

LUMPEN

A JOURNAL FOR POOR AND WORKING CLASS WRITERS



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LUMPEN: A JOURNAL FOR POOR AND WORKING-CLASS WRITERS

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Each author asserts their moral right to be identified as the author of their respective work.

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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LUMPEN#18

A JOURNAL FOR POOR AND WORKING CLASS WRITERS

QUEER

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EDITORIAL

Deborah S.

All previous issues of *Lumpen Journal* have included texts from queer and trans people, regardless of the theme. However, we thought it would be interesting to try doing a call for submissions specifically on this topic, to continue exploring this series of themes that started with issue 15, *Migration*. We reckoned it would be fitting to bring forward the usual summer publication date for *THE Queer Issue* to come out in June as a political intervention, against the commodification of what was once a radical struggle for liberation and is now little more than a capitalist parade. Every June we rehash the slogans *Pride is a protest* and *Stonewall was a riot*, but what are we doing on a local level to turn these into action? Whether you decide to reclaim the spirit of Pride by organising an alternative demonstration, having a picnic to build community, disrupting a parade to block a far-right party from participating in Pride (as yours truly did a few years back) or standing up against genocide in whichever way you can, as we are reminded in the

third text, we hope this issue inspires you to make connections, build community resilience and be there for each other, whatever the future (or present) throws at us.

To promote the call for submissions on this topic, we did a couple of social media experiments, even though here at The Class Work Project we very openly hate commercial social media, or really anything Big Tech related. It was quite an effort on our part to create content in the format required to be noticed in these big capitalist platforms. One of those experiments was naming a few films and a tv show depicting working class queers, asking followers to add more names to that list. The results were: *La Veneno* (2024 limited tv series), *A Taste of Honey* (film & play), *Weekend* (2011 film), *The King and the Clown* (2005 film), *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1990 TV), *It's a Sin* (2021 TV), *Pride* (2014 film), *A Date For Mad Mary* (2026 film), *By Hook or By Crook* (2001 film). The list I originally posted included: *Rebel Dykes* (2021 documentary), *What Have I Done To Deserve This?* (1984 film), *What It Feels Like For A Girl* (2025 limited tv series), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985 film) and *God's Own Country* (2017 film). This social media post was the most engaged with probably in all our history and

the second in number of views. Seeing these stats was a little bittersweet: on the one hand, I was glad the effort paid off, but on the other, I was frustrated that we have to bind the content we make to some standards set by Silicon Valley's techno-feudalism. Here at the Class Work Project we try to engage and create content in other ways, through this *Journal*, our blog, our consultancy work and the workshops we facilitate. It's a creative and collaborative effort to engage in class discourse through several angles, a give and take that can often be more horizontal and community building than the creator / consumer logic that commercial social media platforms promote to keep you glued to your phone. If you are reading this and you haven't subscribed to our newsletter, go to our website and do that now before Big Tech kicks us out for good. Now, getting back on topic..

This issue is packed with some amazing testimonies, starting off with Stuart Feather's memories from the early years of the Gay Liberation movement in the US and UK or John Hoggett's experiences of gay community during the AIDS crisis, to more contemporary accounts of trans resistance in the UK penned by Esraa Husain (who already participated in *Lumpen 15 – Migration*) and Jaime Starr. We have some more introspective or analytical pieces on lived experience and our relation with wider society from Ro, L, Steve and Lorna. To balance it all, there's also some excellent fiction from Mariah Pearl and Jet Moon.

One aspect of this issue that we're especially proud of is the diversity in ages from our authors. Noah, a member of the Hangout queer youth club in Leeds, is being published for the first time at 14 years old, while our oldest, Stuart, is 86 years old at the time of publication. Noah's youth worker Lou also gives us some insights on how different it was for them growing up and how it feels now playing a big part in making this space possible for other

generations. We often think of queer spaces as dominated by the 20s to 40s age bracket, give or take either side, and that might be the case when what we call community spaces are reduced to going out partying all night or other activities for more abled bodied adults, but this issue demonstrates we are here, we are queer is for all ages.

It's been my first time editing *Lumpen* (or any journal at all). In regards to publications I have usually taken on more support-based roles like proofreading or communications, so there was a little fear at the beginning of the process, but things have fallen into place nicely. When I was writing the call for submissions I was fantasising about receiving loads of texts related to the prompts I listed. Not all of them came up in the end, but I am happy with the diversity and quality of the submissions we have received. I am very grateful to my co-workers at The Class Work Project for supporting me in this role. Special thanks to our amazing cover artist Kumo Qüin and all our writers for their wonderful contributions. Thank you for reading and sharing this with your contacts. •

THE POLITICS OF CAMP: The Antics Of Gay Liberation

Stuart Feather

Unbeknown to each other two sociology students in London picked up snippets of news that on 27 June 1969 New York police had raided a gay bar, the *Stonewall Inn* in Greenwich Village, to be met by lesbians and drag queens fighting back. The riot continued through the night until the next day and broke out sporadically over the following week.

In the starkest fashion the phenomenon had exposed the violence behind the oppression of lesbians, gays, transsexuals and people of colour, and the duality of sexism and racism that James Baldwin had been writing about since 1956.¹

Sometime later came the news that a Gay Liberation Front had been founded at New York's Alternative University.

The following summer both students decided to investigate the extraordinary ideas that followed on the high heels and heady exhilaration of the Stonewall riots. Bob Mellors at the London School of Economics (LSE) involved himself with the movement in New York.

Aubrey Walter at the University of East London attended gay groups on his way to San Francisco.

They met in Philadelphia at the Black Panthers' Revolutionary Peoples' Constitutional Convention organised by Huey P Newton, Supreme Commander of the Panthers, who generously invited Gay Liberation & Women's Liberation to take part in the conference having recognised the duality of sexism/racism and declared that of all people, homosexuals could be the most revolutionary.²

The pair returned to London and founded GLF at the London School of Economics (LSE) on the 8th of October 1970, with a demonstration against the student newspaper *The Sennet* that carried sexist comments about gays. I visited some three weeks later and was immediately excited and turned on by what I found. Aged 30 I became one with its mainly younger activists.

Committing yourself to GLF's activism meant Coming Out to your employer, workmates, friends and family, a painful right-of-passage for everyone concerned. But, a good talking point, often hilarious, when joining a consciousness-raising awareness group; how you felt about declaring your sexuality, what effect that had on you, what effect you had on others.

Wearing a badge declaring your sexuality was not too daunting, on most occasions the conversation remained on an impersonal level, like 'what does GLF stand for.' Rarely did it touch on how society and the press constantly force us to feel guilty and ashamed of ourselves.

The times helped; the late 60s decriminalisation of homosexuality and abortion and the 'Summer of Love' was still in the air. The events of May '68 in Paris which originated with male students at Nanterre University making Reichian³ inspired demands of its faculty to provide non segregated dormitories⁴ led ultimately to the French government's near collapse.

GLF was no place for the notion of a hierarchy of pain, or the ideas of martyrdom. This was new, Genet like in its overturned order from isolated victim to active social agency. This was an event. Something that happened that had never existed before: Gay Pride; in ourselves, in each other and in our community. For the author of *The Soul of Man Under Socialism*, Gay Liberation would have been Oscar Wilde's wet-dream come true.

About the middle of November 1970 people began to feel a demonstration was needed. That night I was sitting a row behind Antony Grey, the Gay Rights campaigner who single-handedly achieved the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967. The man who on his first appearance on television had to endure being filmed with his back to the camera, and for another interview filmed in a darkened studio on the same basis: that it would be improper, even immoral to show the face of a homosexual on TV.

The one question was, of a million problems which one were we going to demonstrate about? The hard gay-left suggested the American Embassy for its visa ban on homosexuals. The proposal

from Eric Thompson, Antony Grey's partner won the vote. He suggested Highbury Fields to protest the recent arrest of Louis Eakes, chair of the Young Liberals, for importuning.

The first publicly advertised demonstration in this country by openly lesbian and gay men took place on 27th November 1970. The cottage on the edge of Highbury Fields was surrounded by some seventy lesbians and gays and lots of chanting occurred. Candles were lit and afterwards the protest moved off to the centre of the fields where the GLF Demands were read out. A reporter from the *Times* and a photographer appeared, one of whom made derogatory remarks about poofs and was promptly denounced. The group then spread out and entered the bushes, cigarettes were lit and the glowing tips used to signal an invitation to other cruisers, which the police in court claimed Eakes had done when he left the cottage. After that everyone went off to celebrate at the nearest pub to Highbury Corner - the *Cock Inn*.

Returning from meetings at the Arts Lab to the LSE after Christmas, the lesbians announced the formation of a group solely for themselves. There were a number of men who put up quite a resistance to this new development, some even demanding their right to attend women's meetings. 19-year-old Tony Reynolds, whom I later learned had been arrested at Notting Hill Gate for chalking pro-gay slogans on walls and pavements a year before GLF began, said:

As I felt the women in the meeting were yet again dominated by the men in the debate on whether the men should be in on their discussions. I think that example is in itself a good reason for the women talking on their own. I myself hopefully look forward to the emergence of a lesbian liberation voice. Unfortunately, I feel bad about the fact that I'm a man putting forward a point that should be made by the women, but as was shown in the last meeting the women didn't get very far, and I think the point should be made pretty soon. The existence of a lesbian caucus in the New York Gay Liberation Front has been very helpful in challenging male chauvinism amongst gay men and anti-gay feelings amongst Women's Lib.

Tony Reynolds's intervention was remarkable for his knowledge and sensibility. He went on to found the GLF Youth Group for young men under the Age of Consent then set at 21. Some of its activists were just 15-years-old.

Between December 1970 and June '71 250 Lesbians and Gays were attending the Wednesday General Meetings, too many for the LSE Lecture Theatre and were asked to leave. Andrew Lumsden, the world's first out journalist and member of the GLF Steering Group took the offer from Anthony Blond to use the basement of the former night club *Middle Earth* in Covent Garden for three months.

By that time GLF had organised the first openly advertised L&G Dance, the 'GLF People's Ball,' held at Kensington

Town Hall on 22nd Dec. A month later, police with a warrant for drugs busted the GLF Disco at the *Prince of Wales*, Hampstead Road, Camden. Another dance at Camden Town Hall featured the *Pink Fairies* and *Hawkwind*. On 4th Feb '71 GLF Street Theatre, of which I was a member, performed *The Miss Trial Competition* on the pavement outside Bow Street Magistrates Court, in support of the four Women's Liberation demonstrators arrested at the Albert Hall for disrupting the *Miss World Contest* live on TV. GLF joined the massive 21st Feb march and demonstration against the Industrial Relations Bill, their participation sent ripples of fear through the male left, and expressions of respect and solidarity from miners in Trafalgar Square. Two days later, Earls Court gay pubs, *The Coleherne* and *The Boltons* were leafleted to advertise the first GLF Gay Day, which took place the following afternoon in Holland Park. 'Homosexuals Come Out!' stickers advertising the party were plastered all over London. And, on 6th March GLF celebrated International Women's Day by joining the march from Marble Arch to Trafalgar Square at the invitation of Women's Liberation.

In June GLF found a regular meeting place at All Saints Church Hall, Notting Hill where Rev Peter Clark provided space for the district's lack of social amenities. In Notting Hill, transplanted GLF could not have found better soil. Locating itself in the midst of Britain's social engineering it burst into flower.

In August GLF found itself under attack from Christian Evangelical Fundamentalists under the leadership of missionary couple Peter and Janet Hill, recently returned from India and horrified to find the depth of depravity the nation had fallen into in their absence. They were joined by the likes of Mary Whitehouse with her clean-up, 'Television Viewers and Listeners Association;' Cabinet member Lord Longford, antipornography campaigner and regular



Centre: Hyde Park arrest of Nicholas Bramble as the Spirit of Porn and Left: the author as Mary Whitehouse. Nicholas, a trained Royal Ballet dancer, sensing the officer's arresting grab, locked his arms. The officer's hands slipped and he cut his little finger on Bramble's diamante bracelet. He was charged with assault, an automatic six-month jail sentence if found guilty. At the 1st hearing the officer wasn't available. At the 2nd they claimed the paperwork was lost. Case closed. By kind Permission of Mirror Newspapers.

visitor to the cell of Moors murderer Myra Hindley, and Malcolm Muggeridge a right-wing journalist and broadcaster. They turned the missionaries' Festival of Light (FoL) campaign from religious to political by demanding the Government recriminalise homosexuality and abortion barely four years after being decriminalised.

