



LUMPEN

A journal for poor and
working class writers

Issue 004

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Lumpen

A Journal for Poor and Working Class Writers
Issue 04

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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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Editorial

It's the 27th June, over a month has passed since the murder of George Floyd by the U.S Police in Minneapolis, and over three months since the social shutdown in the UK began. Over in the U.S the fight against anti-blackness and white supremacy once more took to the streets, for over a week in most major cities hundreds of thousands of people, predominantly Black Americans but with significant support from working-class people of all races used a variety of tactics to push back against institutional and cultural racism that US society is based upon. Here in the UK, the nation that if not ground zero for white supremacist ideology, then certainly a founding member, protests and demonstrations have occurred up and down the country. These have had a significantly more limited spectrum of tactics, but the impetus and legitimacy of the anger was made equally; White Supremacy and particularly Anti-Blackness is in every tentacle of the UK's state apparatus, social system and cultural hegemony. From the disproportionate carceral violence against Black bodies via the police, prisons, social services and school system to the cultural fields of knowledge production within universities, media and publishing. White Supremacy and Anti-Blackness are woven into this nation's fabric,



its colonial and imperial power, and its key involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade were the foundations and the first ten floors of the building that is the country's wealth. Symbols of this, such as the statue of Edward Colston which was dumped into Bristol Harbour on the 7th June during one protest, are part of the symbolic violence that attempts to legitimise the UK's white supremacist culture. When this statue got the dunking it deserved, a not inconsiderable number of White men were disturbed. I'm not going to start mocking these men (and undoubtedly people of other genders, but it was mostly men), other people can do that if they want, but I don't find it funny. I recognise that disturbedness, I recognise that call to violence channeled through patriotism, through nationalism, through masculinity, and most of all through Whiteness. I don't just recognise it because I was raised alongside them, many of the men who over the last couple of weeks have taken it on themselves to protect statues, these monuments to genocide, these symbols of who the White British are and from what we built our lives, look and sound like my father and the fathers of many of my childhood friends. They look and sound like many of the men and boys I was in prison with, and those I met in support groups and pubs during my 20's and 30's. They look and sound like me, they are not the other, a distant amorphous group who I feel no kinship with. They are men and boys like me, who were raised to think that lives only mattered because they were White, and are sent into psychological spirals when faced with the reality that as Priyamvada Gopal stated on Twitter earlier in the week, "White lives don't matter. As White lives". Gopal, one of the few individuals associated with Cambridge University who I would urge everyone to listen to, and the author of the brilliant book "Insurgent Empires", was furthering the call for the abolition of Whiteness. It is a call that people like me, and my co-editors at Lumpen would do well to support. Whiteness is a social construct, shaped and refined over centuries, it is a silent prayer through which we pledge our loyalty to racial hierarchies, which help to maintain the Capitalist Class system, and what Jackie Wang calls

a ritualised violence against black people and time and time and time again make us betray our class in overt and covert ways.

The study of Whiteness seeks to foreground historical processes that created and still creates racialised subjects (Allen, 1994). The goal of these processes is to make “White” both neutral and natural. Its neutrality speaking to the white middle class male as being the social and cultural norm, against which others are seen as less than (Roedinger, 2007). The men who protect statues, who have been viciously and violently attacking Priyamvada Gopal online with threats of sexual assault and death, do not all belong to one class. They will be from the same working class communities I and the other editors are from, but they will also be from the plush suburbs our friends come from and the stately mansions where our enemies reside. In protecting statues and threatening those who speak against Whiteness they are pledging loyalty to a system which has no real care for them, and for many will be their cause of death.

When we examine Whiteness we place “White” in its historical context, showing how it is a position that has been formed, and is still being formed due to a variety of political, economic and social processes. It is vital that we do this, that we vigorously trace the path it has gone down, and how it travels through us still. Whiteness is also a performance (Allen, 1994), one in which class dynamics have been overlooked (Meer, 2015). Any conceptualisation of whiteness must accommodate the notion that ‘[t]he economic and psychological wages of whiteness may be more meagre (and thus more precious) the lower down the social hierarchy the white subject is located’ (Garner, 2006: 262). However the performance of whiteness is still one which grants privileges to all who are racialised as white. As people who might consider ourselves in opposition to the current political, economic and social systems it is vital we comprehend ourselves as both products and reproducers of those systems. Those of us racialised

as White must gain a comprehension of past, present and future paths of Whiteness and what our individual and collective role in that might be. Not in order to reform Whiteness - you can't reform Whiteness anymore than you can reform Genocide - but so that we can find its weakest points in order to rip it from limb to limb. As Professor Gopal suggests it is not the abolition of white people, but the abolition of Whiteness that we must achieve. Rather than becoming Class Traitors we must be Race Traitors.

All four members of the Class Work Project Co-op which produces the Lumpen Journal are white. We may come from some of the most economically and politically marginalised communities within Whiteness, but we are White nonetheless, and have benefitted from this and will continue to do so. Lawler's (2012) analysis that working class whiteness is not the same as middle class whiteness, the former "a form of extreme whiteness, or hyper-whiteness, that works as a counterpoint to 'ordinary' (and middle-class) whiteness" (Lawler, S. 2012) resonates with our position, and in my own case allows me to draw a line between myself and the White men I was raised amongst. I have got older and I have been able to perform this middle class whiteness to a greater and greater extent, allowing me entry into certain spaces and social mobility. My old whiteness was as Lawler suggests "framed as an unreflexive, axiomatically racist whiteness" (Lawler, 2012), in comparison to the more middle class whiteness (Hunter, S, 2010) which is able to present reflexivity, engage in conversations about racism, white supremacy, colonialism; but at the same time continue to benefit significantly from those same conditions they decry. This is part of performing the correct ordinary whiteness, one that is located within the neo-liberal, multicultural notion of a good liberal (Hunter, 2010).

It should be said that no racial identity or identity of any kind is bound to class position nor class loyalty. Just as there are white men from my old neighbourhoods who betray their class with their

racism, there will be some who betray their class with a developed contempt for the working class people they come from. There are also people of color who have thrown themselves behind the persecution and exploitation of all working class people. Some have been welcomed with open arms into the caverns of middle class culture and social institutions of the state, and others into positions within the global elites of capital. They legitimise the concept of neo-liberal, multicultural society, in which individual elevation is prized and used as a stick to beat those who are unable or unwilling to achieve capitalistic goals. This is important for us to remember in the current climate where more and more folks of the socially liberal and centre left persuasion are discovering their internalised racism, and the importance of Black leadership. Any Black leadership will not suffice; those who denounce racism, white supremacy, but ignore its relationship with the violence of capitalism and the state are searching for positions of power, not the end of exploitation. White people with anti-capitalist and abolitionist perspectives do not need to throw their critical faculties out the window in order to be seen as anti-racist. This would be performative politics at its most egregious, and situates itself in the politics of charity not solidarity. It suggests that the logics of domination are not overlapping and entwined with one another, but discreet tools which we can pick and choose from based upon what benefits us as individuals. The world is not short of radical Black thinkers, organisers and activists, who are working towards social justice, and they will not always be in agreement with one another. Simply agreeing with everyone you are listening to at the time is merely performative politics.

Revolutionary or Transformative practice is not simple work: it requires dialogue, debate and discussion, it requires us to listen carefully, build trust and open up spaces where this dialogue can happen. It also requires a level of reflexivity, it requires those who are participating to engage with the ways in which they are a product of, and reproduce the forms of, structural violence and

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oppression, without it ever descending into ritual self-flagellation for the sake of appearing politically conscious and anti-oppression. I'd like to think that Lumpen can over time become a space for that dialogue. The editors and many of the contributors of the first 4 issues of our journal are White and we are poor and working class, our allegiances are being constantly fought over. The more diminished our Whiteness becomes, the stronger our class becomes, but we can not merely rely on highlighting our class position without a rigorous engagement with our relation to white supremacy, the patriarchy and the other conditions of our social position.



WHITE
LIVES
DONT MATTER.
AS
WHITE
LIVES.

— Priyamvada Gopal

That Was Then and This Is Now

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Stacey Clare

When I say I grew up in Cumbria, for some people their imagination goes straight to the idyllic childhood promise of a Beatrix Potter tale. Wordsworth was so inspired by the Lake District that he wrote of its pastoral charm replete with rolling green hills, fluffy clouds and daffodils dancing in the breeze. The timeless splendour of the Cumbrian landscape is truly one of the most spectacular places on earth attracting tourists and adventure seekers from all over the world, thanks to the National Park protections that safeguard the prehistoric environment there. In many ways, I consider myself fortunate to have my childhood memories punctuated with some of the most breathtaking natural beauty on the planet.

Cumbria is also home to one of the worst opiate epidemics in the UK. In early 2018 press headlines began publicising the shockingly high statistic of deaths by heroin overdose in the south Cumbrian town of Barrow-upon-Furness. One particular block of flats had

become a ghetto for addicts, with people dying at an alarming rate; at one point the frequency of overdoses became a weekly death count, earning Barrow the title of 'heroin capital of the UK'. Barrow-upon-Furness also happens to be where British Aerospace Systems (BAE) builds weapons of mass destruction for the military industrial complex at their ship building facility there, the largest in the country. It would seem that for those born and brought up in Barrow their options are limited to choosing between which version of death they would prefer - personal anguish or global warfare.

When I was a teenager there was a BBC TV drama series, *The Lakes*, broadcast in 1997. We anticipated each episode every weekend with excitement, and it was all we talked about at school the following Monday. Looking back, I can now see how it was an acutely accurate depiction of life in Cumbria. The series was centred around a group of working-class adolescents for whom life consisted of working shit jobs in hotels, drug and alcohol abuse, and fucking. Juxtaposed against the lives of these despondent youths, a community of middle-class, asset-wealthy characters were also up to no good. The wretched activities of a generation without much of a future to look forward to transformed the majestic wilderness of Cumbria into a grim, eerily dark backdrop, which still resonates with me to this day.

When I look back on my own upbringing I can relate to the weirdness of middle-class, working-class and under-class culture all set against the staggering Cumbrian scenery. My own childhood was a strange hotchpotch of upwardly mobile aspirations merged with elements of genuine poverty. It's difficult to know where to start. I used to bunk off school to smoke fags down the cobbled back lanes behind the rows of Victorian redbrick terraced houses in my hometown, built during the industrial revolution to house factory workers and now worth a small fortune. I had friends who lived on council estates who I drank cider with and watched them sniffing solvents and tooting aerosols, children dabbling with

substances to prepare themselves for a lifetime of addiction. I fought with my mother to buy expensive sportswear in order to fit in with the rigid homogeneity of my classmates, for whom any variation from the uniform Adidas tracksuit bottoms was grounds for emotional brutality. Since the family funds weren't there to pay for me to keep up I worked up a pretty serious shoplifting habit instead.

It goes without saying that I grew up in a predominantly white neighbourhood, with very few people of colour around. After my dad walked out on the family before I was born, my mother remarried a member of the Asian community, a Muslim man from Kuwait. While this meant I grew up in a multiracial household exposed to Islamic customs, providing me with a worldview beyond my own whiteness (which I now consider to be a great blessing), it was also further grounds for being othered and vilified by my white peers. Being white myself, though, meant I was never subject to the systemic violence and injustices enacted on people of colour nearby. My whiteness has opened more doors for me than I can even comprehend.

I played classical music in the local youth orchestra and excelled in my exams. I also played truant to attend afternoon organ recitals at Carlisle Cathedral, one of the many impressive examples of medieval architecture in the town, with my elderly Godmother. I was semi-adopted by the local vicar's family who took me in when I needed a safe place to study for my GCSEs. I sat and wrote my coursework in the church vicarage, another elegant and refined location with stunning views across the historic Carlisle to Settle railway line and over to the fells. Camping trips to the Lake District were so frequent that I took it for granted that lakes, forests, trees and hills were a normality, and my map-reading ability did indeed become a lifelong skill thanks to the Duke of Edinburgh who gave me an award for passing myself off as middle-class.

Of course, none of the above really sounds that bad. There were bits of my childhood that I'll always be grateful for; nature, architecture, history, beauty, music, education, all the things one might hope for a child to be surrounded by. Not to mention my white, blonde-haired, blue-eyed privilege. Regrettably, that wasn't all I experienced. I also lived a reality of emotional violence, psychological anguish and durational suffering. Underpinning all the gorgeous views, grandiose buildings and genteel culture was a wretched home life that was shot through with generational trauma. No amount of classical music lessons or excellence in education could protect my developing nervous system from the tyranny that was going on behind closed doors. Which is why I have a deep disregard for middle-class values; learning to read maps and play the piano was all well and good, but it didn't protect me from the worst effects of my upbringing. Despite being bullied throughout my entire education for appearing middle-class, for want for another identity, I consider myself to be under-class.

Years of counselling, psychotherapy, trauma-work and self-help have got me through the worst effects of my background. When I entered secondary school my maladaptive personality traits started to really show up. A social services investigation led to a care tribunal to decide whether I needed to be placed on the child protection register (the result of which, that I didn't, is still to my mind doubtful). By the time I started doing a fine art degree I had signs of borderline personality disorder, clinical depression, and various pathologies that left me in a constant state of distress and unable to form secure connections and bonds with people around me. As an adult survivor of childhood neglect, I've been processing a lot. I've lived through breakdowns, health crises, loss of work, lack of income, financial instability, relationship difficulties, anxious and disordered attachments. By my 30th year I was suicidally distraught, which culminated in a full physical and mental breakdown lasting a number of months and took all the self-preservation I could muster to pull through.

My recent discovery in the last few years of Bessel Van Der Kolk's best-selling book, 'The Body Keeps The Score', has introduced me to the transformative concept of trauma theory. This vital theory has given me the wondrous gift of understanding myself well enough to hold a working story of what went wrong and why, how it has impacted me, and how I can heal and move on. The working story of my family background really all revolves around my mother and her unprocessed childhood sexual abuse and neglect. Although mercifully I did not experience childhood sexual abuse myself, the legacy of it ran through our family like a racecourse. Her unpredictable moods, horrific tantrums, and disordered bonding style meant she was unable to provide her children with a safe emotional and psychological environment.

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The upshot of this meant my siblings and I grew up with stress hormones raging through our little minds and bodies; cortisol shaped our developing nervous systems as we tried to grow in a home where we were profoundly unseen and unsafe. She neglected our basic needs for food, security and warmth, since she was so dissociated and never really present. There wasn't much relief to be found outside the home either, since school was a minefield of cruelty. I was very rarely accepted by any of my peers, whose future prospects were not dissimilar to the addicts in Barrow-upon-Furness or the characters from The Lakes. Playing at being middle-class became a survival strategy, and I managed to claw my way into another life using education as a vehicle for escape, as well as piggy-backing on the generosity of a handful of support figures who by blessed chance were in my life for one reason or another. Since then my instinct to heal has led me to seek out as many tools and strategies for coping, processing and thriving as I could find.

It's not easy to explain how bad things got. I'm not used to writing about my childhood, my school days, and my upbringing; it's not

a story I'm normally willing to share. As a writer I am usually quick to achieve a state of flow and a sense of purpose to my words. But my own trauma is not a subject I have explored much, certainly not in public, and there's an extremely good reason for that. Having laid myself bare in the retelling of the most private and painful details of my life, I am now vulnerable to the instant typecasting that accompanies the following fact; that I am a sex worker.

The logic of Radical Feminism makes fast and easy work of locating my victimhood, immediately linking my trauma to my job. Anyone who subscribes to the ideological viewpoint that selling sex is gender-based violence will leap on such a testimonial as mine as proof that the sex industry contains a disproportionate number of abuse victims, a theory often mooted but never empirically verified. To a radical feminist there are no distinctions between my childhood circumstances and my current environment; there is merely a continuation of suffering. No nuance is allowed, nor can dialogue take place. I am a victim in the true sense of the word, and there can be no way for the distinctions I have made between my past and my present to be anything other than delusional.

According to trauma theory, the triggered psyche cannot tell the difference between the past and the present. Brain chemistry is such that when a trauma has not been processed it lives on in the nervous system, presenting itself over and over as a call to action, asking to be healed. Until it has been processed, a trauma survivor lives with a piece of their past coming back up via the process of triggering. Entering into a triggered state means reliving the past, unable to stay in the present and having no agency over one's behaviour. Trauma survivors are therefore more likely to fulfil lives which replicate abuse shapes, repeating history until they have regained some kind of insight and awareness, and are able to make sense of what happened to them in a framework that gives them agency over their present lives i.e. that was then and this is now.

Mainstream feminism categorises sex workers as trauma victims. The end. Sex work is violence. Full stop. According to this logic anyone working in the sex industry is currently living through trauma and violence right now. And yet among sex workers like myself, there is a different set of truths demanding to be heard, truths that transcend the received narratives about us. To be disavowed for drawing distinctions between our own past and present lives, to have our own life stories distorted and weaponised against us, to have our narratives proscribed for all time, these are the ultimate forms of objectification. We are objectified as victims by mainstream feminist ideology as much as we are sexually objectified in the club, dancing on a pole.

My past undoubtedly primed me for exploitation. I entered the sex industry age 22, long before I had any framework for understanding myself as a trauma survivor. It wasn't until I was 27 that I even acknowledged I had suffered neglect, and that neglect was itself a form of child abuse. Since then I have worked on integrating piece after piece of traumatic material, reclaiming my life and autonomy day by day. I now practice a form of chanting (or Breathwork depending on which way you look at it) as part of a daily spiritual practice that has reconnected me with my present, my relationships, my sense of purpose and self-worth. It turns out that using the breath is a powerful method of intervention for rebalancing the autonomic nervous system, which is responsible for all manner of self-regulation from the fight-flight-freeze mechanism to sleep and digestion. I have regained some kind of independence from the wake of anxiety, grief and chaos of my childhood. And while sifting through the debris of a life that fell apart I managed to pick out some pieces among the rubble that were worth keeping. And one of them is sex work.

Any sex worker will tell you that entering the explicit marketplace of transactional relationships gave them the ability to uphold boundaries in a way they never could before. Some only learn

that they even have the right to exert boundaries once they become sex workers. Of course, the sex industry is not a fabulous training ground for producing strong, assertive women. Working conditions in the sex industry are more likely to undermine individual sex workers' boundaries than support them, which is a major problem of the criminalised marketplace. Nonetheless, I've lost count of the number of times I've had the same conversation with my colleagues at the strip club – that we learned more about boundaries doing sex work than in any other area of our lives.

