

**issue 3**

**free**

# COMMUNAL LEISURE



## What is communal leisure?

For want of a better way to open this than by defining each term, I will begin with leisure. A leisure can be found in a designated centre, or "Leisure Centre", where throngs of people go to partake in various forms of exercise for a small fee. The throngs of people here represent the "communal". Veruccas and anticlimactic wave machines aside, the following is a proper attempt to disseminate what comes is.

I am not particularly good at leisuring communally, if communal leisure is taken to mean time spent with a group of people who are all aware of the fact that they are at leisure together. In my true leisure time (that is, time spent entirely unoccupied), I generally sit on the subway and go around in circles for the sheer hell of it and love of public transport for as long as I can get away with. Alas, commuting is likely not many people's leisure time, but can communal leisure be individual people being at leisure in the company of other people at leisure without having to be in a defined group? Public libraries are undeniably a form of this sort of unintentional communal leisure, a reach I'm willing to reach to if only to express my love for the public library.

Intentional communal leisure, like joining a group with the aim to create leisure together is a lot more involved than somewhat awkwardly perching beside someone on the sofa in Hillhead library for a few hours in reverent silence though, and is likely to resemble communal occupation rather than communal leisure. Communal occupation is easy; people meet in groups to get things done. Whilst it doesn't have to be overly formal or agenda-ed, it is certainly not leisurely. True communal leisure is likely a horrific logistical nightmare to achieve, happening quiescently only on a sunny day when everyone you've ever known finds themselves drawn to the park to do little else but sit. Presently in Glasgow therefore we are all doomed to forgo our communal leisure time for the next (at least) 4 months or so as the sun can't seem to set fast enough. The facilitative role of the humble park is nothing short of impressive: here is a bunch of grass and some trees pretty much do what you like it's free there are no expectations of what you do with the space everyone without exception is welcome and unquestioned. Dogs.

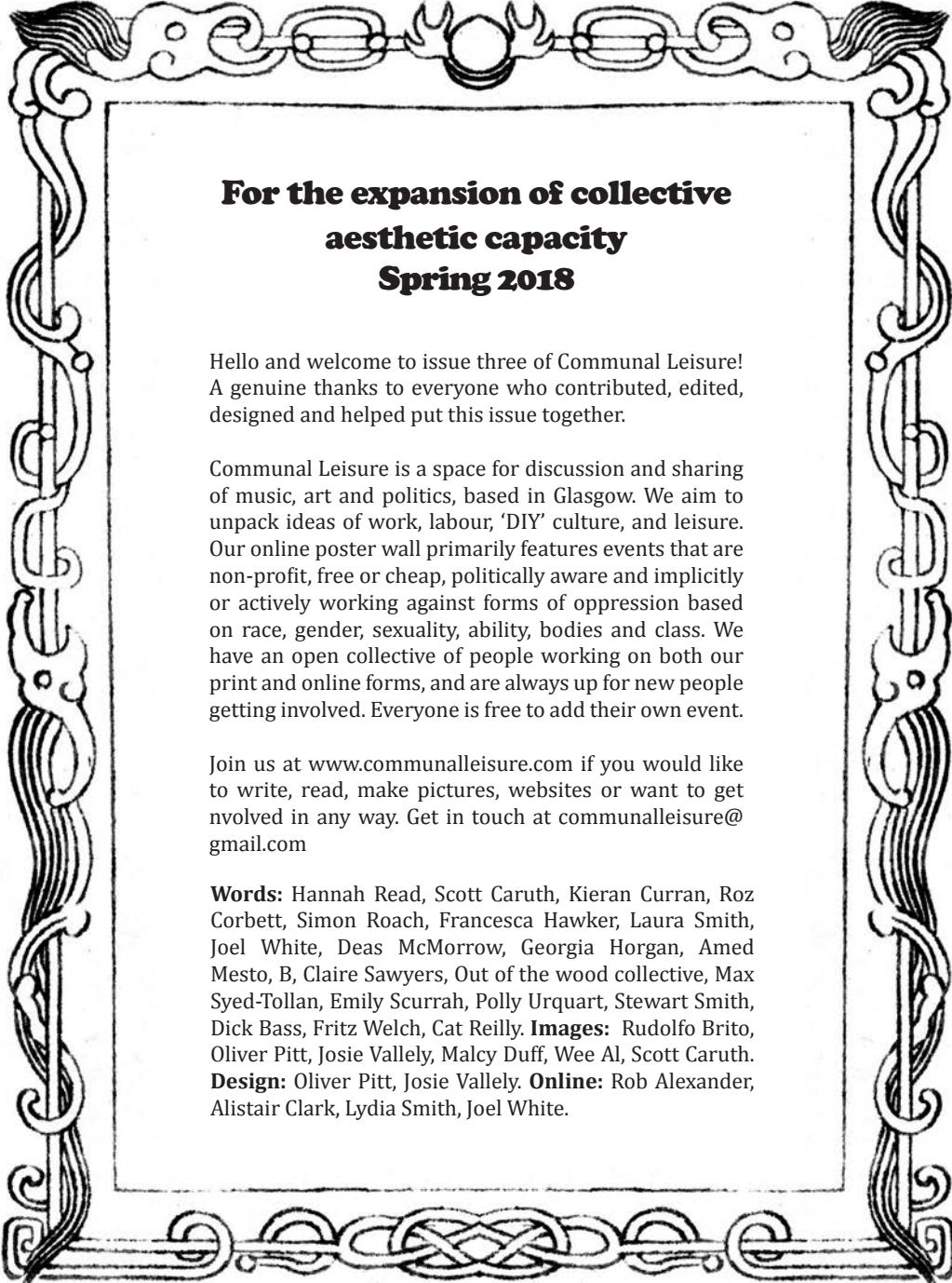
It is hardly a novel take to suggest that parks and libraries (and public transport too maybe) are good. Whilst it is all...

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very well extolling the virtues of parks, it is maybe important to consider how we can take these virtues and apply them as best as possible to other spaces we find ourselves in trying to have a lil leisure, be they our clubs or gigs or gallery spaces. Mass appeasement is difficult, the crux of the aforementioned logistical nightmare. Promises to increase diversity and remove social and economic barriers often never reach the people they are supposedly intended to help, instead bouncing around homogenous insular groups and patting each member on the back before sidling out a back door. How one takes the blank slate that is an unassuming park ready to be filled with people ready to be at leisure and adapts that to the club I am unsure – although I once found myself at a night where someone had brought their dog who seemed to be having a fun time and subsequently made everyone else feel pretty happy, so maybe that's one aspect worth considering (might I note that he was able to let himself out and did so routinely). Aside from filling clubs with dogs, minimising unease strikes me as being central to facilitating leisure time, but is by no means an easy feat. Making leisure more communal and making communal activities more leisurely is possible through reducing the expectations we place on other people and they on us. Come out if you wanna, don't if you don't, dance if you wanna, don't if you don't.

So what is communal leisure aside from sitting in a park ((or enjoying seeing a dog in a club))? I reckon for now it might have to be the collective sense of waiting to be able to sit in the park together again, and cutting everyone a little more social slack.

HR



## **For the expansion of collective aesthetic capacity Spring 2018**

Hello and welcome to issue three of Communal Leisure! A genuine thanks to everyone who contributed, edited, designed and helped put this issue together.

Communal Leisure is a space for discussion and sharing of music, art and politics, based in Glasgow. We aim to unpack ideas of work, labour, 'DIY' culture, and leisure. Our online poster wall primarily features events that are non-profit, free or cheap, politically aware and implicitly or actively working against forms of oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, ability, bodies and class. We have an open collective of people working on both our print and online forms, and are always up for new people getting involved. Everyone is free to add their own event.

Join us at [www.communalleisure.com](http://www.communalleisure.com) if you would like to write, read, make pictures, websites or want to get involved in any way. Get in touch at [communalleisure@gmail.com](mailto:communalleisure@gmail.com)

**Words:** Hannah Read, Scott Caruth, Kieran Curran, Roz Corbett, Simon Roach, Francesca Hawker, Laura Smith, Joel White, Deas McMorrow, Georgia Horgan, Amed Mesto, B, Claire Sawyers, Out of the wood collective, Max Syed-Tollan, Emily Scurrah, Polly Urquart, Stewart Smith, Dick Bass, Fritz Welch, Cat Reilly. **Images:** Rudolfo Brito, Oliver Pitt, Josie Vallely, Malcy Duff, Wee Al, Scott Caruth. **Design:** Oliver Pitt, Josie Vallely. **Online:** Rob Alexander, Alistair Clark, Lydia Smith, Joel White.



## RATTLE LIBRARY OPENS 4 ALL UR PHILOSOFUN NEEDS

Sunday morning and your brain's still throbbing-gristled from that Tennents multipack and a soggy nibble on your pal's best £10 gurner last night? Need some Angela Davis and a little Adorno to soften the fuzz and blow those cobwebs away? Then look no further than the Rattle Library at Glasgow Autonomous Space, the city's vibiest Sunday hangout for autodidacts with a hangover. It's got an amazing book collection of radical and leftist philosophy, sociology, history, and loads more, alongside a growing library of zines and pamphlets. It's basically got all the things you want to read but never got round to or are too expensive. GAS also puts gigs on now, so keep an eye out for upcoming shows.

## KURDISH SOLIDARITY GROUPS PROTEST ATTACKS IN TURKEY

Kurdish groups in Scotland, organised around Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan, took part in several demonstrations in support of the Kurdish city of Afrin this January and February, as Turkey began a bombing campaign against Kurdish settlements in the region. Demonstrations were held in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh, with hundreds of protesters joining in condemnation of the attacks. Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan released the following statement alongside the promise of future protests:

"The Kurds and their neighbours in the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (or Rojava) have led the fight against ISIS. They have established an autonomous,

secular, feminist, grass-roots democracy based on principles of community control that should be an example to us all. They have provided a peaceful and secure home to refugees from across Syria. Now the big powers are standing aside as a fascistic and autocratic ruler, who has shown his contempt for human rights and democracy, and has boasted about his imperial ambitions, invades from land and air. We are calling on the people of St Andrews to show support for the people of Afrin and Rojava, and for what they have achieved for us all. Please look beyond the headlines that rely on Turkish propaganda. Check out the Kurdish perspective at [anfenglish.com](http://anfenglish.com) And find Scottish Solidarity with Kurdistan on facebook. Tell your MP to tell the UK Government to condemn Turkish aggression, to stop any further arms sales to Turkey, and to insist on the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria being part of any discussions on the future of Syria. There is a Kurdish saying, born of bitter experience - 'no friends but the mountains'. We want to show the people of Afrin that they also have friends here in Scotland"

## LIVING RENT ARE MAKING A RACKET

The Glasgow branch of Living Rent, Scotland's tenants union, is growing accustomed to taking to the streets in support of its members, and it's finding that it's quite effective too. The latest success came after a two-day standoff in front of the offices of a notorious Glasgow Letting Agency, Infiniti Properties, who had illegally charged a Living Rent member £180 in 'screening fees'. (All fees charged outside rent and deposit are illegal under the Rent Scotland Act 1988).

After the bizarre involvement of private security, letting agency staff

locking themselves in, and three police cars turning up at the agency's request but not finding anything to do to justify their presence, the peaceful but relentless gathering of Living Rent members and supporters ended with the agency agreeing to meet formally to discuss the issue.

Living Rent have also started having regular street stalls to raise awareness of the transformative potential of renters' collective power. After one such street stall, a Living Rent member said: "we're out in Patrick today to keep the momentum up, letting folk know that we're building up a union which is already fighting and winning on local issues affecting tenants, and trying to shift the balance of power city-wide."

Member defence training sessions are currently being organised in Glasgow to prepare tenants for upcoming direct actions. You can find out about them on Living Rent's website.

## WESTGAP ARE PUTTING THEMSELVES OUT THERE TOO

West Glasgow Against Poverty (WestGAP) have started holding street stalls in front of job centres to talk to people about their welfare rights and try to answer any questions, doubts or concerns that folk may have. WestGAP is a grassroots, non-hierarchical organisation that has been providing free and independent welfare rights advice since 1997. As drastic and far-reaching changes are being made to the welfare system in ways that are hard to discern (read: Universal Credit), we are all left feeling ever more confused and helpless. Thank fuck for WestGAP and their work.

WestGAP is entirely volunteer-run. They are now recruiting to build the

capacity to get out onto the streets regularly, get in touch with them if you'd like to help.

## CAMPAIGN AGAINST TRANS PEOPLE SPREADS TO 'PROGRESSIVE' MEDIA

Transphobic hate campaigners across Scotland have been escalating their attacks over the last few months, as a campaign of bullying and harassment in the lead up to a vote on reforming the Gender Recognition Act (GRA) drew support from media figures, including those from the so-called 'progressive' Indy-Left. The reviewed Gender Recognition Act simply seeks to allow women, men and non binary people to register their correct gender with the state, but has been seized on by Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs) as a way to further their campaigning against trans rights and trans inclusion. In January, The National newspaper published a radically transphobic article in its print and online editions, by journalist Shona Craven, celebrating an event in which trans and non binary people and their lives were mocked and attacked as "a phase", "a cult fad", "narcissistic", "perverted", "confused liberalism", "profoundly irrational", "a fashion statement", "self harm" and "mutilation". The event itself was picketed by the radical Anti-Capitalist Queers group, who chanted and held placards outside, and covered by the tireless writers at A Thousand Flowers, from whom much of the above information is sourced.

This National article was then roundly celebrated by Bella Caledonia, and various other IndyRef twitter types, for its 'braveness' and 'free speech' (in spreading misinformation and exposing trans folk to further harm?). As A Thousand Flowers pointed out, all of the main women's organisations and gender equality groups in Scotland support the Equal Recognition Campaign and reform of the Gender Recognition Act, evidenced by a public statement from November by Close the Gap, Engender, Equate Scotland, Rape Crisis Scotland, Scottish Women's Aid, Women 50:50 and Zero Tolerance in which they make clear that they "support the realisation of rights of trans people. For over a decade, we have engaged in constructive dialogue with our colleagues in the Scottish Trans Alliance, Equality Network, LGBT Youth Scotland and Stonewall Scotland. We do not regard trans equality and women's equality to contradict or be in competition with each other."

This was a point deliberately elided by Craven, along with Catriona Stewart of the Sunday Herald and others, putting trans people at direct risk of not seeking

support from such organisations. That The National, Bella Caledonia and writers from The Herald and other 'Progressive' outlets are joining the likes of the Daily Mail and Wings Over Scotland in pursuing this bigotry demands a radical response in support of rights for trans folk.

Find out more and get involved at A Thousand Flowers, Trans Pride Scotland, Scottish Trans Alliance, or Action for Trans Health.

## GOVAN HOPES TO STRIKE 'BINGO' WITH LYCEUM SUPER CINEMA

Govan Lyceum, one of the last remaining 1930s super cinemas in the UK, could reopen as a concert venue after standing empty for over a decade. Govan Housing Association is hoping to buy the B listed Lyceum and bring it back as a community owned events and concert venue. The Lyceum, which opened in December 1938 and sat 2600 people, was built on the site of the 1898 Lyceum Music Hall. It was converted to a cinema in 1923 but burned down 14 years later before being rebuilt and bought in 1974 by County Bingo, who converted it into a bingo parlour and 480 seat cinema. The cinema closed in 1981, and the bingo hall in 2006, with the venue empty since then. Top films from 1981 include Superman II, Raiders of the Lost Ark, The Fox and the Hound, and Chariots of Fire – Christ what a shite year.