John Chesterman saw the danger, alerted Street Theatre and persuaded young lesbian Janet Phillips to pose as a devout Christian and apply for a job with the FoL. Appointed to their planning office with access to tickets for the inauguration, Janet was also able, with the use of the FoL address book, to dispatch at the very last moment, new parking arrangements for the coaches transporting the devout from all over the country to Central London for the rally, except that the new parking places were in the outer boroughs, with new timings for arrival, some as late as 6:00 p.m. which was when the FoL finished.

The FoL inaugural meeting at Methodist Central Hall was trashed in a series of some twenty or so well-timed interruptions. When Tony Salvis the dodgy GLF secretary entered the vestibule dressed as a well-fed Bishop in an immaculate suit, purple shirt, and dog collar he was soon surrounded by women confessing their sins. To each one he raised his hand in benediction and said, "Carry on sinning sister, it's good for you."

As the applause for the first speech died away slow handclapping was heard

throughout the assembly. Once the congregation regained their composure and the next speaker took the stand, mice were released causing shrieks of disbelief and snorts of disgust as people tried to escape into the aisles or attempted to climb onto their pews. After another interval, Nuns in blue habits with white wimples filed out of their pews to stand in line abreast across the central aisle before moving solemnly to the front of the hall. The pious sisters turned to face the congregation lifted up their skirts and danced the Can-Can down the aisle. There was pandemonium. People were utterly staggered and one of the nuns looked like a man. The GLF Youth group then draped a huge white sheet over the front of the balcony, displaying in bold red letters 'Cliff for Queen.'⁵

A speaker proclaimed she had homosexual friends and knew how much happier they were, when like her they discovered Jesus and renounced their former lives. The temperature shot-up with suppressed rage, clouds of talcum powder filled the air and down from the balcony were hurled religious texts with pornographic pictures tucked inside. At one-point same sex couples stood up, embraced and started kissing each other. When Muggeridge began his attack on homosexuals, five Klu Klux Klan figures stood, raised their right arms and agreed - "Yes! Burn them like faggots! Hangings too good for them! Bring back the birch! Jail them for life! Crucify them!" Muggeridge despaired:

I think it's a waste of time to try to develop any sort of cogent thought in the presence of such yahoos,"⁶ and finally he gave up by quoting the bloody red hand of Ulster himself, the Rev. Ian Paisley, "Let us put on the sword of strength, pick up the armour of righteousness, and come out into the light."⁷

Towards the end, after more interventions, the GLF Action group, dressed as workmen managed to get into the basement and threw enough switches to



L.-R. Michael Reading, Nicholas Bramble, Rachael Pollack founder of the GLF Transsexual and Transvestite Group, and Michael Lynham as the wicked school M'am.

plunge half the hall into darkness. The Guardian next day reported under the headline 'Darkness in our Light.'⁸

For the rally in Trafalgar Square and march to the Festival in Hyde Park the GLF group came as nuns; a choir in red tissue paper surplices, a violin accompanist, the Alternative Mary Whitehouse as their conductor; Riot police, a Spirit of Porn with a tray of masks of Longford, Muggerridge, and Whitehouse; a wicked schoolmarm brandished a cane; Jesus wore a loin cloth, a crown of thorns and carried a cross. Women's Liberation came as exhausted mothers pushing toy prams.

Approaching from Covent Garden they found the Square jammed with bug-eyed, tunnel-visioned, hysterical families rocking backwards and forwards shrieking "Jesus Saves! Jesus Saves!" GLF turned south and edged towards St. Martins-in-the-Fields. The people on its steps fled on seeing this approaching vision from hell, arranged a tableau fronting the great church and sang the hymn, "All things bright and beautiful."

They tried to move on again toward the Strand but found the way blocked by a police line that wouldn't let them pass. Those at the front, mainly the women asked why, and pointed out that they were making a peaceful protest. A senior police officer with scrambled egg all over his cap appeared from behind the lines, marched towards GLF and told them to disperse stating "That you are suspected of being associated with the Angry Brigade."⁹

On the North side of the plinth the Festival organizers stood listening to the preacher and gazing at the immense crowd in front of them. Those at the corners having glimpsed or sensed something odd happening behind them, came round the side of the column to investigate, and were aghast to discover the Alternative Mary Whitehouse, in her trademark upswept glasses, conducting choristers in a hymn, while the real Mary Whitehouse stood on the north side, holding herself and her beautiful morals aloft for the adoration of the congregation in front of her.

Meanwhile the police grabbed the wicked schoolmarm, turned him upside down and lowered him to the ground headfirst. Two nuns restricted by their habits were also arrested, the rest fled before the police returned. Somehow they got down off the column and away across the square and into the Mall, while the choristers disappeared into the crowd along with Jesus who'd wisely abandoned his cross.

Halfway down the Mall the escapees began to meet up and calm down and stopped to wait and see how many had got away. Five of them were left, The Spirit of Porn, two Nuns, a riot-policemen, and the Alternative Mary Whitehouse. United they started out for Hyde Park and the mass meeting. All along the Mall and up Constitution Hill more of these dangerous religious extremists stood on the pavement shrieking 'Jesus Saves.' What a relief it was to enter the Park and find some peace as they headed for Marble Arch.

The party were jerked backwards to a halt. The police had swooped so cleverly they hadn't been aware of them at all. Silently the constables had run over the grass behind them. Grasping hands slid

down to pinion their wrists, push their arms up their backs, and forced them round and forward to a waiting police van. A priest ran up and asked why they'd been arrested. The door was slammed shut in his face, and off they bumped over the turf to the road leading down to woodlands that conceal Hyde Park Police Station.

It was a short journey, but long enough for them to ask the arresting officers why they'd been arrested. "Why did you behave like that," one demanded, "we haven't been causing trouble. We were making a peaceful protest. Don't you know that violence only leads to violence? Cat got your tongue! Shy are you? Do you prefer boys or girls officer?"¹⁰

The Festival of Light expected 70,000 people to attend but only 30,000 did so. GLF had successfully entertained the media who were delighted by their antics and gleefully described them to the nation. A month later the FoL collapsed.



St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. L-R: The author as Mary Whitehouse conducts the choir, violinist Peter Reed, Mary McIntosh, Claudia the first out Trans activist in GLF, Jenny, and Frankie Green. The nun, Tim Bolingbrook blesses Bette Bourne.

Police retaliation for GLF's attack on the FoL was swift. Activists going for a drink after the next General Meeting found *The Chepstow* barricaded in by police cars, Black Marias, and a force announcing that the landlord did not want GLF in his pub. Pretending GLF was associated with the Angry Brigade, the Metropolitan Police were attempting to impose apartheid; forcing the Out lesbians and gays back into the ghetto where their agents, the landlords of gay pubs could control GLF's access to their own community . . . •

Stuart is an eighty-six-year-old queer activist from the Gay Liberation Front and member of the radical queen's commune in Notting Hill 1970-1974, author of 'Blowing the Lid: Gay Liberation, Sexual Revolution and Radical Queens', Zero Books, 2016. Email: stuart@blowingthelid.stuartfeather.co.uk

1 James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*, Dial Books, New York, 1956. First UK edition, Michael Joseph, London, 1957.

2 Huey P. Newton, A Letter from Huey to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women's Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements, *The Black Panther*, California, 21 August 1970 p.5.

3 In February 1967, the French Trotskyist Boris Frankel, spoke on [Wilhelm] Reich and the social function of sexual repression to a crowd of several hundred students at the Nanterre branch of the University of Paris. "I can personally attest to the enthusiastic response of the audience, for I was there." * Introduction, Bertell Ollman, *Sex-Pol Essays*, 1929-1934. *Wilhelm Reich*, Verso, London, 1972.

4 In the week following the talk, Reich's booklet, *The Sexual Struggle of Youth*, was sold door to door in all the residence halls. This led to a widespread sex-educational campaign based – as Daniel Cohn-Bendit tells us – on Reich's revolutionary ideas and resulted in the men and women students of the women's dorms to protest their restrictive rules. Other struggles over other issues followed but the consciousness which culminated in the events of May 1968 was first awakened in a great number of Nanterre students in the struggle against their sexual repression. Daniel Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism and the Left Wing Alternative*, trans; A Pomerans,* Translation, (London 1969), p.29. Reich's *Sexual Struggle of Youth*, is now banned in some French high schools.

5 Basil Gingell, Religious Affairs Correspondent, Uproar at Central Hall, *The Times*, 10 September 1971.

6 *Frenz* 11, 30 Sep. 1971

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Guardian*, 11 Sep. 1971

9 Peter Dunn, *The Sunday Times*, 26 September 1971, p.7.

The Angry Brigade had been on a bombing campaign since 1968 targeting the empty homes of government ministers and leading industrialists. They also bombed the BBC Transmitter Van ready outside the Albert Hall the night before the Miss World Contest 1970, when Women's Liberation protested against the contest from inside the hall using football rattles and Bob Hope fled the stage after making a series of sexist comments, televised nationwide. It was that bombing that led police to suspect that WL was connected to the AB which was completely ridiculous but caused a great deal of trouble to all those women. See also the movie of the protest; *Misbehaviour*, 2020, starring Kieran Knightley.

10 Stuart Feather, (2016).

REAMS AND BEGUILE

Ro

I am back here—where my lover overwhelms me with too much completeness to be able to talk about them. I am back at the rubberiness of giddy air pockets squished between our bodies when we look at each other, seams splitting with fondness and lust. Love, awe, respect. I am back at not caring about describing it. I don't want to explain why he is everything he is to me. He seems endless.

Why would I articulate something that will shroud me forever. Now, most times, I can understand where I exist in space. Without moving, the world flattens under me, time de-narrativises itself, circumstances become just that, circumstance, and everything I think and feel has a purpose; to belong somewhere. I belong somewhere.

And then something happens when I look in his eyes. So much happens in my imagination of his eyes that I can't

catch a flicker of in words; so much will soothe and delight and divine me and so much more will I give him, and so safe is living, that trying to tell tale of it is like hacking ancient forests with a sculpting chisel. Words diminish the peace he creates, make mutant sounds that nowhere resemble our world. I spin freak galaxies of our own to run unsatisfied in.

Where is the language of temperature and touch. How can I emit what happens in my blood when he walks toward me and the theorising falls away. He says my name that is not my legal name, and the weight of dread, the shimmering scared, anticipatory survival, of protecting people, of finally taking a breath as a person, not indentured, leaves me, fleeing. I am already free. He is already here, we are already unfettered. It is simple in this long second when he smiles, and I am satisfied with living again.

And what a living he instils. ✿

Each time "it's just policy" comes to cut me, he picks me up from work. On the way out the building, his hug tries not to solve anything, but to

stop it. Just for a minute, makes it end. He makes classic romance feel unique: going out for tetra pack drinks so late the day would otherwise have ended for me; introducing each other at “family events” and not explaining where we go when we leave these people; ‘just because’ flowers, often come potted; hot towel to my fever, learning my home remedies without making me confront the loneliness of a remedy that was never quite home. He banter with my depression, is marble cool to my anxiety. The deep-sea quiet intimacy of updating our emergency contacts.

When we walk, he wraps his finger around my ring finger, and smirks.

Pride is a gated concert where papers are checked, and housing is for married femmes. Instead, we learn local histories of distant lands. Instead, we water plants in infoshops. People’s lack of showing up makes me question this leftist shit, and he puts a hand on my chest. “You’re building a cushion in a tax haven,” he remembers. “We will have evenings debating building rates in anarchist meetings, and we’ll buy everyone heat.” Kisses my hurting head. “We’re building a cushion so you can take one less job.”

He is self-aware, soft, a force of joy. Neither of us needs to be alone being that, anymore. He’s subtle, except when he’s proud of us. He doesn’t make me wonder what I mean. He doesn’t make me make big decisions alone, especially where I have to quantify what my joy is worth. Should I give up 10 years of trying to find friends and uproot to Japan to study sport? He loves the idea. He sees me reach for something that is mine—not something that is less bad—and he is all over making the plan work. He sees the loss in it just the same; the want and the pain have their own

places. He holds me thrashing in my ecstasy just as he can cradle my grief.

He loves playing volleyball with me; calls it peak flirting. I stop looking for people to play with all the time. We have crazy rallies in the middle of the night.

