospitals, schools and factories, it has also been described as a means of getting the idle to work, and a way of assessing the causes of these displays of idleness.

The Jobcentre, then, may be exploiting similar tools of surveillance and vulnerability, in order to create a sense of power that one cannot help but feel is fundamental to its existence. This begins from the second that you explain the purpose of your visit to the security guards on the door, and continues as you describe your personal situation in front of a multitude of observers.

Of course, there are differences in the architectural setup of the Jobcentre and the idea of Panopticism. There is not one central tower, wherein there may be an observer. In fact, the mode of surveillance is much more explicit. The surveillance that takes place is evident, and one could argue, amplified. Security guards, CCTV cameras, work coaches, and other 'Job Seekers' reinforce it.

The main point worth taking from Foucault's theory is that architecture can be used to strip an individual's privacy away from them, and to highlight any feelings of being subjected to an invisible, but nonetheless omnipresent, power. And just as the central tower in a prison is used to require less 'official' observers, 'Job Seekers' are almost persuaded to serve this purpose within the Jobcentre.

III

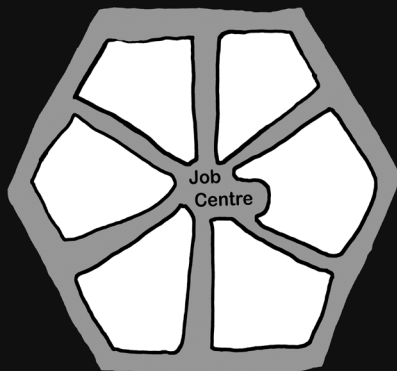
Elsewhere, it's evident that class and privacy are interlinked on many levels. A higher social status brings with it an increased ability to protect oneself from the visibility of others, and this is something that few working-class individuals, such as those who are on JSA, can afford for themselves. The higher up the social ladder you are, the higher the possibility that you can resist surveillance.

Exposing people before each other in an open-plan office, so that they must confess how unprofitable they are publicly, is only one method of using visibility as a means of humiliation. Elsewhere, it manifests itself as long queues of people on the street waiting to sign on, used as an example to others of where they could be if they do not skip gaily down the capitalist path, however shitty their options may be.

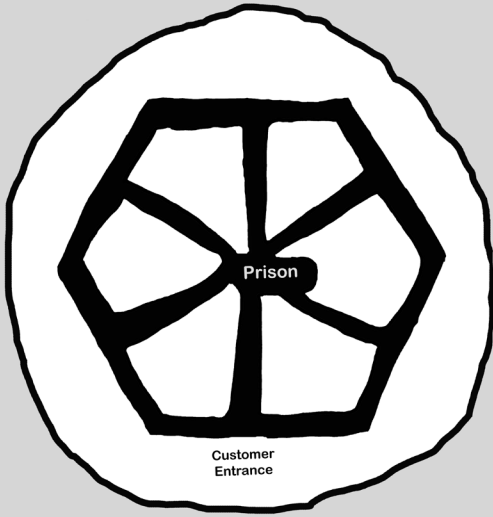
In Foucault's words, 'visibility is a trap,' and this isn't all that it is (ibid., p.200). Visibility is a weapon, used by the state to afford privacy to some, and exposure to others: those that become a part of the mass body known as the 'unemployed'. Take a step further, and you will see that those who are at the very bottom - the homeless - are afforded no privacy at all. They are out in the cold, subjected to the derision of those who could also quite easily fall into a state of constant visibility.

And this is what we should be focusing on, whether you have stepped foot in the Jobcentre or you've managed to avoid the pleasure until now. We may allow our state to be one of humiliation and surveillance whilst it doesn't subject all of us to such powers, but it can, and a large part of the population is one pay-check away from losing the luxury of such privacy.

Jobseeker's Allowance is not the state exercising kindness to its most vulnerable. It is a symbol of what we are all aware of under a capitalist system: if you fulfil the purpose assigned to you as a human being - to find yourself a 9 'til 5 job - then you are rewarded with the privilege of maintaining your pride and solitude. If not, you are exposed as an example of what not to be, and you must play by the rules of others.



Customer
Entrance





The Prison Struggle

John Bowden

The chief dynamic of progressive change within prisons is not cosmetic liberal reform intended to achieve little more than a superficial legitimisation of the prison system, but rather a fundamental shift and change in the balance and relationship of institutional power between jailer and jailed. If prisons as total institutions of punishment and control are intrinsically characterised by the total disempowerment of the imprisoned, then only the collective empowerment of prisoners can significantly and meaningfully change the relationship of power that structurally defines prisons.

How then is this collective empowerment of prisoners to be achieved? If the essential purpose and function of prison is to disempower and totally control prisoners, then any attempt by prisoners to self-organise and collectively empower is inevitably responded to with repression and punishment, especially focused against those perceived as “ringleaders”. The entire control and discipline apparatus of prison regimes is structured specifically to prevent collective solidarity and defiance, so any attempt by prisoners to self-organise as a dynamic of institutional change inevitably



generates conflict and confrontation with those responsible for enforcing and maintaining “Good Order and Discipline” within prisons. Prisoner uprisings or riots are the inevitable outcome and result of that conflict.

During the 1960s and 1970s there were frequent prisoner’s uprisings in British high-security jails that resulted in a shift in the balance of power within those institutions and a liberalisation of their regimes. What especially characterised prisoner society in those jails was powerful bonds of group solidarity and unity, and an organisational ability to resist and challenge attempts by prison staff to impose arbitrary authority or abuses of power. The organisational influence of imprisoned Irish prisoners of war contributed significantly to prisoner solidarity at the forefront of organised expressions of resistance and protest. The direct relationship between

- collective prisoner solidarity, and empowerment and
- radically improved prison regimes was very evident in
- British high-security jails at this time, whilst the attempt of liberal prison reformists to change and improve conditions prevailing in, for example local remand prisons with their transient population of short-term and remand prisoners, achieved absolutely nothing.