## SCOTTISH POOL FORUMS SEE RED AFTER 'SNOOKERED' AT SPA VOTE

Forum users were 'cueing' up to criticise a new motion from the Scottish Pool Association December 2017 Minutes this month, as the decision that "One player has to have amassed 3 frames in first hour or the match will be reduced by 2 frames" was branded "a load of crap" and "outrageous" following a tense 10 to 9 vote by the Scottish Pool Association board. As one General Member, 'ScottishSlack', commented, "Seems harsh on the slower guys out there"

"Very harsh, voting went 8-8 [Sic, was 9-9] against status quo with the chairman having the casting vote" added another use, 'Cyclone'.

Moderator, 'FlyingScotsman' responded with an incisive defence of the decision:

"Well I think players have to understand that there are players out there taking over 4 hours for match's, not once or a couple of times but nearly every time they play, why because that is the way they play?"

Some will come back on and say that's

unfair on the opponent but the SPA have to do something, otherwise the match's go on to long and we do not finish the tournament.

Also these players will again be timed, why because their opponents ask for it straight away!"

This follows criticism of the SPA for failing to publish its constitution online, with the page dedicated to it simply stating: "As agreed at the SPA meeting on Sunday 4th December 2016, the online version of the SPA Constitution, and its appendices, are out of date and have been removed from the website.

The SPA Executive Committee will carry out a full review of the Constitution and shall publish the amended version in due course." Pass the chalk!

## KNOTS

The first ever Knots festival took place this January, positioning itself as an 'unofficial fringe festival' for the many-heided fiddle-hydra that is Celtic Connections. Celtic connections were annoyed- but the show went on. In response to Celtic Connections (which is essentially a giant school concert) taking over the city of Glasgow for three mellifluous weeks, Knots was set up to provide a space in which some of the complex themes that arise from it can be unravelled. What are the connections between 'Celtic' culture and authenticity, tradition, ownership, exclusion and appropriation? Who is included or excluded by Celtic tradition and how do we navigate these issues in 2018?

With talks on fears to the troubling entanglement of Celticism and white supremacy, Knots succeeded in starting a conversation that is sure to continue. Look out for events throughout the year under the Knots banner, to keep you satisfied until the sequel next January!

## NO GOOD NEW BANDS IN GLASGOW ANYMORE

"Everyone agrees there are no good new bands in Glasgow anymore", says everyone. Gone are the days when you and all your mates played in about 20 free-improv noise acts at any one time, now everybody is either a DJ, a DJ / Producer, a Producer / DJ or too skint to pay for a practice space. "But what about Banana Oil, Cucina Povera, LAPS, Objectified and that perennial 'first gig for this new Glasgow band' band that always play Night School and Spitehouse parties", says some red-cheeked young idealist, as we boo them out the pub. Half of those lot were in bands for years anyway. They dont count. There's no use fighting it, its over. Might as well move to Edinburgh and start a well-paid Ceilidh group, call it 'Fossil Ayes' or 'Trad Lads' or 'Dougie MacDirty' or 'Reelin In

the Beers'. Or maybe we should start a hardcore band, like us, right now? Blow the cobwebs right off this shit. Ha! Ha! Yeah just kidding. Good one. Really are no good new bands anymore though right? Name me one. Go on then?

## UCU GIVE FULL MARKS FOR ESCALATING STRIKE

Education workers across Scotland will join over 61 campuses across the UK in strike action over February and March, in protest against continued attacks on pensions. Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) balloted for the strike after talks between them and the employers' representative Universities UK (UUK) ended without agreement this November, with 88% of UCU members across the UK voting in favour of strike action. The strikes will occur over a four-week period, beginning with a five-day walkout from Thursday, 22nd February, to Wednesday, 28th February. The following two weeks will see four-day and five-day walkouts, respectively. The dispute centres on UUK's proposals to end the defined benefit element of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme. UCU says this would leave a typical lecturer almost £10,000 a year worse off in retirement than under the current set-up. UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said staff were "understandably angry" and felt "let down by vice-chancellors who seem to care more about defending their own pay and perks than the rights of their staff". "Strike action on this scale has not been seen before on UK campuses, but universities need to know the full scale of the disruption they will be hit with if they refuse to sort this mess out," she said.

A friend of Communal Leisure who tutors at Glasgow University added, "yes of course I'll be supporting the strike and be out on the picket lines for this important issue, but it would also be nice to see more solidarity for lower-paid and casualised workers, like those of us who had our pay delayed by months last year due to farcical university HR!"

To the barricades!

## YELLOW CARD FOR OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR AT FOOTBALL ACT

The controversial Offensive Behaviour at Football Act is one step closer to being scrapped, as MSPs voted this January to bring forward a bill that would see its repeal. Labour MSP James Kelly's members bill was opposed by many SNP members, who brought in the legislation in 2012, but were outnumbered by MSPs

from opposition parties, all of whom are in favour of scrapping it.

The Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications Act came into force in 2012 after the SNP used its majority to push through the legislation, which many felt was undertaken for momentary political capital rather than any meaningful engagement with questions of violence and sectarianism at football matches in Scotland. Campaigning group Fans Against Criminalisation (FAC) released a statement following the vote:

"Today saw the campaign against the Offensive Behaviour Act take another step in the inexorable road to repeal. MSPs voted 65 to 61 in favour of the Justice Committee report which recommended support for the general principles of the Bill. The next stage (2) is the amendment stage and thereafter the repeal bill will go back to Parliament for MSPs to have the final vote. FAC reps were there today, as they always are, to observe and report back. We will have a longer report tomorrow and we will cover some of the lighter moments in one of our podcasts over the coming months.

For tonight, however, lets enjoy the moment and take some pride in the way that we as a group of citizens have refused to be criminalised and have campaigned relentlessly and in an organised way to that end."

## GIANT TANK NO LONGER TEENAGERS, MISS OWN BIRTHDAY

Edinburgh based "largely ignored luddite" record label, Giant Tank, celebrated 20 years of CD-Rs, noise, gunk, and serious free improvisation in November 2017. Ali Robertson, one of the label's founders, and half of #folktronica duo Usurper, released the following statement, by way of commemoration:

"November of 2017 marks the twentieth anniversary of my operations under the Giant Tank monicker. Two decades ago I wandered into "the bothy" in OXgangs with Alex McGregor and Bob Fairfoull to make an irritating tinny din and never looked back. At this late stage in the game, I have nae idea how else you're supposed to live a life and I still cannae play that trumpet. In fact: the trumpet's goosed.

I chose not to commemorate the passing of this date with a celebratory event or release and instead opted to peruse an auld issue of Bananafish while relaxing behind closed doors in my vintage '00s Giant Tank sweatshirt. I'd forgotten how warm this 'hing is. I'm glad I accidentally ripped the arse oot of it at the Giant Tank band's final live performance. It really benefits fae the added ventilation.

I ain't giving up the ghost any time

soon either. More crappy cd-rs and ill-attended gigs coming your way soon!" - Ali Robertson, Nov. 2017

Ali and Malcy Duffaka Duffand Robertson aka Usurper are the featured artists at this year's Counterflows Festival, across Glasgow from the 5-8th of April.

## NOT MOVING FORCED TO MOVE ON

Much loved mid-week clubnight 'Not Moving' has ended its tenure at Nice N Sleazys, after an estimated 84 parties over the last few years. Curated by Laurie Pitt, drummer / percussionist for a raft of great Glasgow DIY bands - including Golden Teacher, Dick 50, THOTH and most recently Banana Oil - Not Moving provided a vital pivot-point for the best in a certain kind of wonky, weirdo dance and other music. Eulogies in full swing, the final Not Moving saw suitably a suitably unhinged set of 'post-divorce Dad' Jungle from the 'house band' Dick 50, top jams from Claudia / CIV, a small mosh pit for wunderkind Luar Domatrix, and 100% Positive Feedback seeing the night out with a set of full-TVP bangers, finishing (I think, everyone was pretty drunk) with the titular DNA tune for which the night is named. RIP indeed. For many in attendance the night seemed to mark a paradigm shift of sorts, as weirder and long-running nights from Sleazys have steadily been moved on, seemingly in favour of more student and Sauchiehall walk-in friendly fare. The list of acts to have played the night is quite amazing, and a great snapshot into a certain wedge of the Glasgow underground.

## HARRY POTTER CASTING 'AVADA KEDAVRA' ACROSS SCOTLAND

Little wizarding wanker, Harry Potter, is ruining everything again, as cash-hungry 'pot-heads' try and monetise the often spurious connections between the magical franchise and Scotland. A new Harry Potter themed shop opened in February in Glasgow, the brainchild of Wendy and Kenny McDermott who also own up-cycle furniture shop Wendy's Hoose. As Wendy told the Evening Times: "Scotland has lots of connections to Harry Potter and we have found a few directly linked to Glasgow. It is our aim to put Glasgow on the Harry Potter Tourist Map. We have identified the ideal location for premises and are currently hard at work to make sure it will be packed to the brim with officially licensed Harry Potter merchandise as well as Harry Potter Inspired furniture and gifts." No doubt crowds of bemused Americans will soon be getting walked around by enthusiastic

Student-Theatre types in capes to visit such landmark sites as 'the place JK Rowling once tweeted something pithy about Jeremy Corbyn' and 'the large-ish man that may have inspired Hagrid'. This follows the first translation of Harry Potter into Scots, Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stane, which is actually a really nice idea to be honest, opening with, "Mr and Mrs Dursley, o nummer fower, Privet Loan, were prood tae say they were gey normal, thank ye verra much." Queercore-Dumbledore for lyf!

## LEFT-LIBERTARIAN SONG CLUB PREACH TO THEIR OWN CHOIR

Red and Black Song Club has relaunched this year, with a bi-weekly (twice monthly? Bi-monthly? I can never work it out. It's every two weeks.) singalong focused on "celebrating songs of working class struggle, anti-fascism and resistance." The group meet every 1st and 3rd Wednesday at GAS (Glasgow Autonomous Space, 53 Kilbirnie Street, G5 8JD), from 7pm. They invite people to "come along to share and learn some radical left songs from past and present to use in your own struggles. Chat with likeminded people over a cup of tea during the break. No musical experience or knowledge necessary just enthusiasm! Players of any instrument are more than welcome to bring them along. Have a favourite radical song to share? Bring some copies along too. No fixed charge. Donation for room and expenses according to your means."

Find Red and Black Song Club on Facebook for more info.

## FRACKING

In a landmark decision, the Scottish Government have voted to ban fracking at the end of last year. The decision came after a lengthy period of research into the technology, and a series of investigations on health, climate change and local community impacts that found, to no one's surprise, that fracking was a pretty terrible idea. A consultation earlier this year gathered one of the largest responses ever in Scotland's history. Over 60,000 people voiced their opinion, with 99% of people coming out against fracking. Crucially, the Scottish Government was swayed by what they called the 'lack of social licence' for the industry across Scotland, as well as the disastrous impacts it would have on climate change. This gives our friends fighting fracking down south another string in their bow against Westminster's frenzied support for this risky industry. In fact, England now remains the only nation in the British Isles that has not restricted the technology in some way.

But with community opposition in Lancashire and Yorkshire growing day by day, for how much longer?



## FIRST BUS INTRODUCES NEW LOYALTY SCHEME IN GLASGOW

In a pioneering move, First Bus now charge loyal customers 5p more every time they get the bus.

## TRANSMISSION FUNDING CUT BY CREATIVE SCOTLAND

In its 35th anniversary year, the artist-run gallery Transmission has had its regular funding from Creative Scotland cut, casting its long term future in the balance. The state-backed funding body rescinded Transmission's three-year funding stream with the assurance of a new pot being set up specifically for artist-run spaces, but with no details, timeframes or indeed even guarantees being given.

The internationally renowned gallery has been undergoing a decolonisation process of its activities over the past two years, resulting in its committee currently being led by People of Colour for the first time. This, along with Transmission's self-professed 'refusal of professionalisation', has led the gallery to call Creative Scotland out on what it sees as political maneuvering — in effect, for not conforming to the liberal consensus on what a contemporary art gallery is and does.

But the funding decision hasn't gone unchallenged. The announcement in January came as around 20 other institutions had their regular money pulled by Creative Scotland, a total of £99 million over the three year cycle, causing two of the funding body's board members to resign. One of those that stepped down, Ruth Wishart, said that Creative Scotland had become "a family at war with many of those it seeks to serve".

In Transmission's own words: "The cultural capital that Transmission generates, though measurable, does not have the kind of payoff that Creative Scotland as a financial body wishes to continue to invest in. It is too messy and unpredictable, subject to quick change. While perhaps not explicitly racist, queerphobic, etc, it could be inferred that Creative Scotland does not see the expressions of these communities in their active, unrefined, ungentrified forms as being valuable, or the timing of this decision to be particularly loaded, and thus acts from a position of institutional bias in which racism, queerphobia and so forth emerge."

## NO 2018 ANARCHIST BOOKFAIR AFTER TRANSPHOBIA ROW

Organisers have said they will not be going ahead with a London Anarchist Bookfair next year after the 2017 event was roundly rebuked for transphobia. An open letter signed by over 40 activist groups and individuals including two Sisters Uncut groups accused The London Bookfair collective, who organise the annual event, of allowing the distribution of trans exclusionary material and for basically being tacitly complicit. They obviously denied this and claimed some "freedom of speech" liberal-in-a-balaclava-shite but the whole thing ended in an internecine mess of statements and response statements and the London Anarchist Bookfair is now on hiatus until it can stop conflating 'varied viewpoints' with violent prejudice. In the meantime, some sound concerned people are looking to organise an Anarchist Feminist bookfair in Edinburgh next year instead.

# BLIND

## (adjective) - Unable to see.

If I may be so bold, I would surmise that most of you reading this would consider the above to be a perfectly reasonable, succinct and accurate definition. Indeed, if participating in a game of Articulate, I myself would likely use similar terminology in order to describe this particular adjective. However, after conducting a 27 year long ethnographical investigation, I have been alerted to a myriad of alternative definitions and interpretations. Indeed, I am forced to concede that in today's western society, "blind" has come to signify and ultimately mean an awful lot more than that which is stated above.

Now before exploring this some more, allow me to introduce myself. I am a recently qualified teacher, former social worker and semi-professional singer. I have a wide range of qualifications, skills and interests. I am a daughter, sister, partner, friend and mother. I am also, in accordance with the aforementioned definition, blind. For many, it is this characteristic alone which is thought to be the most important when defining me.

Having lost my sight 27 years ago at the age of two, I have become pretty well-adjusted to life as a visually impaired person. Although my inability to see makes a daily impact, I have developed strategies which have enabled me to navigate life in an independent and mostly confident fashion. Indeed, for the most part it is not my lack of sight which makes life challenging, it is managing the frequent and crudely judgemental attitudes of others which presents the most difficulty. I am no way insinuating that my life is blighted by a constant onslaught of negativity from absolutely everybody I meet. I have a joy-filled, fruitful existence full of wonderful, supportive and unassuming individuals. However, it is genuinely true that nearly every day I will encounter somebody who subscribes to an alternative definition of what it means to be blind.