I never catastrophize again. I have a much more immediate check of sanity, comfort, relief, to ever reach the point of spiral again. Why would I imagine the worst when a furnace hold is mine anytime I want it? The worst simply can not happen if the world is backslash to us, our existence.

And because he is fictional, he never gets hurt, or suffers, or dies. ❀

We take a half step of disconnection? I edit him, and we’re in love again.

With him, I don’t even lose queer time! We are gay without the dangers—cis-passing, purposeful, deflecting glares, inviting envy, breedable and allowed. It’s safe to hug him in public; I don’t run down laws before a kiss. People get out of the way of a tall man and he is always holding my hand next to him.

“You make my life feel like a shonen anime,” *he* says. I am glad for it. He weathervanes me as I walk through crowds drunk. Calls me a heat-seeking missile aiming straight for his heart when I want cuddles. Glazes my fictional crushes. Falls for every lyric

‘With him, I don’t even lose queer dangers— cis-passing, purposeful, deflecting glares, inviting envy, breedable and allowed. It’s safe to hug him in public; I don’t run down laws before a kiss.’

prank. Tells me he’ll protect me from everyone except his grandma when she meets me for the first time; “All the best” he says, and shakes my hand, “I’m not risking that woman’s bull embrace.”

He helps me write the application that will take me away from him. Tackles me, drops me, bribes me with soba. Never lets me forget that I am my priority.

It’s just that—the way I want to be known and held when I have a panic attack, or when I get bruised, or when I’m tired, or I’m horny, somehow feels like it can’t be achieved. Still, he makes me learn to assemble a meal, even if all I have to work with is an old cucumber and a tin of beans.

Every now and then, I am incapacitated; that they will kill me because I am not white. He never tries to forgive the world. But he pulls up my spreadsheet, “Proof points to reframe despair”; he highlights “you’ve gone from rootlessness to rootlessness and made a friend each time,” he highlights “you’ve built privileges out of being mobile, English-speaking, and earnest. Doctors have charged you less because you were earnest.” He answers me: they might—but they haven’t caught up yet.

I’m not the funnier person in the relationship anymore. I’m not the only person who learns from patterns. I’m not more interested in repair than my partner, I’m not more organised, or capable, or giving, or with more energy or capacity. I’m not foolish for wanting something more. I’m not clearly the more impassioned to make him

laugh—he has nicknames and tricks and crutches and solutions and dates and presents and dreams for us that I hadn't even imagined. When I say 'equals,' it takes my breath away in how many ways that is accurate. He floors me. He makes it routine.

Real life people do a half-assed job of being people anyway. Meanwhile my love strolls through a wet mart bending a world with his happiness. Then he gets excited that I exist.

"Afternoon snookums, you look stunning today." A giddy mess, just watching me exist. •

Written in Singapore under bonded labour, by a queer criminalised first for being brown.

Soundtrack for after reading: ヒカリアレ (hikari are) by Burnout Syndrome.

Ro feels like a lifelong immigrant, most recently to London. They write solarpunk worlds and play volleyball. Ro also makes zines on rent justice, good chairs, and eating for emancipation, which are displayed at Asia Art Archive, Glasgow Zine Library, and inside unsuspecting library books worldwide. Most importantly, Ro is the "very nonbinary laugh" in Sarah Keyworth's latest special. Sometimes they are @sendlasagna.

REFLECTIONS ON TRANSNESS OVER THE YEARS: A CALL FOR LIBERATION

Esraa Husain

I find myself becoming more critical of what Pride means to my community and I amidst the bigotry and the current growing hostility towards trans people in Scotland and the UK. I reflect on my first Pride march in Aberdeen, my first HRT injection, my first and last queer heartbreaks, and being jailed for my gender expression and identity back in Kuwait. I think of the many Prides in Junes that I have attended and LGBTQ History Months in Februarys that I have celebrated, and Novembers that I have spent grieving over our losses in the community. November is Trans Awareness Month which includes Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR). These months hold multitudes of pride, joy, love and loss and the unwritten. In this piece, I document some of the recent local movements in Scotland and share my lived experiences of activism as testimonies, in a gesture to contribute to our living archive of queerness and transness, working towards liberation.

The Scottish Trans Conference

I had the privilege of working with the Scottish Trans Conference for the first time in 2023 and delivered a session following their themes of care and community in Dundee.¹ I proposed a panel discussion with Q&A, which they kindly welcomed and funded. The panel featured three trans and nonbinary individuals based in Scotland who shared their challenges when accessing healthcare, including mental healthcare and wellbeing services such as community support groups and DIY. Our panel included underrepresented perspectives touching on disability, neurodivergence, immigration, ethnicity, and sex work. We adapted a hybrid format, and people who could not attend in person have joined us live online. The wonderful team at the conference have designed and published a zine afterwards with the support of Coin-Operated Press.² This is a contribution to our living archives that proves our existence and validates the richness of our experiences.

At the train station in Dundee, I spotted several people who attended the same event and suggested that we sit all together in one carriage thinking

'safety in numbers'. Despite our efforts in cultivating safe and healing spaces, we are painfully aware that such visibility and representation come with inevitable risk. Unfortunately we were subjected to transphobic abuse on the train when heading back to Glasgow. The train inspector provided us with temporary safety and separated us from the abuser. After a nerve-wracking train journey, we arrived in Glasgow exhausted, scared and extra vigilant of our surroundings, in case the abuser is still around. He did threaten me in front of everyone that he would beat me up once we arrived in Glasgow, so the train conductor said that they have a duty to report the incident, and a few police officers were waiting for us to record our statements when we arrived. It was heartbreaking to be subjected to that kind of venom immediately after being embraced with such care and respect at the conference. This incident left a heaviness that stayed with us for months afterwards. But this is not a statement of defeat. This is a reminder that there is still work to be done and that our community is great at being many things, especially resilient and persevering in the face of hate and intolerance.

This is exactly why I reached out to the conference again in 2024, to deliver another session following their theme of create and change in Glasgow.³ All that frustration and hurt was channelled once again into community-building; considering the location, I decided to host an event via U Belong Glasgow.⁴ Our event, Hear Me Out: Poetry and Spoken Word from Trans and Non-binary BPOC Creatives, had a hybrid format like the year before. It was a performance panel with a Q&A that included four published and emerging trans and non-binary creatives of colour who shared their poetry and spoken word in unique styles, some included sound, visuals and movement. It was a snowy and cold day in Glasgow but being in the company of the trans and non-binary community and comrades brought

so much warmth. Holding the space for our complexities and expansiveness with generosity and compassion.

In 2025, the conference took a different shape, titled: We Can't Keep Waiting, Take Action for Trans Healthcare in Glasgow, where I proposed to deliver a creative writing workshop exploring local and global queer resistance via U Belong Glasgow. Contributors had the opportunity to read and share their creative writings for the first time in front of an audience. The morale was high, and you could see their confidence blooming and their hope nourished. This is exactly why we did it and why we need to continue doing. This type of community organising recharges me, and I know my younger self would have been so proud to see how far I have come.

Involvement at the University of Glasgow

For the first time in Glasgow, I was invited as a public speaker in November 2019 by the University of Glasgow's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer Plus Students Association (GULGBTQ+) to join a panel on Trans Body and Positivity with fellow trans and non-binary students at the University of Glasgow. It was a collaboration with Glasgow University Food and Body Positivity Society.⁵ Hosted by Indigo Korres, who does an abundance of important work for our community and is currently running the Scottish Queer

International Film Festival (SQIFF).⁶ This led me to be invited for the second time by GULGBTQ+ to join the main event of Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR) in collaboration with Glasgow University Student Representative Council (GUSRC).⁷ It was an opportunity for the queer students to mourn and remember those who have been lost to the violence of transphobia, and to increase awareness and understanding of the difficulties faced by trans people across the globe. There were various activities and events, including Flag Raising, the Transgender Art Exhibition showcasing the works of local artists, and we ended the day with a Vigil. I went to a few of the events and was asked to speak at the Main Event with a group of trans and non-binary people who shared what TDoR meant to them. I read a testimony on incarceration, policing and transness that was originally published in *Kohl Journal* titled 'The Required Labels'.⁸

Even though institutions such as universities offer limited spaces for us, and that does feel tokenistic, however, the student population work hard to make sure that our voices are heard. I had the opportunity to participate in the Research Sharing activity at the Virtual Pride with the LGBTQ+ Staff Network as part of the University of Glasgow Pride at Home event.⁹ Students kept mobilising and established the bi-yearly UniQueer Zine, in which I had the privilege to publish two of my creative pieces in two separate issues in 2020. One piece is a short photography poem under the

theme of community / solidarity called '22 Hours in Edinburgh', and the second poem was published under the theme of queer bodies / queer souls called 'What is It?'. My position as a researcher at the University does not hinder my opposition to the University's unethical practices, including the arms industry investment.¹⁰ It actually motivates me to stand up against it with more passion.

The Failures of Glasgow Pride and Glasgow Film Theatre

In 2025, we saw the persistent courageous acts by students at the University of Glasgow in challenging the status quo and making sure that our trans and queer voices are heard and reminding ourselves and others that this fight towards liberation is intersectional. We cannot advocate for trans rights without speaking against genocide and the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. With the shameful and disappointing statement published by Glasgow Pride¹¹, claiming that they are against Pinkwashing, while failing miserably to understand and recognise what Pinkwashing is. Deciding against PACBI under the phrase 'Cinema for All' is confusing and contradictory. What about the cinemas that are destroyed and demolished by the occupation in Palestine? Why was it unquestionable to remove Russian films when the war started in Ukraine, and now debating standing up against genocide in Palestine? It is tragic to see how history repeats itself in failing our humanity. Our fights and rights locally and internationally are interconnected. Together, we will find the way to liberate ourselves and our communities despite this monstrous violence and without the hollow gestures of performative promises from the corrupt systems of power. We cannot speak up against tyranny in the imperial core without protesting the brutalities in Palestine and the Global South that are backed

up by the West to disturb, exploit and extract resources, and leave the countries uninhabitable. We cannot call out injustices without condemning the terrible withdrawal of funds for the disabled in the UK. And we cannot win if we do not stand together. •

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1 <https://www.scottishtrans.org/scottish-trans-conference-2023-care-community/>

2 <https://www.scottishtrans.org/community/scottish-trans-conference-2023-zine/>

3 <https://www.outsavvy.com/event/22598/scottish-trans-conference-2024-create-change>

4 <https://www.instagram.com/ubelongglasgow/>

5 <https://www.facebook.com/gufoodandbody/photos/a.2284017281918421/2506153679704779/>

6 <https://www.sqiff.org/>

7 <https://www.facebook.com/events/s/transgender-day-of-remembrance/415358072707760/>

8 <https://kohljournal.press/the-required-labels>

9 <https://www.facebook.com/events/s/uofg-pride-at-home/276879423358193/>

10 <https://www.glasgowunisc.org/news/article/gusrc/Statement-UofG-Continues-Arms-Industry-Investment/>

11 <https://www.glasgowfilm.org/statement-from-glasgow-film-board-of-trustees/>

AWPAB (ASSIGNED WRONG PLACE AT BIRTH)

Lisa Fouweather

Let's set the scene.

.....

.....

.....

tumbleweed.

Actually, let's just skip this part. I forgot, I'm from Donny.

There's never much going on here. (God save) The Queen (The fascist regime) granted us city status in 2022, but despite the title that we didn't ask for, we'll always be what we've always been, a run-down, overlooked (see also: forgotten. neglected), working-class town. The kind of place that people leave (if they're lucky).

We've had some great talent come out of Doncaster – YungBlud, Louis Tomlinson, Tan France, to name just a few... But where are they all now? Why London, of course, where else?... Who in their right mind would stay in this ghost town?...

What is Doncaster really like?

There is a lot of generational poverty here, and a lot of it is due to addiction, a disease that gains momentum in places that have been stripped of opportunity and then blamed for not being 'progressive' enough.

It is for this reason that there is so much racism, homophobia, and general backward thinking here, too. Because when you're told, whether implicitly or explicitly, that you don't matter, you look for something, or someone, to hold to account.

Doncaster is therefore the perfect breeding ground for the likes of Reform UK. Instead of realising that politicians are the issue, the public takes their lies as gospel and goes along with their scapegoating...

'The issue with this place isn't because we don't care about you, it's because of those asylum seekers who are fleeing their war-torn countries in search of safety. &, of course, we can't forget all the trans men who want to be women, (or is it men, no women), who put our girls and women at risk by using the same bathroom.'