During the 1990s the prison authorities were successful in completely regaining control of British high-security prisons following two high-profile escapes from Parkhurst and Whitemoor prisons. A prison system investigation into the escapes claimed a direct connection between the relationship of power that had developed in British high-security jails between prisoners and staff that had “conditioned” those staff to virtually allow prisoners to run the jails and consequently compromise security. Prison security, the investigation concluded, was not just about walls and bars, but was also more effectively assured

by dis-empowering prisoners and subjecting them to greater control; the term “dynamic security” was used to describe what in effect was a counter-revolution in high-security prisons, and over the following two decades the segregation of prisoner “ringleaders” in Close Supervision Centres and the introduction of the Enhanced Privileges Scheme, whereby rights previously won by struggle and protest would now be “privileges” to be “earned” by “good behaviour”, effectively shifted the balance of power back to the advantage of prison guards. The consequence of the subsequent total dis-empowerment of prisoners in high-security jails was a serious deterioration of regimes in those jails and an increase in the use of staff violence to silence and subdue those prisoners who fought back.

Prison society is essentially a microcosm of the wider society beyond the walls, and the increased dis-empowerment and repression of prisoners over the last two and three decades reflected a social climate of increasing intolerance, oppression and the stigmatisation of marginalised groups, as well as the generalised dis-empowerment of the working class. The increasing replacement of the welfare state with the Law and Order state is turning prisons into virtual concentration camps and the dynamic of resistance to that must originate and find expression within the institutions of repression themselves. It is also the duty of those individuals and groups who profess a commitment to the struggle for radical social and political change to recognise and support the prison struggle as an integral part of that struggle.

Traditionally, the radical and revolutionary Left in Britain has been blind to the prison struggle, unlike in those countries and societies where the prison experience is an inevitable consequence and part of the wider political struggle and therefore recognised as an important part and

element of that struggle. By comparison, the British Left, with its largely educated middle-class composition, has related to the imprisoned as the “Lumpen Proletariat”, or that element of the most marginalised poor least relevant to the political struggle or even a potential danger to it. In so-called “Liberal Democracies” it is the poorest and most socially disadvantaged who populate the prisons, whilst those allowed the freedom to engage in non-violent political activity rarely experience penal repression or state violence, and so see or experience no connection with the imprisoned, or an inevitable relationship between political struggle and imprisonment. Whereas in other more openly repressive societies the prison struggle is recognised as an intrinsic part of the wider social and political struggle, in “liberal democracies” like the UK, the prison experience is mostly known only to those existing on the outer margins of that society, and those viewed as beyond the pale even by those claiming a commitment to revolutionary struggle.

- In fact, it is the most oppressed and marginalised that represent potentially the most revolutionary element in society, and this group is to be found most plentiful within the ghettos and prisons. In the 1960s and 1970s in American prisons the high degree of political consciousness amongst prisoners, especially Afro-American prisoners, created a dynamic that fuelled resistance in the Afro-American community generally and provided political inspiration and direction to groups such as the Black Panthers and Black Liberation Army. For such groups at that time the prison struggle represented an integral part of the revolutionary struggle generally.

Prison as an institution and system is a core weapon of the state repression and any movement of real political struggle must by necessity focus resources and activity on supporting the anti-prison struggle, especially when that

struggle is fought from within the prisons themselves.

An important opportunity for showing such support and solidarity is through recognising the struggle of prisoners against their enslavement by the Prison Industrial Complex and the increasing exploitation of cheap prison labour by private multinational corporations. The increasing privatisation or “contracting out” of state services to private, profit-driven companies has caused the selling-off of whole chunks of the prison system to private corporations, who are utilising their ownership of prisoner labour to extract maximum profit under conditions of overt coercion and forced labour. This represents straight forward modern slavery. In a hidden part of our society there are literally thousands of men and women forced to work in prison factories for as little as £10 per week, and the government is financially complicit in this slavery and willingly provides it under the veneer of “Law and Order” to obscure and justify it. In terms of the prison struggle, the wholesale enslavement of prisoners by private corporations is a front of conflict that all anti-capitalist groups should actively take sides in, representing as it does the savage exploitation of one of the most dis-empowered and marginalised groups in society. One struggle. One fight.







Zero Hours

Simon Griffiths

Before the flesh parts, with the pain yet to start,
there's a moment of quiet. I let the knife slip,
watch my sliced fingertip. Then comes the blood,
which soon turns to flood, but for a second stands proud;
an array of single beads that burst out and bejewel.

Saw Fred solve the same a month ago. With palmed
steel, smooth and cool, I head to the hob, show spoon
to flame and wait for that hot lava glow. Lay it on a thick
plastic slab, brown for root veg. Parsnips, I was chopping,
tonight's Christmas dinner, one full sack still to do.

I ready myself, I steady myself,
I want to, I don't want to.
I can, I can't.

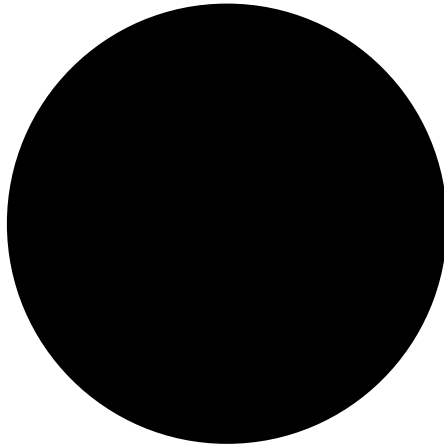


But hold on, let's be clear eyed, sure it's macho,
elbows thrust wide, but in truth and by design,
there's the contract I had no choice but to sign.
No sick pay, no holiday, no guaranteed hours.

Now the connection, bloody fingertip with metal aglow.
There's a sausage like sizzle, but in the middle of the pain
it's no worse than the fear. I push harder, then enough.
Blood staunched, I inspect the damage, catch a whiff
of plastic and flesh, the sharp-sweet mingle of things
molten.

● My seared skin a whitish grey, edges the golden crisp
● of chicken pan-fried. I dress the wound, vinyl glove it
● and with three-fingered grip, endure the next ten hours
of my shift. Another scar story, one of millions,
back and front,
hidden and seen,
all of us branded for the want of a meal out.