Over the years I have dealt first hand with people demonstrating varying levels of shock, concern or sometimes suspicion as to how I am able to work, travel, dress myself or just generally competently conduct my life without being able to see. Being asked regularly who chooses my clothes for me as I somehow always managed to assemble an outfit; being shocked that I have a sighted partner; being physically removed from a road crossing I was intending to use on account of it being "risky"; assuming I live on takeaways; assuming I am unemployed; being told that blind people can't be teachers whilst undertaking a PGCE ... I could go on. Indeed, I have encountered

many demoralising assumptions which have been difficult to reconcile. However, in addition to "blind" being seemingly synonymous with unstylish, unsafe and generally less capable than sighted people, I have recently become aware of yet another common assumption which, for me, has proved to be particularly unpalatable.

Since announcing my pregnancy a year ago, and becoming a parent in July, I have faced a new onslaught of people keen to voice their concern, or general distaste towards my family planning decisions. A taxi driver when seeing my bump asked if I thought it was "wise" to become a parent. My partner has been informed that he will have to be a very "hands-on dad" as I won't be able to contribute my share of the child-rearing duties. Even some friends have expressed concern as to how I'll cope. However, the practicalities of parenting without eyesight are not as



tricky as one might think.

A very common concern expressed by many is my ability, or perceived lack of ability, to change a nappy. On numerous occasions I have been informed by strangers that it would be "impossible" for me to successfully manage this as I would inevitably end up coated in faecal matter and my baby would be left unclean. Five months along the line and I'm relieved to report that this has never happened. A combination of using touch, smell and some basic organisation skills suffice in ensuring that both baby and I exit the changing mat without suffering any trauma. I mean, even if I was to get dirty, I am fortunate enough to live in a house with running water and therefore could remedy the situation quickly and effectively.

Another common assumption is that my baby and I will be housebound and fully reliant on others to take us out and about. It is true that navigating the outside world with a baby requires a little extra planning on my part, however I'm sure this is the case for many new parents. My own strategy is to use a baby carrier so my daughter sits safely on my front leaving my hands free to use a white cane as a mobility aid. Alternatively, I can pop my daughter in the pram and pull it behind me with one hand, whilst using the cane in the other. Both of these strategies have enabled me and my daughter to access taxis, buses and trains as well as getting out and about on foot.

Years of relying on the use of touch, smell and hearing has meant that I am already equipped with the tools required for life as a blind parent. I was first to notice a heat-rash on my daughter's chest, can tell from another room if she is lying on her front or back by the sounds she makes and need only sniff to ascertain the extent of any required nappy attention. We already enjoy story-time together as I have a number of duel print and braille books and access to modern technology means that I am only ever a video call away from a pair of eyes if required.

When explaining these methods, I have sometimes been met with an exasperated sigh ... "well it might be easy now but how are you going to cope in the future when she's running all over the place?" Of course I can't fully predict what the future may bring. All I can say is that I plan to continue to use methods more sophisticated than merely relying upon sight when parenting my daughter. A bell attached to her clothing will help me audibly keep track of her movements (if not her organically occurring noise); using rains when out and about will help me keep her safe and fostering a relationship rooted in mutual respect will help me manage any attempts my daughter may make to exploit my blindness.

All in all, I feel a sense of evangelical duty to take to the streets, banner aloft and shout in the most raucous voice I can muster, "blind people can be responsible, capable and fully functioning human beings too." Alas my poster paints were expended during my PGCE year and shouting is bad for the vocal chords so I instead turn to writing this article in order to get my point across. And what is my point? My point is that my time spent over the past year justifying and explaining myself has solidified in my mind the nagging worry that many people have a fairly shoddy view of what it means to be blind. This is not ok. Blindness should not be a filter by which to view a person's achievements, characteristics or life as a whole. It is not an indicator of capability, responsibility or vulnerability. It is merely a simplified way of saying one thing ... unable to see.

# REVOLUTION IN ROJAVA

The Kurds have been in the headlines for the past few years. Even though they are the largest nation in the world without their own independent state, many people only heard about them after their war against ISIS (Daesh). Kurds have suffered from discrimination and have had atrocities committed against them by different governments in each of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. In this article, I am going to focus on the issue of Syrian (western) Kurdistan, known as Rojava ('the place where the sun sets').

Kurdistan (or 'the land of Kurds') straddles the mountainous borders in the Middle East where Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria converge. Although those living in Iraq, Turkey, and Iran are better known, the Kurds in Syria were almost unheard of until July 2012, when they emerged suddenly as a potential game changer in the Syrian civil war. Nobody knows the exact number of Kurds living in Syria because we exaggerate our numbers, while the government undercounts us to de-emphasise the problem. Nevertheless, saying that they represent approximately 12 percent of the Syrian population or that slightly more than 2.5 million Kurds live in Syria might be reasonable.

During the past centuries the Kurds in Syria have suffered under a form of sequential triple colonialism: first, the Ottoman Empire until 1918; then the French until 1946; and subsequently the Arabs, once Syria gained its independence. After coming to power in 1963, the Baathist party (which is still in power) proved even more hostile towards the Kurds.

Many Kurds in Syria have been denied Syrian citizenship. In 1962, Decree 93 classified some 120,000 Kurds as ajaneb ('foreigners') who could not vote, own property or work in government jobs. This non-status has been inherited by their descendants. A government decree prohibited the registration of children with Kurdish names. Kurdish cultural centres, bookshops, music and similar activities have also been banned. In addition, for many years the repressive Syrian government of Hafez Assad (the father of the current president) sought to maintain an Arab belt between its Kurds and those in Turkey and Iraq, uprooting Syrian Kurds and depriving them of their livelihood.

In March 2004, Kurdish rioting broke out in Qamishlo, Syria, spreading rapidly to all Kurdish regions in Syria. Since then the atmosphere has remained tense.

In July 2012, exhausted, the Syrian regime left Rojava to concentrate on fighting the opposition elsewhere in the country, creating a gap in many services. It was expected by many politicians and

by the regime itself that Rojava would witness chaos, riots and that it would become a sanctuary for criminals. But people organised themselves and filled all the gaps, creating a society in which everyone needs everyone and no one holds ultimate power.

In this society, power rests with the people. They are empowered to make the decisions that affect them the most. There is no hierarchy; everyone has the same amount of responsibility and is entitled to the same amount of rights. After Assad's regime had left, even streets became cleaner.

However, in the summer of 2013, the well-known terrorist organisation, Al-Qaeda, known locally as Jabhat Al Nusra, was not happy with what was going on in Rojava. Backed by Turkey, Al Nusra started to attack Kurdish villages and civilians in order to bring them back to Islam, as they saw it, and to save the Kurds from infidelity, atheism and anarchism. In addition, there was/is also an embargo from Turkey. These two facts put a great pressure on the newborn way of living in Rojava.

Women and men fought side by side as comrades against terrorism. In many occasions a few people shared one gun as there was a shortage of military equipment. The situation was very challenging. Everyone contributed; people who could not fight helped with cooking and delivering supplies to the front. The number of casualties was high. Many fighters who were injured died as there were not enough medical supplies. Nevertheless, the spirit was high and finally the battle was won and Al-Nusra was defeated. It is worth mentioning that at that time many Syrian cities were captured easily by Al-Nusra.

In 2014, the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS/Daesh) captured some major cities in both countries and proclaimed the caliphate. After capturing Mosul, which is the second biggest city in Iraq and had a huge amount of military needs, they started to attack the Kurds. Even though Mosul had 30,000 trained soldiers and around 30,000 federal police, it fell in six days. However, Kobani, a small Kurdish town in Rojava, resisted 134 days of continuous fight and did not fall. The Kobani Battle was won even though the majority of the Kurdish fighters were ordinary people without proper training. This proves to us that anarchism and non-hierarchical society is powerful not only in daily life but also on the battlefield. What is happening in Rojava is not a utopia but reality.

Although revolutions have taken place in many Arab countries, men are still dominating all aspects of life and women are still looked down on and are excluded from any decisions. Men still have the power to control every detail of women's lives, and women still have no right to stop their husbands from marrying a second, third and fourth wife.

Instead, for example, demonstrations in support of child marriage outstrip those against it, and clerics declare that opponents of paedophilia are apostates because the Prophet Mohammed married his second wife, Aisha, when she was an eight-year old child.

On the other hand, in Rojava, there is a sexual revolution besides the revolution against dictators. There are women protection units (YPJ); these units have been fighting alongside men at the front and they also protect women's rights in everyday life. For instance, women can decide the number of children in the family. Men who try to have more than one wife are imprisoned and fined. Decision making is shared equally between both genders.

History has taught the Kurds hard lessons. The sacrifices were always huge and the results were dramatic with massive losses and casualties. The example of Rojava seems to worry the neighbouring countries (Turkey, Iran and Iraq) as well as the Syrian regime. Peshmarga's withdrawing from Kirkuk, Iraqi Kurdistan, in ambiguous circumstances, and the advance of the Shia-militia, backed by Iran, towards Kurdish regions, have raised question marks. There might be yet another international conspiracy against the Kurds. It seems like history is repeating itself yet again.

The Kurds are surrounded by many enemies and their so-called western allies, who are unreliable, are likely to leave them to face their fate alone. After being used by the west to fight ISIS, the Kurds in Rojava might have to fight the Syrian criminal regime and the brutality of Iran and Turkey alone. This means more blood will be shed, resulting in more widows, orphans and destroyed cities. It will also surely cause new flows of people seeking safety in Europe.

Once Rojava is destroyed, the martyrs will be called traitors and their orphans will walk with bowed heads and they will be shamed and hated. Discrimination will be resumed with added intensity and all the rights that people enjoyed during the revolution will be regarded as punishable crimes.

The Kurds have been used by their allies many times and each time they were then left alone. The British empire used them in late 1910s and early 1920s, the Soviets used them in 1946 and the USA used them during the battle of the desert in 1990. It will be hardly surprising if this happens again after ISIS recedes.

# SUBWAY 121

## Circles

In 2016, Glasgow's favourite round trip - sometimes the Clockwork Orange, usually The Subway, never The Underground - celebrated its 120th year of operation. Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), in charge, honoured the anniversary with a selection of limited merchandise, cupcake parties, some slick signage and one specially redecorated train car, painted to simulate the 1896 historic uniform of original car No. 55, complete with illustrated trellis gates on the carriage doors. Circulated images of celebration from this short outburst of memorialisation show a network moving from the well-populated bustle of the Subway's 19th century beginnings to the faceless blur and sheen of modern transportation, making ghosts of the future as well as the past.

Alongside the celebrations, SPT announced a further £200 million investment into the Subway's on-going modernisation program, with Swiss/Italian consortium Stadler contracted to build 17 new train sets, along with an overhaul of signalling, the operational control centre, and platform screen doors. The plan: to eventually move to Unattended Train Operations (UTO), automated driver-less trains, replacing the driver's cab at the front of the train with a forward view through a new wide-screen window. This new rolling stock will be a four-car set, as opposed to the current three-car, aiming to maximise the space available in order to allow for wheelchair access, with wheelchair users able to access the system at St Enoch and Govan once the new transport interchange is complete. The Subway has for it lifespan been a consistently inaccessible space for many to use.

SPT's corporate narrative of the Subway's history and future, informed by a managerially widespread notion that logistics and transportation sectors are inevitably on a track towards automation, has little time for the voices or stories of those who dug, built and ran the Glasgow Subway, and continue to do so. That these industrial sectors are often the most militantly well organized in trade union and labour history, partly due to their robustness against the capital-relocation 'spatial fixes' (moving to a place with cheaper labour or other ways of extracting more surplus value) available in other sectors, has also been scrubbed out of the narrative. The forces of class, industry and geographic dispersal that forged - and were forged by - Glasgow's network of transportation are relegated to a 'heritage' photomontage, where 'People Make Glasgow', but as consumers of

the city's brand, rather than agents and active shapers of its future. SPT's 120 year celebrations present us with a municipal vision of 'fully automated' travel without the attendant ideas of a basic income, radical redistribution of wealth and democratic participation that make the idea of automation a popular one in some left circles. Here we have a world of disappearing, gossamer humans and empty, unused platforms. A vision of silence.

This article is a truncated version of a longer tour/cassette tape/essay - conducted by Dr Lawrence Blissett and the GLARC research team and available from Glarc.net - a project that aims to partially chart the sounds and dirt that have been scrubbed from

through the years than its social or labour history. The project also draws heavily on the great work of locally based scholar Neil Gray - an academic and participant in projects like Variant Magazine and Glasgow Games Monitor - particular his freely available PhD thesis, 'Neoliberal urbanism and spatial composition in recessionary Glasgow'. I write as a junior research assistant and a recent resident of Glasgow, original from Bradford, Yorkshire (which has no Subway), and expect to have made many glaring omissions and mistakes, which I encourage folk to tell me about and so I can amend and expand this tour as more people interact with it.

The Subway itself is far from silent, and this essay came from regular commutes on it, enjoying its noises, gusts, and rhythms. The tour takes one loop through the network, with a couple of backs and forth to see both inner and outer lines, and to help fit a chronology onto a circle, which is never easy. The project is part 'dead labour' noise gig, part 'commuter' performance piece, definitely mainly a ridiculously time consuming amateur history. Here, I sketch over the context for the project.

## Digging in

Opened on the 14th December 1896, the Glasgow Subway is the third-oldest underground metro system in the world, after the London Underground and the Budapest Metro. Sounds of labour and history echo through its two concentric circles, spiralling right back to those first dug out tunnels, from which the route has barely deviated.

The city at this point had already established itself within a vast network of global transport infrastructure, with Glasgow and the Clyde situated at a temporally ideal point for transatlantic movement of goods and people, as well as physically producing vast amounts of shipping and locomotive stock. The city's growth into what we now call the 'Second City of Empire' from the 17th Century onwards - forged initially through tobacco and sugar from slavery plantations and colonial expansion in the Americas, but continuing into the late 18th Century with the West Indies cotton trade - found a particular apotheosis in the city's 1938 Empire Exhibition, along with the legacies of 'Tobacco Lords' like Andrew Buchanan (after whom Buchanan street is named), John Glassford (who has a street named after him too, and owned plantations in Virginia and Maryland) and William Cunningham (whose former mansion now houses the Gallery of Modern Art).

Construction on the Subway began in 1887, following a petition for funds to parliament a few years earlier, preceded by 3 unsuccessful attempts to gain money for similar projects. The

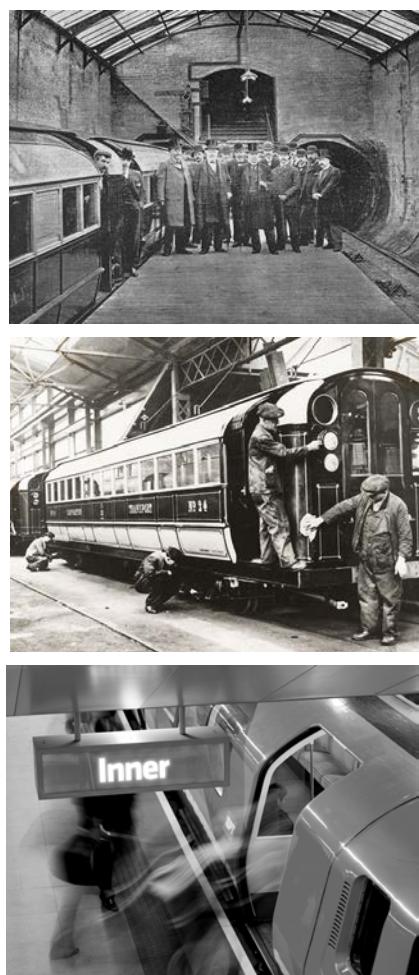


Figure 1 – Ghosts of the Future

the Subway's history, to celebrate its 121st year. The main essay, available for free online, functions as a guideless tour, to be read alongside a ride on the Subway. The writing takes most of its historical information from John Wright and Ian Maclean's 'Circles Under the Clyde', but owes much more to the workers and travellers who made the Subway, rendered oblique and muffled throughout that book: Wright was a modernising 'superintendent' of the network during the 1970s, and the book focuses more on the Subway's engineering and managerial changes

late 19th Century in Glasgow was a time of rapid urbanisation and change, as rural workers cleared from their land in the Highlands joined large numbers who had made the move to Glasgow from the Lowlands in the 18th century. As Neil Gray explains, "These immigrants were largely concentrated in and around the Old Town following the westwards exodus of the wealthier classes to more airy climes in a classic European West End/East End socio-spatial divide" creating intense pressure on infrastructure, both in terms of transportation and housing, as rent increases averaged 47% over the city from 1861 to 1911.