The likes of Reform UK talk such rubbish that is simply untrue and based on no factual evidence, yet they are believed because they are strategic in who they target.

And so, the working class, *my class*, is turned against itself (again).

Growing up queer in Doncaster

Despite the systemic failure that is present in Doncaster, I am still proud of my roots and where I'm from. Pride, however, doesn't eradicate difficulty, especially as a queer person...

Growing up queer in Doncaster wasn't, and isn't (I moved back here last year to save money), easy. I feel the stares when I go out for lunch with my partner. The quiet looks of disapproval from across the room, the laughs, the sense of unease, 'are we safe?'. .

I've been called so many slurs, some of which don't even apply, yet still, I feel them all.

As with anything, a knife to one of us is a knife to all of us.

IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU ARE. IT MATTERS THAT YOU'RE NOT WHAT THEY EXPECT.

There is very little queer representation here. People might not conform to the law, but what they do conform to is norms, whereby individuality and creativity, in terms of fashion and gender expression, is very much a rarity.

It makes me laugh sometimes, actually, how I can go out one day and be referred to as 'lady', yet two days later, go out looking exactly the same

and be called sir. I personally go by any pronouns, so it doesn't bother me (hence me finding it quite funny). It just adds to this sense of people not knowing how to perceive someone who doesn't fit into the boxes they didn't know could be broken out of.

I might find it funny sometimes, but underneath that amusement is always a sense of discomfort at the need we have to categorise, even when the categories don't fit. The reason behind this is due to a lack of language, exposure, and possibility. The age-old quote of 'you can't be what you can't see' is so true, and unfortunately, in Doncaster, there isn't much to see.

And this is where class comes back into the picture...

QUEER LIBERATION ISN'T JUST ABOUT VISIBILITY, IT'S ABOUT ACCESS.

Had I been given a different option to ballet as a kid, and seen more girls and women embracing their masculinity, if I'd been shown even *one* alternative, I think I'd have found life easier, and less like I was a thorn in a bed of roses.

But I wasn't [given a different option], because I was born in the 'wrong' place...

In places like London, you only have to step foot out of your house to see queer representation. It's a city of such unapologetic freedom of expression, and I love it for that. What I don't love

quite so much, however, is the fact that something as fundamental as feeling seen is based on where you happen to have been born...

Heaven might be in London. But it doesn't *belong* to London.

You can find a piece of it anywhere...

Where I'm at now*

**Physically, I'm in Doncaster. Mentally, I'm in a queer nightclub in Berlin...*

Growing up, I wasted far too many years in a pink leotard and ballet pumps, feeling like I was in the wrong body, and performing 'normality' in school. I did this for a whole 13 years, in fact...

Now, I am very fortunate to have built a beautiful community of queer creatives through my indie press, 'ANARKISS', and it is very healing for my inner-child, that girl-maybe boy-definitely alien creature that is still within me...

Our community might not physically reside in the same location, but within the zines that I curate, we can all be our unfiltered, binary-breaking selves.

What can you do?

To be liberated, it's not enough to simply be accepted. We must all work together to dismantle the conditions that make acceptance feel impossible in the first place. Only then will society realise what has been staring us in the face...

THE SAME SYSTEMS THAT PRODUCE POVERTY
ALSO PRODUCE INTOLERANCE

Alas, Queer people are not the enemy of the working class. We are the working class. •

Lisa Fouweather (L) is a writer based in South Yorkshire and the editor of ANARKISS. She lives with her fiancée, four dogs, and two cats, and writes about queerness, class, and subculture from a distinctly Northern perspective.



Mut
Home in
the
alley,

FIND ME IN THE ALLEY

Mariah Pearl

Let me set the scene.

Unyielding on the street. Rain, soaking, your typical kind of tragedy. Walk, or run, it is a quick fall into the slips of allies and this is where they meet. In a lot of ways, the moss bricked surrounding is where they feel most free. They are quiet usually, but loud as they gather. Dark, somehow sheltered, though no one questions if their roof is an extension of the buildings, or one they have constructed from comradery. All they know is that it is warmer here than home.

Now who do we have? We have all your usual suspects of course. She was a girl. Just a girl, but her body slipped between the cracks of a nuanced identity. He was a boy. Only a boy, but his mind reached out to grasp onto anybody. Now, if it's helpful, and you so desire, please repeat until you fill the alley. Cloistered, this is the only time they have ever felt truly neighborly, shoulder to shoulder with individuality.

"In a world built on scraps and crumbs, what will you eat?" They ask one another, trading in memories. It is an echoed frustration. To know the feeling of restlessness, the wanting fills them every time the subscription to a life they didn't choose renews.

See, she nurtures the babies, has done nearly all her days. None of them are her own. She doesn't

feel all that motherly. Change one diaper at the age of six and you've changed a thousand. To think, she could have been good with a wrench, but they didn't come in pink; not the ones she could afford. The only alternative problem solving she knows is to sit behind desks, receptions, and phone calls. Micromanaged existence, sweeping up after the men in those offices with the windows. There is never enough to take home and unlock the door, set the alarm, it's not all that different from changing those diapers after all.

He runs the bar sometimes; is placed at doorways when lights go low. On a good day he circles kitchens (but usually only edgy ones). Here they let him be angry, still hungry for the unknowing. In a way he is in charge, but never further than his arms can reach. Mostly lonely, his frustration is in being silent and stuck. No one listens when you're riddled with a life not so straight, never narrow. They can use his physicality when it suits them, but he never took to racing. Spin, spin, spinning could have come easier he thinks. He is mostly disassociated from it now. Oddity is all fun and games when the people around you are loose. In his experience, the windows are still

ever closed when the sun comes up, especially when you can't produce. Over time their curiosities led them to be over-educated, under-appreciated, but what else were they meant to do? Up to now it felt like they took all the right roads, only to find dead end doorways with 'male only' signs. There is no good example of where they fit or who they could become, only if you really construe the way we see an industry; blur those terms and conditions too. For a long time, they thought they could be trailblazers, build it and they will come. The sieve of society has small holes though and slipping through is hard to do.

Nonetheless, all their life was potential energy building, then slashed at the knees of 'what if' identity as it released. Trial and error seemed the only way, made sense at the time. We all want life to be easy, and for these gender prescribed moments, it seems showing up is all you have to do.

"Somehow rising to the top, leaves you at the bottom in this kind of race." They yell at each other and mostly agree. They come here for solutions, the boys and the girls of the side street alley. To brainstorm and puzzle a way out of the mistaken identity they have been soaked in. More importantly, when they aren't rioting, they are here to rest, to play; something they can never do in the light of day. This is a task best completed steeped in sands, but this gravel will do because it is really more about the who than the where anyways. The protest doesn't have to be a lonely one, not when you love like they do.

"I know what the solution could be!"

They raise and shout at the idea of boisterous anonymity. It is a rally cry, the thought simple. Revolutions are stamped out; happens so easily from the top down. That is the biggest problem they see.

Murmured queries abound in this troubleshooting "...unless somehow we meet in the middle?" (a cross road if you like the analogy). Always a choice between denial, or bleeding battle, where the front line is riddled with a history gone violently unnoticed. The queer identity feels slippery when most people only want to live in places safely. They, they, they – not such a hard concept really.

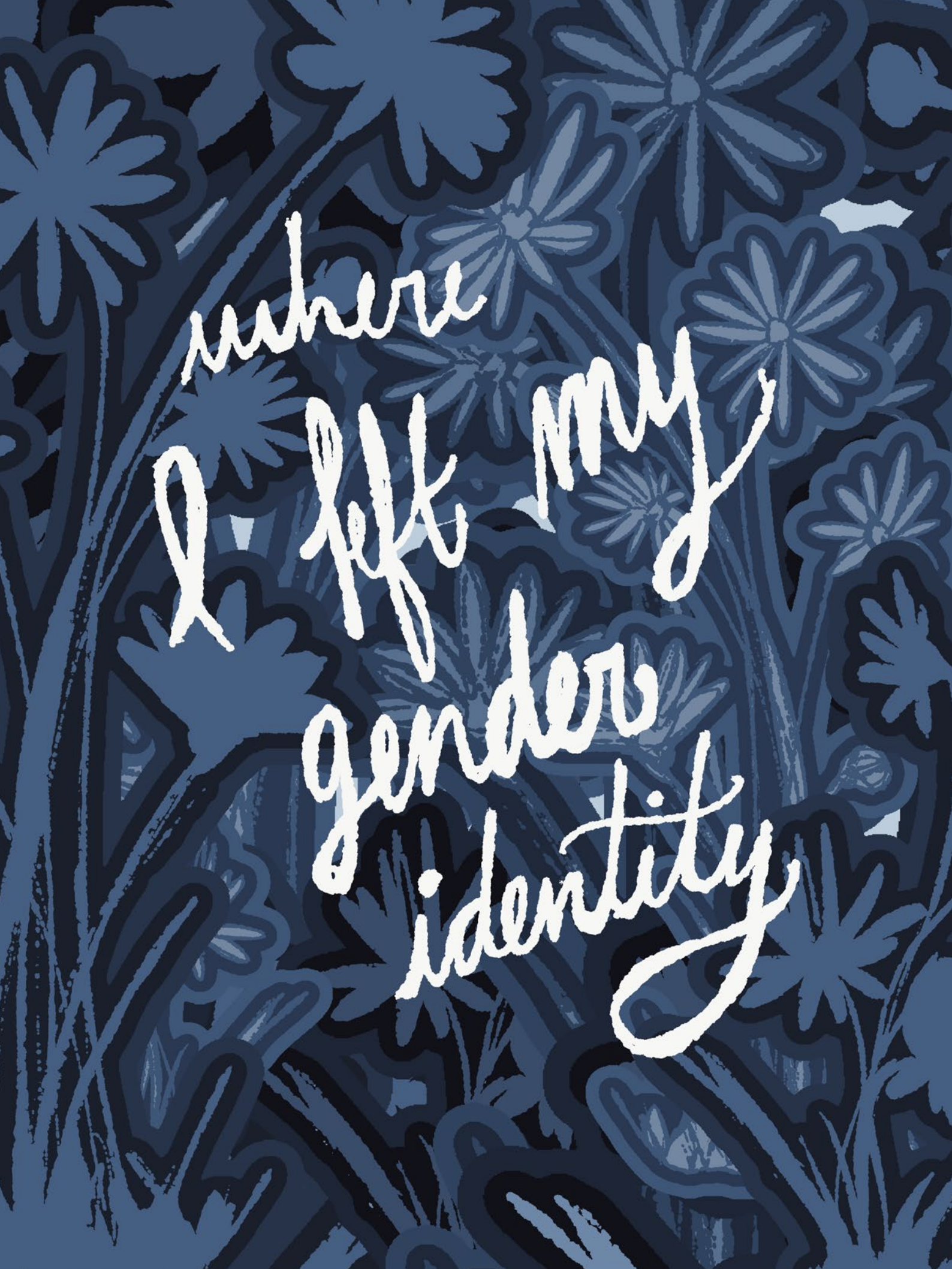
Oh, my sincere apologies, I nearly forgot (I didn't). They are the boy and the girl, you knew that though, didn't you? Who? One or two? In the end, perhaps they both are me. Little parts being erased and rebuilt until the sketch of my mentality better fits society's expectation of yours truly. I will leave you decide if it is important to you whether I am pink or if I am blue. Either way the collar is tight.

What's important is that I will stay here with you through every slippery, dark, wet night, regardless of the color you choose. While we hope for the solidarity, that's often not something many others will do. A dwindling rally cry to reject simplicity, because last I checked my ability to clock in didn't require the aesthetic of my work shoe. Then again, they see some value in it, so maybe it really is only my perception of reality. Either way there's really no need to reject me in this case of mistaken identity.

In the meantime, if you need me, you can find me in the alley. •

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where
I left my
gender
identity

WORKER-FAGGOT

Steve Jones

The Queer worker can exist anywhere they like but never comfortably. The reproduction of the capitalist system requires a certain subordination of the body that the queer worker can perform, often very successfully, but never to the actual satisfaction of the queer worker. The subordination of the queer worker's body, and thus labour-power, to the needs of capital will never be able to sit correctly. Capital requires us to be properly gendered, or performing proper gender, in order to fit into the process of capitalist reproduction. The 'properly' gendered body is one that corresponds to the way it was sexed at birth and one that conforms to the norms assigned to that properly sexed and gendered body. In light of Mario Tronti's Strategy of Refusal, we, the worker-faggots of the world, are posed to be fantastically improper.