I ready myself, I steady myself,
I want to, I don't want to.
I can, I can't.



Radical

Dave Tomory

settling down into the heart race,
Of who feels the most love, the most grace
Looking for a winner by the glow of their face
Adjusting by habit to the inner waste

I wonder who here is not wearing a mask
whose taste is fed by each life, each past
If I could name the question no one will dare to ask
Who here would leave to let another go last?

one more embrace toward a mundane utopia
love drunk, post scarcity myopia
Maybe a long way from the daylight dystopia
But how close to a real world that could be better, either?

FORWARD

Floriane Herrero

«I'm alive and you are dead.»

Philip K Dick

This is a text for those who do not feel like they belong, for those who feel ashamed of who they are and would like to crawl out of their skin and life, for those who are not beautiful, wealthy, and successful, for those who want more. For those who had or still have to fight to be able to express themselves and exist. This is really, basically, simply, a text for all of us craving freedom and space and love above all, above fucking money, toxic power and useless things. Above a meaningless model, above norms, and conformity. I am one of those, one of you, one of the out-of-place people and I always will be. What I want to write about is the nothingness of where you come from, especially as far as what you can do is concerned. How you can break the chains of social determinism to become whatever you want, even in our sick society which constantly crushes dreams and hopes and kindnesses. Kindness is the key but violence is the rule.

Those of us with a sense of purpose, a sense of going forward and doing good or at least DOING are always mistreated, negated, judged, mocked. When you come from nothing, when all you own is your mind and heart, you will always be disregarded, but you actually have all the wealth you could ask for.

This is also a text about what it means to create (it does not matter what, just create) when you do not come from the elite, when you come from a place where creation is either a luxury or a distraction, even when you, personally, feel that creating is like breathing, a necessity, a life or death question. A door to life.

Fast forward, past the sentimental introduction: I once read a quote from James Baldwin with which, to my surprise, I strongly disagreed. Maybe because English is not my first language and thus I completely misunderstood it. My disagreement surprised me because James Baldwin touched me so many times that I could not understand how I could reject his words so fully that day. This is naive and childish, but I do tend to feel a strong sense of communion with few writers, and any hiccups in this love story make me feel unbalanced.

Anyhow, the quote reads "Know from whence you came. If you know whence you came, there are absolutely no limitations to where you can go." I am still wondering if it really matters whether I understood it properly or only read and got what I wanted out of it. I am not a scholar, I did not try to analyse this. What probably matters more is what it awoke in me, what it brought back, which is my own struggle with where I come from, where I am and what I want to be.

This text is about the inadequacy I have always felt and struggle with.

How I was always torn between my social background, where I came from, what I was given, and my life, the people I encountered and the events I was part of.

How our current society makes you feel miserable if you come from a working-class background, if you are one of the small ones, the humble silent ones, especially if you want to escape it and do something more, something bigger. Using the word "escape" does not mean I judge anything or anyone, does not mean I think there is anything wrong with being there, being one of the lows. I am from there, I will always be and I take pride in it. And I do feel love for this more often than not forgotten part of our world. The real people. At least, I think they are more real, alive. Am I wrong? Am I a romantic? I only mean that you have a right to escape, a right to decide, which is what society and our current main mentality deny every single day. Racism, sexism, supremacism, prejudices in all their hellish yet subtle forms, you name it, they all aim to shape you, making you a prisoner of your condition. Writing, creating, evolving is being denied because you do not have your place here, you are not legitimate, you are not the educated ones.

- Because, well, you could possibly become the master, and that should not happen, right?

My own story is a story of two worlds, the one I come from and the one I penetrated. By chance but also by force.

The world I come from is made of work, family, day-to-day decisions, saving money for Summer holidays, social housing, enjoying the little things, cooking on a Sunday, watching TV, and dreaming about being retired. Of dogs, and kids, and playing outside, and not having a lot but still feeling a lot. A modest world, a world of limited actions but meaningful ones nonetheless. A world where struggle is a reality, not a concept or an excuse.

The world I discovered later in life, and I became a part of, is a world of buying, consuming, as well as learning, knowing

and sharing. A world full of contradictions and deceivers, a labyrinth to carefully navigate, a whole new world of excitement in which one can get lost and find oneself at the same time. Of elites, of patrons, of competition, of shining in society, fighting with others to find your own place, of goals and achievements, of abstraction, of having ambitions. Of social status above truth and honesty. Of art, theory, creation, mind space. A beautiful, colourful world, a world of discovery and endless opportunities, but a world of appearances, deception as well, and a harsh world, which impeccably excludes you if you do not follow the rules, do not know the codes.

I do not pretend to universality, I do not pretend to know. These worlds are mine, they are not stereotypes, they are not categories. I am describing them to make it clear what I am stuck between, what my own unique mindset is. Why am I doing it? Why am I writing this? Maybe out of helplessness, but maybe out of solidarity, maybe because I long for companionship and I truly believe sharing one's own experience of life can help.

I come from a small French town. A place full of concrete and inhabited mainly by immigrants, who came to work in factories and escaped political, social, or economic oppression. A town where you work, eat and have a roof above your head and should be happy about it. My dream world was one of images, words, feelings and emotions, of things happening. A fire burning inside of me, an insatiable curiosity, a craving, an impatience to discover. So I left, I went to the big city, I started studying at a prestigious school, I started studying art, I lived the student life in Paris, the city of dreams and possibilities, the city that can swallow you whole. The fire kept burning, but every single day, I was reminded that this was not MY world, that I should not hope

too much because I was different, I was small, I could not understand the codes, the rules. I persisted nevertheless, I kept on burning stronger and stronger, and I found a place in between, an uneasy place where half of myself feels ashamed and tiny and stupid, and half of myself feels defiant, angry, and wants to eat up the whole world every fucking morning. This is what I mean: half of myself is ashamed of being who I am, this is wrong, this is sad. Struggling with my sense of purpose and legitimacy every single day for the past 15 years has made me realise that you should not try to negate your past, erase your memories, or tell a different story about yourself. You should wear it like a crown, be proud and tall, in every single circumstance. Never let anyone put you down, never let them keep the control or the power. Reach out, steal it, fight for it. Knowledge and wealth and creation come from the heart, every single heart, educated or not, well-established or not, poor or rich.