Gray goes on to explain that with "the City of Glasgow Union Railway Act of 1864, large areas of slum housing were demolished when railway lines were driven through the Gallowgate and Saltmarket", with "around 20,000 people displaced by railway expansion". While the city was re-shaped from above by one kind of track and sleeper, the original architects of the Subway attempted to profit from beneath. The city saw huge influxes of capital and labour during this time, with an established class of wealthy industrialists seeking ways to manage and move their workers, as well as hoard and accrue fixed capital in the form of machinery and infrastructure.

Plans for the Subway aimed to capitalise on this moment, and focused from the beginning on the West of the city (never further east than St Enoch), adding a new undertow beneath the industrial flows of the vast Clyde and Govan shipyards.

## The Tour

The tour itself travels through all fifteen stations on the Subway circle, sketching various parts of a very partial Glaswegian social history, inspired by and drawing on the Subway's past. It begins in the late 19th Century in a city ruled by trams, ferries, horse pulled omnibuses, and heavy foot traffic, before following the often-treacherous work of digging out the original Subway line, from which the route has barely deviated. Various ghosts and spectres make an appearance, none fully exorcized by the time of the Subway's disastrous opening in 1896, which saw one complete breakdown and two full speed collisions, with various passenger injuries (luckily, none serious). Once working, the Subway quickly becomes a firm and important part of the city's infrastructure and social memory; with all its smells, sounds and grime. It's also a key site of worker organising during the 'Red Clydeside' era of labour militancy in the city, with a 'Staff Friendly Society' formed in 1902 feeding into several decades of mass-protest, rent strikes, and union activity.

The Subway's original cable haulage system (don't worry, there are ample engineering facts for your next pub quiz that I will leave out here), turns electric in 1935, signalling a shift from what managers saw as a 'labour intensive' operation, to one with increasingly less employees. Glasgow's wartime and post-war changes saw the Subway reach its peak levels of operation (37.3 Million users between 1984-9!) just as the city was redrawn in huge period of 'creative destruction' that saw many Glasgow residents moved into satellite towns, away from established transport infrastructure. Struggles over such urban policies met fierce resistance however, continuing into disputes over the 'Capital of Culture' celebrations in 1990, and the celebration of the colonial 'Tobacco Lords' in the rebranding of the Merchant City.

of £270 million, alongside a possible £2.3 billion expansion that included a new 'East End Circle', with seven new stations at St. Mungo's, Onslow, Duke Street, Celtic Park, Dalmarnock, Newhall and Gorbals. This was aimed to coincide with the city's 2014 Commonwealth Games bid, another project that saw massive displacement of city residents in the name of 'redevelopment', but the plans never came to fruition and many East End residents are still very poorly served by a city transportation system that values car owners above all else.

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, in 2016 this modernisation project was expanded to include a massive overhaul of trains, signalling and the operational control centre, with the addition of newly see-through platform screen doors – that SPT hopes will pave the way for Unattended Train Operations (UTO). Designs for the trains focus on a "new forward view through a new wide-screen window at the front of the train", a driverless window into an automated future.

## Spun

The Glasgow Subway's 120th birthday was marked with an outpouring of affection and memory, channelled by current management into a slick 'modernisation' narrative that sought to erase the messy, noisy and contested ways in which The Subway, and its surroundings, has been a constant sight of class struggle and social change. Its fixity, beneath our feet, while a city grew around it, invites contemporary Glaswegians to consider the labour and strife, along with the bungled management and corruption, which went into fashioning the urban space around us. There is a vast array of stories, ghosts and history buried down there, all of it exceeding corporate frames or branding exercises. This proper cacophony, often too loud, is what I've attempted to very partially sweep through in this article and the accompanying tour/essay/tape. The tour ends at Shield's Road, a place I routinely entered on my daily commute, and encourages participants to look around at the legacy of this great circle in the ground: the nearby ruined engine houses (marked for redevelopment), the snaking M8, the flattened surroundings of what has become a perennial 'transport hub'; and consider how we move around this city, and who moves us. We are those spectres of the future, and we shouldn't let ourselves be so easily scrubbed away or silenced. Any automated utopia must consider the material labours involved in its creation, and if the Subway teaches us anything, it is that where some see repeated cycles of accumulation and crisis, we might see grounds for new kinds of revolution.



Figure 2 – 'Looking to the future'

As the Subway passed into a new millennium, much discussion turned to possible expansions beyond its original 2 concentric, circular lines. Between 2005 and 2007 SPT embarked on a long and expensive consultation process about extending the system in the West End, East End, South Side and Glasgow Harbour areas of the city. Consultants recommended major refurbishment of the existing rolling stock and stations, at an overall cost

# POSTCARDS FROM WORK

11am and I just spent ten minutes reading about an estranged salamander that was thought lost for over 40 years. The scientifically demure Jackson's climbing salamander, Bolitoglossa jackson, coyly draped in black and gold, finally rediscovered after all this time. I'm astounded. What've you been doing all these years, Jackson?!

I'm a journalist so this is deeply relevant to my work, the rediscovery of shy reptiles, asking these deeply relevant questions, one cmd+clicked tab at a time. This along with Robert Mugabi's hourly movements, which affects us all (relevant). And that Norway might divest from the North Sea, which we're all struck by even if it's overdue (relevant). And the other five tabs opened last week, which weren't interesting enough to read then but will be tomorrow (relevant).

This is my journalistic work so this is all very important. So many nervous salamanders, so little time. Endless, unmitigating relevance.

SR

Friends!

In classic postcard style, I'm writing this on the train back home after work. Work was fine, but the journey is better. No conductor disapproving of my bike today. Time to settle down and day dream for a solid 45 mins. A mini-break in between work and home.

I really like the architecture of the new Haymarket station. Do you remember the old Haymarket station? It was a dark narrow corridor that felt a bit like a slaughterhouse, and there was only one gate for bikes to come in and out of so that you had to battle against the tide of pedestrians to get out. Now, on certain days, when you come into the station at the end of the day the setting sun lights up the whole of the glass made west wall of the station, making a wall of gold. It's a dreamy way to end the day.

I've started dreaming about a new job, as caretaker of Glasgow Queen Street Station. Did you know 45,000 people go through this station every day?! 45,000 users of public transport every day. We should celebrate that.

They're redesigning the layout of Queen Street at the moment, making it more open plan. I'm not sure what the final layout will be, but I dread the infiltration of several shops. I dream of a station where something surprising and delightful happens on a regular basis to give my computer squared eyes something to enjoy. Like maybe a temporary aquarium. Or at Christmas everyone gets ice skates before they get off the train and all the platforms are made into ice rinks that lead to the ice rink in George square. I realise this wouldn't be particularly practical, or safe, or accessible. But you'd remember it. You'd possibly make friends from it too.

Wish you were here in my dreamscape queen street station.  
See you soon!

RC

# I STAND WITH DAFNE MCPHERSON

Content warning: grief, miscarriage

In July 2016 Dafne McPherson was prosecuted for homicide after she suffered a miscarriage at her place of work. This miscarriage, which occurred in the Mexican state of Querétaro in the September of 2015, where McPherson is a resident, has been interpreted by the Mexican courts as murder, with the prosecution accusing McPherson of repeatedly flushing the toilet in order to kill her own baby. She has currently served one year of a sixteen-year sentence for the (supposed) offence. She has not seen her daughter, nine-year-old Lia, since her conviction, as psychologists and family members believe it is better to tell Lia that her mother is in hospital.

During the trial the prosecution went unchallenged after making comparisons between McPherson and a dog.

During pregnancy women are heavily discouraged from openly celebrating their news until the end of the first trimester, when the baby's heartbeat is located and the chance of miscarriage drops significantly. At some point this piece of (what might seem) friendly or considered advice started to topple the realms of logic or personal preference, becoming a go to piece of social legislation women dare challenge only if they feel comfortable publicly jinxing the life of their own offspring. But, statistically speaking, if one in six pregnancies ends in miscarriage anyway, it's time to put the superstition aside and permit women to talk about their pregnancies whenever they feel ready.

Last October, two days after my 23rd birthday, I had my first miscarriage. Confused, I told only a handful of women. They all had their own stories to share in return, including one friend who had kept the embryo in a tissue in her pocket

for several days after her miscarriage occurred. I was shocked, because until this point no one had spoken to me about their miscarriages, although I had heard lots of reports from friends about how they were getting along post abortion. I started to read more on the subject and quickly discovered it was not uncommon for women to feel obliged to go into work despite suffering miscarriages that might mean three weeks of heavy bleeding on top of the emotional anguish of losing a baby.

This week Dafne McPherson made it into the British news, I think for the first time, since googling her name doesn't pull any previous results. The Guardian has previously run articles on the growing maltreatment of women who miscarry in Mexico, something they link to the change in abortion law that occurred a decade ago. This poem is for Dafne McPherson, Mirna Ramirez and all of the other women who have suffered publicly or privately, abroad, in Mexico or within the UK.

DM

## My Experience of Miscarriage

I was pregnant,  
A small seed planted in me,  
A safe place to dream before birth.  
Our baby left so suddenly,  
I did not have the chance to celebrate  
Before I felt that they were gone.  
I saw them sit, still against the toilet porcelain  
And although they were silent for the moments we spent together  
I have assigned them many words.  
He, she, it, you, mine, ours, they, them.  
I imagine her with your smile and my eyes,  
She would talk in a little voice and before any other words,  
Mutter our names. But speech seems inappropriate  
When I recall that silence.  
So I make the choice to try to forget  
When I was you  
When they were it.

# TREPTOWER PARK

If it was the eighties I would probably be dead. Isn't it funny then, that I wanted to kill myself? With the right amount of distance anything can be funny.

This place wasn't supposed to be, those who build memorials rarely want to be laughed at or to be seen laughing. In Roman times women used to protest the Emperor and other powerful men by laughing at them en masse in coliseums and other public settings. It was difficult to punish a sole culprit in this context. There is only one figure in the memorial who looks as though he may be laughing but it is hard to tell. The rest of the tableau contains a city in ruins so perhaps he has lost his mind. This reminds me of the 'Roman' statues in Stadio Dei Marmi commissioned by Mussolini. Because nobody cares to restore the statues the first thing to break and fall off is the penis, as though castrated by time.

There is a huge deep ring of cracks in the tiles surrounding the obelisk outside of the stadium, emblazoned with the word 'Mussolini'. Since the labour of repair here could be seen as sympathising with Fascism it has developed a gradual tilt, like a diminishing erection. I heard that the Soviet army raped every surviving woman in Berlin as they took the city. The city at that time, and for a while afterwards, was described as 'hell on earth', with mass rape and people eating corpses to survive.

When I first arrived here I thought that the sculpture of the woman kneeling down and pulling her cardigan over her breast was supposed to be some intervention in the space that attested this 'detail'. Later I overheard a tour guide explain that it was in fact 'weeping mother Russia'. Perhaps she was upset about the same thing nonetheless. I wonder where those babies are now. Maybe they didn't survive.

I heard in the eighties during the AIDS epidemic that men were dumped on the streets in bin bags after they had died. Already estranged from their families, no one came to pick them up and nobody wanted to touch the body. I wonder if suicide was better. I wonder what a police officer would say to an AIDS positive man with a gun to his head. I wonder how many men have been fucked by undercover cops in parks. I heard that during the shooting of the Al Pacino movie *Cruiser* gay rights activists took up strategic positions in buildings surrounding the film set. From there they used mirrors to reflect light back into the camera lenses, disrupting the filming. I also heard that they blasted air horns and loud music so that parts of the soundtrack had to be rerecorded.

When I arrived here I stumbled upon a gigantic statue of Ernst Thälmann. His fist is clenched before a stone flag that I'm guessing we're meant to assume is red. His nostril, the circumference of an armchair, is said to be fitted with a heater to prevent snow from gathering. I went back another time towards sunset. I saw a young man and woman practicing a dance routine on the base of the statue above metre high concrete letters that read 'ROTFRONT'. They kept fucking up and starting over again.

Leaving the apartment early one morning I descended the awkwardly steep hill down towards the checkpoint into H2. It was the first light and very quiet and cool. As I came down the hill I began to hear 'These Boots Are Made for Walking' by Nancy Sinatra. It grew louder until I reached the checkpoint. There was only one soldier on duty and he was resting his chin on his bulletproof vest, half asleep. The song played from the speaker on his phone and he failed to register the alarm sounding as I passed through the detector.

Later that week I met Haya for the first time. Someone brought her to the apartment in Al Khalil. As soon as the door closed she ripped off her hijab and got up on the coffee table, started

dancing to 'Hotline Bling' played from somebody's laptop. I told her that if she wanted to get out of her home she could marry a gay guy, like many of my friends had done. She seemed impressed by this idea.

I read a report from an ethnographer who carried out his field work in the Lower East Side of Manhattan during the eighties. He followed teenagers who had run away from their homes in the midwest or deep south. They lived on the streets. Dealers targeted them, got them hooked to provide a steady income. They made special individually sized doses exclusively for youth sales. In turn, the young people laboured sex to finance their habits, creating an intergenerational economy, often with the dealers themselves. Most of them died of AIDS eventually, ended up in bin bags or unmarked graves. The older ones joined them there, finding a sort-of democracy in death.

The bars had unverbalised but rigid 'sectors' that divided those that were there for leisure from those that were there for labour. Body language alone would facilitate traffic between the two zones. My client worked in a bank in the same position for over forty years. The street that it was on underwent several major changes over the course of his career.

On a square adjoining the bank a huge statue of Lenin stood until '91. It matched the scale of the housing blocks around it. Those on the thirtieth floor and above had Lenin staring directly into their living rooms. When the company conscripted to demolish the statue went bankrupt their workers were laid off. Lenin stood there for some time, huge pieces missing from his body, embarrassing the council considerably. The same workers that had erected it had been hired to bring it down, subsequently laid off, in the ongoing cyclical process of the urbanist bungling of dictators and establishments under whom it is ones' misfortune to live and to work.

SC



# TOP 6 WAYS

## THE CHARITY SECTOR WORKPLACE FAILS MISERABLY TO LIVE ITS VALUES

I'm writing this ironically as a listicle, because, in actual fact, I believe the value of 'to the point,' limited, concise, gimicky writing forms over more circulatory, discursive styles is inherently oppressive (more on this below).