The proper working-man and the proper working-woman under capitalism are married to one another, and together use their bodies to make more of each other. The sex is dry and bad and transactional,

or so it seems to a humble, gay barman such as myself. The proper man and proper woman come together in their dry, bad sex to reproduce their class in the night, speaking literally, and during the day to reproduce their class in the Marxist sense of social relations. The pair need each other to survive. To afford their mouldy little flat, the proper couple need two incomes and when worker junior comes along, they will need a dual income even more. I think this is the source of a kind of hetero-frustration, the distinct unfulfillment of heterosexual life; I see it every shift, where the middle-aged woman is so happy to receive my admittedly poor service just because I am gay and that feels refreshing and new and out of her ordinary. I feel it when there's a wedding-ringed hand making its way below my belt because she is married and the gay male body is a safe, available and *free* body in her mind. The queer worker is a pillar of newness that can distract from hetero-frustration. I, and other queer workers, are not bound by the fact that I must reproduce my class bodily and if I were straight, I would be profoundly envious of that fact. We can see this in 'DL Trade' too. Hetero-frustration leads the gay man who has chosen a straight life, who has refused the strategy of refusal, to seek out queerness under cover of dark. Perhaps

'The queer worker surpasses the general milieu of exploitation by entering into the material territory of the furthered exploitation of queer labour and the expulsion of the difficult queer from labour itself. When a queer worker acknowledges that they become the worker-faggot.'

he is a chaser, perhaps he likes a twink, either way it is a queer rupture in the performance of proper masculinity as a result of hetero-frustration that exposes the fragility of the way capitalism genders the body, love and relationships. Don't feel too sorry for DL Trade though, he is unhappy by his own volition. The queer is as Tronti describes the worker, free but by necessity subordinated – we must choose our queer freeness but must then live in the way we are othered by our improperness for good or ill. Hetero-frustration is that marker of the mundanity of straight life, of our straight worker-comrades and of our straight boss-exploiters, that explodes onto the scene of reality at the point where the hetero realises that properness under capital is stifling; or when the queer is approached and they see a window to freedom to your own body and, necessarily, from capitalist social relations.

The queer worker cannot participate in this process of literal reproduction and in many cases, we are excluded from the process of social reproduction. The way I have sex, or rather the fact that I can't be bothered really, does not create new workers.

The way lesbians generally have sex doesn't produce new workers. We can never stumble upon worker junior the way the proper couple can and often do. We are improper, improper under our clothes, improper in love, and thank God for that. Many queer workers cannot even be called workers because of their queerness, our trans comrades are often excluded from the process of selling their labour-power because of that impropriety, that offence against capitalism's gendering.

We are a puzzle piece that does not fit neatly into the process of capitalist reproduction, though among cisgender gays and lesbians the rate of employment is broadly higher. Be it family rejection producing lack of social safety or a need to mould oneself to fit into the mould of proper worker, the cisgender queer worker is worked to the bone even more so than the hetero-

frustrated proper couple. Whenever the queer worker participates in capitalist production and reproduction, they are worked harder than their straight counter-part. The queer worker must earn their place even harder to erase their impropriety against capitalist gendering, must sell their labour-power more cheaply or expect less because we could be cast out with the 'difficult' queer. We then are both broadly incapable of literal reproduction and where we are allowed into production, we are worked harder. We start at a position of passive non-collaboration but we are poised to turn that into a process of active refusal that could be catastrophic for the capitalist class.

The queer worker surpasses the general milieu of exploitation by entering into the material territory of the furthered exploitation of queer labour and the expulsion of the difficult queer from labour itself. When a queer worker acknowledges that they become the worker-faggot. The queer worker comes into the world already at the beginning point of what Tronti refers to as 'the opening of the revolutionary process', we come into the world in a state of 'passive non-collaboration in the development of capital'. The queer worker who tries to fit in remains, despite all their efforts, in a state of non-collaboration as we are a fundamentally uneasy element within capitalism. We are kept in a state of precarity, we must be exploited to be able to afford to live but we cannot live the proper capitalist life or the proper queer life, we are incapable of one and

thrown out as the result of the other. To become the worker-faggot we must move ourselves to the end of Tronti's strategy of refusal and engage in the 'active political refusal of [capitalism's] power'. When in this chapter of *Workers and Capital* Tronti calls for 'the tactics of organisation' by which we can carry out the strategy of refusal, we must answer as the worker-faggot, who is non-collaborative, who actively refuses and who goes out and makes themselves the difficult queer. If social reproduction can throw us out anyway, we must tear chunks out of that process by becoming the worker-faggot. That must be the message of the worker-faggot, if you are to be exploited make your exploitation difficult for the exploiter.

The worker-faggot is a stone with which the capitalist must break his teeth and a beacon around which the proletariat can gather. The worker-faggot must take their place at the forefront of communism and batter down the doors of class society, bring down the house and set us on the road to socialism. The worker-faggot will be able to make and remake the body of humanity generally and individually as part of the spear-tip of communism. The worker-faggot will tear down the barrier of passivity that has 'been the most powerful barrier in blocking all future revolutionary possibilities' by leading from example. You, worker-faggot, are the weapon of communism and you can strike the first death blow to capital, only if you so choose to live and be difficult. •

Steve is the pen name of a communist living in the north east of England. You can read more from Steve at redstorm.noblogs.org, where he has written on his experience of the Student Intifada, among other analyses. You can contact Steve via email at stevenjjones@proton.me

JACK AND RALPH IN LORD OF THE FLIES: AN ESSAY.

Noah

Jack Merridew and Ralph in William Golding's didactic novel; *Lord Of The Flies*, are they friends, foes or perhaps something else? This topic is heavily debated by fans of the book and many others. The relationship between the protagonist and antagonist in Golding's novel is far from simple and it is a difficult topic to get a clear answer to. However, as a massive fan of Golding's novel I have a clear view and opinion about this and for my essay I will be giving an introspective insight on the potentially queer relationship Golding had implied while writing his story.

In his novel, Sir William Golding presented Jack and Ralph's relationship as nuanced but important for the plot of his book about the corruptiveness of power, greed, and ambition. He does this and builds his two characters up as a representation of Democracy versus Totalitarianism. This is key as the difficult relationship of these two characters further creates the 'impossibility' for their friendship to ever go further (as well as the time period). Despite this there are many pieces of evidence in the book that prove that the idea of Jack and Ralph liking each other isn't too impossible or far-fetched. The evidence I have mentioned will be presented to you now, by me.

Firstly, I will begin with the way that our two characters are shown to interact. At the very beginning of the novel in chapter one, Ralph and Jack ('Merridew') meet when the former decides to 'have a meeting' using a conch shell he found to call the other boys (whose ages range from around five to around twelve). When Jack first meets Ralph what he saw 'did not seem to satisfy him'. This tension-filled moment quickly disperses once Jack is granted leadership of his choir and the two boys 'smiled at each other with shy liking.' This new bond and demonstration of fondness is followed up by Ralph 'glancing' at Jack's shorts (which were 'sticking to him with sweat') 'admiringly'. This shows the audience how clear it is that Ralph looks up to Jack and sees him as a brave and inspirational character from the very start of Golding's novel. This is important as it develops a strong bond between the two before any main events even happen.

Then, in chapter two the large group of school boys begin to plan and act

on ideas that are formed upon the two scenarios at hand; getting rescued/ attracting help and preparing to stay/ survive on the island for the foreseeable future. The first action the boys take is to have a meeting and discuss their options. In said meeting the boys find out about the potential 'beastie' inhabiting the island, mentioned by a young boy whose face is 'blotted out by a mulberry-coloured birthmark'. The boys also agree to 'make a fire' in the hopes of attracting a ship. They all agree to do this immediately and when the myriad of boys reach the top of the mountain they use sticks, loose wood and 'green branches' to create a heap, ready to turn into a fire. However a problem soon arises. They have no means to light the fire. At this realisation 'The shameful knowledge' grew between Jack and Ralph. Not just this but 'society paused about them' and 'they did not know how to begin confession'. Yes, there is a more simple explanation for this that readers usually choose, the boys are embarrassed at the fact they don't know how to light a fire and don't have the means to do so. However, from mine and many other readers' point of view there is a much deeper explanation for this; shame and guilt. Not due to a simple mistake the two made but due to the embarrassment of liking each other.

Another thing I noticed about this moment is the way time seemed to slow down for Jack and Ralph and how everyone around them paused, or rather, seemed to pause. Now, typically the slowing down of time or pausing of reality is a key representative of the harbouring of romantic or complicated

feelings. This is used in romance movies particularly. Therefore, further presenting evidence for my point. Now, the idea of the 'fire scene', as I dub it, is not as simple due to there being two sets of analysis for the scene, however, even if this was not meant to represent my idea it sets up an impression of queerness for the reader to refer back to during the novel.

An important point to mention is that, throughout the first half of the novel, Jack respects Ralph. He doesn't respect other characters (besides Roger, Maurice and a select few of his choir/'Hunters'). He makes it clear throughout the book that he hates Piggy and thinks of him as fat and useless and it is apparent he does not care for Simon either with the clear refusal of concern when the younger boy faints in chapter one. This is especially interesting and important to mention as it demonstrates the clear idea of Jack liking Ralph and viewing him as worthy of his time and effort. Something he doesn't even consider with other boys.

Something else that catches my attention is the way Jack expects Ralph to mirror his emotions and accomplishments. In chapter four Jack and a small group of other boys (including the twins; Sam and Eric and Roger) go hunting for pigs which is a relatively new thing and something Jack enjoys and is very fixated on. In previous chapters Jack fails to catch a pig and that is something for him to be embarrassed about but in chapter four he does manage to accomplish this feat and brings the pig he caught to the mountain where he is faced with 'too many awful implications', one being he had let the fire out and another being that a ship had passed. However, before he discovers these two revelations he 'hailed Ralph excitedly' and was 'too happy' for Ralph's unimpressed tone to 'let it worry him' and stop him from 'grinning'. Before Jack truly realises the severity of his actions he is 'charitable in his happiness' and 'sought' to include Ralph and the others in 'the thing

that had happened'. This shows that rather than thinking about the things he did wrong he is too focused on pleasing Ralph and including him in the excitement he feels when achieving something that he deems as a fantastic thing. Though this act of courage is inevitably insufficient enough and it does not bring Ralph any joy. Jack is upset by this. The adversity Jack had to face to get the pig is ultimately something he is proud of and he chooses to share it with Ralph in the hopes of the other congratulating him or being proud which doesn't happen and this fact really upsets Jack. This shows further how Jack thinks the world of Ralph and wants the boy to think highly of him.

My second to last point is the fact that Jack is implied to be jealous of Piggy and Ralph's relationship multiple times in the book. One time we see this display of anger and upset is in chapter five when Ralph and Jack are fighting about the fire and when Ralph mentions that 'Piggy's got the conch' and deserves his turn to speak Jack dismisses this and tells 'The fair boy' to 'favour Piggy' as he 'always' does. Another time Jack shows jealousy is in chapter seven when a group of the boys are climbing up a mountain to search for the 'beastie' and Ralph brings up the point that they can't 'leave the littluns alone with Piggy' all night and Jack retaliates by sarcastically mentioning that they 'mustn't let anything happen to Piggy'. It's clear through these depictions of Jack's annoyance and anger that he cares for Ralph a lot and he wants Ralph to like him but he believes that the boy ultimately prefers Piggy who he hates.

Now, my final point; the fight between our protagonist and antagonist in the eleventh chapter of Golding's didactic novel. In chapter eleven Ralph and Piggy make their way up to Jack and the Hunters' hideout which they don the title of 'Castle Rock'. Here, Ralph and Jack get into a physical fight. They begin to hit and 'stab' each other with the butts (opposite sides) of their spears. This expresses a clear intention within the moment,

despite both of the boys' anger they do not wish to cause true harm to one another. This reinforces the belief that even deep down despite all that has happened throughout the course of the book the two boys still like each other and think highly of one another.

That is why I believe in William Golding's didactic novel *Lord Of The Flies* the protagonist Ralph and the Antagonist Jack Merridew are heavily implied to be queer or at least like each other more than they should. The way Golding writes their bond and interaction hints at this. My opinion may not be correct and this may not be Golding's intention but it is not unlikely for this to be true due to the way they are written and built as characters.