Part of my journey included the freedom as an art student to choose my own specialism. My most immediate area of interest was my own work as a stripper, and I dived into reading about the feminist sex wars, immersing myself in the historical dialogue (and conflict) between women about the sex industry and what it means. By chance I discovered a book in the corner of my local bookshop, 'Stripping, Sex and Popular Culture' by Catherine M. Roach. Reading her interview with Johanna Breyer, a social worker running a free health clinic for sex workers at Saint James Infirmary, San Francisco, backed up my own experience as well as countless others I'd heard:

"Something may have happened to someone in their past and they ended up working in the sex industry, but I haven't seen research projects convincing me that women have more of a history of sexual abuse or sexual violence in the sex industry versus any other sector where women work." [i]

Roach went on to explain how stripping and sex work could be healing for survivors of abuse, "precisely because it does allow them to repeat sexual scenarios but this time remain in control. They can learn to set boundaries and say no and be self-assertive." Again in Breyer's words, "even for people doing prostitution and full-service work, that can be a way for them to really find their boundaries and say 'this is not abusive to me, whereas this was

abusive to me' and you can really have those clear delineations." This is so key to trauma theory. It is well established that PTSD sufferers experience dissociation from their present experience when triggered, preventing them from creating those clear delineations. Going back to Kolk's 'The Body Keeps the Score:

"If the problem of PTSD is dissociation, the goal of treatment would be association: integrating the cut-off elements of the trauma into the ongoing narrative of life, so that the brain can recognise that 'that was then, and this is now.'" [ii]

I, like many of my sex-working colleagues, am now able to recognise and distinguish my past from my present. I am able to identify the patterns that push me around; I know when a client is a narcissist because I remember what it was like to be unseen and unsafe. I know when I am in an abusive cycle because I remember what abuse was like. And the more work I do to integrate my past, the more wisdom I can access in the present and the less history repeats itself. I am an adult now, not a frightened and confused child at the mercy of a despotic caregiver.

These distinctions are precisely what a radical feminist cannot hear without extrapolating from my words that the only proof that a sex worker has integrated their past is when they exit the sex industry. I find myself wondering about this concept of the triggered mind being unable to distinguish the difference between past and present, and can't help thinking this looks a lot like the blueprint of unprocessed trauma. If the triggered psyche cannot tell the difference between one's own past and present, does that also apply to telling the difference between someone else's? Are radical feminist campaign groups as likely to include female PTSD sufferers with past histories of assault, neglect and abuse as, say, a strip club? As Breyer pointed out, if the statistics of gender-based violence are to be believed, we have to accept there are women everywhere with abuse in their backgrounds.

One of the most egregious impacts of mainstream feminism is to silence sex workers' voices. The tendency to see our stories of abuse and neglect used as grist for the mill of abolitionism, has cornered our community. We are less likely to speak out about abuses in our own industry for fear of the narcissistic traits we are wise to. Being unseen and unheard is our specialty, so why bother? There is an unspoken covenant among sex worker advocates never to speak publicly about our past trauma; this shapes and edits our movement into a limited set of narratives. By publishing this article, not only do I run the risk of my words being taken out of context and used for a political agenda, there is also the chance I will be called out or rejected by members of my own community. But the inability to safely acknowledge and integrate past traumas and abuses is exactly what stands in the way of collective healing.

The campaign to abolish the sex industry can be compared to the war on drugs – its approach is no more likely to support individuals in the sex industry than the addicts in Barrow. The two worlds of addiction and sex work intersect fiercely with each other, and in both cases public policy fails to offer survivors what they need. To quote Kolk once more:

“We are fundamentally social creatures – our brains are wired to foster working and playing together. Trauma devastates the social-engagement system and interferes with cooperation, nurturing, and the ability to function as a productive member of the clan... Yet institutions that deal with traumatized children and adults all too often bypass the emotional-engagement system that is the foundation of who we are and instead focus narrowly on correcting ‘faulty thinking’ and on suppressing unpleasant emotions and troublesome behaviour.”[iii]

As long as radical feminism seeks to correct faulty behaviour there can be no space for transformation; criminalisation continues to add to the burden of trauma already carried within society. While

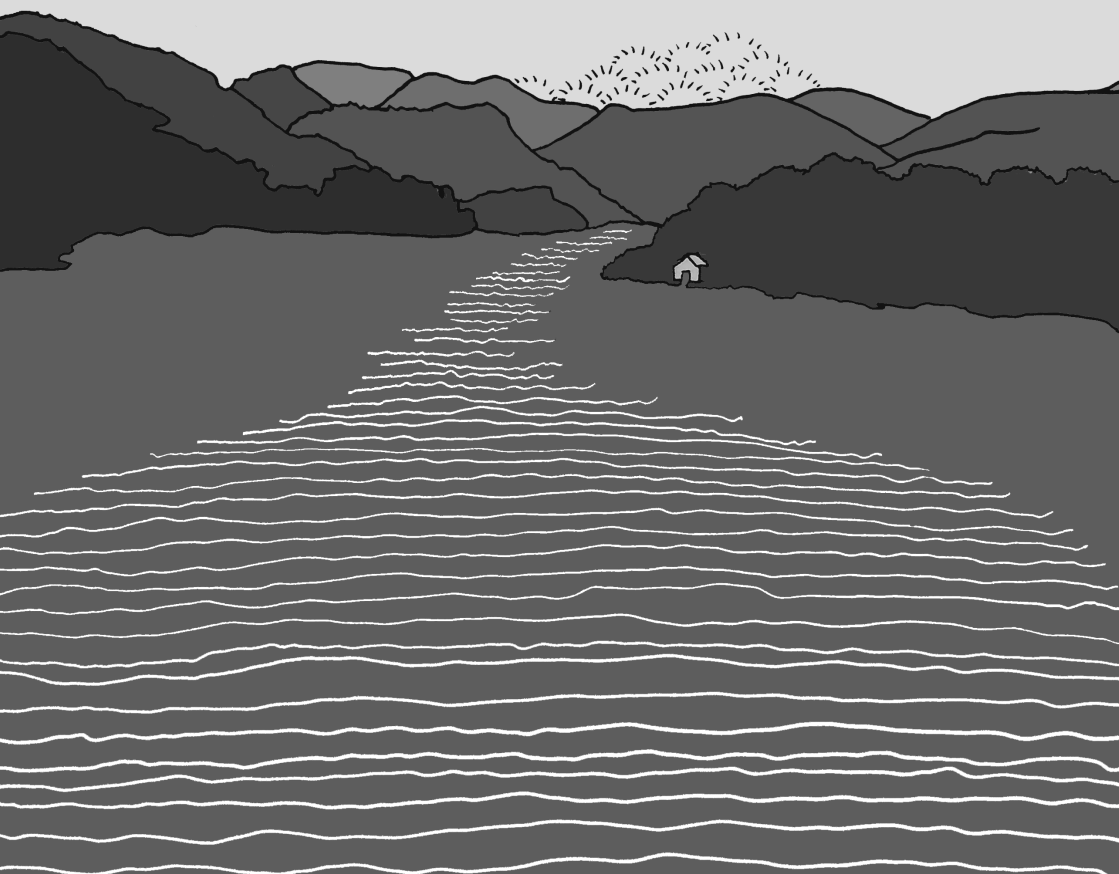
every effort is being made among the sex working community to decriminalise sex work and open the door to employment rights and protections for sex workers, we must not forget that trauma may run through any industry regardless of whether it is regulated properly. What is needed now more than ever is a culture that can hold space for trauma to be integrated and resolved; this will not be achieved by simply shutting down strip clubs.



[i] Roach, C.M. pg. 78 “Stripping, Sex and Popular Culture”, 2007, Berg

[ii] Kolk, B.V. pg. 181, “The Body Keeps The Score: Mind, Brain and Body in the Transformation of Trauma” 2014, Penguin Group

[iii] Kolk, B.V. pg. 349



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Aspiration to Alienation

Amber Taylor-Smith

So then Amber, how do you raise aspirations in your students?

A question I am asked in every interview as an FE teacher. I can spout all the jargon in the world, I can pay the lip service that's expected of me to this concept. But it doesn't alleviate the pit of dread that manifests in my stomach, it doesn't stop me from visibly wincing.

Raising aspirations is wonderful, being able to inspire students to strive for better lives, for higher education. However, I work with students who have social, emotional and mental health issues and those with special educational needs. I am by no means undermining their potential, but the infrastructure isn't there to support these students to progress. They are bunged on a study programme with no real progression, expected to grow into a product of their environment.

I am from South Yorkshire; synonymous with the working class, Scargill, Orgreave, foodbanks, austerity, racism. Romanticised for Kes, flat caps, Brassed Off, we are a portrait of nostalgia, unable to break free of the connotations that lie within our misrepresentation. As of 2020, 1/3 of students attended college institutions hungry. A local MP runs an app that charges foodbanks £180 to register. One council tried to slash the budget by removing trade unions from Local Government funding.

Please, tell me more about how raising the aspirations of young people will be fruitful without the support of their families, councils, colleges?

My aspirations were raised throughout my education. I was constantly told by teachers that I NEEDED to go to university. At age 15, I became the primary carer for my terminally ill single mother, confined to our ex council house which she had remortgaged and remortgaged on the right to buy scheme. I wasn't in a fit state to go on and do the A Levels I had been thrust towards. I spent two years as a NEET, clutching at opportunities which I couldn't fulfil due to the situation at home. I started college twice, dropping out in weeks. I even started an apprenticeship with no progression opportunities but couldn't justify the time away from my mum.

Eventually, I found some form of belonging on a Fashion course at my local college. It was part time, giving me enough time to develop myself, whilst being able to meet my mum's needs. A handful of my peers had been through similar circumstances, previously disengaged with education. We became a much-needed support network.

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In order to pass the course, there was a module where you had to apply to university. You absolutely had to pay £22 to submit your application through UCAS. As a result of this, I wound up with a place at Leeds College of Art. I still remember the interview. My creativity stemmed from a love of heritage, and I can see now that my seat in the classroom was tokenistic – they wanted to exploit my working-class background.

Originally, I had planned to stay at home whilst attending university. My mother was so incredibly proud of me. She beamed. However, the social care system is so underfunded that my mother wasn't eligible for carers to visit due to me being registered at the address as a 20-year-old adult. She was catheterised, a fall risk. She'd even microwaved tin foil. Yet none of this mattered.

I was housed with four young women who were also attending the art school. I was paying for the smallest room in the house.

We spent Freshers looking at each other's homes on google earth. Sprawling estates, huge detached houses, swimming pools, paddocks. My two-bed terraced ex council home was "cute". The divide took roots.

They were sipping on elderflower gin and tonics. Something I'd only ever seen my grandma have at Christmas. I've never felt so alienated. I sunk into a depressive episode. I'd broken free of the identity of carer and assumed the new identity of scum. My strong accent was another opportunity for constant ridicule.

I was no longer proud of my background. I was ashamed. I dropped out.

My mum sadly reached palliative care and died the following November. Since, I've built myself back up. I worked and studied for my teaching qualification part time. I'm now a professional. But that means fuck all. I'm on supply. I can't seem to get a "real" job with my non-traditional education. Some weeks I still struggle to put food on the table.

So, why is Further Education so focused on raising the aspirations of the working class? Why are we providing false hope in the guise of education? Are we just breeding alienation?

On one end of the scale, there's the inability of the working class to move comfortably in middle class circles. The ridicule from those who feel superior. The romanticising of our backgrounds provides joy; a dystopian past for the middle classes who want to shake off the shackles of the title of oppressor.

On the other end, alienation is bred within the working class as a community. If you have a degree, a title, a "professional" career, how can you possibly identify with those you grew up with who took a traditional working-class route? Our retail workers, our

factory workers, the manual labourers, the support staff, our carers – how can we relate with these individuals? Are we just as bad as the middle class who revel in the working-class rhetoric?

Is the concept of raising aspirations an elitist constructed means of fracturing the working class? Of pitting us against one another? We are stronger in numbers. As a collective we can speak our experience, we can make change. The miners' strike of 1984; power in numbers. Whilst pits did eventually close, a voice was heard. An identity of strength was exercised.

Raising aspirations is key in FE, particularly in predominantly working-class areas, to motivate and inspire students to feel more secure in their knowledge, lived experience and ultimately finances. But the ridicule of the working class striving for a better quality of life must end. The fracturing and eradication of the working class as we know it must end.

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- The working class will never end, but alienation must.

THE GREAT EQUALIZER



It's Roastin, It's Hot

Bob Charlie

It's summertime, definitely, in the 'Nor Loch, an it's roastin.

It's hoachin. It's fuckin hot.

By the time I'd swept out the last of the losers and general hangers-on wi naewhere better to be out the door it was about half seven. Celia was nearly leavin for work an it wiz fuckin hoachin already. I mean the sun was smashin right through a pristine blue sky like a knife gash.

I felt right bad for Celia. We'd kept her up all the long, hot, sleazy night, doing nonsense and playing crazy golf in the livin room. It was a long, heavy night – so close in that tiny wee room wi bodies. And the noise.

Am sat outside just cheezin in the hot sun wi a cup ae peppermint tea. We'd kept her up aw night long wi our shite an there a was, bold as brass, just sat down dossin in the near skud on the doorstep. She wis gathering her gear fir what was evidently gonna be a really long, hot, shit shift in the surgery.

And there's the sun fuckin splittin the sky. So I try to be as nice as I can. "D'ya want a cup ae peppermint tea, a coffee? Any help gettin ready for work?" I sipped frae ma chipped cup as she looked down at me with something like love, saying nothing.

"Did ye sl..." – I thought better of it. "I'll make ye a wee bit breakfast then, hen." After pouring her a nice wee cup ae the Columbian and settin oot a nice wee bowl ae Fruit n Fibre wi a sliced up banana in aboot it, I notice what the cunts fi last night have gone an done. The rats have only gone an made themselves that many cups ae

tea, sugar aboundin - that there's fuck all milk or sugar left. Not a grain nor a lick ae the stuff tae be had.

Being Mr. Nice, at least fer the morning, I bolt oot the door while she's in the cludgey n fresh'nin up. Next dooor the Lidl's closed for fucks sake, so am runnin on further up the road to Tesco's. Tesco's for fucks sake. And the sun's fuckin screamin, man. It's shoutin down at me: "Burn ya cunt, burn...". I've just washed anaw, an here I am: sweatin. Dirty again. An runnin up the road. Tae Tesco's for milk. Tesco's fir milk fir fucks sake.

Down the stairs I trot. Into Tesco I go. Runnin. Sweatin. All the way doon past aw they aisles. They always put the milk way at the back ae the shop, don't they? In the hope that every cunt just nippin in for milk will stop by every aisle on their way, and rook themsels for nae need.

Cunts. I'm only in for the milk.

Past this isle, n past that - I finally arrive in the back ae beyond at the dairy aisle - the cool an precious milk. So cool back here. But I feel that weird way you do when you're roastin, then suddenly cauld – it's like when you're a bairn an you come oot the pool after jumpin aboot radge aw day, an you step oot intae the inky-blue night time, n get chills right doon ye.

Cauld sweat right doon yer spine.

Grab her milk.

Runnin back I go, dyin t'feed her afore she's away. Past the meat, past the confection'ry, past the tea n coffee where I grab a wee bag of sweet, sweet sugar. Past aw the cleaning shite, past the fruit n veg, past the self service checkoots, past the bacci n past the fags - straight oot the door. Fuck Tesco's fir payin. Pay yer taxes ya cunts.

July 2020

Sweatin hot n cold. Back doon Logie Green I go, runnin like fuck wi ma milk n sugar bag. Back in the door and I makes the breaky. At least – I pours the milk.

Celia seems happy enough. Evidently she's had a wee burn while I've been away, runnin up the road an sweatin, grabbin the milk n sugar an runnin.

She doses gently over her cereal as her eyelashes slowly close and stay shut a few seconds before opening, halfway again. She's glowin in the sunlight bright. A picture of morningtime sun.

We sit together, and take the piss out of last night's guests. And just sit. Happy with laughs. Finishing her cereal, she takes her bowl to the sink and slips it into the hot, soapy water with a plop, turning and leaning forward with her hands comfortably splayed on the red, checked and stained tablecloth.

●
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● Her silken vest top hangs daintily from her perky pups, gently swaying in the wind that rides in waves through the window open wide. I look good at her sweet plum – that round juicy rump, as she goes to pick up her coffee from the table.

It's bruised slightly, her bum, from when she fell the other night. She landed on a bottle, but she looks now smashin nonetheless. The bruise is like a burst of purple art on an alabaster cast. I go to touch it and she turns around slowly, eyes following.

I get the smile I've been workin for all mornin. Puckering her sweet lips, I kiss them. She gathers some things – skants, bra and makeup, spectacles from the couch – and i'm sad to see her going.

She sways as she moves away, slowly groovin to the radio, and heads to wash her body.





My Posh Mate

Ellese Elliot



I recently had the privilege of spending a week in Edinburgh, in a historic Scottish home spread over four glorious, decadent carpeted floors of utter wealth. The staircase spiralled up to a huge skylight, and the walls dripped with mysterious paintings. There was a lift, a foyer, a private park, two front rooms, a ball room, a Harry Potter bedroom under the staircase (amazing), a nursery with two rocking horses in the window, more bathrooms than I counted, one of which had a huge bath propped up on a marble platform, enough cake to make a fat lady sick, and a large cinema room, which was about the size of my one bedroom council flat.

My one bedroom council flat. Well, it's not that bad. It's like gold dust now. It has great windows, lined with mould, the toilet's next to my bath (which is great for emergency pissing), the walls are dripping with milk and decorated with my kids' drawings, a stairwell (outside), where the local people come together to smoke smack and crack, a communal garden, where the people taking drugs shit, an external alarm clock to the sound of gunshots, tasers, or just general bad language, and a balcony, that the council clears of items for a fee (such as your child's buggy), take that. Council life, it has its ups, it has its downs.

It's hard not to feel relatively impoverished when you step inside such a grand home. It's hard not to feel jealous. It's hard not to have some resentment. It's hard to have a friendship that crosses class lines. I want to get in there. I want to live there. Please adopt my family. Please.

I do try to stay thankful for what I have, but the kind of problems we face because of our respective situations/benefits or incomes are different and it came to light that that is reflected in our parenting style and our behaviour as mums. One might ask, how does a council scum mum, such as myself, know a posh toff mum like her?

We met in Greenwich Park and we struck up our friendship talking about motherhood, magic and marshmallows. Whatever, I can't really remember, but I thought she was cool. She's American, I could tell she was living more comfortably than I by the glossiness of her hair, and the sleekness of her buggy. The first house I visited was also something out of *Pimp My Yard*, and my presence there made me feel anxious. I almost felt unworthy. Not because of the way she acted, but because of the way she, or her husband who I had not met yet, may act upon understanding my working classness, and where and how I lived.

● She shops at Waitrose. I rob Waitrose. She goes organic. I go manic.
● She wears Mac. I wear sacks. Well I don't really wear sacks, but it rhymes and you get the gist. These are the differences. They are superficial, they are materialistic, and they are real. We live in a world where friendships are based on mutual fetishes. Our status is worn on our clothes like the tattoos of prisoners, not always, but usually always.

I knew Americans generally could not identify class through accents, but I felt I was to be soon revealed when her husband from England rocked up. And he did. But he was, what some call, a self made man. He opened his mouth and his accent was as coarse and as tough as mine. Yay. You're not a posh twat. You're just quite rich. Honestly they are both lovely.