As a disclaimer, there are lots of groups who suffer far more than me from the microaggressions of a workplace which is dominated by straight, white, privately-educated-Oxbridge men, and I'm sure there have been times I've unwittingly been complicit in perpetuating these (which I would always seek to address). These are just some of the issues I've been affected by, but the list is by no means exhaustive (listicles are inherently oppressive in their reductionism, after all).

### It doesn't recognise the nagging doubt which precludes marginalised groups from raising their head above the parapet.

Did you see that 'as a disclaimer' thing I did above ^^^? Anxiety and nagging self doubt result from not being told you're the absolute don for 13 years of schooling. Hesitancy and guilt derive from growing up alongside incredibly talented individuals with greater barriers than you to doing what they wanted so were denied that option.

So much of neoliberal working culture is centred around 'making it for yourself' and being entrepreneurial in all you do - particularly in order to achieve monetary/career rewards. This fails to recognise that in order to professionalise your hobbies, to throw yourself at big opportunities, to propel yourself up the career ladder relies upon unfettered degrees of self-confidence, an awareness of opportunities in the first place, and the capital to resource your ambitions through material means or the luxury of spare time and headspace.

Another thing: what ever happened to the right to leisure time, regardless of income? What ever happened to leisure time being restorative and conducive to the wellbeing of those oppressed by the capitalist workplace?

### It fails to recognise the emotional labour of worrying about money

I am sure I am not alone in failing to concentrate in meetings because I'm calculating how on earth I'm going to get through the month without maxing out my overdraft. I hate money, I am instinctively repulsed by the desire for its accumulation, yet it creeps into every crevice of my mind because unfortunately it's not possible to live without. The power dynamics in the workplace take on monstrous proportions when your line manager literally has the power to deny you a livelihood if you don't do a good enough job. A failure to consider the seismic emotional toll this takes on people who have no other access to capital is a failure to take seriously some pretty significant barriers to wellbeing. This isn't to mention the fact that often underpaid junior staff are engaged in some kind of side-hustle to make ends meet, and worry about how they can juggle this alongside doing well enough at the day job.

### Its attempts to address its shameful lack of diversity are pitiful and tokenistic

'We are currently underrepresented by X group, so applications from these groups are strongly encouraged' is NOT GOOD ENOUGH. If BME/disabled/trans/non-privately-educated white men from Oxbridge come into the workspace, the message is clear: you need to learn this culture, otherwise you're not accepted. Diversity means a plethora of cultural attitudes, it means different modes of interaction are welcomed - it doesn't mean that marginalised groups have to learn to perform as a posh white straight dude. I can't really say much more here, because there are such blatant and flagrant ways in which anyone outside of this dominant culture is made to feel like they don't belong it's astonishing and just really fucking obvious.

Safe spaces are important in the workplace, and (woefully) underrepresented groups often need to air their nagging doubts, self-doubt, and constant fear they're going to get sacked without fear of retribution. Peer support systems in the workplace aren't just a nice-to-have in this context, they're vital if we want greater inclusivity. Another thing: being rude, disinterested and dismissive towards marginalised groups and/or junior staff is just as unacceptable as behaving like that towards the CEO. It shouldn't need saying should it.

### Expenses

'Just pay for it yourself and you can expense it.' What if you don't have the money in your account? What if that pushes you threateningly low to the bottom of your overdraft? This system also fails to recognise how incredibly stressful chasing this money up can be,

and the terrifying thought that maybe you'll never get that ESSENTIAL 50 quid back. Yes, for some people 50 quid isn't something they can waive. Yes, many of the people for whom that is the case are in full time employment.

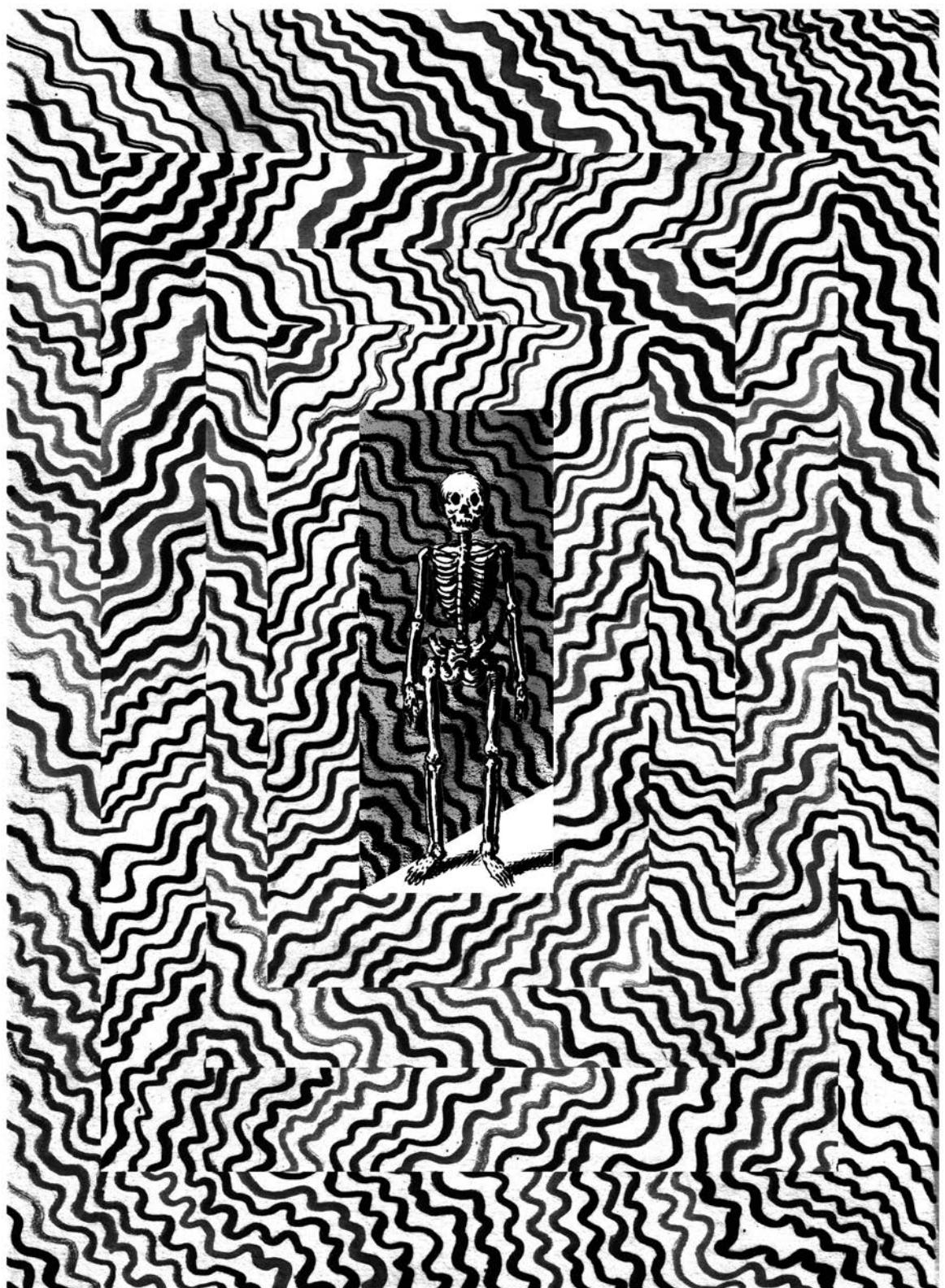
### Like its evil (twin) of the private sector workplace, it only values phallocentric, concise, to the point and LOUD forms of expression

There are some pretty cool French feminist babes from the 70s who wrote about conventionally structured forms of writing being 'phallocentric.' I'm no essentialist, but I think there's some interesting points in this about how the constructed 'masculine' with its associations of a discrete end goal (and its echoes of heteronormative penetrative sex) are privileged over more circumambulatory, digressive, interactive styles of expression (with their typically 'feminine' connotations of natter, gossip and lack of purpose/professionalism). The limits put on discussion, nuance, and the inclusion of multiple voices in the way we express ourselves in the workplace, both internally and externally, are, I believe, inherently oppressive and devalue alternative modes of expression. I could go on about this, but I'm trying to be concise and I don't want to come across like a stupid digressive female who doesn't know what she's talking about.

### It woefully ignores the knowledge and lived experience of junior/marginalised staff members

I have sat in meetings where people have speculated hypothetically about the toll that high rents and low wages must take on individual mental and physical health. Where people have pondered out loud 'if only' we could have access to precarious workers to hear about their experiences. HELLO! You have people in your office who have lived that experience. And what about running past your reports and articles past your BME staff members to test for dog-whistle racism? Or are they too lowly and unimportant to have anything of value to share? Or (as I really suspect is the case) are they as good as invisible to you when it comes to issues of substance, strategy and content?

There's stuff we can do about all of this, but we need to open up this conversation in the first place. In the face of the terrifying and brutal opposing forces we're trying to fight in the third sector, it's easy to dismiss this as trivial and secondary to the big fight. But if we are to create a strong and successful movement, I say its importance is critical.



# DEATHS IN DETENTION

The Unity Centre first came into contact with 'Mr B' when he called to let us know about the death of a fellow detainee in Morton Hall Immigration Removal Centre. This interview was conducted in (via) a mixture of text messages and faxes, due to the very poor phone signal and limited internet access for detainees at Morton Hall.

## Public awareness of the UK immigration system is minimal, and many people are not even aware that migrants are imprisoned in this country. What would you like the public to understand about immigration detention?

The general public perception is that Immigration Removal Centres are safe places before immediate departure from the UK. The sad reality is that IRCs (immigration removal centres) in the UK are high-security prison establishments with barbed wires and high fences. I have personally met detainees that have spent 3 years in a detention centre here in the UK. Detention Centres in the UK barely meets Basic Human Rights. We are fed very low-quality food - low in protein and insufficient in the necessary nutrients an adult male requires. We are deprived [of the opportunity] to keep consistent family ties. We are also in an extremely disadvantaged position for accessing contact to the outside world. The internet access is very limited, we are only allowed 50 minutes per day which are heavily monitored by IRC staff. The level of violence and self-harm is shockingly high.

## There have been 5 deaths in the UK detention estate this year and you've told me many more stories of abuse and maltreatment in Morton Hall. What are the main barriers to getting this information out?

I believe the main barrier to getting this information out there is that the mainstream media in the UK are not interested in detainees' welfare. I genuinely believe they are well aware of what is happening here. The BBC and Channel 4 have been informed of incidents in detention centres, but for unknown reasons they decide not to broadcast the stories. Media cover-

up protecting the UK government's integrity, I guess. I don't want to fall in the fringe of a conspiracy theorist...

## You told me many detainees in Morton Hall are, understandably, too afraid to challenge IRC authority. What empowers you to resist?

I am a born real fighter and I have had learnt to fight even harder for all I have achieved in my life. It was not difficult to notice some individual do all they can to get a uniform, with the uniform comes power. Uniform + Power = immunity to carry on their personal agenda. Don't get me wrong there are some good officers here at IRC Morton Hall, good decent human beings, but on the other hand there some others that try to abuse their power and try to impose prison rules upon us when in face we are not prisoners. Others have a false naïve perception that because they are working with foreigners they have the right to antagonise us and will be no consequences. Every time I see an act of abuse been committed I put my foot down and I challenge that officer acting out of order. If the officer in question is acting with high levels of irrationality or aggressively I just appeal for the right effective channels (Formal Complaints). I resist wrong doing and injustice and I have seen plenty in my life time, I resist unreasonable demands and most of all I have no fear.

## And what is the reaction from staff, when you file a complaint?

Everytime u make a complaint here, it's more likely the IRC will find the complaint 'not to be substantiated'. Regardless of how clear the evidence in ur favour is, the management will try their best to persuade u with threatening language to drop the complaint 'as it might have a negative consequence with ur immigration case'. How the fuck is that possible?\* Many ppl get intimidated in front of tied-and-suited managers and will drop their complaint.

## Can you give an example of detainees' resistance that you have seen or been part of?

One of the common tactics the officers use in here is antagonising a targeted detainee for [a reaction], so they can write negative shite in our files, and on some occasions get [that detainee] recalled to prison. I know more than 10 ppl that have ended up being detained, but in prison.

Just now in the server one officer got nasty with a detainee coz the fellow got some extra food, and we all went mental at the officers, threats to kicking off and all that stuff - the officers backed down!!

## In what ways do detainees support each other?

I have a very good support network here; I am a people's person I guess,

always willing to help. We help each other, giving advice based on personal experiences. We also alert detainees of the solicitors' scam system - they just seemed to be more interested in the financial gain than the detainees' wellbeing. I am not saying that all solicitors are like Dracula, but I have heard lot of stories of solicitors asking for ridiculous amounts of money. In the unit I am in, I try my best to keep an eye on everyone and keep the right balance of harmony. That's not always an easy task here.

## What qualities or behaviours in a detainee make the guards or the Home Office afraid?

When a detainee starts inciting others not to comply, or not to be afraid of the Home Office or IRC staff.

## What are the best ways in which people on the outside can offer support?

The best way people outside can support is by raising awareness of what is happening here in the UK - migrants detained in prison institutions and being treated like prisoners just because of immigration (issues), it's not fair. It's unjust and cruel. People outside should go to their local MPs and raise concern. At the end of the day, the public outside has voted for those government representatives in Westminster passing laws and policies, so the people are able to hold the government officials accountable - and demand better treatment and a better policy in place of detention.

\* Detention is not like prison. 'Good behaviour' should have nothing to do with the progress of your immigration claim or the amount of time you are detained for.

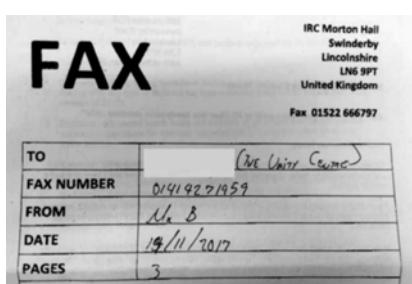
## What are your hopes for your future?

Get my british citizenship back, claim the enforceable financial compensation I am entitled to, and realistically contribute to [getting] the UK government to end immigration detention from outside!

## What are your hopes for the future of the UK immigration system?

A real positive change for the better, and fast! This grotesque injustice can't be allowed to continue!

Read B's witness statement, 'Another dead in detention - letter from detained folk in Morton Hall', published on The Unity Centre website. Sign the petition on changed.org written by detainees at Morton Hall, '2 deaths in detention in 2 weeks. Tell the government: We need answers!' Organisations here in Glasgow working towards the abolition of immigration detention are: The Unity Centre, We Will Rise and Stop Detention Scotland.



# MARLIE MUL'S CANCELLED EXHIBITION: A POST-MATCH ANALYSIS

Glasgow Museum of Modern Art  
26th May – 29th October 2017

## Retracting

Still dangling, until recently, from the Glasgow Museum of Modern Art's neoclassical entrance were large PVC banners that advertised an exhibition by Dutch artist Marlie Mul. Supported by the Henry Moore Foundation and the Mondriaan Fund, this show was intended as the first in a series of exhibitions at Glasgow's flagship publicly funded space. Stamped across the tasteful, monochrome banner were large, blunt red letters marking the show CANCELLED.