Thank you,

Noah!! •

Noah is a young writer and member of The Hangout in Leeds. He is passionate about literature and the preservation of queer history.



QUEERING THE COMMUNITY CENTRE

A mediation on The Hangout

Lou Howell

Growing up, I didn't have a local community centre. Our nearest place to hang out was the local Sainsbury's adjacent to our council estate; we went there every Wednesday, a sacred tradition for us cranmer bank kids. I did not know then that community centres could become sacred spaces. I did not know that queering a place does not always arrive through theory or language, that sometimes it arrives through a youth club on a Tuesday night in Leeds.

I run The Hangout, a project for queer young people aged eleven to eighteen in Leeds. It exists because young people asked me for a place to go. Not somewhere polished or aspirational or designed by people who speak about working class communities like they are tragic case studies. We needed somewhere alive, somewhere ordinary enough to become magical. The Hangout is built from the soft architecture of repetition: every Tuesday: every evening, every term. We meet for an hour and explore the many reasons to be alive: to make art, to explore our well-being, to socialise.

What I have learnt from running this project is that working class play is an underestimated force, growing up on a council estate in Leeds taught

me that play is how people stay alive under capitalism. At The Hangout, magic is created through this tradition of play. Young people make films about queer futures. We have built giant quilts inspired by the AIDS Memorial Quilt, danced around a Maypole in the garden, played under parachutes, baked cookies, devised drama. There is something deeply queer about turning a community hall into an entire universe. One minute a room is fluorescent lights and stackable chairs. Next it is a runway show, a rehearsal room, a cinema, a confessional booth, and a chosen family dinner table. It is a place to let young people witness adults who have survived and our queering the space is about disrupting the inevitability of loneliness. It is about creating conditions where people can imagine themselves existing in the future.

There is a particular kind of grief that comes with growing up queer and working class. You inherit absence. You search for ancestors and find very few



people who were allowed to stay alive long enough to become old.

I love Leeds with a devotion that feels embarrassing sometimes. I love its sandstone houses and its corner shops and its strange softness. I love the estates where kids play football against graffiti stained walls. I love the way people in Leeds speak directly, without performance. The city raised me politically and emotionally. It taught me that community is not an abstract ideal. Community is practical. It is giving someone a lift home. It is making extra food in case another young person turns up hungry. It is texting afterwards to check if someone got home safe.

Being from a council estate shaped everything about how I understand care.

On estates, people know institutions will not save them. So people save each other. Not perfectly. Not romantically. But materially. Through rides, cigarettes, gossip, food, protection. There is a long history of working class mutual aid that often goes unnamed because it is considered too ordinary to archive. Yet this is where I learned love. Not from institutions but from neighbours.

Running The Hangout has changed my understanding of time. I used to think ancestry only travelled backwards. I thought ancestors were people you inherited from. But queer communities complicate linearity. Sometimes you become the thing you needed. Sometimes you become evidence that survival is possible.

I think about this when I watch young people at The Hangout laughing together without apology. I think about it when a trans kid arrives terrified and months later leaves glowing with confidence.

I think about it when we travel together to London or make art together or sit in silence after a difficult conversation. Through this work I became an ancestor, not through age but through responsibility. Through witnessing. Through staying.

Lou Howell is an underclass youth worker and writer. Their practice involves radical dismantling of youth oppression and they are the lead director for The Hangout Youth CIC. If you would like to learn more about The Hangout please contact us at l.howell@thehangoutleeds.org.

An ancestor is not somebody perfect. An ancestor is somebody who leaves behind a map. Somebody who creates evidence of care in a world organised around abandonment. In queer communities especially, ancestry is created collectively. Every youth worker who stays late cleaning glitter from tables. Every older trans person is telling the truth about survival. Every working class queer person refuses to disappear. These are ancestral acts. •

All images developed independently by the young people at The Hangout using physical film and original artwork.





BEATING BEATING HEART IS BLEEDING
that is how I know that I'm
ALIVE - BEING BEING HUMAN
+ that is how I know I will
SURVIVE.
BROKEN BROKEN MIND in the MOTION
DIE.
What I feel I know that I want

IM autistic,
not broken.

Choose
Compassion.

Love
you. :3

SOMETHING
SOMETHING
Always MUMBLING
But with some help
I think I'll be
ALRIGHT.

- Miles
😊

THE RIGHT NOT TO BE

Lorna

An old friend of mine told me that lesbians were treated better than gays throughout history because they could pretend to be just friends and hide. I replied that the right of non-existence wasn't a privilege. She was a straight cis woman. But I thought she was right. I always felt less than men, with less privilege, with less expectations and consequences but also with no capability to fight back. So hiding was always the better choice.

At school I began to be bullied because I didn't believe in God. That was the main reason, then developed into more. Now I recognise that I was too sensitive and I played with worms, while my classmates grew up with middle class privilege or with working class violence, so I kinda understand it. But I'm learning to stop justifying it as I learn to change my inner beliefs. When I got involved in politics, it began with a feminist base group, we met in social centers around the city, and they did a lot of things, I didn't. I got involved only in some of them because I was too afraid of people, so I kept a really low profile and I gradually felt distanced from the group. I felt criticised and judged and left because I also criticised and judged others but above all, I judged myself. I bought in to all the standards and demands that came from believing

that we were all equal, with equal capacities, without neurodivergence, without different social backgrounds.

Then I realized that my family wasn't living happily ever after, that there was a lot of suffering surrounding me before, during and after my parents split up. They couldn't afford the attention that my brother and I required as a child, nor therapy. My family had a basic low income and a really long history of domestic violence, they divorced and it continued. I grew up almost hiding. I had already heard about social injustice because my dad was an anarchist and he explained a lot to me, but he yelled too much too. Mum was really sensitive to others' pain, but somehow she couldn't stand her own, her own fear and mine. So I hid in fiction, first in my own imagination, then in others. I fantasised about the Disney movies I saw, about some TV shows and I got obsessed with the main female characters. I dreamt about me saving them, about them finding some value in me, being grateful

and falling in love. I felt the same way about one or two of my teachers.

At some point in my teens I watched *Brokeback Mountain*. At that time my imagination had already been influenced by all the hetero references in movies, series and books. I already knew that couples (not only families) were made by men and women and usually women wanted to feel safe among brave, intelligent and resolute men but at the same time I learned that men were the main threat too so I began to fantasise about rescuing the ones I knew and admired. When I thought I was bisexual I began to watch LGBTBI movies. I think that deep down I thought I didn't want to suffer, I was a woman in a world built by and for men, I was bullied for not being like the others, and I thought that I could choose, so I chose to bury what I felt.

I tried alcohol and weed for the first time at 14 and 18, and I began to hide in them as I began to hide in men. Romantic relationships began to provide the validation I lacked. As the fear of others grew I found myself hiding in those brave, intelligent older men that I idealised. When I began college I couldn't afford a room or a meal outside of the home, so I kept returning to my house with my fears and anxiety while others were able to have a social life. I made some friends but I would always put myself beneath them and kept looking for romantic validation. The more I continued using drugs and people the worse I felt. But I blamed everyone anyway because I couldn't understand what was happening to me. When I

finally had the courage to accept that I felt almost exclusively attracted to women I had already built a pattern that I kept repeating. I kept killing myself for a really long time, until I realised what that meant and that I could ask for help. That help came with no other demands, with no requirements. I wasn't asked to be anything else, I only needed the desire to live and recover. Then I could begin to embrace myself and stop running.

Now my god is non-binary and involves plants and animals spirits too, so if that exists how can I be denied the right to. I am asking for what I'm giving, the compassion to love even when it's too much for making the right choice and being able to be, to question, to fight and to choose one's dignity. The reminder that this life is so full of creatures that really want to enjoy themselves but a really big bunch of white supremacists who aren't able to empathize torture them and the great majority of humankind serve them for lunch, continuing the chain of violence. I don't eat them but not because I shouldn't, because I am learning to listen to them as I'm learning to listen to me. Because it's not about what I can or I have to any more, it is about what I can't deny. It is about helping others and choosing them even when they are not capable of choosing and helping themselves instead of urging them to do what they can't, not to save them but to dignify all of us. •

POVERTY SUCKS

John Hoggett

I am from an extremely privileged background. My parents were near the pinnacle of the upper middle class yet I have lived in near poverty all my adult life.

So why am I writing this you may ask? Truth is I am a Poofy Woofter Homosexualist, a Pinko Commie Queer and I've had more men than you've had hot dinners and as a transman I know said, "If your family fuck you up enough, no matter what background you come from you'll be living in poverty anyway, it's really hard to get out of."

In 1979 I went to university to study horticulture. I didn't really want to go; I only went to please my dad. Before that I was on an organic farm for nine months, it was the happiest time of my life. They said, "Don't go, you won't enjoy it," but I thought, I'm going to get the degree then say to my dad, "That's the last thing I do for you." It was going to be a rite of passage to an independent adulthood. I also thought I'm going to the Gay Soc, which was a really exciting idea. Being out on an organic farm in 1979 would have been a bit too odd, even for me, and let's face it I was a bit odd.

I loved my first term, I joined oodles of societies, including the small but lovely Gay Soc. I found the art students, having a wild time at parties, taking

drugs and dancing at gigs. But in my first term I got a phone call telling me my step mother had left my father so I went home wanting to be the dutiful son and comfort him only to find he was raging. His favorite line was, "HAVE YOU SEEN SUZANNAH, SHE'S RUING MY LIFE!". Then angrily telling me she was drinking a bottle of vodka a day before she left him. I was thinking he was bitter but she drank herself to death a few decades later.

At Christmas I went home. Suzannah, my step mother, called by to discuss the arrangements to look after my half brother and sister. When she tried to leave my father flew into a rage and tried to strangle her. I called my big cousin Chris to stop him.

Less than a year later I got another phone call saying my half-sister, Lucy, had been killed, knocked over by a car on her way to school.

My parents' worse aspects came out after all this and I was cowed by both of them.

I stopped studying, got up late, went to parties and hung out with the art students and I dropped out of university. I couldn't face going back to the organic farm so I stayed in Reading, where I had gone to study and hung out with the anarchists. It was the 80's, a lot of unemployment and a lot of community around a magazine called *Red Rag* which has a record of the miners strike, Greenham common, the start of the AIDS crisis and other topical issues.

The film *Pride* ends with the miners arriving in buses and then assembling and leading the Pride march. I was there, I saw it happen. Its significance passed me by at the time; I was just a dippy hippy going along for the ride. But it was perhaps the last big flowering of working-class solidarity and it also marked the loss of trade union power in this country.

Later I saw police marching on Pride events which disgusted me as I'd seen them kettle Poll Tax protesters and known them to arrest men for cottaging. Then the military marched on Pride and queer homelessness increased after the 2008 crash as Pride boasted floats funded by tax avoiding corporations. A few years my local Pride festival hosted a stall from the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston. By that time, I was done with Pride Parades, they kind of disgusted me.

In the early 80's I was lost, and to tell the truth I still to some degree am. So, I went to Gays the Word bookshop in London to see what I could find. There on their

notice board was a postcard saying a group of gay men were looking to set up a rural gay commune. Bingo, I thought, that's for me. They didn't get a commune but they set up a housing coop in Leeds called Wilde Lavender. They later got two communal houses in London. They were a mix of middle- and working-class men.

The commune in the country never materialized because it would rely on upper middle-class men sinking their capital into buying a property and living in the country with less well-off poofs. The working-class gay men were happy to live and work in the countryside but the more well-off ones only wanted to visit; they wanted a gay retreat center but were not willing to stump up the cash.

Then the AIDS crisis hit. The Wilde Lavender people thought maybe the rural commune won't happen just now but how about putting on a Health Week which they did at a community in Scotland called Laurieston Hall. It was very successful and they decided to do it again. Out of this an organization emerged called the Edward Carpenter Community (ECC), after Edward Carpenter, the late Victorian out gay socialist. They still organize holidays in the country for gay men. I first went in 1989. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Laurieston Hall is stunning, it backs onto a loch, has a sauna, hills to climb, stunning countryside and it had 60 sexy, intelligent, extravagant gay men staying for the week. I think the ethos of those weeks were to create a week-long therapeutic community. We laughed, we cried, we dressed up and had the most fabulous cabaret while looking after some very sick young gay men, learning about HIV – AIDS and grieving for our losses. In those years I would meet handsome young men, fall in love and see them die a year or two later. The organization had a payment system where if you were on benefits, you paid just about benefit level but if you had a good income, you paid several times that amount. You could

'The film Pride ends with the miners arriving in buses and then assembling and leading the Pride march. I was there, I saw it happen. Its significance passed me by at the time; I was just a dippy hippy going along for the ride. But it was perhaps the last big flowering of working-class solidarity and it also marked the loss of trade union power in this country.'

also get a travel bursary and people were happy to offer lifts in their cars. It was carefully thought out so those with less money could be included in attending and developing the community.