Until....

My kids scribbled on her walls, rubbed lipstick in her white carpet, threw popcorn down four flights of stairs, pulled out more toys than feathers plucked from a chicken and shat in her lift. Oh Dear. Generally, I cannot keep on top of the mess at my house, on my own, or even with a friend's help. My kids are four and one, they are tidy, but they are better at being messy. And when you are responsible for a huge house, it also has its downs. So when posh toff mum walked into council scum mum's room in posh toffs house, she went ballistic..

Now I get it, I totally get it, not wanting to clean up mess all day. Let alone other people's mess. I was trying as much as I could to stay on top of it, but I just couldn't. My 1 year old is like a tornado. And I suffer with a type of PTSD which mostly goes unnoticed, but makes me let's say, a bit slow in the morning. I gave her a warning, but she did not heed it. And now I was in front of a woman screaming at me, she pulled out the American form of classism and called me, "White Trash". Inside I laughed a little, I felt like I was on Ricki Lake. She questioned how I could live like this, and why my kids, unlike hers, were so "undisciplined". She went on to use the fact that the bedroom was a mess to justify why I am lower class and why I will never get out of my flat.

At this point, I realised, I was not paranoid. Classism definitely exists. And it definitely exists out of ignorance. I was very apologetic during her diatribe, I did not shout, I did not call her a posh bitch, I did not burn her house down. Well done me. I was very calm and I offered her a hug, which she declined in place of a cider. She later broke down in tears and told me how sorry she was. At the end of the day, I don't think she's horrible. She too is a mother under pressure. Irrespective of the difference in our homes, we probably feel relatively the same amount of pressure to keep on top of all the shit and spend equal amounts of time tidying up. I recognised her struggle as a sister, just with a nicer home to keep. She could however get a cleaner, but for whatever reason she's reasoned

that this will not do. It was and it wasn't class that created these differences.

My boys are, for one, just much more active than her girls. So they make more mess. I am not as active during the day as her, because of my PTSD, related to crime and violence experienced because of living on a rough estate. Three, I don't care as much as her about my home, because I don't actually like my home, which is reflected in the ways I bring up my children. They jump on the sofa, they draw on the walls and we throw our shit about in rage and in rave. We have a jolly old time in the process.

In the days to come not much changed, I tried my utmost to keep on top of the mess, but there was no stopping my baby whirlwind, and the comments kept on rolling. I did not really have the time in the end to explain to her why she was wrong. But maybe she may have realised that my two boys and my situation is different. Are we still friends? I'm not sure. But friendships as these should be encouraged. They may show posh toffs our struggles, and scum mums might get some decent hand me downs.

WHITE
TRASH



... WHITE PECKHAM

xchris

1

The melancholy twilight landscape all around Peckham Rye settled in on itself once again because in fact the middle classes had well settled into Peckham Rye's surrounding streets for a shitty long time in memorial and they love a mackerel twilight.

Peckham bourgeois backstreets with the large gabled windows, large porches probably, bold colourful front doors with golden numerals and front gardens with plants and Begonias in hanging baskets, one of the most Colonial of flowers and straight from the book of Empire, and as such that this other jolly Peckham is an 'oasis of cleanliness and civilisation and comfort in the midst of – the contrary'. By which they mean the contrary savages who you couldn't trust for one minute, or even get to know properly as they were so fickle or so damn unreverential, and these back streets as celebrated in one or two books like 'The Architecture of Peckham' by Tim Charlesworth: bold bare tasteful narratives that tried to cut through the shite of Peckham estates and dog-eared ends that had been served up piping hot as poverty porn with heavy heavy stigma on national TV. But those 'less well-known' cutesy Victorian workers cottages or Georgian terraces are only really served up by those with taste to disappear those contrary fucks once more, those in tower blocks or low level estates, no chic, no modernism, no respect, no cares. Or that poverty was to be supposedly conquered away by savage cuts in local government expenditure or ameliorated, expunged, resolved missionary-style in dingy back yards of council estates undergoing 'regeneration'. Peckham bourgeois backstreets had to have their constant revenge on Estate Sams and Samanthas and Mohammeds and Laylas and Amaris and Nias.

Back in the days of the early 80s, this middle class architecture dreamscape, banal and unerotic, hid an occasional forced introduction of clueless but searching working class youth to young middle class clever clogs types. Every classroom had one or two of them. Thinking about them from the back seats of the dumbo stream at school where the culture-prone young men were not of course, but were in other classrooms entirely streamed and groomed for the smart pass to University, those clever types seemed to understand something of English poetry at 16 or they could place a few Keats or Wordsworth quotes, they knew of James Dean, of Jean-Luc Godard, of Victor Hugo and of Chopin or Satie piano music, or of Situationist theory or knowing of Lolita and who that young girl was and meant. These kids never nicked bikes or mopeds or cars but they nicked cultural references from their parents or from books they found on their parents' shelves. Hence we yoof oiks then were able to detect some dim and distant horizon to want kind of badly that was better than working in Tesco's or a Goods-In desk at Comet, when at the time you might struggle through a golden pack of ten Benson and Hedges and read WAR Leo Kessler or HORROR Stephen King or watch the Generation Game or 3-2-1 or Bullseye, the lonely years of punk and punk mates who turned Nazi receding away as the 80s hammered us and your paperback Jack Kerouac, paperback Christopher Isherwood or paperback Albert Camus was yet to arrive in your life, such an education made then only in the Public Library which became a treasure trove and funded by dole spent good on second-hand books in charity shops and being nowhere near any University that would have ruined such learning forever.

Suburban boy, up from Eltham for a thing, for a night out in Brixton first time and kipping over in a middle class mate's girlfriend's mum's house off Peckham Rye and seeing for the first time fruit bowls on the table and hippy chic mother's clothing and rooms lit by lamps only. The first night away from the family nest, and then that same first walk as made in July 1982 that by 2019 had been

made ten thousand times from the vastness of Peckham Rye back up to the train station called Peckham Rye, because the suburban boy ended up a council tenant on Old Kent Rd not so far away. But no longer could that walk be the same as it had been all those years ago in that first lonely and lost time not even knowing well how to get home to Eltham, clueless really, and that walk from the Rye to the Station, that walk, and not then feeling so out of place as you might do now, then just feeling working class like everyone else on that road, black or white, and that same walk now brings contempt and spitting on the pavement to add to the rubbish in boxes and rubbish strewn by the side of the road, this fact of Peckham Life, strong aromas cheek by jowl, chicken heads and cow carcass, plantain and sometimes clandestine live snails, this fucking revenge on England's horrific Empire, this being enough, though for some long or short-term white locals to wish those Blacks to fuck off out of Peckham in an act of gentrifying prettification that takes their colonial nostrils to some Radio 4 imperialism of superiority where the English still shit on all from a high place, and as if that shit did and does not still smell.

It's been said that the rubbish on Rye Lane was an act of anti-colonial resistance and long may it stay that way, for new build residential were still plonking down and them that bought into them overpriced as they were and whatever were hating on any old prole business, corner shop, kebabs, garages or MOT places, the same contempt for places that journalists in The Telegraph were then describing denizens as 'hooky' in faux-homage to Only Fools And Horses, whose name must still in 2019 be forever evoked when banging out 1500 words on Peckham for the Sunday papers, tapped out absent-mindedly into the iPhone on the new Overground heading out of the Queens Rd Peckham direct jugular vein to Dalston twattery, a few choice places and phrases, some wonky wank article destined only for the Twitter feed and Facebook pages of morons who thought they had something to share about the place (as if factoids meant knowing anything material and/

or juicy, real or lived), whatever. Anyone with any suss preferred the old and actual Winnie Mandela House on Peckham Rd to the imaginary Nelson Mandela House of Rodney and Del Boy and that irritating and useless uncle Buster, because it's entirely arguable that the abject beating to death of fourteen year old UDF activist ordered by Winnie is in some ways more understandable as a desperately bad act of struggle than the instant capitulation to the mass scale beatings of neo-colonialism and neo-liberalism that Nelson Mandela plunged Black South Africans into on taking power. Arguable, dubious yes, totally is, again arguable! Journalists use Del Boy as a weapon against Peckham because they can't use Desmonds for that purpose because Desmonds is for real and this is their erasure some more, at play.

Yet the refrain 'Only Fools and Horses work' sets up a genuine 'hooky street' primer of proletarian longing, work indeed being the space occupied between drinking or drowning your sorrows, in the pub, in the street or a few nips or cans hidden in the desk or behind the cash register if you were too fucked to care. Hooky fucking street, known by all as work, is known by all as a fucking imposition with no remorse, no saving graces, no dignity, no relief, just grind and grinding, moved by the tense displeasure it places on the mind and body and soul as it grinds its pelvis into you at any angle on any hole it can take, any orifice of we mongrel class in this fucking endurance test of new White Peckham.

2

Charity shops were doing well now on Peckham High Street, rammed and no longer on their uppers, but consequentially normal decent people could no longer get a look-in on the economic bargains of clothes that they liked and they could wear without feeling bad or overly visible unless they wanted to, as the places were now packed out with posers and utter cunts upon fucking cunts looking for ironic, funny clothes like check cardigans, patent leather shoes, flat caps, heavy metal t-shirts, in a never-dying middle class fad for

the last 25 years - that insults the honourable class politics of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal, established in May 1979. But it's now taken up rather well and better by young black girls from the estates mostly wearing Maiden t-shirts - a funny uncanny fashion statement read through with some subversion, which the trendy ass-wipe Metal t-shirt wearing dickhead is nowhere close to, being merely ignorant of the possible resistances of Heavy Metal in its awful but stupendous declaration of independence and doom and gloom fight back from 70s and 80s post-industrial grinding poverty.

Or the interlopers in the charity shops they buying metallic blouses or any Eighties shite like Levis 501's with fly buttons and the 'correct' vintage red stitched selvage where the only beyond-the-pale items are shell suits in hideous colours, these items being irredeemably working class still and they have not dared to go there. Not yet but new oxygen thieves are always round the corner or so it seems. Half brick to the head of any of these stupendous graduates of Arts Hogwarts who go out for a night in Peckham in a lime green Ellesse or duffed up 90's turquoise Kappa for the pigs would be wilding on any black youth out on the piss, and being as raucous as these white art hippies on any Friday or Saturday night in Peckham with the cheek of their loud caterwauling ego froth, such black kids beaten and chucked in the van, the spit hoods out, the cop's own body camera goading them as they are turned to black prole meat, this being so far from the glory of your own grime video set on your own estate ends but much more true to life and historically represented in NWA's 'Straight Outta Compton' original video, where despite Ice Cube's insistence that if the pigs come then 'Off your ass, that's how I'm going out', they all get rounded up one by one by tooled-up cops, handguns or shotguns to your face. Feds 1 – NWA Nil!

Now the insane and violent glory days of the Peckham Boys 'gang' being well and truly over and those Boys ironically honoured in Time Out's London's movers and shakers of 2006, of course despite the

deaths, the North Peckham estate regenerated and so grim reality once again turned in on itself as black life is murdered by white life's morality so that the errors and horror of 'black on black crime' is once again misunderstood by both Council sociologists and Academic tossers and 'solved' by housing demolitions and 'rebalancing the community' or 'deconcentrating poverty' that they proposed as a fucking fantastic answer to misery and crime and the pain of the working class, this tragedy some kind of gentrification deluxe turned into cultural references sometimes for all those faux Oliver Twists exhibiting at Hannah Barry gallery or those walking wank trumpets heralding themselves and always looking down on the actually existing black street culture from Frank's Bar, Frank himself 'concerned about the gentrification of the area' but unable and unwilling to do anything other than continue looking down from on high and totting up the takings. And beneath Frank's Bar, the sewer of Peckham Levels, multi-storey car park turned multi-coloured Hellhole, as above so below init, the white idiots drunk up to black sounds, black pains down on the street. The heavy silence in the fleeting midst between drumbeats and bass notes leaves an agonising space to feel the content of actual Black life, where that minimal space in dance music, micro silences highlight that content in the verse or the yearning, but then probably a chance for white boys to fill that momentary space with chatter. Or like Emmanuella Kwenortey wrote, that soul music made from black suffering is devoured in good time dancing clubs 95% white at Soul Train in the Bussey Building, and what can this mean because Peckham, Rye Lane, was and still is fucking poor and black and with soul.

The Black working class has consisted of people who were bus drivers, accountants, insurance agents, DJ's, shop workers, people who pick up litter or who paint the yellow and white lines in the road, were nurses and NHS admin staff, were housing officers and housing dogsbodies at the Council, were charity muggers, were receptionists, were grocers' assistants, were beauticians, were

sellers of tickets at the railways, were salespeople, were phone screen fixers, were road sweepers and rubbish men, were truck drivers, were deliverers of fruit and red and white meats and slippery fishes early in the morning, were sellers of Chinese food, Indian food, Ethiopian food, were travel agents, were production engineers for cheap studios, were low waged security guards at Bold Tendencies multi-storey car park keeping out the brothers who were in no way interested in Barcardi bars anyhow, were selling popcorn in the Plex, were different sorts of managers in the Plex, were cleaning the bogs in the Plex, were information officers for the Plex, were ushers, projectionists, cooks, chefs, dishwashers, cleaner uppers, mail order clerks, ambulance drivers or callers or mechanics, welders and scaffolders or steel erectors, retail chain managers and area managers, hairdressers, fabricators, janitors, carpet sellers, carers, dog walkers, local paper journalists and photographers, graphic designers, web designers, clothes designers, baristas and sandwich artists, models, strippers, prostitutes, escorts, tilers and plumbers and labourers, mans and vans, womans and vans, lifeguards, gym workers, gym trainers, personal trainers, pole dance trainers, trainer sellers in J.D Sports, jerk chicken sellers, butchers, grocers, newsagents, record shop workers, cd stall owners, were DVD shop workers, were DVD shop owners, are rickshaw drivers, taxi drivers, mini-cab drivers, bus cleaners, bus supervisors, bus inspectors, ticket inspectors, club staff, club runners, in telesales, mobile phone hustlers in EE, regional greeting cards salespeople, late night staff in the Plex, or were hustling for Sky TV sign-ups in Peckham Square, were bartenders in Peckham Pelican, were selling you petrol, fast food, coffee, other stuff in the old BP garage on Peckham Rd, were gallery assistants, were designers, were court ushers, were bailiffs, were martial arts teachers, were low paid teachers, Overground ticket inspectors, UKBA enforcement officer scumbags, were zero hour contracted to slavery at Sports Direct out on Walworth Rd or Old Kent Rd, were painting and decorating old Rastas doing a few houses up for wages in Bellenden Rd but more so mostly relics than

the chintzy dinner party word of mouth ‘a couple of little Polish builders really nice and hardworking’ but you do see Rastas around still thank fuck, were also bike mechanics or bike sellers in Evans, are landscape gardeners or drive the small grass-cutting tractors for the local council, contracted in probably, were plasterers, electricians, plumbers again, locksmiths, drainage workers working for Mears at Lambeth, were not many getting-there artists, poets, film makers but were many more now wherever that might lead to and how and good luck, were librarians, were Po-lice, were a million other jobs the black working class consisted of.....

And what?

The weaponised nonsense of there being a ‘white working class’ who exist for Guardian writers or London Review of Books readers to ponder - that is those working class white people who actually also do exactly the same jobs as listed above but obviously there is more racial hierarchy present in its own entirely shitty way, even though we are all exploited working class people even though waged labour is ideologically and thus materially racialised, by which Guardian and LRB scumbags do well because they never notice that a black hand cleans the toilet of their offices at 5am in the morning or that a black hand cleans the dishes in the restaurant behind closed doors, but that a white hand subs their writing and that a white hand takes their order in the Peckham Refreshment Rooms on Blenheim Grove. Did you see that there was a black security guard labouring at the door of the Effra Social Club in Brixton when inside is 99% white professionals playing board games and drinking fruit ciders from Sweden, give a shit, because this white oasis decides that keeping the picture of Winston Churchill up on the lounge wall of this former Tory club can ingratiate the need for a private hire of that lounge to spend a minimum of £1000 at the bar or you lose your £200 deposit because white irony also has a high price to be paid? And so who can understand if you attempt to be a black person working in

the arts, in the creative industries, in the hospitality and catering sector, that you were not necessarily selling your soul to become middle class as the rate of class exploitation mixed with racism is like a hammer perpetually banging you and good luck to those who succeed where Inglan is still a Bitch, where there is still 'no escaping it', still killing it in Peckham.

Black communities, all those overlapping and hybrid means and ways to an end for survival, are not allowed to be thought of as 'black areas' in the city because we don't say 'white areas' of a city although if we did we might see how these white areas are experienced by black communities and it might be an actual relief to grasp that a bit. But maybe for whites there is less at stake colonially in this insistence that we don't racially label areas than there is for black communities who might be happy to know of their neighbourhoods as 'black areas'. Also because these areas are aspirational because and in fact after hundreds of years of slavery, exploitation, violence and death (including forced rape, being orphaned, being transported, being mutilated, being induced quickly into a deep and long-lasting traumatic horror) that aspiration asserts itself as a legacy of these slow-to-heal wounds, still sore, still mentally smarting, and that getting on, doing well, being made, is not a sell out of the place some on the Left want you to never leave but is only really the same as any prole desire to live free from the masters and not in other peoples' gated ghettos they want you to inhabit forever. Leftist myths of black people as an even more revolutionary class subject that doesn't take into account aspiration as self-defence is proper racist and so – what is to be done in White Peckham?

3

Under a rancid and a frozen moon the night time was breeding the new pupa in the streets where White Peckham turns from being caterpillars to being new locusts, and this magical trans-species event results in more white noise as bars, as galleries, as unself-

consciously described 'eating places' called The Coal Rooms, whites coal blackface to their cheek to eat 'smoked jerk goat sausage,' breakfast at £15 a go where 'mushrooms & Marmite' signify never changing white cultural hegemony. You walk past Bar Story in 2013, past the Peckham Pelican in 2015, past Beer Rebellion in 2016, past John The Unicorn in 2017, past Four Quarters South in 2018, past The Market in 2019, past The Fanon in 2021 or The Colonialist Past Beginning With A 'Fuck You' Bar in 2022, that barricades might be needed to be made from the rubble of the to-be-destroyed Review bookshop in Bellenden Rd and on the list for wrecking The General Store close by ('our specially curated selection of hampers are a bespoke design modeled on an original by Stanley Kubrick'), that Anthony Gormley's bollards would go through the windows of The Begging Bowl, that copies of the White Review in bundles would be the fuse primer on homemade cannons made by possible comrades in Tara Fabrications on Bleinhem Grove, and that in the end none of this would probably come to pass.