On entering the gallery, the description of the exhibition read:

*This would have been Marlie Mul's first exhibition in Scotland, however after careful consideration the artist has cancelled the exhibition. There is no exhibition.*

Except for a series of billboard posters filling GoMA's arched windows, the main space was entirely empty. The posters felt austere despite their playful, washy brushstrokes and floppy shapes, which represented a miniature model of Gallery 1. Once again, in stark contrast to the blanched images, diagonal, fire engine red letters announced the show was CANCELLED.

The final paragraph solicited proposals from members of the public for activities and events to take place in the gallery. Resonant with early Conceptual works such as Robert Barry's 1969 work During the exhibition the gallery will be closed<sup>1</sup> and Maria Eichhorn's recent work 5 weeks, 25 days, 175 hours at Chisenhale<sup>2</sup> — where the artist requested that the gallery staff withdraw their labour for the duration of the exhibition — GoMA described the show as an "amazing opportunity" and "implicit critique of what is displayed within museums and galleries."<sup>3</sup>

Mul's previous works are by and large playful, irreverent sculptural installations; a recent solo show at Vilma Gold in London included cartoon-like nicotine patches printed on Plexiglass panels. Similarly, the brilliantly titled Stop Being So Attractive I Can't Get Anything Done at Autocenter, Berlin, included digital prints on silk of smoking cartoon foetuses, alongside a series of

metal sculptures with dog-ends stuffed into various crevices. In light of these earlier works, Mul's exhibition at GoMA seemed markedly out of character.

The branding of Mul's cancelled exhibition was reminiscent of Glasgow City Council's recent initiative to crack down on illegal billposters. In order to deter the placement of 'eye-sore' adverts for gigs, club nights and other cultural activities in the city centre, cancelled stickers were pasted over posters. In conversation with the artist, it emerged that this reference was intentional, and, indeed, that the decision to cancel the exhibition at GoMA was not merely a gesture intended to critique an art object's use-value via the traditional post-Conceptual avenues. After all, if this is the case, why bother with the posters?

Perhaps unsurprising to many artists and cultural workers based in Glasgow, the decision to cancel the exhibition was largely driven by the commissioning approach of Glasgow Life—the council subsidiary responsible for cultural programming. Mul found she was caught in a labyrinth of no-go areas, tight budgets and short notice periods, resulting in her proposals for new work being rejected. With regard to the show's relationship to Glasgow City Council's 'cancelled' sticker initiative, the inadvertent suppression of the council's own sanctioned cultural activity seems cruelly ironic.

## Re-structuring

Glasgow City Council policy has fallen foul of the city's artistic community several times before. In 1990, Glasgow School of Art student, Jonathon Monk, prophesied the council's modern-day anti-billposting initiative by placing 'cancelled' notices over 1990 European City of Culture events advertising. Similarly, artist Ross Sinclair pasted up posters reading 'Capital of Culture' and 'Culture of Capital' as a critique of the excessive emphasis on profit many artists felt the City of Culture title promoted.<sup>4</sup> Over a decade later, Variant magazine published Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt's research on the founding on Glasgow Life.<sup>5</sup> This germinal series of papers validated many artists' anxieties around the City of Culture initiative, and continues to be acutely relevant.

Beneath the veneer of streamlining and financial 'sustainability', Glasgow Life (or Culture and Sport Glasgow, as it was first dubbed) was created to encourage private investment in the city's culture and leisure services, thus improving their quality and securing their future. Gordon Nesbitt picked apart the formation of GCC's arm's length cultural outfit, demonstrating how the composition of the staff, board, aims and objectives signaled the subordination of culture to capital. Damning reports on the management's personal financial interests<sup>6</sup> and disregard for even the

most mainstream artistic practices<sup>7</sup> painted a bleak picture of GCC's restructuring project.

Perhaps the policy most pertinent here is Glasgow Life's emphasis on increasing cultural tourism. Gordon Nesbitt describes how money was funneled towards projects that would encourage elite international tourism, focused on gentrifying the city centre at the expense of local communities, artistic or otherwise. For example, the 2010 Venues Review proposed the reduced opening hours or outright closure of eleven recreation and community centres in some of the poorest wards of Glasgow – a process from which tourist-friendly venues like the Kelvingrove and the Burrell Collection were immune.<sup>8</sup> To give a further example that pertains to the artistic community specifically, after the completion of the Trongate 103 art centre in 2009 as part of the Merchant City regeneration project, the eight art organizations housed in the building – including Transmission gallery – were given five year leases, after which their future was uncertain.<sup>9</sup>

Much of what was prophesized in this series of articles has come to pass: indeed, Transmission were forced to endlessly wrangle with the privately run City Property to secure their place on King Street; equally, Glasgow Life's continual losses, due to the lack of private donations which were originally forecast, remain a threat to the city's cultural vitality. Currently, Glasgow City Council at large is attempting to make £165 million in savings, which is no mean feat for one of the city's largest employers.

As a result, the council's perpetual state of re-structuring has not only jeopardized the future of various public services, but has also left voids in management structures. Since her departure for the Baltic, Gateshead in 2015, former Head of Arts and Tramway artistic director Sarah Munro has not been replaced. Other senior curatorial staff has been appointed, but none whose role is as comprehensive. Consequently, a key mediator between curatorial staff and senior management has been lost, leaving the support structure around the smooth delivery of exhibitions all at sea – as demonstrated by Mul's experience.

In light of this, GoMA's Gallery 1 is effectively held ransom; the insertion of the absolute minimum of art work, in order to block the council from hurriedly throwing together an alternative exhibition makes visible the deep cracks in the business oriented approach, insufficient support for artists and a lack of care for their constituents, even in their most commercially-viable, tourist friendly venues. What's depressing – as has been the case with so much disaster not only in the field of arts and culture, but the welfare state at large – is that it took the aesthetics of radical failure to bring this all to a head.

## Re-purposing

Indeed, the invitation for the public to activate the space is one of a multitude of bitter ironies in the series of events. Like the apparition of some manacle-clanking 'Ghost of Public Service Cuts Past,' the museum's transformation into a gargantuan community centre in the face of Glasgow Life's closures felt almost vengeful. Whether or not this would elicit a wake up call at the council – or at least bring some people to GoMA who'd never been before – remained to be seen. As affirmed by Lauren Velvick in her optimistic August review, 10 it felt certain that the measure of the project's success would ultimately be its collateral events and aftermath.

There were a number of terms and conditions surrounding the application to hold an event in Gallery 1. For instance, any political content was prohibited. Furthermore, the events had to be self-contained; no staff, budget or resources were available. Equally, events were under no circumstances allowed to solicit financial contributions or donations.<sup>11</sup> Several rather predictable activities ensued: mass yoga; kid's drawing workshops; a self-initiated exhibition of oil paintings. Some more obscure events also took place, with titles like "The Thing About Funerals Is" and "Burst Baw", whose content is difficult to decipher.<sup>12</sup>

It's extremely tempting to take the dreich view that an extended programme of exercise classes, mandolin playing and musical chairs represents little more than a crystallisation of the mediocrity that permeates so many public institutions. Although admittedly the offer of free, accessible public space is an admirable one, the exhibition's temporary status only draws attention to the fact that these facilities aren't available elsewhere – albeit with a forgiving "socially engaged" sheen. Furthermore, inviting the public to programme for themselves without any budget or resources signals the continued, relentless extraction of value from voluntary workers, in a cultural economy already largely founded on free labour. It is perhaps this pervasive attitude that prompted the management at Glasgow Life to show remarkably little resistance to Mul's cancellation proposal – after all, it's what so much of the city's cultural landscape is built on.

However, this is a broad, bleak stroke. There were in fact some interesting, pertinent events held in the space that validate Velvick's positive outlook. For instance, events hosted by Amnesty International, a workshop proposed by an 8-year-old and an evening of music hosted by Bass Warrior Sound System represented imagination and diversity that is often pretermitted by Glasgow's mainstream museums. According to a member of staff, to the casual observer it was the case that people who wouldn't

usually go to the museum were utilizing GoMA's main space.

But therein lies a spanner in an already creaky works – the fact that GoMA staff could only rely on cursory observation to quantify the success of the project. Staff members commented that despite the call out's refusal to provide any personnel, scheduling and managing events was a full-time job, supplementary to already full-time workloads. Furthermore, GoMA simply did not have the capacity or budget to task someone with effectively analyzing the impact of the project, demonstrating the diffusion of Glasgow Life's perennial cutbacks to their flagship, tourist-friendly establishments.

As a result, there is unlikely to be meaningful feedback to the management about the project's successes, failures and complications. Despite the debate sparked in the art world, as far as Glasgow Life is concerned, it seems increasingly unlikely that the events will prompt any self-reflection.

## Reckoning

It's a tough line to take, but if it were up to me, I would have insisted it was left empty. Dry? Arrogant? Ungenerous? Certainly.<sup>13</sup> But these are perhaps some adjectives that could be applied to the 2010 Venues Review. I absolutely agree that the efforts by GoMA staff and the artist were completely sincere – and certainly do draw attention to issues surrounding accessible public space. However, there's a distinct aftertaste of damage control. A large part of me would have liked to witness the tabloid backlash surrounding a stark, unapologetic void, and looked on with glee as council management-types were ritually dragged through the mud.

But this nihilistic perspective is completely reliant on existing in a parallel universe where the conservative press would have had the insight to identify the nuances of the situation. Instead of reporting around austerity, mismanagement and under-resourcing, some splash along the lines of, "look at what these lazy worthless artists are doing with public money" would have been inevitable. In light of the realities of the wider political landscape we operate in, the curatorial staff at GoMA made the best of a bad situation; they attempted to protect the museum, protect the artist, and fend off the wolves.

But there's a glimmer of hope on the horizon. The events of recent months have signalled a radical shift in wider public opinion, with a greater consciousness around the impact of austerity. This was reflected recent political events – the obstinately centrist Scottish Labour lost their majority in the 2017 council elections to the SNP, signaling a significant shift in council politics. Despite any reservations around

the SNP's chameleon tendencies, And there are some encouraging policies in the manifesto; for instance, the they have pledged to hand a million pounds to each of the city's wards, empowering communities to influence how money is spent on services.<sup>13</sup> An organised response from the artistic community to this new policy – helping to channel funding to meaningful, long term projects as opposed to hollow, impotent workshop schemes – could aid resistance to what is thought of as 'big' corporate gentrification and the privileging of elite tourism over local infrastructure. Hopefully – tentatively – there's still time to consider This exhibition is cancelled as more than an empty gesture.

Special thanks to Marlie Mul, Paul Pieroni & others.

GH

1. Read an article about a reprieve of this work in New York here.

2. Chisenhale Gallery Archive – Maria Eichorn

3. Glasgow gallery left empty for 'cancelled' exhibition – BBC Scotland reports.

4. These works and the conditions surrounding them are discussed in Sarah Lowndes' book *The DIY Movement in Art, Music and Publishing: Subjugated Knowledge* (2016)

5. Rebecca Gordon Nesbitt, 'The New Bohemia' & 'Glasgow Life or Death'

6. Gordon Nesbitt describes in page 2 of her essay 'The New Bohemia' how the decision making around staging a major, touring Glasgow Boys exhibition in 2010 would boost the value of the chair of the board's personal art collection.

7. Again, in 'The New Bohemia' Gordon Nesbitt relays the following remarks from Bridget McConnell, the executive director of Glasgow Life: "Writing in 1997 – the year Glasgow-based artist Christine Borland was nominated for the Turner Prize, with her contemporary, Douglas Gordon, having won the prestigious prize the previous year – McConnell confined her appraisal of visual art successes in Scotland to an earlier generation of painters, misspelling John Bellany's name and merging Peter Howson's with that of Ken Currie to commend "the internationally successful Belamey, Campbell and Howie."

8. The CSG Private and Confidential Venues Review is discussed on p.18 of 'Glasgow Life or Death'

9. The future of tenants at Trongate 103 is discussed on p.7 of 'The New Bohemia', with a citation referring to a GCC webpage, which has since been removed.

10. Lauren Velvick, "Marlie Mul: This exhibition is cancelled", a review in *Art Monthly*, issue 408, July–August 2017, pp. 35–36.

11. Find the proposal form to use GoMA's Gallery 1 here.

12. Information obtained from a complete inventory of events and activities in Gallery 1, supplied by GoMA staff.

13. Words used in Lauren Velvick's review to describe the expectations surrounding projects such as this.

14. 'Plans to 'revolutionise' council politics with pledge to hand Glasgow communities £100m' in *The Herald*, 5th September 2016.

# THE DAILY DPBOST

Special ~ Sonica Festival & Other Stuff at Tramway ~ Edition

A man walks towards Tramway and realises it is not on that road and changes direction and heads to Tramway

Brother gets sister tickets to two events at the Tramway Theatre (follows the signs) and finds Tramway up and running.

Olivia gave girl a pic of a bridge with no river running under, and she gave other pics away because her uncle gave them to her boyfriend.

'Wow the water rises high in that piece *Shorelines* by Oliver Coates performed by musicians-slash-dancers-slash-actresses at the Tramway theatre doesn't it! It was so high and the furniture got pulled around on ropes by the people in the piece - no actual water was used.'

Adults were put to work to make boots for chairs so they didn't scratch the stairs up to the top of the place - a piece of carpet, cut to the size of less carpet, punched with tools for leather, cinched with cable ties, then tightened. Absolutely huge amounts. It took ages and on their break they got to watch Vines on YouTube in the main theatre room/space.

*Woman Dances On Backhoe On Top Of Skyline View*

'I went to see two things at Sonica festival not one but two and now I'm trying to refresh the page to get another friend and me tickets for an Arvo Pärt thing at Tramway - the other two things I saw at Tramway were free tickets cause he said he'd plug them on his show. So easy to lie about actually, he just sounded like press. He was press he was going to talk about them on his show, but he would never have had to prove it.'

Two friends have been reprimanded for doing the Megabus thing and then the other thing with First Buses is also apparently not working now – update!

'It's not that it's meant to be bad, it's that it's meant to be itself and itself is bad'

*Tabula Rasa* by Arvo Pärt was listened to while sewing holes in T-shirts, and it fit the bill. And now they have four tickets (under 26's) (bought in two installments) to see the Scottish Ensemble play it and then they'll be paid back. They were given the leaflet advertising *Tabula Rasa* on vacating the Tramway Theatre, they were there to see *Shorelines* by Oliver Coates.

'The betting thing (the guy from a band told me in Sainsbury's) is where you just, all you do right, is your account is a sort of holding place for money and then other people place online bets in place of you and you get a slice off the top of the money being moved around.'