- Cherish what has been, be clever enough to know it made
- you the person you are today. Let it nourish your mind and your creation. Consider your past as a precious friend. The past is not a menacing shadow, it is a silent follower, a teacher as well as a student. It does not hold the key, does not limit you. There is only one movement: forward. Don't try and go back, you will get lost on the path. The past is not here, only YOU are here. Anything you want to do, to write, to sing, to paint, to think about, to shout out at the world, anything and anywhere, you can do. Where you come from is not what you will do, trust me.

WORK
FAMILY

DAY-TO-DAY DECISIONS
SAVING FOR SUMMER HOLIDAYS
SOCIAL HOUSING
ENJOYING THE LITTLE THINGS
COOKING ON SUNDAYS
WATCHING TV DREAMING ABOUT BEING
RETIRED

OF DOGS
AND KIDS
AND PLAYING OUTSIDE
AND NOT HAVING
A LOT
BUT FEELING A LOT
A MODEST WORLD

A WORLD
WHERE
STRUGGLE
IS A REALITY
NOT A
CONCEPT
OR AN
EXCUSE

A WORLD OF LIMITED ACTIONS
BUT MEANINGFUL ONES





Perishable

Mariah Pearl

I wait. Sat on a couch, I'm up to my eyes in a thin grey blanket I picked up on my way through Scotland. A sleek chill lays about the place. It's a quiet room. My toes are ice on the laminate floor. Everything around me feels fresh. There is a layer of newness covering a cheap interior. It's easily scratched and quickly shows age. I continue to wait because the walls are somehow a reflection of myself. First glance shows peace, urging me to stay, to wait. I am still and the motif around me shows a quick look into a catalogue life. I can see myself in the photos of the bulk mail I hold and they all show me waiting. A newness. It is all the right choices, but stands only as an exterior waiting to dull.

This is my new apartment. One look closer and the paint is faded. The metals have tarnished. In fact there is no waiting involved. Every day is a feverish rush of nerve and adrenaline. Even my room mates wouldn't know I don't have a dollar to my name. That I have no path before me and a broken one behind. Moving over the ocean, I was on the



tail end of a round trip ticket that hardly belonged to me. Leaving behind little structure, I picked up right where I left off. Beg, borrow, and steal, that's the way. It never claimed to be a horrible journey, but it is my journey. I wait on my couch in my day old apartment in the darkest parts of town and I think about my stature. I sit assessing the situation within myself. I am both embarrassed and ashamed to say anything outside my shell of a body. I have this will to keep my complaints knowing I wouldn't actually change a thing. At the end of it I am lucky to be here with my thin grey blanket, toes ice on the floor. I feel separated from my body. So I wait.

I am unable to afford the bus fare to my first day of work, or any day after that for the next while. A gentleman, my roommate asks if I want a spin in the morning, 'Won't be going that way every day, but sure can this time.' I am relieved while remaining realistic. It isn't that I don't have the two mile walk in me, but there is always a fear with new tasks. In time it will come second nature. For now, the unexpected is around the corner. New city, new house, new job and somehow still, a hope for a new start. Always a new beginning. I am always standing directly to the left of the big break that carries all the unease of a typical 'make ends meet' lifestyle. That's it really. I could use a break from the strain of using my whole body as a bridge to a lifestyle I was never raised to afford. Erratic attempts to find the key, the linchpin into the world I was looking for have all come up empty. Questions rise in my waiting. I know and believe that I have just as much potential as anyone else. However, in the same breath I am somehow unable to tap it. I feel bottled and bored, running marathons inside my own anxiety about my value. I am smart enough at this point to know better than to feel quieted by my situation. Social learning runs deep and it has left me insecure. I am both halves of a world.

I am alone in it by merely not being so at all. A paradox I am waiting in. I am waiting for someone who came before me to speak up, to justify my feeling, when I know they never will. In fact I am doing anything but waiting. Yet I here I am on my couch, dreading tomorrow.

I wait. I am in an endless cycle that began when I was born. Reaching and tipping just over the edge. Far enough to fall. Close enough to stay. Cutting it all just that close, pay-check to pay-check is a common enough living for most of the world. I know the facts. I know the people. 'Plenty of people do it, you aren't special', I think. I know I am not alone. Maybe I wait because I was taught to. We are all living a dishonest truth. Maybe, there is little truth left to share. I lie in wait of the day that I have stretched too thin. Unwavering luck presses on for now. My toes are cold and I have built a castle around them, swimming in a moat of grey felted fabric.

I close my eyes. I find myself at a five star charity dinner, thrown in my honour. I am craving powdered soup and the boxed mashed potatoes I used to eat for dinner and not the half portion of deep sea fish on my plate. In truth I've never eaten fish that didn't come from a can. Waiters see unease in my eyes when I am unable to pronounce the names of wines. They nod, deciding to choose for me. Throughout the night they exchange my empty glass for a full one. I have hardly abandoned the first before they come, lifting them swiftly from my hand. A magic well of toxic courage. I feel guilt. I am guilty of wanting more than what I have had because I value that I have had any of it to begin with. At the same time, I know it is a pathetic existence to know there is more and to be afraid to want it.

Stability. It is the knowledge of what you have and being

content with it. It is the thought of my ice toes on the laminate floor. My thin grey blanket surrounding me.

Security. The feeling of reaching the till knowing the change in my pocket will cover the total. It's going to the store and leaving with all the things I need, and had intended to buy. It is buying goods that haven't yet gone out of date.

Reduced goods. That feeling of success opening the perishables just collected, at home and finding uncurdled milk. I once bought curdled milk. The disappointment in myself outweighs the disappointment in the store for having sold it in the first place. I could have felt abandoned by the system that supports me, but all I did was regret spending the money at all. I felt ashamed.