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When these middle class-adjacent sallow proletarian youth of the 80s 'grew up', their ruffled proletarian class position was sometimes debated by others now that they took a freelance job or two 'in the Arts', where total cunts abounded still despite decades of critical theory of this and that, or mentions of 'praxis' or 'pedagogy' or describing themselves as 'cultural workers' enough to make you chuck up, the latest hypes of 'Contemporary European Philosophy' giving a frisson of you living on the edge because essentially you refused the pretty decent call to 'decolonise', even if that's now so trendy with whites that it goes full circle back to their privilege to have the time and space to 'think about it for a bit' but do fuck all, as they see their life 'predicated' upon something or 'problematized' by something, but actually keep their well dealt life cards even closer to their chests lest they have to give a tiny smidgeon of what they have up for even 10 seconds, and still they had wanked themselves blind over the years to some current hybrid of Achille Mbembe's 'necro-politics', or worse they had screamed up some

nonsensical bollocks at their excitement of ‘how interesting’ Wendy Trevino’s criticism of Gloria Anzaldúa is but you know, it’s still only ever ‘interesting’ and never a weapon for change. Or pick from a big floppy straw hat from Oxfam what you will from the normal academic canon because Black thought always has to be approved by its reference to Western White thinkers, and all abstracted anyhow from any actual practical solidarity they might give out to actual black or brown people.

Or artistic students might ‘practice’ their ‘art’ and their ‘intervention’ on someone else’s Council Estate and write in their dreadful and dreary blurb that their art ‘hovers between flatness and three dimensions’ as they invade and intervene in a space they need to ‘FUCK OFF’ from, as was written by a local on their poster that they dared to paste to an estate wall and we had to consider how, despite a myriad of good intentions mused upon in ‘the real world’, as it was always described by cheerful DSS Work Advisors back in the day of Job Seekers Allowance, you never once had been able to answer the question ‘and what do you do?’ both because you never went to those sort of middle class posh people’s cultural studies parties and because you was never going to be the kind of shithead who ‘did’ something, especially the kind of shithead who thought that their ‘doing’ something means that they were then ‘something’ in themselves when they are all just a horrible same bag of shit, piss and bones - the same as everyone else except with better skin and more expensive shoes on their feet. Your working class background fucks you up always, no matter how much you can pass. It does your head in.

It was October 2019 and one of these fools had bumped you in the street and spilt some flat white coffee on your feet and said ‘Sorry, buddy!’ which was another plus double-plus-bad in the Gentrification Index, this marker of Whiteness sadly not indexically linked to a punch in the face thing. More lovely kittens died as a result of your human empathy scale being once more downgraded

to junk status, this being that 'Social interactions rated 'Junk' are highly speculative and are likely in, or very near, default, but with some prospect of recovery of principal and interest'. White Fucking Peckham.

4

Because of these kind of people, Peckham had been said by many to have been improved, was 'better now' and that the area was no longer scary, still 'edgy' if you wanted your own edge ('Yeah, I live in Peckham now' – 'Yeah I live in Pecknam!') and that was all rested journalistically on the overt coding and inference that it was the influx of white people who had made this so and not the efforts of every local Tenants' and Residents' Association to keep their estates as great places to live and to offer meeting space for local groups and organising days out for residents, not the efforts of every local playground or kids amenity groups or BMX clubs, not the work of all the mentoring work for young teens, not the patience and love of From Boyhood to Manhood project, the Kickstart Catch-22 project, the MCSAS – Hearts of Love project, not the dedicated work of teachers in local schools, not the Sojourner Truth Community Centre, not even the work of local families and an amazing protest by kids to save their Leyton Square Adventure playground which they managed, not the One O'Clock Clubs and children's nurseries, toddlers groups or homework clubs, not the dozen or so dedicated centres where kids can learn music production or dance or photography or graphic design, probably not even the local advice centres and C.A.B and S.G.T.O doing Universal Credit drop-in advice at Bells Gardens Community Centre or any local Food Banks, not the healthcare advice and drop-in services that exist in Peckham, not the Pensioners' Centre or the Pensioners' Action Group, not the Southwark Day Centre For Asylum Seekers at the Coplestan Centre or the Southwark Refugee Project or the Peckham Pride protests in 2016 and 2017 led by local asylum seekers or the day when locals and traders faced off UK Border Agency wankers on Rye Lane in 2015 and told them to

fuck off in no uncertain terms, not the market stall holders' nor the local shopkeepers' grace and humour, the pharmacists going beyond the call of pharmacy shopkeeping to care for all, not even the long term older generation of white residents who have lived in Peckham throughout much and understand what the area was about and how they play a part of that and, of course, many of them whites being subject to their own well-worn contradictions and stresses and strains and many of these also being subject to budget cuts overseen by Labour councillors...

But no! What had 'changed Peckham for the better' had been arts squats on Lyndhurst Way that really were only a property guardian scam 'preventing squatters from getting in' or the Wowow art squat at the Co-op on Rye Lane, or the Southwark Council-funded strategy of Bellenden Road Renewal Scheme and Anthony Gormley and Flat Time House and bollards and lamp-posts and every new restaurant there since 2010, or the Yoga studio who complained to their neighbours about boomboxes and too much noise harshing their white Yoga clientele mellow, and after the shit storm got in The Standard that they were able to get The Editor to remove their shit and note that 'the article has been edited from its original form after comments made by the founders created animosity locally', or puff pieces in the New York Times where all artists mentioned are white, a piece in Vogue in 2015 'Urban Renaissance: How Peckham Became London's Cultural Epicentre' where all the photos of artists and gallery owners are white but the model who is modeling in edgy shots in bright-lit back streets is black, or once again the same white supremacy in 2016 where Vogue again writes 'A Perfect Afternoon in Peckham: The Williamsburg of London' and once again everyone pictured is an Aryan monster, or Arcadia Missa, Lucky PDF, Jupiter Woods, Sunday Painter, or the Bunhill Bandits whose arty 2009 press release began 'In deepest darkest Peckham' or the Safehouse, the Pop-Up Peckham Hotel, the South London Gallery empire on Peckham Rd that has the brass neck to crowdfund to open up another building for 'a hub for community

meals and artist-led events', Auto Italia South East, Assembly Point, Amp Gallery on Acorn Estate, m2 Gallery, Moca London gallery, Seen Fifteen gallery, Garudio Studiage, Limbo Limbo gallery, The Chopping Black gallery or Rod Barton gallery, or it had been the endeavours of Peckham Bazaar, Artusi, Pedler, Ganapati, Anderson and Co, The Clock House probably described as 'eateries' in Time Out, or it had been the long term moronic local Jenny Éclair with her 'Rye Lane is quite gritty and it smells; nail bars fight with Blue Planet-style fishmongers; let's just say it's one of the few remaining streets in London where I occasionally have to hold a scented hankie to my nose' or her on Peckham Levels '...anyway, the staircase doesn't smell of wee and ganja anymore. It smells of a brand new Peckham', or it was Grand Designs TV show 'The Peckham House' purchased way back some time for £40,000 by Thespian done well Monty Ravenscroft and his partner Claire and now an AirB&B rental at £235 per night, and do you remember when that awful crowdfunded urban project that was fronted by white architect professionals who desperately advertised their urban oasis of the Peckham Coal Line as being a real kind of community project because they got some actual non-white locals to smile on the Vimeo-hosted trailer and begging for your cash, and it was a kind of dumb and pointless and relentlessly overdone reference to New York's The Highline that would never happen but they raised £75,757 anyhow for it, which went where exactly, and when they first put an image online of what it could look like they had, shit you not, some kind of funky Highline space with 95% white people chilling listening to some buskers who were all white men in suits but like a Slavic migrant street band of cello, oboe and accordion, and when this was pointed out to be incredibly fucked up they took they same image, deleted a few Photoshop layers, the musician men now edited out and in come new Photoshop stock layers of an African man playing congas and a black woman walking into the frame with an umbrella – fucking beyond belief, no? And now the Coal Line is recommending a property developers' new builds of Stable Yards because it would guarantee the first bit of the Coal

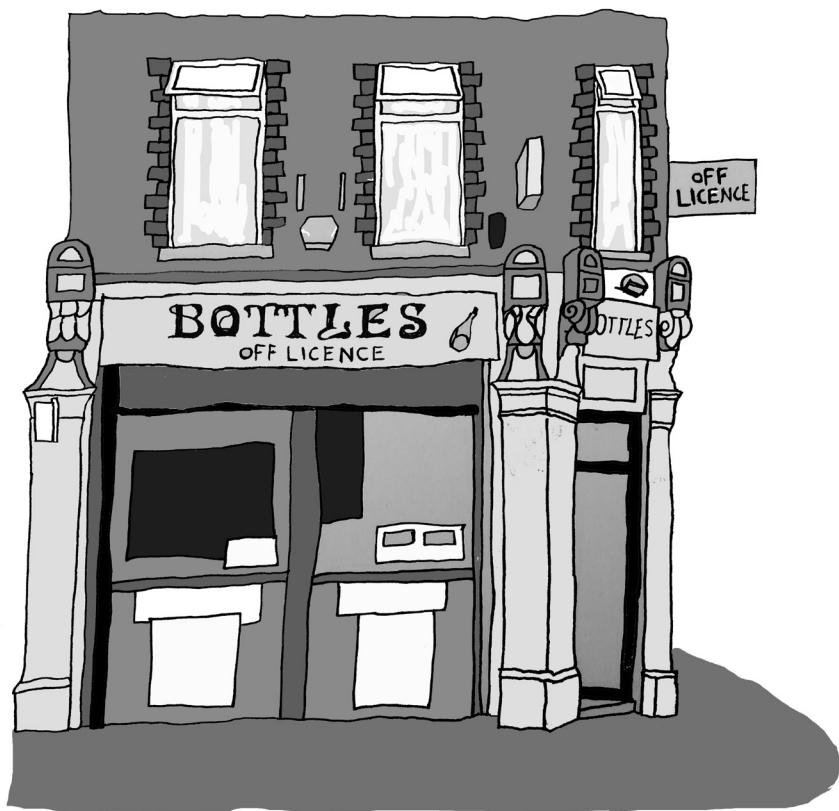
Line init, or Gareth James Estate Agents of Displacement in the area who cackled out how they had played a major part in the now high yield profits of buy-to-let landlords in the area, or it was all of those residents in streets off Bellenden Rd who were the perfect ‘agents or transmitters of values...of British civilization superior to any other in Europe or the Americas in the technical aspects of and the middle class attention to housing, leisure and food’, or was it even then the same snow white middle class people interviewed by Emma Jackson and Michaela Benson who could say ‘most of my neighbours are very multicultural, um ... and you know, and I’ve had curried goat before and I’m quite happy to have curried goat again, the Indian lady makes lovely Indian food when we go over there sort of thing ... so that is multicultural and I like that and I like our neighbours ... I like Bellenden area because that is sort of a little, um, villagey sort of feel’ or even and more explicitly ‘What I’m subscribing to is the fact that, why refuse that you have..., because you have a stake in the community – as in, put your hard-earned cash, and mental and emotional stake in a community, you feel as if you have some kind of power over what happens to it ... if we didn’t live here, what would this area be?’ And now how much more of this can you take for there is tons more believe us. Fresh fucked-up Hell indeed. And what would the area be if they didn’t live there? Was it them who did it, who made it all better in all their self-gratifying and self-referential Whiteness? You laugh or cry or murder. Or murder yourself, init.

You wanted to know, in your imaginary t-shirt ‘GTFO of Our Habitus’, what any of this meant nowadays and which meant you would put any middle class concern for your ‘well being’ straight back up their ass, all their shit and violence so touchy-feely and the worse for it and never an actual fist, this curse of the middle classes, all their bile and loathing of the poor and every hateful thought you had towards those ‘Peckham bourgeois backstreets’ and the class violence that they so easily wielded against us all, we who will never know our place and will be constantly confused even if we

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are able to find some peace and happiness with ourselves and our comrades and all this could only lead downhill all the way to Bottles on the High Street, a place you had never even bought a beer in but was glad it remained steadfast against all filthy gentrifiers although one day it actually and literally and tragically disappeared over night and become something entirely else unmemorable, and as much the same again could be said of nearby and Peckham legend Crackerjack, getting half a bottle Mad Dog from there in late 90s, and finally closed in 2020 where much a street robbery money has been spent on fine alcohols, this practice only being a more street version of crowdfunding your survival and your jollies, your reparations, one further tactic probably, you thought and added into your internal rant, of the need to die of bile in White Peckham.







MOTHERGIRL
GIRLMOTHER
FATHERSTRANGER
BROKENBROTHER
GRANDFATHERBOY



A Little Girl

Tammi Dallaston

There was once a little girl.

Clever, funny, and loving, her gifts were paraded for all to see.

They were taken from her box, shared out, then pillaged and stolen by the jealous ones, the blind ones, the ones that couldn't feel.

Not understanding where her true nature's gifts had gone, the little girl boxed herself up and hid in books, behind sofas and in stasis.

Quickly, before the right time, an older figure emerged in the child's body –
Girlmother.

Girlmother would listen to everyone's problems, even those not spoken to her, absorb them and berate herself for being too little to make it all better for the hurting ones.

"When I'm bigger," she said, "I'll fix you all. That will be my thing and that is what I will do."



In those little years, the Girlmother took care of her own Mothergirl. Mothergirl should have protected the Girlmother, but she was too

emotionally stunted and could only see within. The Girlmother wrapped Mothergirl in a blanket of protection and stepped out in front of her.

The Girlmother was wary of the Fatherstranger.

She watched him from behind a book, behind her fingers, behind her face –pre-empting the actions, moods, emotions. She hid in plain sight.

The Girlmother also had to take care of the Brokenbrother.

It was no-one's fault, but he became no-one's responsibility.

But more than this, she cared for the Grandfatherboy, although she didn't understand how.

She tried disconnecting her mind when he used her body, but he kept trying to bring her back. Fogged in confusion, but wanting to help him, she sought the eyes of anyone that could see.

The Grandmotherstone just frowned, stolid in the background

“You're not the only one”, her eyes said. “You don't matter.”



She looked into the eyes of the Fatherstranger, clouded with alcohol, knowledge and despair.

She looked for the eyes of the Mothergirl, but they were forever turned inward.

When the Grandfatherboy finally put the Girlmother on the shelf, and left her there, she was bereft.

What had she done wrong?

She was simply no longer girl enough.

The Fatherstranger became a danger.

Pendulous moods, swinging realities, swinging fists.

Girlmother became Teen-disconnect.

Trying to feel her way back into her body was futile.

So she offered it out to those that thought they needed it. For a quick fix. To fix them.

She didn't know how cracked she was becoming.

The punk biker – who took a piece of her heart to the other side of the world.

All the Boymen – desperate to prove. Something. She never knew what.

The musician – the one that tried to paper over the cracks with melody, until she tore at it with her lyrics.

That other girl – who tried to smooth out the knots, before she began knitting her own.

The entomologist – who cornered her, and tried to make her dance with his butterflies and tarantulas.

The blue-eyed, black-haired thrillseeker, unashamed that he was hidden and only brought out for danger fun.

All the disconnected ones.

Then came the Killer, in the saviour's cloak.

The one with all the answers.

PeterPan. Another Boyman.

“How familiar”, she cried.

“How strange he's on my side.”

Eighteen years penance.

Eighteen years to open the boxes, explore cobwebbed corners.

They began to see the little girl, the Girlmother, the Teen-disconnect.

The Killer had watched her for years.

He'd known the Teen-disconnect.

She acknowledged the death stare of the Fatherstranger, never to be seen again.

She stood up to the Grandfatherboy, dead and gone.

Waved at all the Boymen.

Forgave the Mothergirl.

The Killer waited before striking, but the cuts struck deep, hard and in all the right wrong places.

The Girlmother appeased, knowing it was her life long duty to fix him. She still didn't know how broken she was.

She cooked, she cleaned, she obeyed.

She prostituted herself again and again.

She began to believe what she was not.

She absorbed the fury, she took the disdain.

She still thought she could fix him.

She didn't know that she needed to be fixed.

She tried to shine in the gaslight.

But she needed the sun and the moon to help her glow.

So the Girlmother became Mothermother:

- The first time – just a few weeks before the blood came. She didn't tell the Killer.

The second time – broke her body but blessed her soul.

The third time – blissful, before the jealous spectre appeared with his scythe, in the shadows, silently threatening to cut those silver bonds.

The fourth time – not even sure if the Babysoul and the Mothermother actually connected, or whether they floated past each other.

The fifth time – the Boysoul landed in the Mothermother with solidity and finality.

He would be the one to set her free.

Then it came, tumbling on her head, heart, soul, psyche, self: the fury of Dante's inferno.

All the circles, all at once, melding from one fresh hell to the next.

Limbo, Lust, Gluttony, Greed, Wrath, Heresy, Fraud

Then the Violence, the Treachery... on and on and on.

Worlds in turmoil.

Bombs landing silently, to explode when she least expected.

But the Mothermother felt acquaintance in the terror, the hyper vigilance, the unknown.

She lay alone – soul bare – to be attacked again, and again. Each time hurt as much as the first.

She never became immune.

She witnessed all the others, the little girl, the Girlmother, even the Teen-disconnect, and smiled in sad familiarity.

She let the PeterPan Killer destroy her shell.

She didn't feel that it was even hers to fix now.

And she still thought she could fix him.

She still didn't know how broken she was.

She crawled away, even then the Killer held onto her ankles.

On and on she dragged.

Carrying the souls that had lived in her body.

Watching the dream stealers, the underground overlords, the silver tongued charmers, and the snake oil vendors.

She walked the dark tunnels, twisting and turning, before she noticed a faint glow, pink in the long way distance. Real?

Intrigued, she saw purpose.

Ignoring the shale rock falls, the potholes, the dark insistent drip, drip, drip of torture, she slowly moved forward.

She made sure to carry her charges carefully, never once dropping them.

She moved past the false prophets, she navigated around the rainbow lake, understanding it's poisonous oily depths would engulf her.

The water churned its discontent with her, but she smiled and walked on.

That light, it glows stronger now.
It's pink. It's warm, and she can't see its source.
Is it getting nearer? She didn't think so.
Is it getting bigger? Yes, undeniably bigger.
Is it getting fuller? It's becoming fuller. Becoming.
She was becoming Becoming.
She looked down and saw the light spilling from all her cracks.

She saw the little girl.
She saw the Girlmother.
She saw the Teen-disconnect.

The Mothermother took them all by the hand, collected them
from behind
sofas, inside books, in stasis, from dusty shelves and behind fingers,
and
● hidden in plain sight.
●
●

She retrieved the piece of heart from the other side of the world,
and
reclaimed the strength that had dissipated in trying to fix others.

As they all held hands, the light flooded through the cracks.
She now understood how broken she had been, and how, when
these beings
were all brought together, she had no more need to fix.
Not herself or anyone else.

Reassembled in this clear pink light, she bathed in the glory of
being.
She felt the hail on her eyelids...
...and it felt good.
She showered in the warm summer rain...
... and it felt good.