When I first went to an ECC event I was thirty and I was one of the youngest men there. The last time I went I was in my mid-fifties and I was still one of the youngest men there. The lowest fee is well above benefit level and there are no travel bursaries any more, the cabarets are less stunning as are the discussions and workshops and the housing in London and Leeds have gone. It has become an elderly gay gentleman's holiday club and less a therapeutic inclusive gay man's expanding community. I wonder if ECC flourished because it

was answering a real need in the height of the AIDS crisis and I wonder what the needs of working class and poor gay men are now?

I think of Ross, who lived in the same block of council flats as me. He was bisexual, had learning difficulties. The council were using the block for former homeless people after 2010 and Ross was one of those. Local councils had their grants cut but still had the same duty to provide services. Ross had been to a "Special School" where he had been bullied and raped. He used to knock on my door to borrow money. I got him

some benefit advice when Universal Credit were trying to force him to work and he was too anxious to face that. I called an ambulance one day when he had bad chest pains that had gone on for forty minutes, it turned out to be a panic attack and me and the ambulance crew managed to talk him down. I also called the police to break his door down when no one had seen him for two weeks but I refused to identify the body, I wanted public services to do that as they had neglected him so badly, he died.

I think of Philip, who I met at a mental health day center, who heard voices and was paranoid. I befriended him and saw him through angry outburst that got him evicted from his bedsit. I was with him when he got all the symptoms of diabetes and refused to go to the doctors; eventually he did but he managed it incredibly badly and despite me complaining he never got offered additional help. I went with him to his first hearing voices group and when I was off work, I gave him some of my gardening jobs. I also, once again, called the police when he didn't answer the door for a week and this time I identified the body. I never found out what killed him but the coroner said "natural causes" so my guess is his badly managed type one diabetes, despair and never getting a life together and poverty were the real killers. Whether the actual cause was a heart attack or a diabetic coma I do not know.

I think of Sean who I also met at the mental health day center. He had been in care as a child and he had a habit of

cutting himself which was just about coming to an end. Then he had a crisis as his very young daughter was up for adoption and he knew he would likely never see her again so we went for a walk and talk round the block in inner city Reading while he told me the sad tale. He later messaged me saying he was going to cut himself so I sent him a harm reduction guide to self-harm and wished him well. I hope it was the last time he resorted to cutting.

The day center closed down of course and people are more likely to be stuck in their bedsits these days. The Tory government cut mental health provision during "austerity" years at the same time as "Mental Health" awareness was increased. That resulted in more people being sectioned but worse conditions on wards, which are now largely run by agency staff who have little incentive to get to know patients. We are in a world of Post Neoliberalism with low public services, outsourcing and a benefit system designed to discipline the working class to poor working conditions and zero hours contracts.

When I came to Reading in 1979 there was one gay pub. At one time, in the late 90's there was four. Now there are none. Increased rents and increased council business rates and the property boom did for them all.

There were no community queer organizations when I first came here. Friends, mainly lesbians started a brilliant ornamentation in the mid 80's called Readings Gay: we had discos, self-defence lessons, a theatre company among other things. Now there are Rugby Teams, climbing groups, a thriving Gay Outdoor Club all dominated by the middle class.

About a year and a half ago I joined a climbing gym, a trendy and fun way of keeping fit and after I nearly had a heart attack I need to keep my exercise level up to stave off the next one. At the climbing gym they run a queer group that meets

once a week. Mainly it is full of middle-class professionals, which for me, after living in a block of needy former homeless people just as services were being cut surrounded by crack dealers, was a relief. But then they set up a WhatsApp group and we got messages about a suicide attempt, panic about scabies and various other quite major life events all sent to a group of fifty semi strangers and quite frankly I don't want to deal with major life traumas and health panics on WhatsApp. If we are doing to deal with them, we need to talk face to face and what is more the climbing gym is out of reach of most people on low income.

My time researching critical psychiatry informed me there is a disproportionate number of queers in the mental health system and if the research by the Albert Kennedy Trust is to be believed (the government cut benefits to under twenty-fives so if you are young, queer and live with a culturally conservative family you either shut up, run away or get chucked out and are likely to find it hard to pay the rent) then those tent cities we see in every town will have a high proportion of young queer homeless people.

Neoliberalism is over. No government is likely to reverse the cuts and the cushy welfare state of the 50's – 70's is gone. Rainbow capitalism has done its job, we now have out LGBT ministers of state, voting for cuts in benefits one week and cuts in taxes to the rich the next, we have out LGBT CEOs of major corporations while queer homelessness soars. We cannot rely on the state for services any more, the mental health system causes more damage than it cures and the left, quite frankly is dead. I saw how the left ignored those affected by cuts in benefits and services when austerity hit and I never want to have anything to do with them again until they start organizing food banks, soup kitchens, resistance to eviction and organize free parties.

I once proposed going to our local pride, having

a picnic outside and inviting people to write on big bits of paper answers to the questions:

WHAT DO READING QUEERS GET?
and
WHAT DO READING QUEERS WANT?

I kind of know what my answers are. We get shrinking corporate funded Pride Festivals with Labour councillors on the committee while queer homelessness soars and a load of traumatized queers stuffed in bedsits or cycling in and out of mental hospitals while the middle classes play rugby and go climbing. We want affordable housing and services based on understanding and encouragement and not tranquillizers and prisons disguised as hospitals. What might your answers be and how might we start creating the services we need outside of the state? I believe that only when enough of us do that can a proper left emerge. •

John Hoggett is a semi-retired self employed gardener. He is also a performance poet, playwright and journalist. His work has been published on www.madintheuk.com and Sublation Media.

TRANS MUSEUM WORKERS IN 2026 - AN ORAL HISTORY

Jaime Starr

It is just after 9am on a humid morning when I notice the two black and white stickers on the outside of a museum I am working with. One says “sex is real” and has a heart for a background. The other flips the heart upside down, to look like genitalia and proclaims “gender identity is bollocks”. Seeing these anywhere, let alone a place I am entering to work feels like a gut punch, but I park my own feelings about the transphobia I am witnessing, and carefully scrape the stickers off the outside of this trans inclusive museum. Even though I am trans, and this is an assault on me and my community, I would rather it was me doing this than a front of house employee/volunteer.

Why do I care who scrapes away the transphobia from this museum? Because this is a class-based worker’s welfare issue.

Front of house jobs, which are usually minimum wage, often zero hours contracts, and sometimes volunteer

rather than paid work, typically involve selling tickets, answering visitor questions, supervising exhibition spaces, and can include some types of cleaning, estate management and security duties. Trans people often occupy front of house or entry level roles in curation and programming, rather than senior management positions within the heritage sector – these are jobs that are zero hours, poorly paid compared to more senior staff based on industry wage benchmarks.¹ Many of these jobs are through fixed term externally funded contracts without job security.

The nature of front of house work means that these workers – usually on the lowest pay within an organisation often at minimum or living wage – are at the front line of engagement with hostile audiences, from far right ‘social auditors’ to ‘gender critical’ groups (there is a known overlap² between these political campaigns) protesting the existence of trans people or hosting conferences in museums venue hire spaces, bookings the museums are obligated to fulfil or risk being sued, as gender critical activists are known to be extremely litigious³ if they feel their (now legally protected) beliefs are not being respected.

Museum workers have little protection when they are exposed to dehumanising, bigoted behaviour from people who attack them for the institution's perceived inclusiveness – interactions which in recent times it has become normal for the perpetrator to film, and monetise. Anecdotal data about the experiences of trans museum workers is currently the only kind available. Although the University of Leicester's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) led Trans Inclusive Culture Project⁴ has collected some testimony from trans museum workers, including myself, as part of their research, statistics on trans employment in heritage are not shared by organisations like the Arts Council, which is the major source of workforce demographic information. What I discuss here is the experience of myself, and friends and colleagues – a form of oral history of the contemporary experiences of trans people in the museum industry.

Anecdotal data suggests that often the response of a museum to a hate incident directly impacting a worker is to remove them from public duties. It is rarer for a museum to issue a statement defending their marginalised workers or their inclusive values after attack, fearful that doing so will draw further far right attention, risk reputational damage or legal action. I have yet to hear of a museum worker being offered legal support or pastoral care from their institution after being harassed, recorded and having footage or photographs put online for far right entertainment, even when this has crossed the line into hate speech. I have encountered museum social media staff whose experience dealing with hate speech on trans issues has left them with post traumatic symptoms, and led to a withdrawal from a type of work they were passionate about, as a form of self protection.

My own introduction to this culture of silence about harm caused to marginalised staff, and hyperfocus on reputational protection at the expense of trans

staff came in the form of threats to my contracted employment from a manager if I talked to anyone outside the organisation about an ongoing situation involving 'gender critical' activity – I later learned that cis staff members were not given the same talk. It was clearly recognised that there was an added emotional burden to me as a trans person in the situation, and the institutional response was to forbid me to access community support about it. Conversely, as a visible trans person and proud heritage worker, I am often greeted in community spaces outside of my working roles with demands to defend institutions I have worked with that have (unwillingly) engaged with gender critical people where the law has required them to do so.

Marginalised staff, including trans people, are often expected to contribute emotional labour and skilled consultancy work for free on top of their contracted duties, for instance being asked to "just quickly" look over an equality policy, review terminology used in a social media post or exhibition label for a topic related to our identity. We often agree to do this unpaid work for fear that refusal or demand for remuneration will lead to the work not getting done at all and our community suffering as a result. That is a huge burden to put on the shoulders of a marginalised person who hasn't bid for a contract doing that work, and there is little to no recognition from many institutions that it is labour, let alone skilled work that involves engaging with our own community's trauma and experiences of discrimination to do it

‘Why do I care who scrapes away the transphobia from this museum? Because this is a class-based worker’s welfare issue.’

well. When I take a freelance contract for consulting about trans inclusion and exclusion, I usually block off two days after it finishes to decompress from the traumatic sharing the work entails – for staff asked to do this on top of their day jobs, that respite doesn’t exist. It’s one task in a work day that has no breathing room for trauma or distress.

While internally in a museum, this EDI consultancy work burden usually falls on marginalised, and often underpaid staff, the picture is very different when heritage industry wide projects seek faces from museums to contribute to ethics guides or working groups about inclusion. Those rooms usually do not feature front of house or entry level staff – they are typically filled with senior leadership figures. Demographic data⁵ from Arts Council England and Creative UK shows that industry leadership is largely white, well paid, not openly disabled, and while there is a reasonable gender parity between men and women and fair representation for cisgender

queer people, I don’t know of any museums other than the Museum of Transology which are led by out trans people. We do need these senior leadership figures to care about inclusion – particularly trans inclusion in the wake of the EHRC guidance which launched between me starting and finishing this article, which if adhered to means that workplaces can’t back up trans staff being allowed to use bathrooms that match their gender rather than their sex assigned at birth. We need museum leaders to care, but it doesn’t make sense for the industry to focus solely on the thoughts and opinions of people who are not interacting day to day with the public, who aren’t picking up transphobic literature left in art galleries featuring trans artists, or scrubbing graffitied hate speech off toilet walls, particularly if the museum leaders are cisgender, and not directly impacted by transphobia.

So the room where industry policy on trans inclusion is made doesn’t reflect us, and other than the incredible E-J Scott, we can’t see pathways to museum leadership for ourselves. I have been told after interviews that while I was a great fit for roles in museums that didn’t focus on queer heritage, my passion for LGBTQIA+ history was a detriment to

my application, that because I am also vocally out as trans, it made me seem 'one note'. As I refuse to shy away from preserving and sharing trans and queer heritage, personally I don't see myself being able to rise far beyond my current role as a Collections Manager. I also see it as a miracle I got this far – discrimination leading to self-exclusion from education, opportunities and mental and physical health inequalities⁶ that exclude us from workplaces mean that like other industries, trans and other marginalised people within the museum sector are likely to be found in lower pay grade roles than senior managerial ones. That's if we get hired at all – even before the transphobic backlash of the 2020s, across society trans people, myself included, experience disproportionate levels of unemployment compared to cis people with equivalent backgrounds, with a 2018 survey⁷ indicating that one in three employers wouldn't hire a trans person, and another forty three percent unsure if they would.