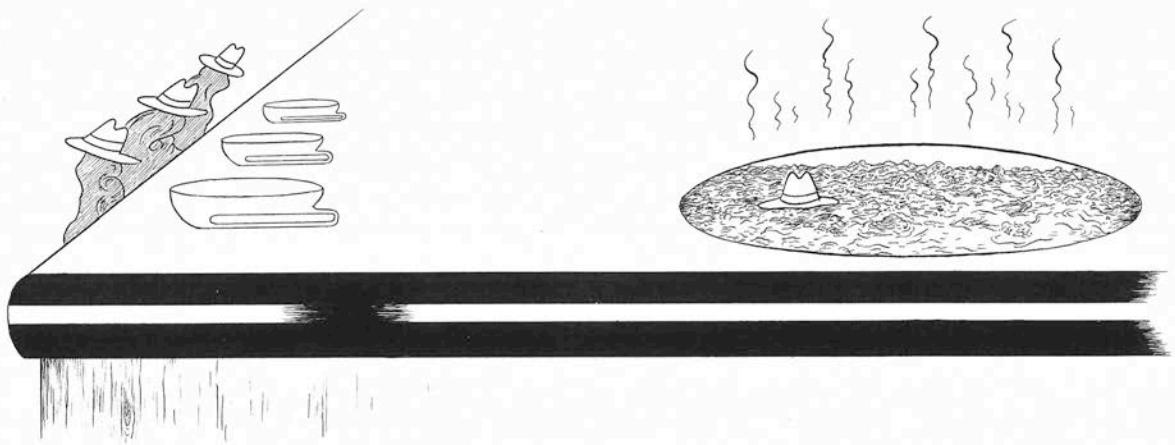
Other ways of freeing up money

'I bet my money on the exhibition on at Tramway at the moment being bad, with the tent and the dog, because I didn't like the pic but then actually I really liked it! The dog creped and the sculptures sang and the tent long and I stayed until I couldn't like the sound and had to turn around and make my own environment, thanks, in which to write about what had just held me funny.'

A man will work as a job at the Sonica Festival installation at Govanhill Baths tomorrow, his job is to continuously re-fill the baths with ice and just listen out.

'And what do we do now do we go to the café? NOOOO!'

'A girl was in Tramway doing some free Tai Chi with a free mid-way tea and her friend told me to go and see a Buzzcut thing at CCA, Stacy Makishi, (not free but not much). and it was transformative!!!!!!'



High Hedges HAS never BEEN to a PUB, so he imagines what they look like.

M.DUFF, 2017



## FOR THE LOVE

This "poem" was emailed to all employees of my work on valentines day. This came from the top. Some of the awkward turns of phrase in this are actually kind of mottos that employees have drilled in to them e.g 'talk straight' and 'actively collaborate' are two of them - think theres 9 overall - sure they're all cited in the poem - another layer of misery. My love life is basically a re-distribution zone for capital.

To my [name of major bank] Valentine,  
This is my chance to speak up,  
Let me get these words off my chest,  
And then we can raise a cup.  
You really are the king of my heart,  
To you I always talk straight,  
Can't wait to get together  
To actively collaborate.  
I love to be in your embrace of change,  
And with you I truly listen  
When you see I've smashed my KPI'S  
Your eyes do truly glisten.  
To you each month I deliver,  
A detailed performance report,  
Blowing my own trumpet  
And getting you full support.

For you I keep my promises,  
You know I always deliver;  
The thrill of doing what I say I will,  
Always gives sends me in to a quiver.  
The passion I bring each day,  
Is something that burns deep within me,  
The ability to speak the cheese on my calls  
Naturally just has to break free.  
So, for my last words,  
Which cannot remain unchecked,  
To all of my personal and  
professional interactions  
I promise to show the upmost respect.

MST

## KICKS

The velcro-adorned right shoe of the kid connected with his testicles, effecting a doubling over instinctively and a large, near comical 'owwww'. This was in a corner of the playground away from the eyes of the one teacher whose responsibility that week was to manage the screeching collective id of a few hundred young kids each lunch-time.

Thus the transgression went largely unnoticed, and its base humour was appreciated - and then repeated - for a number of days. The air was crisp and cold, characteristic of a sharp mid-February in the town. Years later, after puberty prematurely hit and he developed a surprising moustache for one of his age, he wondered if this had its roots in haphazardly executed childhood sadism.

A solo 14 year old practiced his kicks over and over on the pitch across the road from the house. Semi-deflated, the rugby ball was placed delicately in a mound of mulchy earth, a by-product of the climate. Facing the goal conventionally used for Gaelic Games, he aimed over the bar and connected repetitively with the front of his right foot. He repeated this daily for weeks, with some obscure hope in mind of occupying a more significant role in the team.

Aggressive tackles in football and rugby were typical of him, as he did not care about the consequences of violence within certain controlled situations.

KC

## KITTY KINS AFTER NAP TIME

Rulers return with transient shame:  
Mea culpas are what is expected.  
A crime scene is cleaned up quick,  
Memories often fail to affix.  
Bashful are the brazen hacks.

Get up, like cats after nap-time,  
Numerous though ensconced indoors  
Scratch about on apartment floors  
Stretch and scowl, sprint and rattle,  
Righteous morals win no battles.

KC



# NO FOOTLIGHTS

Performance can be a tool for conceiving and enacting alternative imaginings of the world. This can exist in its power to blur the boundary between art and life, with ideals being worked out in expression. Proposing 'a better way of living' through performance is often implicit – notably, in performances where some effort is made to dissolve the performer/spectator distinction. The question here is why such performances could be considered utopian, and to answer it I will look at some historical examples in light of Bakhtin's theory of carnival.

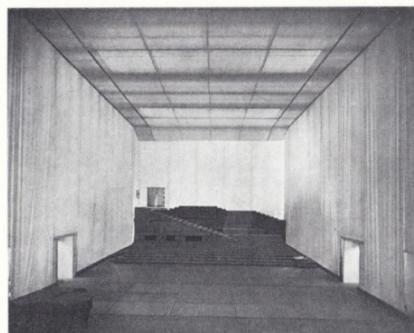
Bakhtin uses 'carnival' to refer to the culture of celebration that was prominent in Europe until the end of the early modern period. On sanctioned festival days the normal rules would be temporarily lifted, with revellers getting up to – and away with – various forms of usually prohibited mischief. Opportunities for misrule spanned the "ritual year", with emphasis in Britain on the times around Christmas and Midsummer. These festivals have sometimes been taken as remnants of a pre-Christian seasonal tradition – and while evidence for this idea is inconclusive, it has endured in the popular imagination. It is worth considering why this might be.

As much as its persistence can be attributed to the Romantic appeal of a living Pagan legacy, it could also be due to how loudly carnival deviated from Church orthodoxy (if only on permitted days of the year). In a sense it was a counter-culture that let people laugh at the status quo; not a practice condoned in the Bible. This is evident with the 'Robin Hood plays' that enjoyed widespread popularity across Britain from the 15th century, and were outlawed by the Scottish Parliament in 1555. These performances involved costumed lay-actors essentially running riot, typically committing acts of petty vandalism and noisily invading churches with musical retinue. A defining quality of Bakhtin's carnival is that it's transgressive. Robin Hood mummery certainly could be: in 1561, a crowd elected a tailor Robin Hood, naming him "Lord of Inobedience" and "after the auld wikit manner of Robene Hude" they:

*"seized on the city gates... and one of the ringleaders being condemned by the city magistrates to be hanged, the mob forced open the jail, set at liberty the criminal and all the prisoners, and broke in pieces the gibbet erected at the gates for executing the malefactor"*

This was in Scotland, where even impersonating the folk hero was by this time illegal. While the storming of prisons is probably atypical, the example

shows that these performances could go 'too far'. In his Chronicle, Robert Fabyan records arrests for treason in 1502, adding that "Also thys yere about Midsomer was taken a felowe, which had renued many of Robin Hode's pagentes"; so there is evidence that licensed festive anarchy could be an outlet for those seeking to present a genuine challenge to the establishment.



Above all, the Robin Hood plays were as much real life events as they were dramatic ones – in the context of these performances participants did things they would not normally do, in a way that was not just 'pretending'. Bakhtin holds this to be central to the idea of carnival:

"[Carnival] belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain

challenge. And if we follow Bakhtin when he detects in carnival the possibility of "a complete withdrawal from the present order", then perhaps 'no footlights' provides an aesthetic guideline for performers in our own times who would see the present order remade.

Contrary to Bakhtin's assertion that theatre depends on the division of actors from audience, from the 1880s that notion was brought into question. Zola called for the stage to be made continuous with the auditorium, in pursuit of what Stanislavski would later term a "theatre of reality and life". This was a reaction to the 19th century's prevailing neo-classicism – what was taken to be its inauthentic posturing typified by the footlights and proscenium arches that had come to adorn the theatres. Zola was radical in his rethinking of the stage; no less so were later designers Edward Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia, who called for the destruction of the footlights and held the invisible boundary illuminated by the footlights the chief obstruction to making theatre.

Appia particularly criticised the placing of works of art always "in front of us, outside of us... it is there, we are here, always distinct", and in 1906 when he designed the theatre at Hellerau (near Dresden) he implemented his ideas in



pattern of play. In fact, carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all people"

If carnival festivity at heart represented 'the people' challenging the established societal hierarchy, the concept of 'no footlights' must be taken as fundamental in the phrasing of that

the creation of a performance space without adornment, stage or footlights. The space, 'Festspeilhaus', was not to be a theatre but rather a 'place for celebration' – and he envisaged the whole community joining there in acts of collective festivity, "with no line dividing audience from performer, professional from amateur". Festspeilhaus was constructed so that all that was set up inside could be modified, moved and remodelled by any that went there – the space therefore defined by how the community who used it felt it should be. It was utopian even in its architecture.

It was well situated at Hellerau then, itself a planned utopian community initiated by brothers Wolf and Harald Dohrn and inspired by William Morris' Hampstead Garden Suburb. Projects like Hellerau were common in Germany at the turn of the 20th century, a so-called "passion for association" forming the basis of much socio-cultural activity. Communal recreational societies became increasingly popular, perhaps because as Counsell suggests communities tried to re-establish themselves after a second wave of industrialisation in the 1880s rapidly ushered in a new, unfamiliar modernity. In 1887 Ferdinand Torres proposed a distinction between 'Gesellschaft' (society, as a system of social relations based on contractual obligation and division of labour) and 'Gemeinschaft' (community, based on kinship and group); as Counsell notes: "a distinction with an inherent value judgement: if the past was a Golden Age of *communitas*, it had now been lost."

If the lone factory worker was an alienating modernity's defining image, then that of the community was its antithesis – and perhaps, antidote to the problems modernisation brought. The pursuit of communal leisure, of shared pastimes and lifestyles exceeding the narrow limits of work, was a popular cause in fin de siècle Germany; and it was directed via a utopian re-appraisal of early and pre-modern patterns of living. Via a process of "radical nostalgia" many sought alternatives to the world they faced within a past world deemed to be lost, in which '*communitas*' had supposedly played a central role. Appia's destruction of the footlights was part of a wider utopic turn to reinvigorate older communal tendencies that were deemed to have fallen by the wayside.

While Appia explored this by manipulating the performance space, Rudolf Laban did so by reconsidering the boundary between performance and ritual. His 'movement choirs' were a series of amateur dance clubs operating in urban areas that were to bring in what he believed would be a "new flowering of mankind" through movement pieces not performed to audiences, but undertaken by performers for their own sake. Central to this project was Laban's notion of 'Festkultur' – a supposedly lost pre-Christian culture of celebration in which performances were undertaken in order to induce cultic ecstasy in the participants rather than for the benefit of spectators. Movement choirs were meant to be a way of bringing ritual-symbolic festivals back into everyday life, detached from the narratives of religion and the commodifying influence of the concert hall. Laban's celebrative art, like Bakhtin's carnival, was in theory a force for social change. And because the only spectators were to be those participating, here too the absence of footlights was key.

But Laban's utopia was problematic (to say the least). Contrasting 'Festkultur' with what it was apparently providing an alternative to – the 'Scheinkultur' (false culture) of modernity – he emphasised the importance of his "new folk dance movement of the white race" in counter-acting the "fashionable social dances which show an invasion of foreign racial movements". The lines upon which he drew his understanding of 'Gemeinschaft' were emphatically those of ethnicity. Movement choirs were eventually co-opted by a nascent National Socialism, although to this day the Trinity-Laban Conservatoire in London retains the title of their instigator. It is very difficult to separate Laban's involvement with Nazism from his art – and perhaps no attempt should be made to do so.

Nonetheless movement choirs are an important example to consider because they highlight how a performance's participants might not just be the people who are there. The community that were to enjoy a revived 'Festkultur' were sharply defined on grounds of race, so as far as Laban's dances in themselves did not involve spectators they were premised upon the idea that some people could not participate. His project did not take 'no footlights' to its ideal conclusion: a performance where all present are participant, and all who are not present could be participant. Only then could a performance, like Bakhtin's carnival, truly embrace "all people". This would be a sort of utopia in itself – and like all utopias, we must finally question whether it is even possible.

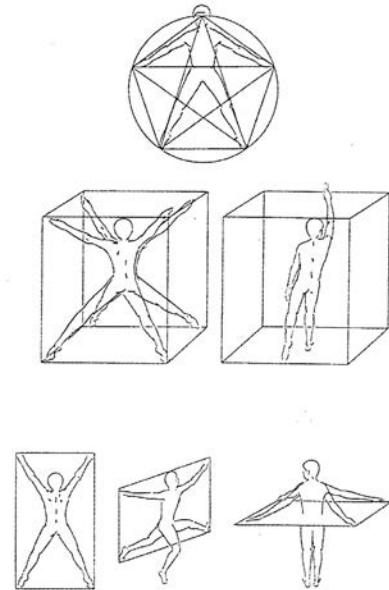
We must be conscious of how community lines are drawn – a lesson ever pressing in these days of supposed echo chambers. How can we ensure performances are open to all? Are 'closed scenes' unethical? It is harder to answer the latter in the affirmative when we consider some safe spaces where certain individuals may not be welcome. In these cases arguably it is not unethical for the space to be in some sense closed, were the presence of these individuals to compromise its safety. On the other hand, setting limits on potential participation (ala Laban) can be dangerous – so the dialogue that informs the setting of those limits is a crucial one. How might a 'massively participatory' attitude towards performance contribute to this dialogue?

Fundamentally it could help to bring art, ethics and life closer together. At very least a performance can be a way of sketching desires onto reality, in order to think them through in a manner more concrete than 'just thinking about them'. If these desires concern ways the world should be, then a performance concerning them can be taken as much a point in a public discourse as it can a personal process of ideation – as the world belongs to everyone. Therefore in a performance that hypothetically

included everyone (if only in the sense that everyone could participate if they wanted to) each utopian/ethical gesture therein would necessarily be considered in relation to every other, for each would need to be taken as public incidents rather than the isolated declarations of an individual. We must believe that the meeting of opposing worldviews can lead to some kind of harmony (including compromise), or else life necessarily tends towards destruction and hope in a common humanity must be abandoned. Because this hope is ethically essential, in certain cases massively participatory performance is too.

MST

Johannes Odenthal



Rudolf von Laban, *Choreutics*, 1966

Images: top left: Interior to Appia's Festspeithaus. Bottom left: One of Luban's 'Movement choirs'

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# OUT OF THE WOODS

## Part 2 : Infrastructure against borders

No borders work within ‘temperate latitudes’ needs to keep in mind the longer-term likelihood of large scale environmental migration from regions rendered uninhabitable by climate change. It seems likely that existing anti-migrant populisms will draw on the ideas of reactionary ecology to demand that ‘lifeboat states’ deploy border violence against outsiders. Countering this danger involves contesting borders in schools, resistance to attempts to turn care workers into border guards, anti-raids activity, housing struggles, organising against immigration detention and migrant solidarity.

Currently, much anti-fascist activity is - necessarily - immediate and reactive, such as countering far-right mobilisations. The future of large-scale climate displacement means there must also be a longer-term project of building an anti-fascist, pro-migrant culture, and at the same time inoculating against the equation of strangers and enemies. This article will explore the bases of popular anti-migrant, white nationalist mobilisation, and make some suggestions of what a longer-term pro-migrant politics could involve.