She lay beneath the navyblack velvet, highlighting the galaxy of silver pinpricks...
... and it felt good.

The shooting stars fell towards her cracks, and she let the light in. Complete.
With the pink light glow within and without, the skin alive on her body, she looked up and vowed that she would remain whole, integrating all the cracks.

She was love, because there was no more hurt to be had.
She didn't need to be fixed.
She was.



Fuck it. It's Friday Night: Marx Can Wait Until Tomorrow.

David Francis

A short story

Hastings, Sussex. January 2020

“Come on dad, you don't need me to read to you. You can read perfectly well yourself. And you don't need me to explain the books. If there's any words you don't know, any words that you've forgotten, just do what I do: look them up – if you can't be bothered to go on the internet we've got all those dictionaries. Look:”

- The daughter gestured to the bookshelves lining every wall of their tiny cottage's living room, laden with dictionaries, thesauruses,
- literary companions, encyclopaedias of phrase, fable, fiction,
- diction, syntax and lexicography alongside a tatty collection of half completed correspondence courses in everything from film studies to practical accountancy.

“We bought them when I was learning to read and we kept them so you wouldn't need me to read to you. Remember?”

The old man made a low whining noise from the back of his throat, hawked and spat in the fire. He looked at the daughter, his wet eyes blinking across the dimly lit smoke-filled hearth and slapped his pink hollow hands on his knees impatiently.

“But I like it when you read the books and then tell me what they mean. I know I can read but I don't care for it, it's boring, it's hard work and it's unnecessary: I don't need to know every single word and sentence. You've said it yourself: half of the pages are superfluous.

Why do you expect me to have to go through that tedious, time consuming, mental activity, at my age? It's just not fair...

...I have told you time and time again that I don't need the level of detail that actually reading the books myself entails. You must read to me."

The old man collapsed back into his armchair breathless and tearful, snorted and wiped his nose on his sleeve.

His daughter sighed:

"I know dad. I know. I'm sorry. I'm just tired. Work was really shitty today, even worse than usual. And the trains and buses were delayed and packed and going shopping afterwards was awful, long queues at the checkouts and everybody getting in each other's way. I'm just very tired. I didn't mean to be so impatient."

She hoped he might ask her why work was shitty, ask her why she was tired, ask about her day, hoped that he might listen and let her talk but instead he looked relieved - triumphant - like he'd won an argument.

The daughter watched as her father concentrated on rolling his cigarette, licking it and lighting it, closing his eyes as he inhaled the smoke. He caught her watching him and offered her a weak smile:

"Oh, sorry darling. Do you want one? I haven't got much I'm afraid, you know how it is at the moment. It's mostly what I got out the ashtrays at 'Spoons."

Knowing that he was lying out of meanness she nodded, said thank you and took his reluctantly offered tobacco with a sweet smile that she knew would annoy him even more.

As he smoked his cigarette the old man became apologetic, muttering self-pityingly:

“I just like you reading books to me darling. I can’t help that can I? It’s one of the only pleasures I have left now. I’m sorry if I’m a pain. I know I’m nothing but a pain to you.”

The daughter leaned forward, balanced her cigarette on the glazed hearth tiles, picked some of the dirty teacups from the stone floor and took them to the sink at the back of the downstairs room of the cottage.

“Don’t worry about it father. I do like reading to you. You know I do. I always look forward to seeing what you’ve found for me to read.”

- She dried her hands and sat back in the armchair in front of the fire
- where her father was already scrabbling around in his supermarket
- carrier bag looking for the book.

He pulled a bottle of economy brand whisky from the plastic bag followed by a small loaf of sliced bread, two unopened cans of ready-made gin and tonic, two empty cans of the same and a battered red and white cardboard box containing bones, gristle and grease that had once been 5 spicy chicken wings and fries.

At the bottom of the bag amongst the fag butts, empty crisp packets and betting slips his fingers finally located the book. He held it in both hands and passed it across to the daughter.

She caught the book as it slipped from her father's thin yellow fingers. It was thick and heavy so she rested it on her knees, drawing them together to form a lectern. The room was becoming cold as the fire was dying and the window panes clacked and rattled as the draught skittered around the floor nipping at their ankles.

The daughter looked down at the ancient hardback book on her lap. It's cover was the colour of dried blood, it was damp and smelled of tobacco smoke, stale gin and cupboards. She brushed off the cigarette ash and fried chicken breadcrumbs and turned over the cover to reveal the title page:

CAPITAL:

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CAPITALIST PRODUCTION

By KARL MARX

First English Edition

TRANSLATED FROM THE THIRD GERMAN EDITION BY

SAMUEL MOORE AND EDWARD AVELING

AND EDITED BY

FREDERICK ENGELS

VOL.1

She began to read silently to herself, then looked over at her father who had opened his bottle and was pouring the whisky into a cracked dirty teacup.

He smiled back at her.

“You don't want a drink do you darling?” he winced.

He never offered to share his whisky with her unless he was very drunk and feeling lonely and sorry for himself and she knew how that always went so she shook her head.

Her father smiled with relief, took a long swallow of his whisky, pulled a face then leaned over and patted the pages of the book on his daughter's lap, fixing her eyes in his watery gaze:

“You do know this book is especially important for us, for our people, don't you?”

The daughter shook her head. She'd never heard of it before. She was confused as to what her father might mean.

He sat back in his chair, nodding and laughing to himself as though what she had said had proved him right about something:

“No, of course you don't. You wouldn't know, would you. What would any of you youngsters know about this? This book meant everything to us when we were proper workers. When we were hard working people who worked and struggled and made things. When we had proper jobs and decent homes, not this shit.”

He spat on the floor and waved his teacup at the ceiling of the cottage, glaring at his daughter as though it were her that had put them there, as though it were her that was responsible for the poor state of their private rented accommodation and not their landlord.

●
●
● “You lot with your internet and your memes and your whining about everything, you wouldn't understand. You make nothing. You know nothing. Nothing.”

He snorted and refilled his teacup.

“You know, my mother, your grandmother, god rest her soul. She told me, if I read this very book I would understand all about the cause and nature of our class oppression and our poverty and the fucking bastard capitalist system that keeps us poor and she said it could even guide us out of our exploitation and misery so we might know how to defeat the bourgeoisie and make a better world free of misery and hardship.”

He peered across the top of his teacup at the daughter who was staring back at him with open eyes.

For the first time that evening, perhaps for the first time in her life, she was interested in what her father had to say. Had her grandmother really read the book that could explain their plight and offer the possibility of remedy?

“What do you mean father? Had nan read this book? Did she read it to you when you were little? What does it say we should do?”

The father spat in the fire again.

“Yes, she read it. She certainly read it to me, I think. Perhaps. I think she read it to me. Oh I don’t know. It was a long time ago. How do you expect me to remember everything? I just remember it being in the house. She was always looking at it. She read so much to us, so many books, every night that I can’t remember it all, I didn’t always listen. But I do remember her saying how it was important.

“She was a wonderful woman my mother. A strong, intelligent woman. Irish she was, or Jewish, or something. She came from a very big family in the east end of London, or Liverpool or Glasgow or somewhere, one of 9, or 11, or 13 I think. She had to leave school at 15 to go and work in an office or a shop or a factory because of the war and had her first child at 16, 17, or 19; that was your uncle Tom, Dick or Harry, you won’t remember them, never came to visit us – nasty pieces of work. I never liked any of them.”

The father muttered to himself grimly, lost in his bitter sibling reminiscences then burst into a coughing fit which reminded him of his current thoughts, where he was and that his daughter was there. He looked at her sternly:

“Anyway. That doesn’t matter. What matters is that she told me that if I ever wanted to understand the cause of my wretchedness I should read *Capital* by Karl Marx and it just so happens that now

I do want to understand the cause of my wretchedness so if you have any sympathy for your old man please just read the fucking book and then tell me what it says.”

For a moment the daughter thought about challenging her father’s rudeness perhaps by hitting him in the face with the weighty tome but her desire to know what she could learn from the book overcame her temper.

So she turned over the first few pages, tutting thoughtfully as she scanned the dark thick paragraphs of old fashioned densely printed script.

The father poured some more whisky into his teacup and coughed: “In your own time darling.”

● She looked up.

● “Do you want me to begin with the editor’s preface or the author’s preface or at the start of chapter one, father?”

● “I don’t know. Just read the main bit, leave out all the prefaces and introductions. I haven’t got all day.”

The daughter cleared her throat and began to read aloud:

“The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.”

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether

directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production.

Every useful thing, as iron, paper, &c., may be looked at from the two points of view of quality and quantity. It is an assemblage of many properties, and may therefore be of use in various ways. To discover the various uses of things is the work of history. So also is the establishment of socially-recognized standards of measure for the quantities of these useful objects. The diversity of these measures has its origin partly in the diverse nature of the objects to be measured, partly in convention.

The utility of a thing makes it a use value.”

The daughter paused, her brow furrowed in thought:

“The utility of a thing makes it a use value.”

“It’s quite hard to understand isn’t it father. I wish I could have talked to nan about all this. I wish she was here with us still. If she’d actually read it all like you say I’m sure she could have helped us to understand what it means.”

She felt tears of sadness and frustration prickle behind her eyes and she looked over to her father, hoping for some reassurance.

But his head had already slumped forward, eyes were closed and he was beginning to snore.

The teacup had fallen from his fingers and was broken, the shattered fragments in a pool of cheap whisky and phlegm on the tiled floor.

The daughter closed the book and placed it on top of the tall pile of unread works of philosophy, politics, literature, religion, and economics on the other side of her armchair.

She damped down the fire and draped a candlewick blanket over her father's slumbering form.

She carefully picked the shards of her father's broken whisky cup off the floor, wrapped them in the pages of an old Radio Times and threw them into the fire.

Then, relieved of her father's tedious company, she poured herself a glass of his whisky and began to feel more relaxed.

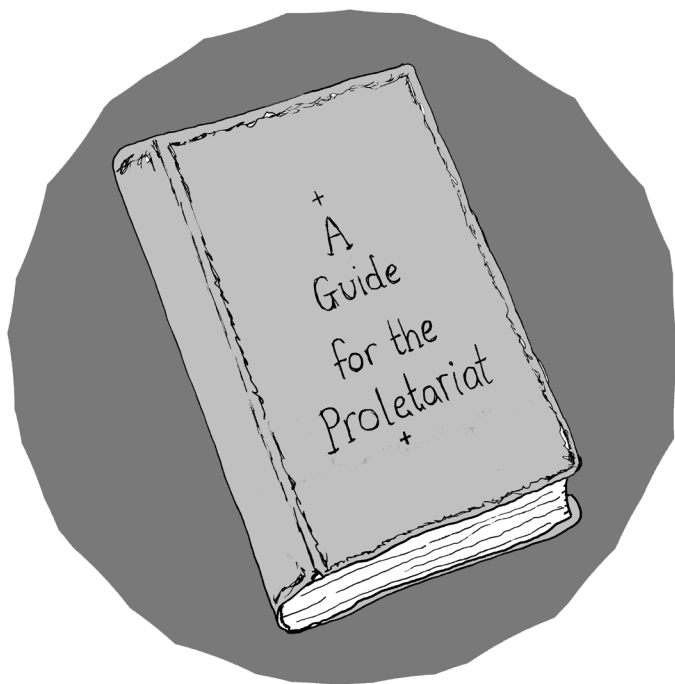
Rifling through the pockets of his jacket she found his pouch of tobacco, cigarette lighter, papers, a small plastic bag still containing a little under 0.5g cocaine, around forty pounds in rolled, folded and crumpled notes and coins and put them into her handbag.

Then, looking at her phone and realising suddenly that it was still only half past nine and that it was Friday night she rushed upstairs to her bedroom where she first treated herself to a decent line of her father's poor quality cocaine before cleaning her teeth and changing out of her work clothes into a beautiful second hand floral frock that she'd found in a charity shop the previous weekend.

Then the daughter put on some makeup and quickly made her hair look fabulous all the while exchanging messages with her friends arranging to meet at a bar in town in half an hour.

As she put her coat on in the downstairs room where her father muttered in his sleep she glanced at *Capital* by her armchair and wondered whether it could really help her and the people she knew to change the way they lived. Then she left the house and hurried down the streets into town.

Fuck it. It's Friday night: Marx can wait until tomorrow.



Brystopia

Davey Payne

We're all going to choke! You 'Brexit' Brits,
You're making me bowk, your United Kingdom's the pits!
Free from EU rule, now you're going to burn coal,
What's next, close all the schools give young graduates the dole?
It's your dirty work being done, the ruling effete,
Would you send your own kids up the lum, when there's chimneys
to sweep?

I'd have you in jail! Charged, just for being obtuse,
On a slow boat we sail into another decade of abuse!
● It's the same sorry story, we're clean out of luck,
● why would you vote Tory? It's no' adding up.....
● You'll wish you weren't born when you're put to the wall,
I pity you really...you've nae brains got nae brawn!

Don't maudle, don't mither though we're nailed to the floor,
don't heed that wee Oliver, don't you dare ask for more!
By shovel, by trick, you've dug us a hole and
it's working, they're dying while you save from paying them dole!
We could end this catastrophe, if you'd forget fossil-fuels,
Auld Dumfries Knitwear factories, we were dyed-in-the-wool!

John Donne did once say that no man is an island
and it's true to this day, look at post-colonial Ireland !
Hard Borders? It's apartheid! Insidious (lack of) education and a
New World Order, led clowns down to our Polling Stations
Working class voted Tory to curb immigration,
Flew off, stoated round pubs like pure mugs on their summer
vacations!

Why must we regress? It just seems so daft,
to wear rose-tinted specs and look to the past!
The Butcher's Apron flies high shouts 'Make Britain great Again'
The people on the street greeting cos we just want to Bremain!
Rutger Bregman kens best! He's our Eurotopian brother,
15 hour weeks? Yes, success, with him at the rudder!



A real emissary! A harbinger of truth!
So...please are you listening, dear Boris and Ruth?!

You'll no have me fooled
though you might kill me off
But my kids won't be ruled
By you Tory toffs.....





Young Hands

Sam Batley

Boredom breeds beasts in youngest minds,
Before the booze and heavy buds.
Fine lines get crossed,
When the size five football fucks off.
Imagination grips
Picking at dirt
Snapping sticks
Dead arms
Deader legs
Mundanity
Park bench shit
Looking for the next fix
Out the blue or black
A baby bird flies for the first time
Whack.
Slapped in the face by the innocent
Destiny in the hands of two miscreants
Flapping on the floor
If only it knew what was in store
It would have flown the week before
Now laying gasping
Wings still new
Fate decided before it flew,
Looked at each other
Instantly knew,

This chick was the excitement to see them through.
In twilight hours
Out of mother's glare
Back home sleeping
Piled up blank stare
Chirps and flutters
Gaping beak
Within old oak eyes looked bleak.
The only eyes staring back
Through the incandescent din,
Were that of trouble and wry grin
Tentative steps
Prod and poke
Unaware of the feeling
What power provokes
Tiny hairs stand to salute
● God like power resolute
● Fate deciders
● Fight or flight
An eye for an eye
In a blind man's fight
'Can't hurt can it'
'flew into your head'
'mad little bastards already half dead'
'fuck it man'
'enough said'
Tools now picked
Opted for smashed glass
Stones the odd twig
Equip
They administer slow not quick
Piece by piece
Placed in fragility
To the soundtrack of laugh and joke
No pangs of shame

No signs of hope
Took its last breath
Blinked,
Then choked.
Eyes closed for the eternal flight
Shoulders shrugged
Marks the end of the night
'see ya tomorrow pal'
'same place same time'
Can't stay at home
Can't come back mine
Boredoms demon perpetuates mind
3 innocent souls
Wrong place
Wrong time.



... Alienation As Poverty

Martin Bradbury

1. Death By A Thousand Coalitions

"The auto industry is much more rationalized than many other industries, but the fundamental character and drive of all industry is the same. It is to rationalize production to get rid of workers to reduce the amount of time it takes to do any job. In that context, the only thing that would be surprising would be that workers did not strike or resist or revolt. The belief that \$5.50 or \$6.00 an hour compensates for that kind of alienation, is the belief that workers are an inferior breed, not like ordinary people."

- Martin Glaberman, 'The Working Class' (1974)

The key issue at stake in our movements is the issue of how we respond to the increase in poverty under neoliberalism. Austerity represents a systematic attack on the working class and as such the dominant approach of our movements since 2010 has been to counter this with an anti-austerity agenda that rejects both cuts to particular services and the dismantling of the welfare state more generally. This has locked us into a path that has required us to form broader coalitions with groups and individuals that do not share our view of a world beyond capitalism. Practically speaking, this has meant that we have had to moderate our positions in order to maintain these alliances, an approach that we have justified with recourse to notions such as the need to be realistic and pragmatic given current conditions. As such we have largely refrained from openly uttering the dreaded C word (*communism*) for fear of scaring off the kind of wishy washy, Guardian-reading soft left who profess to care about working people whilst simultaneously declaring their true contempt for those very same people. How exactly do they declare their contempt? They declare it by arguing that in

fighting for a world beyond capitalism we are being utopian, that in reality There Is No Alternative and that as such we should scale back our dreams. For those of us who are or have been involved in the student movement this manifested itself in demands for free printer credits and cheaper coffee on university campuses.

2. The Importance of Being Earnest, The Practicality of Being Impractical

Why do they think this of us? If you get to speak to them they will give various reasons but ultimately they all come back to one simple fact: they are unable to broaden their political horizons and believe that working class people are able to direct their own lives. They cling tenaciously to the reactionary belief that the slave requires a master, that the slave will always require a master, and as such the most we should demand is that the master only whip us fifteen times instead of sixteen because it is unrealistic to demand a state of affairs in which there is no master and there is no whip. The soft leftist rejection of the communist project as a living project amounts to an insidious form of self-hatred, itself stemming from an equally toxic socio-political inferiority complex regarding their own inability to live in a world in which they are not constantly told what to do by others. If they were to only apply this to themselves they would be merely irritating. However, they project their feelings of inferiority onto others and brand as a heretic anyone who dares to shoot for the stars beyond an unbearable reality.

This willingness to generalise from their own experience of inferiority is what makes them dangerous rather than merely irritating. For those of us who dare to think beyond their narrow horizon we must remember that we did not arrive at our positions by magic. We read. We wrote. We had conversations with each other. We protested together. We occupied together. We came into conflict with the state together and some of us got smashed

and saw our friends and comrades get smashed. Then while we were busy picking up the pieces and trying to put ourselves, our friends, and our comrades back together again we saw ourselves being lied about, defamed, slandered, and vilified; sometimes our antagonists were those that we thought may be on our side and sometimes they were those that we knew for certain were our enemies. If their evaluation of us as extremists is correct then we must tell them that getting to be this militant was not easy, it required a lot of hard work, and that by asking us to moderate our views it is they and not we that demand too much.