This landscape of exclusion, of failure to build an environment where trans people can thrive or even work without discrimination in the heritage industry is, I believe, only going to get worse following the Supreme Court ruling and EHRC guidance. Many museums opposed the 2025 interim EHRC guidance⁸ which said that trans people should be barred from bathrooms and changing rooms associated with our gender, but that we should also not be allowed into facilities matching our birth sex if we didn't look like we belonged there. For instance, a trans man with a beard would be disallowed from the men's room because he was assigned female at birth, but also shouldn't be allowed in the women's toilets because he looks like a man and that would upset the actual women using that facility. Despite this industry opposition, heritage bodies like Arts Council England which many museums rely on for their main funding wrote to organisations they funded instructing

them to follow the interim guidance⁹ even though it wasn't legally binding yet – making funding contingent on complying in advance with trans exclusion. No matter how many museums express distaste or opposition to the ruling, the fact remains - if they can't get funding because they let us use the bathrooms, then there is no museum to work in. And at the same time, if we can't pee at work, we can't work.

When the final form of EHRC guidance came out last week, my current main employer, Queer Britain, posted a public statement¹⁰ saying that they would continue to act as a safe, trans inclusive space where anyone could use their (gender neutral) bathroom. I felt a sense of relief when I saw that – it should not be normal in the UK to be relieved that I will have unimpeded access to a toilet in my place of work. But that is the new state of play for trans people in this country. And in heritage buildings and museums on tight budgets which can't magic up room or funding to create new trans bathrooms (which is the workaround offered by the EHRC guidance, having a third toilet besides men's and women's for trans people), it's going to mean some trans people who aren't confident enough to use the toilet they want without legal protection, like we did before the Equality Act existed will stop working in museums. We as an industry will lose the friendly faces at the welcome desk, the approachable gallery attendant who tells you more about the ceramics that caught your eye, the learning workshop facilitator who is an expert at getting school kids to

care about ancient Roman artifacts, the access and inclusion officer who helps a person with learning disabilities access a science collection that makes them squeal with joy, the exhibition curator who makes audiences weep or laugh or feel seen with art and material culture, and the collections assistant who makes thousands of objects accessible for academics, authors and researchers to view online.

I don't have a pithy ending for this article. I'm angry, and hurting, and so is my community. I need you to care, and if listing the ways we help you in museums does that, then so be it. Care about us – we need you to keep saying that you do, out loud where people can see. Solidarity helps; gender critical organisations backed by billionaires, say they are speaking for the silent majority – proving that they aren't means speaking up. It matters. We need you. •

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1 www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/workforce/pay-in-museums/ <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/workforce/pay-in-museums>

2 www.transafety.network/posts/the-big-lie/

3 www.sex-matters.org/posts/freedom-of-speech/statement-on-the-peoples-history-museum/

4 www.transinclusiveculture.le.ac.uk/resources/

5 www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2025/09/diversity-in-cultural-leadership-has-stalled-report-finds/

6 www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/being-lgbtq-and-disabled-where-identities-meet

7 www.crosslandsolicitors.com/site/hr-hub/transgender-discrimination-in-UK-workplaces

8 www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2025/04/small-museums-respond-to-uk-supreme-court-gender-ruling/

9 www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2025/05/museums-grapple-with-implications-of-supreme-court-ruling-on-sex/

10 www.linkedin.com/posts/queer-britain_queerbritain-lgbtq-lesbian-activity-7465008964439781377-P_Z9

YOUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE

Jet Moon

Every day I go to work at the call centre. Catching the train from the station across the road from the warehouse and with luck making the connection that carries me out North, for an hour of rattling carriages and smudged window views of the suburbs. Working in a call centre would not be my first choice of work. Being free to get on with what needs to be done would be my first choice. The fact of it is that I have rent to pay, food to buy, bills to be met, my art school fees to be paid. So I took the job. I interviewed for plenty of others before I got this one, mostly in the service industry: waiting tables or tending bars; but I don't have a lot of experience. There's that big gap in my C.V that I have to explain to prospective employers. What was I doing? Well, mostly I was doing more drugs that I can easily recall: uppers, downers, speed, barbiturates, Valium, hallucinogens, horse-tranquilizers, home-made heroin, pot, pinkies, Serepax, halcyon, dollies, df118's, palfium, paregoric. Like I said, I don't remember them all, but I am *highly qualified* in that field of expertise. So, here I am making a long ride out into the suburbs. My telephone voice is good and, as they like to tell you: 'The phone call you make to inquire about the job is part of the interview process.'

The bosses at the call centre are Dink and Boogie, really they are more sort of mini-bosses. Employed by the faceless offshore investment merger that runs this branch of operations. Dink is a beautifully coiffured, smooth skinned and silken voiced man, Gay in that might pass for metrosexual way beloved by your average stay at home mum. An actor, he could provide the perfect voice over for your new sofa purchase, prestigious hotel suite or even with the right luck, a game show. He's just waiting for a call-back from one of his auditions. In the meantime he has settled for the front desk at James, James and Jamieson Market Research Inc. He is the Good Cop: who explains nicely, smiles when timesheets need to be corrected, at worst offers a snappish 'Look, can you just try to get it right next time?' On the other side of things is Boogie who sits at her desk, rarely speaking but with a face like a slapped arse. Just hope you never have to deal with her.

Apparently she's in a happy relationship. Each day when she clocks out, waiting at the door is her equally butch partner; they exchange a pecked kiss and shuffle off arm in arm. Blue rinse Margaret - seated across from me - her voice querulous as she relays this information says, 'I thought her partner might be more feminine.' I give Margaret a look, pointing to the rainbow-flag badge I'm wearing, then at my headphones to signal I'm on a call. We have all sorts working here, two hundred and fifty people on each shift, row upon row of cubicles, the hubbub of voices filling the room.

At the beginning of each shift I get my headset out of my locker, sign in and note down my time of arrival. Then, go to take my place among the ranks of the barely employed: artists, actors, mums making a partial return to work, students working their way through university, almost retired grandads who can't afford to live on a meagre pension, flamer gay boys with no manners and loud mouths dishing the dirt between calls.

As I log in, my screen comes to life, a yellow cursor blinking at the beginning of my script, as I am prompted to call the next unsuspecting member of the public. To solicit their valuable opinion on oral hygiene, their nightly television viewing habits, the latest political polls and voter trends.

'Dear sir/madam, my name is xxx I am calling you from xxx xxx would you mind answering a few questions about xxx?' Then if they don't slam down

the phone, I go through the screeners: 'Are you employed, in part time work, unemployed?', 'aged between 16-18, 19-21, 22-24, 25-30?' and so on, each category aimed at disqualifying those who don't fit whatever target group we are looking for. 'Have you eaten or purchased for your household in the past week, xxx brand of biscuits?', 'How likely would you say you are to purchase xxx again in the next two weeks?', 'Would you say you are a. Extremely likely, b. somewhat likely, c. Not very likely, d. Not at all likely?'

Day after day, I repeat the same scripts. Hearing the sharp click of phones being put down loud and clear through my head set. Sometimes I make wins with long surveys that take twenty-five minutes to complete, while wondering who the hell has the time for this? I do my best to keep my interview subjects hooked. If by some miracle someone makes it through to the end, their 'grand prize' is the chance to attend a focus group: paid \$25 to sample xxx a new variety of xxx that is being market tested, 'We'd really value your opinion'.

We get a ten-minute break for every four hours worked. It is in the break room that I meet Nelima. Nelima, with her bright sparkling eyes and sharp laughter. I've sat next to her a few times, glimpsing how she tilts her head to listen; lifting up the lead of the headset in one hand so it doesn't tangle as she turns in her seat. She has a carefulness to her manner, so that even I feel as if she is really listening...paying deep attention as people answer the dull repetitive shit we ask them. As if the voice at the end of the phone giving their opinion on brands of floor polish, children's sticking plasters, betting shops and television licensing, could really slew the worlds course...answering on a scale of 1 - (not very likely) to 10 - (extremely likely) - Dear sir/madam/insert gender here, would you recommend this - to your friends, family? Neighbours? Lady at the corner store? A random

'I've never been a member of a union, i'm excited. It brings back memories of my dad singing: 'oh, you don't get me, i'm part of the union

You don't get me, i'm part of the union, you don't get me, i'm part of the union

Until the day i die, until the day i die.' Dad's bolshie attitude always made me feel proud. That was back in the day when unions were king, back in the day of mass walk outs, militant shop stewards, bosses crying that they were being held to ransom.'

person in your kids play group? That dog you patted once but really liked? The cute queer with the green hair you spotted in the supermarket? Your favourite teacher back in high school? YOUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE. You decide how wide to draw it.

Nelima and I having a break at the same time is a rare moment in a workplace of staggered shifts. Ten minutes to rush, jamming in lunch or dinner, going for a pee or smoking a cigarette. Ten minutes, which doesn't lend itself to socialising. Turns out she has a Master's degree in Political Science, specialising in Women's studies. Of course she does! What the fuck is she doing here?

'Well, I'm just not sure what to do next, I'm thinking about going back to school but...' She shrugs 'I don't know.'

We talk full tilt, spilling out details of our lives, until her watch beeps a reminder that it's time to go back to work; our sandwiches sitting in front of us uneaten. Then I'm on a different shift and I don't see Nelima for ages, we exchange the occasional text messages but it's hard to really get to know people in this job.

My new shift has me calling doctors and dentists, jotting down short statements that might end up as a tag line on product endorsements: 'Two out of three clinicians recommend'. For this I am paid an extra eighty-five cents per hour and get a semi-regular shift, enough hours that mean I can pay all my bills. It's a promotion of sorts but it also means I have hardly any time to attend classes at the art school I managed to get into.

'If you move to 'Stralia, then make sure you have something concrete to do there.' That was the advice given to me by my addiction counsellor. Art school, where I constantly run late, making far too occasional attendance. Where my well-heeled class mates give me cool stares when I explain that I have to go to work. Late at night I stand reading on subterranean station platforms. Tiredness blurring the words of feminist theory, critiques of the art market and elitism; of who gets to make art and join the art canon. Things I've long suspected are affirmed in print. As my body sways under dream like neon, rhythmic sentences lifting me - freed for a span of time into a world of passionate ideals, where articulate voices feed my rage and the hope for something better - Until my train arrives to carry me home, to shower, eat and sleep, to be ready for another day of work.

Union organisers come to the call centre¹ and everyone on shift is allowed a break, to hear what they have to say. The mini-bosses Dink and Boogie are none too pleased, ...think of all the lost time! I've never been a member of a union, I'm excited. It brings back memories of my dad singing: 'Oh, you don't get me, I'm part of the union
You don't get me, I'm part of the union, You don't get me, I'm part of the union
Until the day I die, until the day I die.'² Dad's bolshie attitude always made me feel proud. That was back in the day when unions were king, back in the day of mass walk outs, militant shop stewards, bosses crying that they were being held to ransom. That was before the unions got their teeth ripped out, before a casualised work force promised us all the 'freedom of working without a contract, before my Dad got promoted to management and gave up being a shop steward.

In my chequered working life, I have never had sick pay or holiday pay. Now at the call centre we have the opportunity of becoming the first casualised

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workforce to be unionised. It's difficult to build solidarity in atomised workforces like ours, where most of us never see each other on a regular basis and joining the union is definitely not encouraged by the invisible big bosses of James, James and Jamieson Market Research Inc; but a legal precedent has been won and the union organisers are here. I tell you what, I can't wait to sign up and pay my dues. •

Jet Moon is a multi-disciplinary artist who writes, performs and collaborates on fierce work for radical social change. Collaborating for many years with the LGBTIQ, kink, sex worker, disability and survivor communities they belong to, dedicated to creating intimate spaces of sharing, visibility and resistance. You can find them on Instagram @xjetmoonx and www.jetmoon.org

1 *Australian call centres—sweatshops of the electronic age* – by Noel Holt, 14 May 2001, www.wsws.org/en/articles/2001/05/call-m14.html ‘...“Call Central” campaign, launched last November by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and six communication unions, is to convince employers of the benefits of unionising their workplaces.’

2 Strawbs - 1973 - *You don't get me I'm part of the Union* www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Part_of_the_Union