- Having unpacked my bag in this new room, I am off to explore
- the city. The memory of my month in my partner's family
- home is still fresh in my mind. I am almost lonely without half a dozen people running about. We moved a day ago to the new apartment, having spent months applying and viewing rooms in houses which we never stood a chance at being offered. We were desperate to accept anything. By chance, and lies, we chose and moved into this one. I think about the way we scraped together the double rent to get the keys, taking out a loan days before. I could be ashamed for applying for a loan with a job contract that was both not wholly a lie but wasn't wholly the truth. I don't. Three people and such a task seemed insurmountable. Two thousand and eight hundred Euros sat on my partner's desk in an envelope. I can't say I had seen an amount of cash in one domestic setting before that moment. It made everything worth waiting for. It was a chance to stop waiting.

I start my job tomorrow. It is temporary, a handful of weeks,

but I am desperately excited to have anything. I was unable to get a tax number because of a backup in the city's distribution centre. So, I set out to get a bank account, having been denied already from three. One challenge at a time, I could cry. Standing in the post office the woman behind the desk explains that, 'You have to have several proofs of address and one has to be a current bill.' Having heard this three times already I feel my heart sinking. I feel my eyes well as she circles words on a pamphlet titled, Current Account Application. I don't have the will to stop her, to say that there is no use continuing. I won't be coming back. I am carrying a 35 cent loaf of bread picked up on the walk. I will make peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for the following week with it. I feel ashamed for being unable to provide something as simple as a bill with my name on it. Who doesn't receive a bill? Truth is, it is people who know they can't pay a bill who don't have one. How though can I have a bill if there is no account to pay out of? How can I pay a bill with no place to lodge my pay-check? The questions circle me and I am carried home. Opening the door with my 2800 Euro key, I am reminded I am unable to contribute to the rent with or without the bank account. I wonder how long I will have to wait for one.

A small blue light is pulsing on my recently acquired phone. When I arrived in the country it became immediately apparent I needed a phone number. As it turns out in order to get a job, apartment, bank, really the whole lot - a phone is essential. It is my email, the notification. I swipe the notification open, but I am unsure if I want to know. Human resources, accounts department from my new job. The rumours were true. I would be taxed at forty percent until I could secure a tax number, at which time the money would be returned. Nearly half my wage in my already standardly low income. So far the whole move seems like

a mess and a joke. The worst of it being this seems to be the case anywhere. I return to my couch, nest back into the grey blanket and consider. I consider the other lives I have led, in the other places I have lived, and how similar they all begin to feel. I am back to waiting. It is the end of day one and I sit. I wait. I wait for tomorrow to come and to see what it brings. I have no answers on how any day past this will be handled. I am wholly dissatisfied. This is just the issue though isn't it? Every dimension of our lives has been built on having. Having a bill to pay, having a room to send the bill to, and having a job, a bank to pay the bill from. You best bet that job you worked to qualify yourself for will by no means pay you in cash. You best believe you have no way to cash a cheque even if they would, because you don't have a bank. It is a circular logic built for those who already have the means.

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- Day one. I am grateful for having gotten a ride to the door.
- I therefore have no taste to respond to my new co-workers as they chat about the predictably shit weather. Instead I wait. There is a buzz about the place. People are kind. I can't read most of these names. Almost every time I answer the phone I respond several times with an, 'Apologies, could you repeat that?' I am begging them to slow down and they know it. Co-workers invite me to coffee. I know I am turning down more than coffee, but I have no change to spend. Besides, I have never enjoyed tea or coffee anyways. My head spins and before I know it I am headed down the mountainside and along the river. I slide back into my apartment and settle into my new spot on the couch. Safely wrapped, I wait for my partner to call. I wait to answer with how my day was and to take my mind from the whirlwind.

Day two. I'm back in front of my mirror. Nearly ready to leave for the walk up the hill, I look down at my feet and

all I can see is the pink and blue polka dot fuzz peeping out in the gap between the top of my shoe and hem of my pants. I hope no one will notice. I would love if there was no comment on the state of my worn black jeans as well. Working to pass as business casual, I am nervous. I don't know if it's working. I need this job, even if it is only for a month. I haven't the cash to spend on new outfits or even to wash my socks. I'll be out of clean ones by tomorrow so I will have to get creative if I want warm toes. Of course, I won't be paid for two weeks so I have to hold out until then and I will happily wait. I wouldn't mention it for fear. I worry my observations will be mistaken for complaints, so I am cautious in what I say. I typically would think any job that couldn't look past my socks for the value of my work wouldn't even be worth having. That is if I didn't have a bill I intended to pay. I wait for this too. I wait to see if my socks will make the day.

I'm wet. My socks are soaked up to my ankles. It is only day two and can't believe I will show up, mascara running down my face. Water drips from my nose and the quicker I walk the worse it gets. There is no shelter. I worry I will be late. I walk briskly. Up, up, up I go to the tip of the city. When I started out I counted myself as lucky. The rain hadn't begun and the morning was the warmest November day I had ever had. Back home the snow is towering already in preparation for the months to come. About a minute ago it began. The rain on my walk that is. I think now that my waiting might altogether be just that. Maybe I wait for nothing to come. Maybe I was taught to wait. Standing here in the rain I imagine that maybe my waiting is more accurately a reflection of my value than of my actions. I both haven't waited one moment of my life and I couldn't wait much more. A toxic feeling, I can feel myself curdling against it.

I was once a swell of life. I was hope and love itself. If I crossed you on a bad day I myself could cover you in a blanket of new-found life. One moment with me was once a shower of resilience. I saw it in others and I was empowered by it. I was thanked by people better than me for being dependable. I once made people with nothing to believe in being full again. I don't know where that girl went. Maybe she just grew tired of waiting. Waiting here, wrapped tight in a sea of grey, I know I couldn't be that anymore. I hardly have the desire to have such an impact. Something in me has spoiled along the way. I feel sparks of a wealth of life here and there, yet I counter the taste of this spirit at every turn, afraid it might outsmart me and leave me reduced. I am reducing myself for fear of burning out in the sun's shine.