Considering this, it is important to ask the question – where has being moderate, realistic, and practical got us? It has got us more of the Conservatives. It has got us an NHS that has been privatised behind our backs. It has got us a list as long as our collective arm of people who have committed suicide because their benefits were stopped or because their application for benefits was rejected altogether. We struggle through dull meetings that drain and demoralise us, making arguments about the evils of neoliberalism that we've all made a hundred times before and often to the same people. They smile at us and tell us that they share our concerns, that like us they also care about people who are struggling to make ends meet. Maybe they will even stand on a picket line alongside the workers that they have so much contempt for, telling them how they are in solidarity with them and how difficult it must be to live on such low wages.

3. Poverty & Drudgery – A False Distinction

The wishy washy conception of poverty begins and ends with lack. It begins with lack because the concern is with an unequal distribution of the social product. It ends with lack because it fails to realise that the product is ours in the first place. Pity the poor who can't afford a holiday abroad or all the mod cons! This conception of poverty is intellectually debased because it is a strictly bourgeois

conception of poverty. It testifies to the sovereignty of money whilst failing to recognise the tyranny of that sovereignty. This bourgeois conception of poverty is beneath us because it fails to recognise that it is a systematic daily denial of our true capacities that built the New Jerusalem for the bourgeoisie and the dark satanic mills for the rest of us. As such, we must be willing to say that we the workers of the world deserve not only all of the social product but much more. We deserve a life worth living, a life where we can flourish and become what we are capable of becoming.

This is of course not to say that we do not share with the bourgeois leftist a concern about unequal distribution. Of course we do. We care just as much as they do about income inequality and cuts to the welfare state. We fight against those things no less than they do. To not do so would be dangerously idealistic considering the challenges that we are facing. However, to acknowledge unequal distribution as a social and political problem does not preclude us attempting to go beyond the narrowness which limiting ourselves to this concept of poverty imposes. If we do not attempt to go beyond this concept of poverty we cannot even begin to go beyond the reality of it; we internalise it in our movements and reproduce the logic of those who are unable to imagine a world in which human beings don't exploit each other. If we are communists we must articulate an alternative conception of poverty within our movements, one which points to a world beyond exploitation and capitalist social relations.

At this point I would like to take the opportunity to quote at length the words of the Marxist, Herbert Marcuse, a man who was certainly not opposed to social change. This quote is rather lengthy but I believe that it deserves to be quoted in full because the television interview which it is taken from was the biggest influence on me in developing the perspective that I have attempted to articulate in this piece:

“The main point I would say is, for Marx, a genuinely socialist society was a society in which the quality of life was decidedly different from the existing societies meaning in a genuinely socialist society labour, full time alienated labour, would no longer be the measure of wealth and value. In an authentic socialist society, men and women could live their lives without fear, without being compelled to spend their entirely (sic) adult existence in alienated performances.”

- Modern Philosophy : Marcuse and the Frankfurt School (1977)

Practically speaking, we must make the case that being unable to pay the rent or having to miss a meal is only one form of poverty, that this is the form of poverty made visible by money and that as such it is the only form of poverty that capitalist society can recognise. Counter to this we must make the case that there is a form of poverty which is rendered invisible in capitalist society, namely poverty as the systematic denial of individual and therefore collective human development, the denial of human capacity that results from doing the same monotonous task day in, day out in order to earn a living. A life of drudgery is a life of poverty. I went to university at the age of 27 and discovered that I had a talent for writing, a talent that was denied for a decade because I had to do bullshit service sector jobs to stay alive. Imagine the hidden capacities that you may all have that you may never get to develop or even become conscious of because of the drudgery and monotony having to reproduce yourselves every single day requires. This is regardless of what kind of work you do or how much you get paid to do it. The development or non-development of those capacities, our ability or inability to manifest our capacities for others, is a more profound measure of real wealth and therefore real poverty. It is more profound because unlike their conception it allows us to imagine that which we are not supposed to imagine and demand that which we are not supposed to demand.

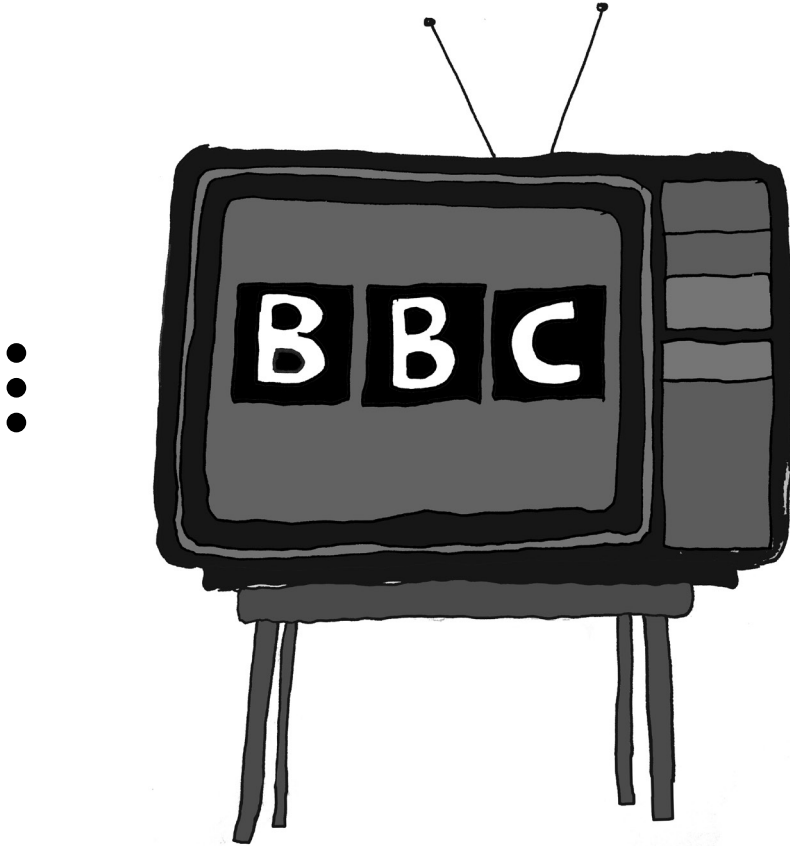
In conclusion, if we are to ever move beyond capitalism we must articulate a conception of wealth and poverty that is radically different to that which dominates in capitalist society, a conception that is grounded in the richness of human ability rather than the capacity to simply buy back in its entirety the social product which has already been stolen from us. We must be willing and able to tell the soft lefties that it is they who are being unrealistic, that it is they who are being utopian. If they want to deny their own agency then let them. If they want to let their own inferiority complex dominate them then let them. If they want to limit their political imaginations then let them. In short, if they want to hate themselves then let them. It is our task to do what they are unable to do themselves. It is our task to go beyond the limitations of the soft left.



WE DESERVE
A LIFE
WORTH
LIVING

A LIFE
WHERE
WE CAN
FLOURISH

AND
BECOME WHAT
WE ARE
CAPABLE OF



Fun in Toytown

Anne

(Read with a BBC RP Accent)

Enid warned against the taint
From ghastly children down the lane.
We all know the BBC is really not for you and me.
In Toytown golliwogs are now replaced by
Naughty worker archetypes.
It's jolly fun to laugh at them, the accents of those little men,
Who clearly went to comprehensive
And though they try to ape their more expensive
Betters, they want what they can't have,
Oh Noddy, ridicule the chav.
Beware beware those ghastly vowels -
Those glottal stops and guttural growls reveal
Emergent service worker!
You greedy funny naughty shirker.
Such jolly toy fun in the village
From Sly and Gobo's moral spillage.
Oh children small and soft like clay at that
Impressionable age
Learn this well and learn it soundly
Learn it thoroughly and roundly
You know it has to turn out badly
Noddy nods his blue hat sadly -
Those Beastly types are foiled again!
Make way for my entitlement!

... Austerity Life

Ella Cosgrove



This piece contains trauma and experiences that others may find difficult to read. Of particular note to mentions and descriptions of sexual violence, poverty, child poverty, sex work, homelessness and domestic violence.

My experiences with poverty did not begin under the Tory austerity that we know today. They started from the moment I took my first breath, and for my parents it started the moment they took theirs. It has been passed down generation to generation in my family lines. I am from poor but resilient roots.

To anyone who reads this, or anyone's personal stories of poverty – but specifically of austerity – hold the words in your mind as words of survival. No sympathy, only anger at the systems that have placed us here.

Growing up, I knew we were poor. Our poorness did not feel the same way as it does now, I did not hold it the same way in my body as my daughter does. There was a difference in the feelings of hunger. In my childhood I stole food from every harvest festival that my school ran, I stole snacks out of wealthier kids school bags and I slid bars of chocolate or cans of coke into my pockets and up my sleeves in shops. When I got older it was phones out of other kids pockets, sold to the men at the kebab shop. My childhood was tainted with sexual abuse and exploitation, caring responsibilities, mental health I didn't understand and homelessness. The poorness never phased me though, it was just normal.



Homeless since 15, pregnant at 17 – with no fixed address and sex working to get myself through college once EMA was scrapped- I had no choice, but to move in with the father. The man abused me like he thought I was a dog, but I had nowhere to go. As a minor I would either end up in social services, who were a threat because of my drug addiction and sex working, or I'd have to give birth on the streets and I wasn't willing. I put myself on the council housing list under a different birthday but I wasn't a priority. I made the choice to be a parent. I went cold turkey on the drugs, almost quit the cigarettes and started implementing boundaries in my relationship with the father. I googled teenage parents services in my area and saw that the only one anywhere close had closed down recently. When my baby was born, so supportively, in an NHS hospital ward, I cried with the only two feelings I had. The purest, untouchable joy, and the purest, darkest desperation.

- We found a flat that accepted housing benefits and he got a job
- working behind a bar three nights a week. We only had one bus
- pass to share, so every time he went in, I couldn't get out anywhere. I sat alone in a tiny mould-ridden bare flat, staring at magnolia walls, for days on end, a baby in my arms. We had a joint benefits account, and I couldn't access the money because it all went to him. Every two weeks he would go to a cash point, take out £20 and give it to me. That was what I was allowed to spend. The rest he spent on drugs. Three months later he disappeared. And took the little pile of £20 notes I'd been saving up with him. He even took the frozen chicken nuggets out of the freezer.

Before applying for benefits I needed to open a bank account. Then find out what benefits existed, what I was entitled to and how to claim – this is very hard to do without access to the internet, a smart phone or transport. They always took a while to come in but it wasn't so bad. I saved money to learn to drive so I could get a job and I bought a car for £250 off Gumtree.

Getting a part time job was the biggest mistake I made. My benefits claims would freeze and refuse to give me money at least once a month because their processing systems were slow and manual. I was paid £384 on average per month, as someone under 21 on minimum part time wages and a zero hours contract. My rent was more than double that amount alone. I was in high debt from bills that weren't being covered by my wages or benefits and my gas and electric would cut out sometimes two or three times a week. I learnt to cook using candles as my source of energy to bring a pot to boil or heat oil. I taught myself to build mini heaters out of tealights and some plant pots I found by the bins outside. I saved money by cutting out meat.

You can't forget the sound of a toddler crying through hunger, unable to express what they want or need other than through the noise that pushes out from their tiny lungs in desperation. I had 6p in my bank account, two days after being paid, I couldn't afford the food shopping with that money and food banks were only just emerging at that time. I sat on the floor with a pan of plain boiled rice, and took it in turns to spoon feed my daughter, then myself. Frequently I'd cook her dinner, usually just smart price pasta with the most basic sauce, and eat her leftovers for my own dinner. We'd eat flour, salt and water mixed together to fill up and butter and sugar mixed together as a treat. My diet was mostly cheap coffee to give me energy in the mornings and cheap cola to fill me up throughout the day. My housing benefits were stopped due to the council losing the pay slip I'd sent them. I got a debt letter of over £8000 from HMRC linked to the joint claim I'd had with my ex. I still pay it back 7 years on.

I was 19. My daughter was almost 2. I was drinking to numb the pain and passed out on the sofa. At 2am I heard my front door opening. My ex and two men entered my house and attempted to kidnap my daughter. I managed to plead with them to stop. They left after two hours of interrogation and a little bit of assault. A

week later, I saw him standing outside my block of flats looking up into my window - I called the police who told me there was no further action to be taken. A week after that, whilst sitting up late at night with a not sleepy toddler, my front door started getting bashed in. He threatened to kill us both if I didn't open it. So I let him in and he tried to kill us both. That night, I packed a tiny bag and left everything I had behind.

The council told me I had made myself intentionally homeless, my mother told me she had no space to take us in, there were no local women's refuges. We got into the car and slept there, and soon enough that became home for just over a year. Where we lived was not safe for us to stay, so I kept us on the move all the time. We eventually ended up staying somewhere in Somerset, in a field, and a nice couple who ran a camping place took us on for a while - provided a tent with a wood burner and a pitch. We lived next to another single parent and her four kids crammed into a tiny caravan. It was nice. When money was getting past the point of desperation we had to leave. Julian, the campsite man, kindly offered me £50 but I couldn't accept it, I lied and said I'd think about it overnight. Shame packed our car and drove us away in the dark that night and I still feel guilty about it everyday.

I met another single parent with a kid similar age to mine, who was close to turning 3 now. We got along so well that after a weekend together, she offered us her sofa bed. Those nine months were the happiest of my life. I was able to start saving the benefits I got, and work again a little. We were surrounded by mould on the walls, mushrooms growing through the carpets and often no heating (in the North!) but I have never laughed so much, shared so much, cooked such wholesome food. She taught me how to love life even when life was shit. I gained my first friend and with her, another daughter. Sadly, we were evicted from that little flat. And my heart truly broke for the first time, because it was the first time I'd loved others in a way that was so beautiful and real, brought together

by connections of trauma and poverty and woven in survival and power. It was also the first time that I'd looked at my life as survival, rather than 'just because'.

My daughter was close to starting school age, so I decided to move 250 miles south, back to my city. I cried every inch of that journey. I'd spent the last few weeks looking for flats to rent and started viewing straight away. Near enough everywhere turned us down because of the benefits, so we kept sleeping in our car until we found somewhere. This tiny house was on the market for £1200 a month - cheap as shit in the area and a garden too – we went to the viewing and everyone leaving looked as if they'd seen a ghost. Inside the walls were black with mould or yellow brown with tar, there were bugs visibly running around on the floors, illegal flammable ceiling tiles (no fire alarms) and it looked like shit but I knew it would be my home. I took it in a heartbeat.

I thought once we had a house again things would be good. My kid started school and after a rushed application, two weeks later I started uni. I never imagined doing that especially after fees rising to 9k a year, but still, the first of my family to go. Housing benefit was fucked because of student loan, and that's when the food banks started. Never felt so ashamed of standing in a queue before, people smiling and being friendly but it just felt wrong. I swallowed my pride though, no other choice. I started sex working again on the side but it went bad and I just lost myself a bit.

After 3 months in this new house, he found us. My ex started standing outside my kid's school, watching, waiting. The school were good and got me in touch with some solicitors who took legal aid. Shame about it though, getting mostly cut, because it took weeks and references and printed out proof of my poorness to finally be granted. But I went to court against that man and won. He never showed his face, but I showed mine and I stood up and told the judge everything he'd done to me, every strangling,

every beating, every bite mark and bruise. We got a one year long restraining order for that.

Being at uni really fucked my mental health. It was the first time I was really faced with middle class people. And it was so deeply uncomfortable. My social class screamed at me from the back of the classroom and I realised the difference between state education and private – something I'd never heard of. Apparently it was hard for people to believe that a politics student had never heard of the cold war. [And after the restraining order], I was suddenly faced with a life that didn't need to focus solely on survival. It was hard on me.

Many nights I wandered drunk or sober to a bridge and wrote a note. Many nights I hung myself over the edge and played with death. Many nights picked up in the back of a police van, told I was going somewhere they'd help me, asked how a young bright thing like me could end up here. Many nights spent sitting on a paper thin mattress up against a cold wall, being watched through windows by curious eyes, reading the scratched words 'help me' over and over again. They call it section 136.

Many days and nights that was. But if I turned up to a GP in tears, thin as a twig, with bags under my eyes so heavy I couldn't blink without pain and asked for help – I got turned away. If I turned up at A&E begging for my life to be saved, on my knees in desperation, I was told I either had to have mild anxiety or depression or already be dead to access any support. I can't even go into the joke that is 'home treatment crisis teams' because if you think supporting people going through crisis is equal to whispering 'are you going to kill yourself tonight?' across a room coz there's a 5 year old who might hear you, then you are a part of that joke.

And of course there were never any beds in wards, there were never any treatments available unless you waited 18 months on a

list for 6 weeks of CBT. So it was either take the drugs or suffer the pain. I always choose to suffer, I thrive on it.

4 years. Food banks, mental health hospitals, fear of men, finally a PTSD diagnosis, more food banks, no gas and electricity, no internet at home, no TV, no shoes without holes, no food, more food banks, first class university degree.

I think life gets better and it doesn't. But I leave uni and get a job. And one night at this job we have a party for something or other and I get childcare for the first time in who knows. I leave with two others at 1am, but of course all my trains have stopped. I skip across town to find a bus but realise I have no money on my bus pass, so I skip to a cash point and I have £16 in my account. My money won't come in for at least two more weeks so I have to decide - taxi and starve, or walk 4ish miles and eat for a few more days. I remember my kids' hunger cries and walk.

And I'm walking for what feels like hours, over main roads, through housing estates, through fancy suburban lanes. I hear a person crying up ahead and hone in on them, only to come round the corner and see three blokes surrounding them. With PTSD, you fight, flight, or freeze. I freeze. One man turns around and without a second thought runs at me in a rage. The last thing I remember is my head hitting the raw brick behind me.

In the shower I look down at my body and the blood and cum washing away below me. I see my leg, small scar on my ankle from getting caught on barbed wire as a kid, on my knee, one side a birthmark, the other a stab wound scarred over from age 14, and my thigh, with new markings. Words I can barely read. And when it starts to heal over, I see what it says and I understand it. The word F E A R forever carved into my skin by lads who stole everything from my pockets, and left in return a fetus I could never love.

This set me back years in progress. And I had an abortion. I had a cracked rib and dislocated shoulder and hip, slight internal bleeding too. The pressure from all sides was too much, colleagues who could barely make eye contact with me out of guilt, social workers telling me to report it, and to give my kid up, teachers at her school asking what happened. I couldn't take it so the psych ward took me.

That admission was probably the best thing that ever happened to me. I was taken straight away (I guess they believed the threat this time) and put into a ward with 4 other people. Alice, an 18 year old covered in self harm scars, Mikayla, 21 with broken English and a heart too big for this world, Theresa was in her 50s and had no home to go back to and Keith, an older man in for the long haul. Then there was me, a 25 year old single parent who could barely speak a word, shaking on the floor.

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But I changed in there. When I was given crisis intervention as I needed it, I changed. I was given so much space to talk about things, what had happened in my past, in the nearer past and how my life was at the moment. It was the first time I could really look at my life without the crushing responsibility of being me looming over my head. And that was what I needed. It was the first time I told anyone what happened to me in my life. The first time I admitted sex working from age 11, spending half of my childhood in police holding cells or on the streets, the first time I ever thought about the word neglect and how I had been, and how I sometimes did the same thing.

I came out of that place a few weeks later able to sleep at night, with some kind of confidence in my steps.

From there my life got easier. I was still traumatised from the past but I was learning to manage it. I still lived in a shit hole, and used food banks and had bailiffs at the door, but there was something

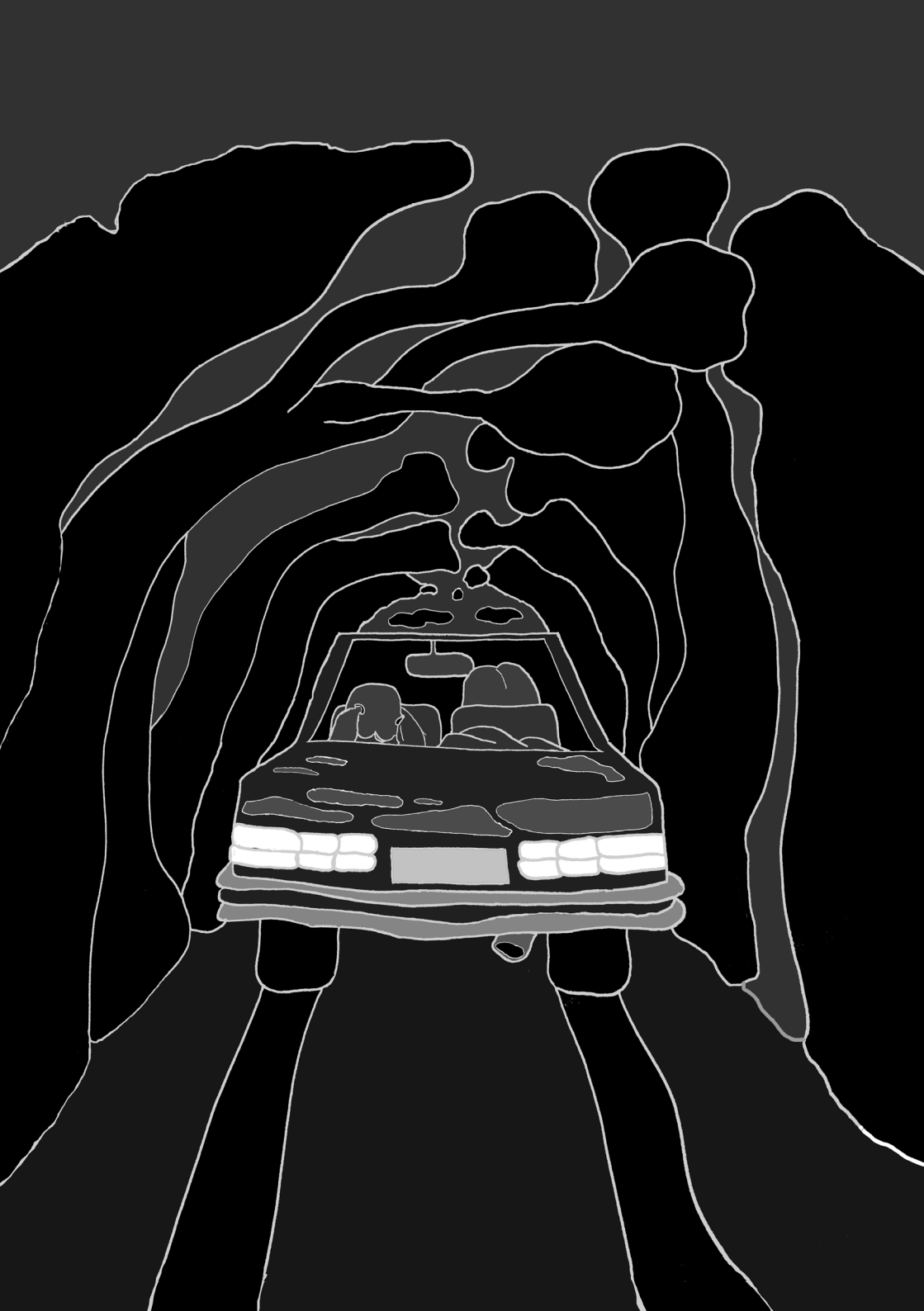
changed in me. And since that day I've done things I want, and I opened myself up to love, relationships, to people.

Now life is different and I'm learning to adapt to it. I got offered a job in the city and it pays good. Because of austerity and other Tory policies I only see £100 of it a month and I have to save that for my bills (800 on rent, 800 on childcare and 200 on travel, just to be able to get there). Sometimes that panics me, and I think I'll be taken back to that place I was in. I'm learning to stop jumping to conclusions, to stop spitting on the floor, to hold doors open for people and make eye contact when I talk to them. It's the second time in my life when I've had to really face my class and where I came from. And the difference is really stark. I'm learning not to be threatened by it. Middle class people, my colleagues and friends, are the same people that looked at me like scum as a kid. I'm learning to feel safe in their spaces. It still affects me, and my family and the people I know and love, just earlier this year my brother died as a result. The depression was too much, he drank himself to death and there were not enough specialists to help him.

I've watched areas change, especially in South London. And as corner shops, fabric shops and bingo halls become boarded up, new faces arrive. And they bring wine bars and boutiques with them. And they talk about how lovely their community is, how safe for their kids, and ignore the 13 year old boy's face, stabbed to death just down the road, when it's in the paper. They call the police when a black man in a tracksuit asks for the time, and put their heads to the ground walking past the homeless woman with blue lips and matted hair. The safer those communities get for white middle class folk, the more dangerous and isolating and unaffordable they become for the people who built them. Working class bodies become their commodity. To be sold or harmed, the state's only true form of commodity that must not be looked at too close or it'll all fall apart.

Austerity was not the thing in my life that hurt me the most, that was men. But living under austerity whilst already poor, already traumatised, killed me, still kills me. It is violence at the hands of the state and it often replicates violence we've experienced at the hands of others, our parents, our partners, ourselves. It is retraumatising, and for those who don't have that experience, it is the continuation of poorness and near impossible to escape. It strips us of our dignity when it closes down our Sure Start centres and youth clubs. It strips us of our independence when it reduces our money so that we can't afford basic tins of food or tampons. It instills deep shame in individuals and communities and it makes poorness something that is dirty, to either be sympathetic of from a distance or to slate as something avoidable. It stops communities from having the resources to help each other, to be communities.

●
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Austerity was born in 2010, just before my daughter. She hasn't known a life without it. It is not something that is subjective, it is objective and its objective is to hurt us, to make us think that unless we become poorer, more hidden, more homeless, more numbed out, that society can't move forward. It puts the responsibility of that on the whole working class, migrant and poor communities. It forces us to take one for the team, then excludes us from playing. It forces us to starve whilst we watch others, on the tubes in their suits, or behind the blacked out windows of Rolls Royce cars, stuff their faces full, lick their lips and smile. It forces us to watch, as if we are behind glass and cannot be seen, as if we couldn't just reach out in front of us and take back what they stole.. As if...



ARE
YOU AN
ENVIRONMENTALIST
OR DO
YOU
WORK
FOR A
LIVING?



The Eco-proletariat:

how social issues combine to create the biggest challenges faced by the environmental movement

Adam

In Alice Rohrwacher's 2018 film *Happy as Lazzaro*, a tobacco baroness exploits a group of farmers, who in turn exploit Lazzaro, a kind-hearted and gentle member of their community. In one scene, the baroness tells her son that the chain of exploitation cannot be stopped, even Lazzaro must be taking advantage of someone – it's impossible not to. This exemplifies neoliberal capitalist thought, where competition and exploitation is the inevitable norm. Use or be used. This way of thinking has had the effect of creating profound divisions across society. Divisions which some would argue are natural or insurmountable. For there to be winners, there has to be losers. This philosophy is shown in stark relief when it comes to the state of our environment – the “winners” squashing anyone who gets in the way of the quest for profit.

But frontline environmentalists and conservationists have known for a long time that for their efforts to succeed, there must be cooperation at all levels of society [1]. Despite this, some of society's largest and/or most marginalised groups, which have so much to offer the environmental movement, continue to be denied a voice, or worse – are branded as enemies. Social theorist Michel Foucault studied how power structures mould knowledge, and how this constructed knowledge can be used to marginalise certain groups (and legitimise others) [2]. The entrenchment of these structures of power-knowledge inevitably result in rifts, which prevent the necessary society-wide engagement in bringing about positive change. These rifts traditionally run along the intersectional confines of class, gender, race and ethnicity. The working class, women, indigenous peoples and other oppressed and marginalised sectors of society all have a crucial role to play in the environmental

movement [3]. But these groups should not be seen as strictly independent entities, operating on their own frontlines with their own unique problems. The interface of ecology and society lies precisely where these groups interact. Here's how.

Class Conflict and the Environment

The term “working class” can be somewhat unclear. For many people in the UK, for example, it might evoke images of a white, pub-dwelling, manual labourer. Yet class transcends race, ethnicity, and gender [4, 5]. The unifying factor is a feeling of oppression from capitalism and the state, a struggle against low social mobility, and a feeling of dehumanisation and even persecution from other more affluent sectors of society [6]. In many economically poorer nations, the oppression assumes an even more insidious character, with workers subjected to inhumane working conditions for little or no pay [8, 9, 11, 12]. This continued exploitation of the labouring classes – from cacao farm hands in Africa to gig economy workers in the UK – is not only detrimental to society, but to the Earth's environment as well.

“A movement up to the task of bringing about the changes needed will not only have to be massive in size, but have a substantial base in the working class,” writes Matt Huber, a geography professor researching the interplay of class and climate politics [7]. Yet, in the West, the environmental movement continues to be dominated by the affluent professional-managerial class, which moulds narratives about how the planet should be cared for [7, 18]. The primary manifestation of this is known as “lifestyle environmentalism”. In brief, lifestyle environmentalism is a product of the idea of personal ecological “footprints” – i.e. how much are we each consuming? The answer usually being “too much”. Accordingly, the response is to push people to make more careful consumer choices: buy less meat, buy dairy alternatives, buy organic, sustainable, Fairtrade, and so on. This is indeed very important, and completely laudable.

The problem is, however, that not everyone is part of the affluent managerial overclass, and therefore in a position to make the same consumer choices.

In many countries in the West, particularly those doing their best to follow neoliberal economic models (like the UK and the US), the multi-ethnic working class has faced years of austerity, wage stagnation, low social mobility, and a steady growth in precarious and exploitative working conditions [7, 10, 11]. In the UK, 16% of adults reported skipping meals due to lack of money, and the poorest 10% of households would need to spend 74% of their income on food to meet healthy diet guidelines [13]. This is compared to only 6% expenditure in the richest 10% [13]. A process known as “redlining”, common in the US, can result in the targeted denial of services including supermarkets to neighbourhoods with largely BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) demographics. So, on the one hand, we have affluent liberal environmentalists saying we are all consuming too much, while on the other hand years of struggle mean low income people are often unable to afford or even access the basics of life, never mind think about which dairy alternative they should buy [13, 15]. This is the proverbial rock and hard place, and working class people find themselves smashed between the two, and resenting both.

The result is alienation both from the environmental movement specifically (especially when Green politicians directly accuse workers of privileged overconsumption) and the left wing liberal establishment in general [14]. This process is worsened by a tendency for members of the managerial overclass to fall back on ideologies of knowledge of the science, the evidence, etc. surrounding the environment, and to criticise members of society who don't follow this line [7]. But instead of convincing them, it only deepens the rift. Albert Camus wrote that workers distrust the intellectual bourgeoisie because they enjoy the privileges of freedom, without carrying out its duties – which is to fight for the

freedom of all [41]. This is still relevant today, with trust in educated experts notoriously low, manifesting as climate change denial and a host of other forms of denialism [42]. But can we be surprised? Can we be surprised that many are distrustful of a system which leaves them behind then lambasts them for not catching up?

In lower income nations across the world, there is an added dimension. Many nations in South America, Africa and Asia are striving to get a feel for the affluent lifestyle by ramping up meat and dairy consumption – just as people who have been enjoying these luxuries all along tell them it’s time to stop [13, 15]. Moreover, people in poorer communities can find themselves reliant (or, in some cases, forced into) ecologically damaging industries (e.g. meat, cacao, cheap textiles) for a livelihood [8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16]. Corporations perhaps even place their industry within these communities precisely because these people “do not have access to alternate means of earning an income” – a process known as “economic extortion” [10]. Therefore, while more affluent environmentalists are right to point to the latest science on climate and environment as an urgent call to action, and are right to point to issues of over-consumption across society, these efforts can’t be successful if a massive section of society feels that the environmental movement is a direct threat to their livelihoods and a chance at a better lifestyle [7]. Especially when the movement is made up of people who live comparatively comfortable and luxurious lives [7]. This sentiment finds an aggressive manifestation in bumper stickers which were popular in rural American working class communities: “Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?” [17]. While fundamentally wrong in many ways (environmentalists, of course, have jobs too), it nevertheless dichotomises being working class and being an environmentalist, as if the two are mutually exclusive.

If working class individuals, particularly ones who are reliant on environmentally destructive industries to live and have been

squashed by decades of austerity, are criticised without being offered a realistic alternative or a chance at stability, then the reaction against the critics will be strong. This reaction is evident in the mass rise of right-wing populism across the globe, with working class communities seeing demagogues as their sole source of protection against a managerial overclass made up of educated and affluent elites [18]. No amount of science or reason will convince many of these people until they can be enfranchised. To again quote Huber: “the key is to build a movement where masses of people connect the dots to see the solutions to all our crises of climate, health care, and housing require building mass social power to combat the industries profiting from these very crises” [7, 19]. So to view the alienated working class as enemies (as they were during the Brexit vote, for example) only deepens the rift between potential allies and perpetuates the cycle of conflict between populism and oligarchy [18, 43]. Yet, the plight of (especially the industrial forces of) the working class has massive implications for another movement: rights and respect for indigenous peoples.

Indigenous Rights: Defend Our Defenders

“Indigenous people are treated as nobodies. We can’t allow this to continue or the people who are working to protect the environment will disappear and those who extract will rule the world,” says Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, UN Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Rights. “Those who extract will rule the world.” This is the key part of a statement which directly shows how industry and indigenous peoples come into conflict. Extractive industries include mining, fuel, logging, and, secondarily, agriculture. Recently, there has been a notable spike in killings and violent repression of indigenous activists seeking to defend their land against these industries [20, 21]. These are, of course, the same industries which provide a livelihood to much of the world’s proletariat, all along the supply chain, which is why indigenous peoples and workers

often find themselves in conflict. The persecution of indigenous peoples is fundamentally unacceptable. While Karl Marx and Abdullah Öcalan see class conflict and the repression of women as defining human history respectively, it could be argued that violence against indigenous peoples is equally historic [22, 23].

Yet regardless of the long and tragic history of indigenous peoples, their plight is also vital for the future of the planet as we know it. 80% of the Earth's biodiversity is situated in indigenous lands [24]. Research clearly shows that indigenous peoples are the most effective at managing biodiversity on their land [25, 26, 30]. They also do it for far cheaper than conventional conservation programmes [27]. This is unsurprising, considering that some indigenous groups, such as the Bayaka in Congo, have been living on their lands for more than 55,000 years [28]. It was only with the recent influx of "sustainable" development initiatives that biodiversity began to plummet [28]. For people who live off the land, it is in their best interest to keep it healthy. In fact, secure land tenure for indigenous communities could result in 8.7-12.9 gigatons of carbon emissions avoided [3]. And could additionally protect 1.14 billion hectares of forest, which would amount to 687-786 gigatons of CO₂ if released into the atmosphere [3].

Despite the role these communities have to play in protecting the environment and biodiversity, it's not just extractive industries that view them as enemies, but many conservation organisations as well [27, 28, 29]. There have been many clashes between eco-guards working for conservation authorities such as WWF and indigenous peoples. This is known as colonial or "fortress" conservation, and is characterised by a conservation from above approach – meaning involvement of the state, the private sector, militarism, and "hierarchies of knowledge that devalue local perspectives and practices" [27, 31, 32]. Again we see how power and knowledge-systems can be used to marginalise and repress [2]. The Survival International website, a charity dedicated to

protection of indigenous peoples, suggests that this knowledge is moulded by racism: the idea that humans, especially non-white ones, inside protected areas endanger the environment [27]. Whereas tourists, trophy hunters, and “sustainable” industries are welcome sources of funding, regardless of the fact that indigenous locals could manage the land without the need for funding from dubious sources [27, 28, 29].

Evidence suggests that, in many areas, the conservation from above approach is not working [33]. In addition, it is bringing indigenous peoples and the working poor into conflict [33]. It is also turning indigenous peoples into the working poor, for example the Bayaka men who, now unable to subsist off the land, are forced to sell their labour in forest work camps (often paid in alcohol) [28, 29]. When indigenous and local environmental defenders were asked what message they have for the wider world, a few advised consumers to think carefully about what products they buy, and not to buy from companies linked to violence [20]. This echoes the lifestyle environmentalist views of the liberal professional-managerial class – that consumer choice is the solution, that responsibility lies on each of us as individuals [7]. Most defenders, however, called for extensive political change, including land rights, transparency, and corporate regulation and accountability [20]. It is explicitly acknowledged that responsibility lies with corporations and state structures, and effective change must come through there. This is where the plight of the working class and the plight of indigenous peoples meets square on.

If the world’s working poor continue to be oppressed, then exploitative corporate structures can continue to position themselves as one of the few sources of livelihood. The same structures that pit them against indigenous peoples. It’s the perverse situation of the system providing a very bad “solution” to a problem it’s responsible for perpetuating. And if the working class continues to feel alienated by more affluent environmentalists or

the liberal left, then the political will to engage in change will run in the wrong direction – towards right-wing, strong-man populists like Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro and the Philippines’ Rodrigo Duterte, two of the world’s most vocal (and dangerous) anti-indigenous, pro-industry leaders, who woo people with false promises of a shake-up to the system that left them behind [18, 34, 35]. Again, the key is to “connect the dots” to see how each crisis affecting these marginalised groups is the product of capitalist industry and its subservient side-kick: the nation-state [7, 23]. None of the crises can be resolved until mass social power can be built to tackle these structures. This requires a substantial base in the working class. Ultimately, both indigenous peoples and the working poor want the same thing: a fair and secure chance at procuring a livelihood. It is the system which pits them against each other. But there is one additional group which continues to face oppression across the globe. A group equally important to tackling these issues.