- I guess I wait because I am just as perishable as the reduced
- milk I once bought from the store. I took a chance on a
- good that never promised much and that is how I feel right now. It is as if everyone around me is just taking a weary chance. I am packaged just like everyone else, but my value is reduced. My value diminishes with every mention of my past. It is a resume of useless opportunity. I am priced to sell. It is because of my price there is no way to know, until you get me home, if I have curdled in the carton. It is possible I am more than I appear, or maybe I am less. If I have well curdled, I will have never really had any value at all. So I wait. I wait for someone to take a chance on the price of me. I am perishable and left out in the heat. I am a loaf of bread. The last on the shelf, fighting off signs of mould. I haven't always got the papers to prove my worth with an expiration date a month away. I have all the same goods inside though. That is what makes waiting hard, having the hope leftover to have made it worth the while.



White Acrylic

Chris Hubble

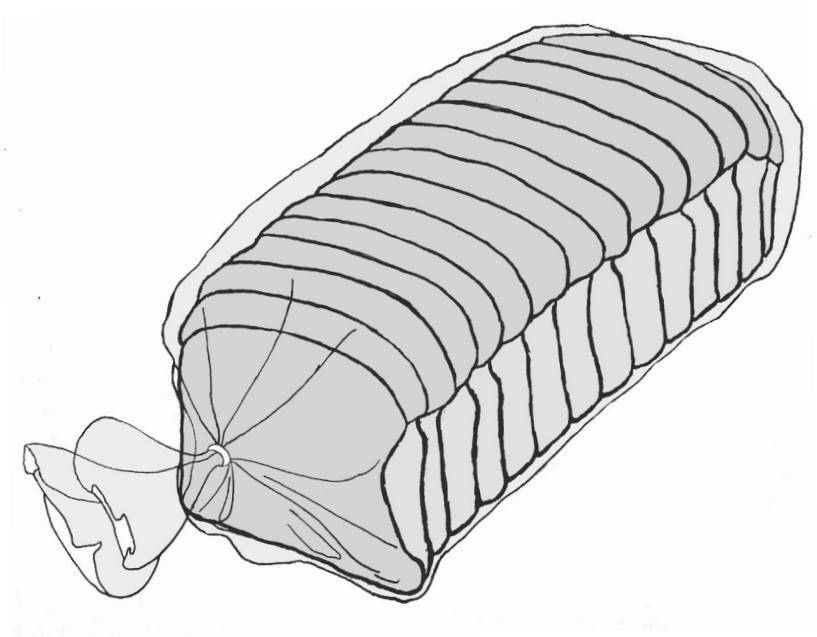
The old signs are taken down, each weather beaten letter removed; the paint, flaked and broken in, now peeled away; the shop and the flat above are stripped bare, shelled out, hollowed, and replaced by sheets of white acrylic, blue and red font emblazoned on top. The rooms are whitewashed, sterile; electric doors (we don't do manual these days)

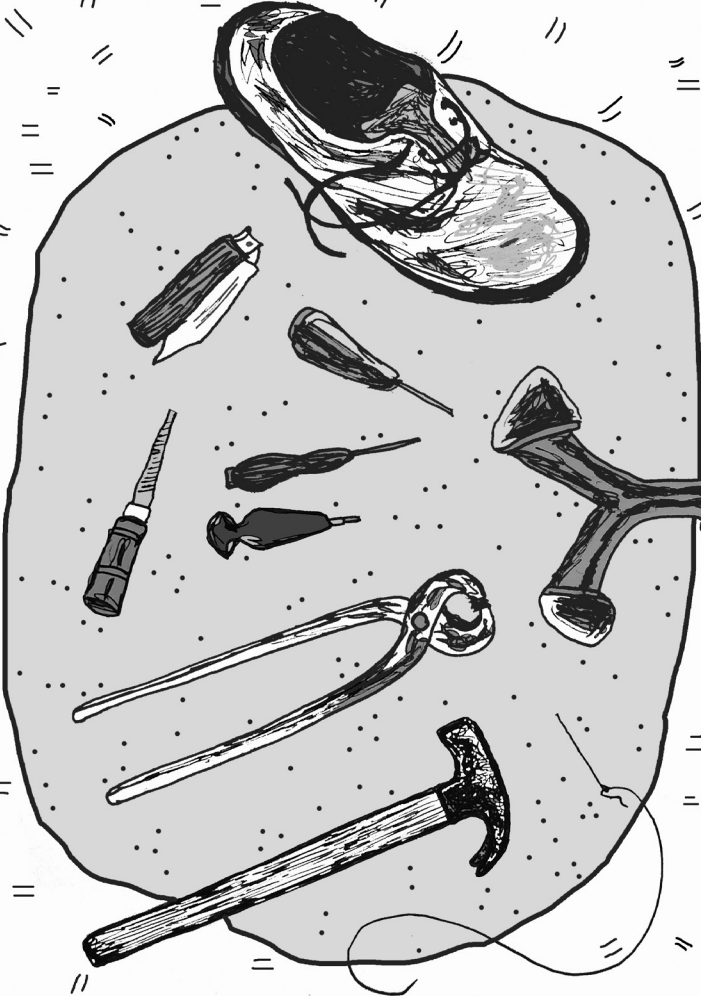
- move aside in silence, no creak,
- no entrance bell above the door,
- no declaration of intent.

The people who used to live in the flat above the bakery haunt the aisles, lifting bread, milk, tea: the leftovers are denied to the birds for fear of rats nesting in the alley behind the store.

The checkout has one staff member. The other staff have been replaced by self-service machines, to teach us, educate us, how to serve our selves. A security guard watches everything - everyone's guilty, especially the kids.

The cracks in the building, the fault lines that scar the surface causing structural damage are concealed with cladding, embed themselves in the foundations until it falls, collapses, and all that's left is brick, rubble, white acrylic in the dust, and nowhere to buy bread.







A Legion of Shoemakers

K. Kemp

Do you think you'd be able, together with your co-workers, to own and operate your workplace, without bosses and managers dictating your actions? How about your community? Your country?

Maybe you do! If so, that's great. Sadly many, many people are horrified at the prospect. To them I would like to say, I understand completely. And to understand why we can sometimes feel this way I think it's better to ask a much simpler question.

Do you know how to make a shoe?



Barring the unlikely event that you're one of the few cobblers or shoemakers still in business, the answer to that question is probably "no". And yet shoes are made every day. Who the hell is out here making all these shoes? Well the answer

is still workers like you and me, but the way shoes (and all goods) are produced has changed. You no longer simply make a shoe, you now fill a single role on an assembly line. Perhaps you glue or stitch on the sole, perhaps you cure or lace the shoe. Odds are you don't even do these things directly but fulfil the human role in guiding a machine in completing this process.

The nature of the shoe assembly line results in two things. Firstly it produces shoes faster and more efficiently than ever before. Secondly it produces workers who technically make shoes for a living, but do not necessarily know how to make a shoe. They certainly know the step in the process that they perform again, and again, and again every day in mind-dulling repetition, but they do not have the skill-set or the craft of a shoemaker. This is incredibly beneficial to whoever owns the shoe factory because they can not only

- pay their workers much less than a skilled shoemaker but
- also replace any of them at a moment's notice. It is much easier to teach a new worker to operate their one step in the shoe making process than to train a proper shoemaker to do all of it. Why take on an apprentice and teach them an entire craft when you can bring someone in for minimum wage and teach them a single repetitive motion?

This process extends far beyond the shoe factory and into basically every workplace. Jobs are split into compartmentalised processes that are easily monitored and scrutinised, all while ensuring you only have PART of the skill set required to create the final product or service you work towards producing. The result of this is an alienated, infantilised workforce, conditioned to accept heavy supervision and the notion that they can only be trusted with the lowest levels of responsibility. This instils in us the subtle message that we simply aren't competent

enough to be trusted with autonomy. This teaches us that we would be lost without the guidance of our betters.

While new technology has made some jobs easier it has also resulted in a workforce that is more heavily monitored and regulated than ever before. Call centre workers can expect their bathroom breaks to be timed, their talk time to be timed, their lunch to be timed, their calls to be listened to and graded, and every single move they make during the day passed under the eyes of management who are incentivised to find something to be critical of in order to justify their own role in the company.

I recently bought a utility knife from B&M, an item that you are not permitted to buy unless you're over the age of 18. Unfortunately for me the cashier did not need to see my ID to know that I was more than old enough to buy this knife. However all knife sales had to be confirmed by a manager, likewise any reduced items sold had to be confirmed by a manager as well. The cashier is both treated as incompetent and a potential criminal.

She needs approval to sell me a knife because she is not permitted to make a judgement call about whether or not it is appropriate to sell me that knife. Whether my ID seems fake or I seem like a dangerous person (I'll spare you my speculation as to what racist and classist criteria are utilised by management to identify a "dangerous person"). She also needs approval to sell reduced items. After all, she could put anything through the register as reduced! She could be making off with yoghurts at a 30% discount by the dozen! The dozen!

The manager doesn't so much as glance at me when he swipes his card to permit the sale, this was never about me

or my purchase. This was about someone in a boardroom, who has likely never set foot in this (or any) B&M, determining that removing those decisions, that agency, from the workers on the tills was the most profitable move to make. That the free will of a worker was an undesirable variable that needed reining in.

Now imagine you, a grown adult, can't even sell another grown adult a utility knife without permission. Imagine you can't go to the bathroom without management tracking the duration of your piss. Imagine you stack boxes for a supermarket and have to scan each one so management knows you're working fast enough. Imagine that you cannot end a conversation with an irate customer no matter how abusive they're being because it's company policy that no matter what they say to you, you take it. Imagine spending

- upwards of 8 hours every day in an environment where
- you have zero control. Where you are little more than a
- conveyor belt scanning groceries, little more than a text to speech program, reading off a section of the script for each response the customer gives you.

Now imagine some bright-eyed socialist approaches you in the street and says, "hey, don't you think people like you and me should be running our workplaces, running our state? Or even doing away with the structure of the state entirely?"

You might find yourself wondering what in the hell they're talking about. You can't even sell a reduced yogurt on your own, how can you possibly be qualified to do something like that? No, those jobs are best left to better men (and it is usually men). And given the environment you spend your days in, this response is perfectly natural. However, some people grow up under very different conditions.

Many new students from working class families struggle when they first attend university because they are ill-equipped to be plunged into an environment where they're expected to be responsible for themselves and their education. How and when you attend classes, what you write about, how you approach different topics, none of this will be spelled out for you and broken down into simple instructions that can be mindlessly, mechanically repeated. University is the first place many of us experience true agency outside of our personal lives.

The university is where middle-class people are sculpted. Many of them go on to have middle-class jobs. Do you think people with posh jobs are treated like the B&M cashier? Do you think solicitors have to check with management when they want to use the toilet? Do you think upper management has to record every action they take during the day and suffer constant supervision?

On the contrary, middle and upper class coded work with few exceptions comes with considerably more agency and freedom than entry level jobs. If you possess the experience and class indicators (degrees, understanding of corporate culture, status) required to do these sorts of jobs you are now considered a high enough quality human being to be treated with some degree of dignity and respect. You will now be considered a competent and capable adult who can be trusted to organise their own work-flow and get things done as they see appropriate.

People who have never had shit jobs, who have never been under the heel of the DWP and been made to jump through increasingly humiliating hoops to avoid homelessness, how could they possibly know what it's like to be made to feel useless and untrustworthy by everything

in your environment? Is it any wonder that the irresponsible bumbling fools in corporate boardrooms and the seats of parliament have never once doubted that they are qualified to rule? That they are fit to make decisions that will impact millions of lives?

If the incompetent children of the rich whose daddies bought them good grades and set them up with a lucrative career right out the gates can feel entitled to run the world, then you and I are, if anything, overqualified. So how do we build that confidence in our communities? How can we even begin to counterbalance an entire economic order that drills it into our heads from the cradle to the grave that we're not good enough?

- To push back against these forces we must address two main ways that capitalist society alienates us. First, it isolates us.
- Second, it convinces us that we cannot meaningfully shape
- the world around us. Only by organising in our communities, (and in many cases our communities need some serious resuscitation to be recognised as such at all), can we strip away the layers of alienation that have wrapped around our minds. Only by helping each other with no transaction, no expectation of payment or profit, can we convince not just one another but ourselves that we are free agents in this world who can change our environment.