● ● ● Gender Equality as a Fundamental

When writing about indigenous environmental defenders, it is not possible to forgo mentioning the brave women spearheading (and dying for) these efforts [36, 37]. Yet women also make up a particularly repressed (and large) portion of the working class, especially in less affluent countries where corporations like to place their most exploitative operations [11]. Sociologist James Fulcher notes that “capitalism combines with patriarchy to obtain the cheapest labour, for women are generally paid less than men, subject to male control, and disposable, since they can be returned to the household if the demand for labour drops” [11]. This echoes Abdullah Öcalan, who argues that in patriarchal, capitalist society women are exploited as a source of cheap labour and as a reproductive resource [23]. Not only is this inherently immoral, it also inhibits collective organisation among the working class by dividing it along the axis of gender. Fortunately, many working class women nonetheless manage to unite and fight for

better conditions, for example the "GarmentMeToo" campaign of garment workers "demanding an end to gender based violence across the global garment supply chain" [38].

The important and obvious thing to reiterate, however, is that women make up a part of all classes, races, ethnicities, etc. Yet, Öcalan views the origins of male domination of women (during the Neolithic period) as being the same point in which society became detached from nature [23]. At this point, women became "almost as a separate race, nation, or class", with sexism used to preserve patriarchal power [23]. Classicist Mary Beard also describes how throughout history there has been a divide between women and traditional notions of power, notions constructed by men for men [39]. A consistent pattern is emerging: oppressors fuse together power and self-serving ideology to marginalise groups which could pose a threat to the status quo [2]. Of course, "depending on class, ethnicity, race, religion etc. women can [also] be complicit and directly involved in the marginalisation and oppression of other women and men" [23]. Yet it cannot be denied that women are often the worst affected by exploitative systems or crises [40]. The role of gender equality in the environmental movement is shown by the potential impact of basic improvements in just one area of life: education. By providing better access to education for girls (which paves the way for improved social mobility, greater freedom, and all the associated benefits), it is estimated that this could reduce up to 51.48 gigatons of CO2 emissions between 2020-2050 [3]. This would also provide the means for women to avoid exploitative work and be better equipped to manage the impacts of climate change on a community level [3].

So where does gender equality meet with issues of class and indigenous rights? Öcalan argues that "without the attainment of societal gender equality, no demand for freedom or equality can be meaningful or realised" [3]. We see young women making up a disproportionate amount of the wage labour force, often including underage girls [11, 45]. We also see indigenous women

(e.g. among the Bayaka), sexually exploited by outsiders and domestically abused by men who are themselves maltreated by the system in a different way [28]. Class, race, and gender interact to create spiralling inequality. In the UK, men from working-class backgrounds earn on average £6,400 less than colleagues from privileged backgrounds. Working-class white women, however, earn on average £19,000 less per year [43]. For non-white women, it's even worse [43]. If gender pay gaps and other systemic inequalities persist, then efforts to ameliorate conditions for any group will always be incomplete, as any previous discrimination will be redirected along axes of gender.

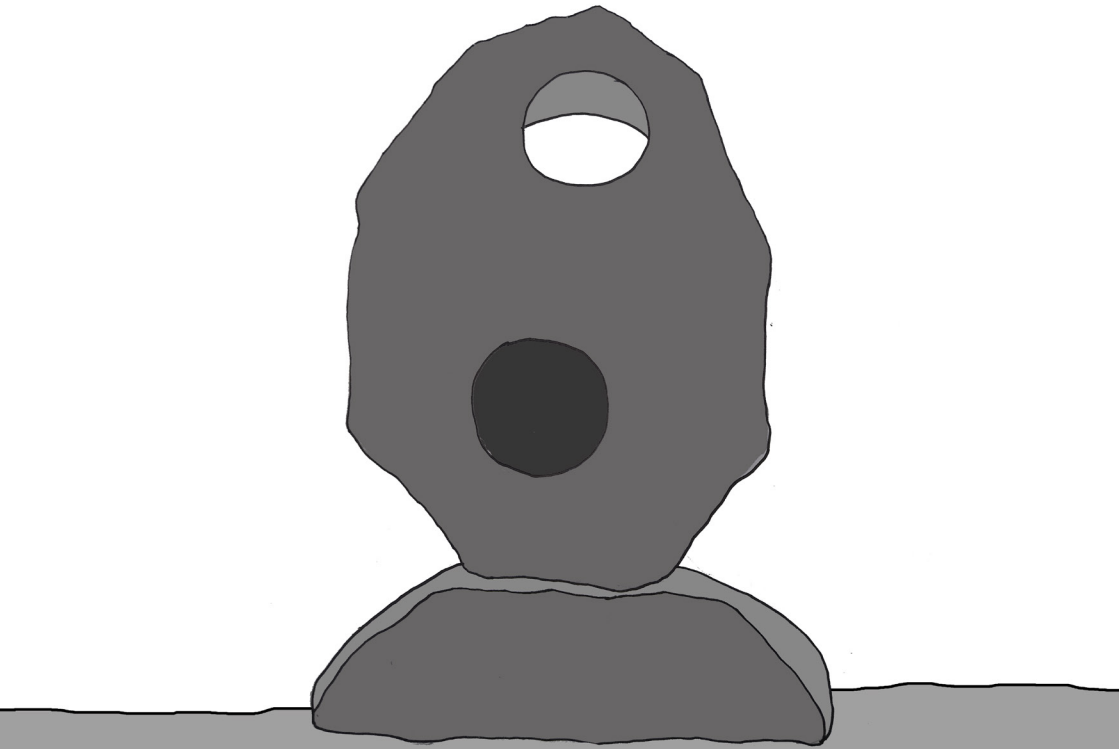
Lucía Sánchez Saornil, a Spanish revolutionary and co-founder of anarchist magazine *Mujeres Libres*, poignantly sums up the paradoxical position of women who stand alongside men oppressed by the system: “Even as they rail against property, they are rabidly proprietorial. Even as they rant against slavery, they are the cruellest of “masters” ... the lowliest slave, once he steps across his threshold, becomes lord and master. His merest whim becomes a binding order for the women in his household. He who, just ten minutes earlier, had to swallow the bitter pill of bourgeois humiliation, looms like a tyrant and makes these unhappy creatures swallow the bitter pill of their supposed inferiority.” Without gender equality, any efforts to build the mass social power required for change will inevitably be tainted at the grassroots level. You cannot improve the conditions of the working class or of indigenous peoples if around half of them remain oppressed or exploited by the system because of their gender. And therefore truly profound improvements in how we relate to our environment cannot be realised. This is how gender equality, indigenous rights, and the plight of the working class are together the most pertinent, interdependent issues faced by the environmental movement.

Conclusion

This was a very basic outline of how issues of class, race, and gender relate to the environmental movement. It is, of course, oversimplified. For example, there has been not enough space to fully explore issues of race, which also have an important role to play in class and gender politics. The main objective was to show that each of these intersectional and interacting groups are both oppressed by the current capitalist system and have a central role in mitigating ecological destruction, which in some cases depends on resolving apparently conflicting interests (but that ultimately would benefit everyone). The most pertinent interface of society and ecology, therefore, lies at these nodes. In the words of the great eco-feminist philosopher Val Plumwood: “when four tectonic plates of liberation theory – those concerned with the oppressions of gender, race, class and nature – finally come together, the resulting tremors could shake the conceptual structures of oppression to their foundations.”

Karl Marx argued that the proletariat are the biggest threat to the capitalist class – if unified. In the present day, of course, this can be extended to include an ecological factor. James Fulcher acknowledges that the current capitalist system is having a detrimental impact on the environment, but argues that within this system the only way to protect the environment is to find ways of making a profit out of it. As we have seen, this is achieved by the exploitation and repression of huge swathes of society. The eco-proletariat, then, refers to those who are directly affected by, coerced into, and have a role in mitigating, environmental destruction, but find themselves struggling or unable to do so. This includes the working class and indigenous peoples around the world, of all genders and ethnicities.

*The bibliography to this text can be found
in the resources section on our website -
www.theclassworkproject.com*





Brendan Behan's Lisp

Dominic Beard

Going to the bower
To see the missing stanza.

Who fears to speak of Easter week? What's the deal with the
baby teeth? Usually I talk nicer with them.

Now I chew gurd, the crumbs feed the birds.
Tumble down, brush off jumper.
Dreamt they fell out
into the sink.
Gentle clink
reflected in the faucet
Up they're gobbled
by a gaggle.



club classics

Dorothy Spencer

i walked out one evening a saturday night
to what you might call an entertainment district the main drag
throbbing with queues to nightclubs and expectant dicks
come the early hours
the streets will be
covered in broken bottles, vomit blood and urine
but for now the
lipstick is red
and the heels have yet to blister.
i give a man on the pavement some change stop to talk
i offer him some of my whisky, he refuses he is the soberest man
on the street
● he's had four hip replacements
● that his body keeps rejecting
● he got sepsis
i was half-man half-abcess he says
watched my leg split open
all the way
like a pod of peas
they drained a pint of pus out of me a day
o god!
that's awful i say it's really awful
i light a cigarette
smoke?
no don't smoke miss
then i think about how nearly all homeless men call me miss
and nobody else does
spare any change miss,
please miss, thanks miss,
i wish i had a bed miss, so i could take you back to it.

i wish they had beds too
i wish we all had beds in warm safe places
and i pray for world peace too
i'm hoping it'll arrive
on a raft of corpses on a sea of blood
la da dee, la dee da
la da dee, la dee da
and the nightclubbers walk by
they are thoroughly absorbed in their lives
they gossip, they flirt
they stagger like new-born foals,
clop-clopping while
grinding happiness between their teeth
in big gurning motions
but anyway i don't begrudge them that or
the drugs, and i wouldn't stop them
dancing if i could
play on
the sounds of redemption from
here to clapham to kingston to howslow to harlow
and the music don't feel like it did
and the music don't feel like it did
i hope their sweat cleanses them
of their unknown sins
i hope they vomit in a way that is violent enough
to exorcise the week's disappointments
i hope they find something like love
on the dancefloor;
a stiff one against the back while dancing
come into my life
i got so much love to show you.
i hope that it's tender
though i fear it will be rough
i hope they have someone to hold their hair back
i hope their doubts



July 2020

stay buried deep

i hope they don't come up along with the sambucca and
confront them from the toilet bowl screaming

do you think you're better off alone?

do you think you're better off alone?

i hope they look hot and i hope

their ex was there and has got fat

i hope they laugh with their stomachs and

feel alive in their guts

i hope they come up fucking screaming hosannas

or baby i'm yours

i hope it all ends well i hope it's all alright

i hope they never know

i hope they stay this way forever

while me and sepsis sit here and watch

and we laugh occasionally at it all

● but with no abandon and it's cold, it's really cold and i run out of
● things to say and so does he

● and i go home i've got a bed and i lie in it

and i pull the covers right up and dream of merry-go-rounds

where the horses bray

and nash their teeth

Find Dorothy Spencer's Chapbook

See what Life is Like, 2020

at www.theclassworkproject.com



A Working Class Gem: Remembering Michael Marra the 'Bard of Dundee'

Luke Campbell

As we inch closer to eight years since losing Michael Marra to throat cancer, aged just sixty years old on Tuesday 23rd October 2012, never sharing a space with the 'Bard of Dundee', never witnessing a live performance, is something I'll forever regret. I was merely fourteen years old when Michael passed, and I wouldn't discover his music until closer to my leaving Dundee some five years later. A poet, singer-songwriter, portrait artist, stage actor, musical director, and touring musician, Michael's art in all its forms shaped my perceptions of grace, justice, and humility, indeed, discovering his work in my late youth influenced how I came to better understand feminist thought and introduced me to informal adult education within prisons for the first time. Through creative masterpieces such as "Frida Kahlo's Visit to the Tay Bridge Bar" (2002), his narration of the execution in Lewis Grassie Gibbon's "Sunset Song" (*Happed in Mist*, 1985), the alternative Scottish National Anthem that is "Hermless" (1991) - a song that shattered the mould of aggressive nationalistic chants - and how he bore witness to street fascist violence in Bonn (Lieblings in *The Absence of Love*, 1996), I received an education that would contribute in leading me to a life of community work - much of it in adult education and literacy (think, *If Dundee was Africa*, 2002). This career has also permitted me the opportunity to work briefly in Polmont Young Offenders

Institute (Scotland), and to learn of others like hip-hop group Hector Bizerk who echoed Michael's desire to take creativity into the jails. Michael's statement that despite his artistic ambitions, he 'didn't want [his] name in lights, [but rather] wanted it in brackets', is something that has shaped my desire to better position myself whilst trying to support others in my work, teaching, and activism. Situating himself in the background, promoting the work of those around him, and always demonstrating his gratitude for those that made it possible to achieve the successes he did in his lifetime, is the type of thanks and emphasis on others that you'd more frequently witness from the magnificent Angela Y. Davis if you're ever fortunate enough to hear her speak.

Born in Lochee to school teacher, Margaret, and printer, Michael was raised as one of his parents' five children in Dundee's west end - an area with significant migrant communities originating in Ireland, Poland, Italy, and the like. His early public performances occurred whilst still a student at the Roman Catholic Lawside Academy high school - an institute he left aged fourteen - though the impression Robert Burns' work left on his was already becoming clear. Yet, after brief periods as a printer, trainee electrician, and a labourer in Dundee, it was the years spent commuting and performing between his hometown and London (England) that shaped the musician's career. Scouted and signed by a man whom he suggested was the first Tory he'd ever met (how fortunate!), Michael released several recordings over the next three years as part of the punk-rock influenced band Skeets Boliver. He later broke out into a solo career that would span the following forty years - involving performances alongside the Scottish National Orchestra, the Scottish Symphony Orchestra, and the globe-trotting Mr. McFall's Chamber, as well as the release of several studio albums via cassette, vinyl, then C.D., three live records, and a series of extended plays. Releasing his debut solo work, *Midass Touch*, in 1980, Michael's works touched the lives of many beyond his native city, addressing life, art, and politics in Glasgow ("Mother

Glasgow”; “King Kong’s Visit to Glasgow”, 1996), Methil (“I Don’t Like Methil”, 1984), and Edinburgh (Bob Dylan’s “Visit to Embra”, 2002). Universities in both Dundee and Glasgow would recognise his contributions to Scottish culture, each bestowing honorary doctorates upon him in 2007 and 2011, respectively.

With stage performances including co-productions of “The Demon Barber” (2007) alongside Graham McLaren and Tartuffe (1995) with Liz Lohead, as well as his solo creations such as “Nan Garland” (2004), “If The Moon Can Be Believed” (2004), and “St. Catherine’s Day” (2011), Michael’s legacy continues today with covers of some of his most critically acclaimed works, now a staple of other artists’ live performances - including Hue and Cry’s cover of “Mother Glasgow”. Such longevity demonstrates Michael’s capacity to appeal to and resonate with audiences throughout the Scottish central belt and beyond. Despite this, I don’t know that I’ll ever be able to get my head around how a cover of Michael’s “Hamish the Goalie” (1983) by Leo Sayer, of “Thunder in My Heart” (1977) fame, ended up featuring on the fundraiser album “Arabest” (2005) - a compilation of fan chants, mod anthems, and commemorative tracks released by my team, Dundee United Football Club. In addition, Dundee indie band *The Hazy Janes* features two of Michael’s children, Alice and Matthew, on vocals and bass guitar, respectively. Michael actually spent many of his latter years collaborating and touring with his family. YouTube features one such stunning rendition of Michael’s heart-wrenching When “These Shoes Were New” (1980), in which ‘The Bard’ humbly positions himself behind an amp, keyboard atop his ever-present ironing board, as he shies away from the audience focus, with *The Hazy Janes* placed front and centre.

As someone born in Paisley, though who moved to Dundee for my father’s work when I was young, barring my adoration and dedication to Dundee United Football Club, I struggled to ever take to the city and found the class divide particularly prominent in

my high school. I left at my first real chance, moving to Edinburgh to study whilst working full-time overnights (another city I've struggled to settle in, though West Pilton feels more comfortable than central areas); it is Glasgow and the west of Scotland that has always held my heart and attention. With relatives still in Renfrewshire and family holidays often having taken place in Glasgow's city centre, it's only through the music of Michael Marra that I've really found an affinity towards the east coast. I've even been fortunate enough to find part-time work at two of the universities in the west, and perhaps the manner in which Michael considered Glasgow his 'home away from home' affords me a second level of affinity for his work beyond that of having shared our east coast youth several decades apart. Another son of Dundee, Billy Mackenzie's The Associates' music helps me through much of my own struggles, though this lies largely in the concepts rather than the grounded everyday-ness of Michael's work. Mackenzie, I've come to understand, was supported and guided by Marra during the formative years of his career. Similarly, the aforementioned Sayer became friends with Michael during the 1980's and produced that cover of the song created ahead of a testimonial game between Dundee United and Tottenham Hotspur Football Club in August 1983. Michael's local fame had led the 'tremendous[ly] talent[ed]' (as described by Jim McLean) late, great Ralph Milne to request that Michael produce the song in Hamish's honour - this being despite Michael's own fondness for city rivals Dundee Football Club. Milne's request therefore reduced the unannounced appearance of the then-Princess of Monaco, Grace Kelly, to a supporting slot within the song. On a note concerning the more socially acceptable drugs, I've recently learnt whilst re-listening to a BBC interview with artistic director Gerry Mulgrew, that I developed a habit Michael himself adopted - that of a ritualistic and soothing 'shower cigarette'. Indeed, it was during some such moment, whilst listening to Michael's music through a Bluetooth speaker, that I felt moved to write about him.

Michael died on the day the twentieth edition of the Celtic Connections festival was launched. Having been a fixture amongst the line-up since its commencement in 1994, Marra's absence was immediately notable. Following his death, the 2013 festival involved a commemorative concert, All Will Be Well - The Life and Songs of Michael Marra, which featured performances from former colleagues and admirers including Dougie Maclean, Eddi Reader, Riley Briggs, The Mackenzie Sisters, and The Hazey Janes. Diving into Michael's works led me to the likes of Martyn Bennett's stunning techno-Celtic fusions (see his collaborative with Marra for Liberation on 2003's creation Grit), then by extension to the talent of Scottish Traveller Sheila Stewart, folk musician and orchestra conductor Greg Lawson, and Scottish traditional singer Karine Polwart. Many still hold deep admiration for an artist whom his contemporaries often believed was under appreciated in his time. Watching recordings or listening to the live albums today, no one can help but be humbled by the manner in which Michael positions his work, sharing origins through dramatic and often humorous anecdotes, before thanking those who gifted the stories that inspired his works. Michael once suggested to STV that the greatest recognition for his music would be its longevity and to have other artists adopt, re-imagine, and perform his songs. James Robertson's (2017) publication Michael Marra: Arrest This Moment may help bring the great man's work to a younger audience, but do yourself a favour and give this working class gem a few hours of your time. x



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The background features a stylized landscape. At the top, a bright yellow sun with thin black lines radiating outwards. Below the sun are green and orange mountains. In the foreground, a pink body of water with white wavy lines representing ripples. A small white house with a red roof is situated on the right bank of the water.

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