It can be difficult when so much of our time is taken up by survival, but we must take it upon ourselves to learn useful skills. Learn to build things, learn to grow food, develop skills that will not only afford us greater independence but will allow us to really interact with the world, to create something with our labour other than numbers on someone else's accounts. This is not to indulge in some fantasy of disappearing into the woods like some unhinged survivalist,

it's to spread the incredibly dangerous idea that us filthy peasants are all capable adults who can change the world.

As a lone worker you can't even scan a reduced yoghurt without supervision. As a union of workers you can take on your bosses for better pay and work conditions. As a community of workers you can take power back from the landowners who control every facet of your lives. As a nation of workers? The sky's the limit.



*LUM
PEN.*

How To Guide For Writing (With Us).



Here are 9 points you need to know:

1. We only accept writing from those who identify as working class or have experienced long term involuntary poverty and economic hardship.

2. We may accept writing of all lengths, but generally we look for anything between 2,000 and 4,000 words.

3. We accept all styles of writing - fiction, non-fiction and everything else inbetween.

4. For each issue we will suggest several themes and questions. If you want to write about something beyond these drop us an email as we might be planning a later issue that fits with it better.

5. If you've never written before or are lacking in confidence in your writing, get in touch. We can give support with your piece of writing, and devise different strategies with you to get your ideas out of your head onto the paper. For example one article for a future issue, will be a transcribed interview with a working class organiser.



Don't worry if you're not confident about spelling, grammar, sounding educated enough. What we're interested in is hearing your ideas based on your lived experiences.

6.

Concerned about style? Don't be, we're happy to publish openly angry rants written in staccato rhythm or fictional narratives about killer avocados on toast and everything else inbetween. Whatever voice you feel comfortable using.

7.

Please title your work, if you can't think of one we can help you find one.

8.

Name yourself as you would like to see it printed, or state if you would like to remain anonymous.

9.



Happy Writing!

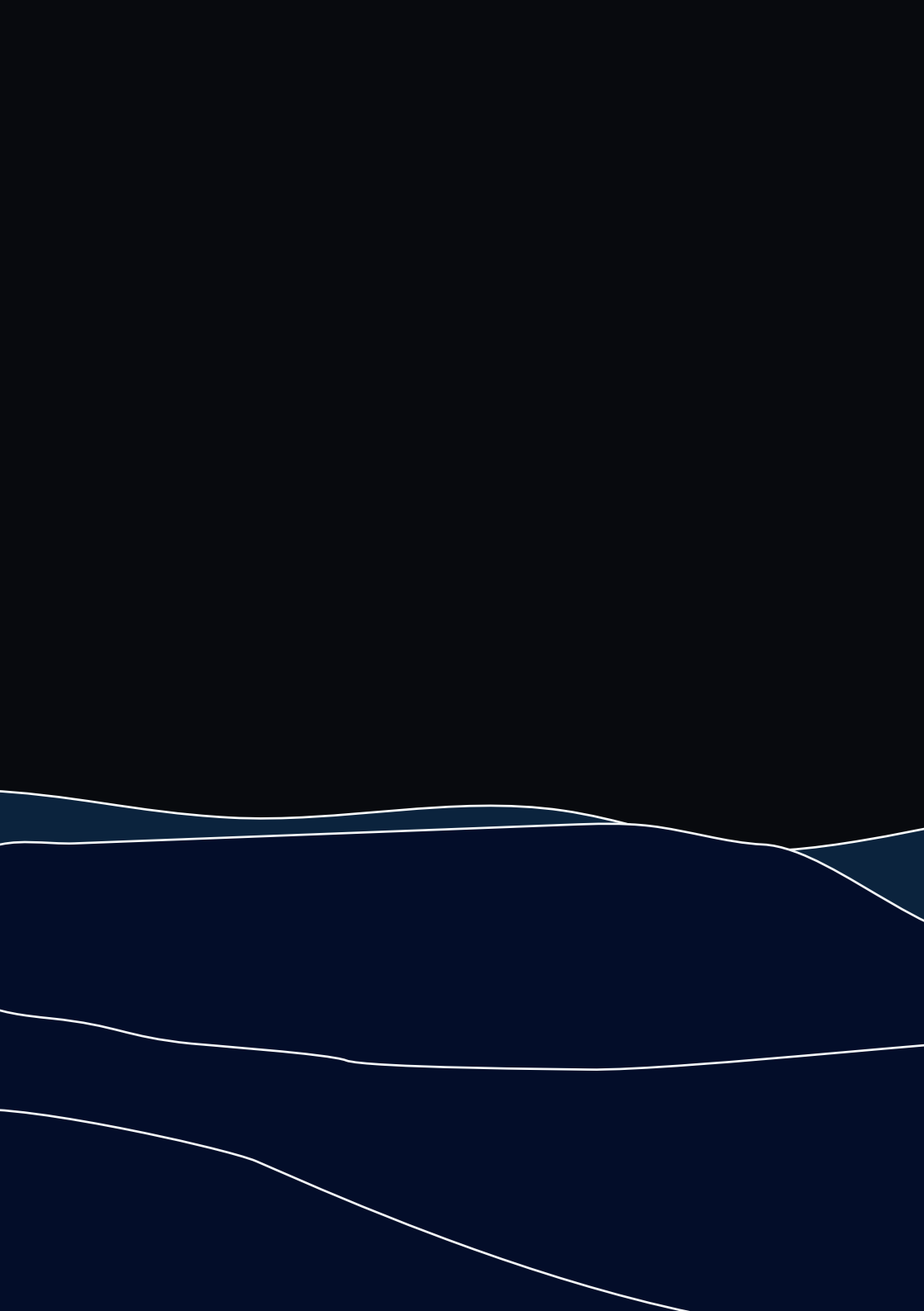
Tips for worriers:

Don't know where to start? Start in the middle. Just try to get your ideas down on paper. It's all practice.

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