### The race-family-nation nexus

...no, the masses were not deceived, they desired fascism, and that is what has to be explained. (...) How does one explain that desire devotes itself to operations that are not failures of recognition, but rather perfectly reactionary unconscious investments?

The spectre of racialised refugees, described as “swarms” and “cockroaches” by Prime Ministers and mass circulation tabloids, has been both manufactured and exploited by a resurgent far right: from Trump’s keynote promise to build a wall and make Mexico pay for it; to the increasingly fascistic atmosphere of Brexit Britain; and surging far right parties in France, Hungary and elsewhere. This spectre gains affective resonance with wider racialised and sexualised anxieties that ‘stick’ to the figure of the migrant, typified by a Polish magazine cover depicting “the Islamic rape of Europe.”

Angela Mitropoulos identifies this nexus of race, nation, and sexuality as ‘oikonomia’ - the law of the household. The household is important as both the site of reproduction of property relations through heritability and marriage contracts; and the site of the reproduction of the (racialised) nation

through sexual reproduction. Hence, the normative (monoracial, heterosexual, nuclear) household - increasingly rare in practice - is the foundation of capitalist futurity; and a key institution in (re) producing citizens loyal to property, nation, and race.

What Mitropoulos calls “the emotional conflation between family, race and nation” is illustrated by ‘cuck’, the vogue white nationalist insult for supposed race traitors. The term at once alludes to a racialised, psycho-sexual anxiety over miscegenation; and a penetration of the nation by ‘rapefugees’, imagined as hordes of swarthy sexual predators. Neither Trump’s well-documented sexual predation (seen by many of his supporters not only as acceptable, but as laudable white heterosexual virility); nor indifference to abuse scandals with predominantly white perpetrators (compare the British far right’s differing interest in the Rochdale and Savile abuse cases) represents a contradiction in this affective configuration. This is due precisely to the emotional nexus of the racialised nation and sexual entitlement: ‘protecting our women’ [sic] from racialised foreigners in order to better reproduce the white nation.

## Border regimes, refuges and social reproduction

Understanding the unconscious investments of populist anti-migrant sentiments in ‘oikonomia’ broadens our understanding of what the longer-term work of building a pro-migrant, anti-fascist, anti-border violence culture involves in unexpected ways. Struggles over matters such as reproductive freedom, sexual violence, and the ability for LGBT+ people to exist in public are also struggles over the emotional core of racialised border violence. They are not peripheral, or distracting, “culture wars” or “identity politics”.

Efforts to define women as wombs and to deny women bodily autonomy share a logic with efforts to control the movements of racial others across borders: a logic of reproductive futurism that reproduces the race and nation through the ‘proper’ family. More directly, a new UK policy of passport checks by landlords, enforced via a £3,000 fine, further marginalises those fleeing domestic violence, who may not have time or even access to collect their own documents from abusive partners. The government has also repeatedly challenged the sexuality of asylum seekers, such as in the case of Aderonke Apata’s deportation to Nigeria.

I would say it is impossible to separate gendered and racial violence (...) men being entitled to regard women (they read as white like them) as their property has been an important

compensatory element in the history and politics of class and race. I think it is difficult to separate concepts of feminine availability (and anxiety about paternity or ownership, women’s promiscuity) from anxieties about proper, racial reproduction.

Hence, it’s no surprise that the most viciously pro-border violence politicians and media are increasingly anxious about the erosion of heterosexual and binary gender norms. Despite the resurgence of quasi-fascist politics, they really feel like they’re losing. And in some important ways they are, although such gains are under severe threat from heteronormative, oikonomic revanchism. Even on the left, for example, we are seeing increasing calls to reconfigure organisation around a narrowly imagined (and thoroughly heterosexual) white working class. Jasbir Puar also cautions against seeing any apparent departure from oikonomic norms as inherently threatening to capital, particularly with gay marriage in mind:

The capitalist reproductive economy (in conjunction with technology: in vitro, sperm banks, cloning, sex selection, genetic testing) no longer exclusively demands heteronormativity as an absolute; its simulation may do.

But while capital may make do with a simulation of the heterosexual family, struggles around these kind of questions contest the reproduction of border-desiring subjects, the bearers of authoritarian values who bash queers as soon as migrants in order to “take back control”. And crucially, they also broaden our understanding of no borders politics to include questions of social reproduction. This resonates with Silvia Federici’s discussion of “a collective struggle over reproduction, reclaiming control over the material conditions of our reproduction and creating new forms of cooperation around this work outside of the logic of capital and the market.”

The example of Glasgow Council’s buddy schemes for migrants and the Glasgow Unity Centre’s solidarity work is instructive here, and seems something which could potentially be replicated:

The asylum seekers were placed in empty flats in long neglected high-rise estates. Neighbours appointed by the council to welcome the new families took the job seriously, bringing the new arrivals from Kosovo, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, into their communities, holding parties, bringing families from across the world together. When families were told they would not be given asylum their Scottish neighbours refused to let the Home Office remove them from the UK. Immigration officials who arrived in the early hours for “dawn raids” on families were met by enraged Glaswegians who refused to let the Home Office take their new friends away. The demonstrations

became widespread and saw the end of the dawn raids. Many thousands of people who had been threatened with removal, including many families, were allowed to stay in Scotland.

This kind of longer-term work creates networks of and infrastructure for mutual material support, a sort of kinship where reproductive labour traditionally assigned to the household is partially socialised. Kinship not as biological kin, but those brought close through a shared relation to the world, living in proximity, and supporting one another. We also have here an echo of the "kinship of the infertile" that Naomi Klein alludes to. This kinship encompasses those unable to have children (with whom Klein feels affinity), but also refuses to centre politics on fertility and its reproductive futurist nexus of race-family-nation. As Silvia Federici puts it:

*...it is through the day-to-day activities by means of which we produce our existence, that we can develop our capacity to cooperate and not only resist our dehumanization but learn to reconstruct the world as a space of nurturing, creativity and care.*

We cannot imagine the working class Glasgow communities who defended their migrant friends blaming them all for the crimes of any of their number, preemptively undermining the attempts to impose collective racial guilt that have been central to anti-migrant agitation in Europe. Hence this creation of collectivity is an 'invention of the people', the people needed to heed Primo Levi's alarm signal, but hitherto missing.

Shifting our capacity to regenerate ourselves from the household to localised but transnational and multiracial networks of mutual aid makes it hard to imagine how the racialised, sexualised anxieties that fuel support for border violence can take root. Importantly, this is a tendency that already exists, as working class people improvise their social reproduction under conditions where the 'proper' nuclear family, even when desirable, is often not economically viable given stagnant and insecure wages and spiralling housing costs.

Several further tendencies are also on our side. In addition to the erosion of the patriarchal, binary gender norms central to the oikonomic nexus, recent struggles - from the movement of the squares and Occupy to Black Lives Matter - have fluently spread beyond national borders. You do not have to subscribe to the more breathless accounts of hyper-networked obsolescence of the nation-state to realise nationalist solidarities are far from the only, or even the most obvious ones, on offer. Whatever the limits of these struggles, that transnational solidarities emerge somewhat spontaneously from the affordances of the communications infrastructure - not to discount the labour of those who actively work to

spread struggles - is certainly encouraging for a no borders politics adequate to the climate crises to come.

## Anti-fascist infrastructures

That struggles can find transnational resonance highlights a further important point. The viciousness and intensity of media racism illustrates how racialised anxieties are not simply a given, but must be permanently stoked to prevent outbreaks of solidarity. Nina Power has called this a "directed and stage-managed misplacement of resentment".

For example, following the widespread circulation of images of the death of Aylan Kurdi, even the far right British tabloids published sympathetic coverage (albeit a heavily racialised and violent form of sympathy, which smoothly reverted to absolute vitriol at the soonest opportunity). The literature on media as meta-representation offers an account of how the media works in cases like these:

It could be that no-one has actually changed their minds, but suddenly those who abhorred the demonisation of migrant[s] have realised that they were not alone. This would fit with a fascinating literature which suggests that the media doesn't so much influence what people think, but what those people think others think (meta-representations rather than representations). But this still matters because it affects what we are prepared

in society to inoculate against Levi's 'latent infection'. That infrastructure can be things like buddy networks and physical spaces to support migrants - and undercut those who try to demonise them - as well as media infrastructures able to contest the sense of isolation felt by the millions of people who despair at the climate of populist racism.

These hybrid networks of people, technology, and infrastructures are what we have previously called "a politics of regenerative cyborgs." Perhaps more straightforwardly, it's a matter of kinship not limited to the biological. This builds on the already widespread forms of mutual support people construct for themselves alongside or in place of nuclear families: bonds of affinity rather than blood.

If even a fraction of the projected climate migration takes place, reactionary forces can be expected to ramp up border panic and demand more border violence, likely organised around an appeal to lifeboat ethics, with lifeboat states imposing death-worlds on racialised outsiders. Understanding the emotional resonance of these calls in the race-family-nation nexus centred on the household allows us to understand how apparently unrelated "cultural" struggles and struggles around social reproduction form part of contesting the reproduction of these unconscious investments.

As the climate shifts to expand the world's uninhabitable zones, the nation-state as a mode of social organisation



to do. Once we feel that we are not alone, that ours is part of a collective voice, we are much more willing to act in public.

This suggests alternative media infrastructures and/or effective use of sympathetic extant media channels is a crucial part of enabling collective action. Millions of people read The Sun advocating racial segregation, but we only know 300 people turned up for a pro-migrant meeting because we read it on Twitter. If it often feels like we're living on a rainy fascist island, this at least in part reflects a media monopoly on meta-representations which ensures pro-migrant people feel alone even when they're not.

Questions of infrastructure provide a partial answer to how to go about building a wider anti-fascist culture

in the habitable zones will come under considerable pressure. Its defenders will not likely accept its obsolescence lightly, and indeed, the military are making climate change central to their planning. But authoritarian lifeboat states and the associated genocidal border violence are not inevitable. While anti-migrant populists are busy denying the existence of climate change, no borders politics can get several decades' head start, quietly building on existing tendencies in contemporary society and struggles, constructing infrastructure to undermine the predictable reactionary responses when the climate crisis becomes undeniable.

Out of the Woods -- A collaborative blog investigating capitalism and climate change' libcom.org/outofthewoods @out\_woods



## DICK BASS BATS

...and so are you).

Brothers and sisters! Get yourself comfortable and prepare to be amazed. Dim the lights, loosen your blouse, give the nippers a thimbleful of bourbon, and kick off those stylish new Flemish brogues (no need to remove your socks - I'm about to LITERALLY BLOW THEM CLEAN OFF!!!). Forget everything you thought you knew.

OK, here we go:

In this century alone we (humankind, that is) have discovered more than 30 new species of bat ("Sacrebleu!", I hear you cry). These include the Chocolate Free-Tailed Bat (*Chaerephon Jobimena*), Nijhoff's Tube-Nosed Bat (*Nyctimene Paranyctimene Tenax*), the New Georgian Monkey-Faced Bat (*Pteralopex Taki*), and the utterly charming Phou Khao Khouay Leaf-Nosed Bat (*Hipposideros Khaokhouayensis*). As a lifelong bat-enthusiast it really is tremendously exciting to see the much-maligned order Chiroptera offering up so many millennial marvels!

Listening to Lau Nau's new album, "Nukkuu", a few words spring to mind: Parapet, jalopy, tedium vitae, dusky stranger, bonce. It's gorgeous stuff. Unfortunately for us wildlife-lovers (and you're not going to believe this) all of the sounds on this album (bar Laura Naukkarinen's to-die-for singing) were made by HITTING, BOINGING, SQUEEZING and BLOWING INTO various bat-corpuses. At one point Naukkarinen

even goes so far as to insert a tiny wooden trumpet up the bad-end of a Mount Popa Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus Paterculus*). And she doesn't just stop at bats - Check this: A Woolly Monkey shrieks itself to death after being imprisoned in a timpani and rolled down a bumpy hill. Hundreds of newts are shot out of a cannon at a big gong. Peafowls are vigorously ballooned by white-hot alpine-horns. It's truly horrifying - Adults only!

## DOWN WITH BEARDY BOO HOO:

### Com Les vs. Official Scottish Culture

In 2018, BBC Scotland will broadcast a three-part documentary on the story of Scottish pop to tie in with the National Museum of Scotland's blockbuster exhibition, Rip It Up. According the NMOS blurb, "the exhibition will feature global stars and independent local heroes from pop's early days right up to today's outstanding newcomers." One can scoff at the wheeling out of Midge Ure and his bogging snotgreen Live Aid guitar out for the media launch, but I do genuinely wish the curators and documentary makers well. The BBC haven't attempted a comprehensive history of Scottish rock and pop since the 1980s, when the late, great Stewart Cruickshank produced the

radio series *Beatstalking*, so this new programme is long overdue.

Given Scotland's growing cultural confidence, it's understandable that the NMOS and BBC are undertaking this project. In the 19 years since devolution, rock and pop has become part of "official" Scottish culture. Institutional support for musicians has been complemented by worthy but mostly underwhelming projects like Ballads Of The Books, where musicians collaborated with poets and novelists. Meanwhile, much work has been done by journalists, academics and curators to map the history of artists, scenes and labels. All well and good, but to what extent do these developments help enshrine a particular idea of Scottish culture?



While the success of Optimo, Numbers et al has put Scottish club culture firmly on the map, it's fair to say that mainstream Scottish music is dominated by indie bands, many of whom have followed the Ballads Of The Book model of collaborating with writers and signalling their literariness. Behold the sensitive Celtic troubadour with his

acoustic guitar and well-thumbed copy of Lanark! Go to the Edinburgh Book Festival and you'll be treated to the sad lad wibbling of Frightened Rabbit's Scott Hutchison. Or, if you can bear it, check out Ian Rankin's centrist dad rock band, no doubt having their latest efforts approvingly retweeted by JK Rowling at this very moment. Of course, there are leftfield alternatives to this sort of dreary middlebrow cross-pollination – take poet Harry Josephine Giles' righteous hardcore band Fit To Work or Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra's interpretations of Edwin Morgan's Mayakovksy – but the point stands: bookish windswept indie is the default mode of "official" Scottish rock, and man, it sucks.

While I reject the writer Kirsty Gunn's notion of a nationalist "controlling agenda" in arts funding (if there is an agenda, it's clearly neo-liberal), questions can be raised about the enshrining of dominant narratives, aesthetics, and institutions, and their impact on funding decisions. While acknowledging the support Creative Scotland does give to marginal music, I would suggest that overall, the funding body places too much emphasis on short-term projects and marketable brands, when it should be offering sustained funding of infrastructure.

A key motivation for the founding of *ComLes* was a frustration at the relative lack of a critical arts media in Scotland. Despite the best efforts of arts journalists, a squeeze on resources and space means that serious discussions of aesthetics and cultural politics are limited. Arts coverage is often boosterish and dominated by usual suspects, leading to the marginalisation of underground acts. These problems are by no means unique to Scotland, but there is something of a small country syndrome at play: nobody wants to look like they're shitting on the scene. But we should have the confidence to offer honest critique – even be rude sometimes. My worry is that Scotland's newfound cultural confidence might slip into complacency: "wha's like us?" all over again. Time to slay some sacred cows and write some new narratives.

SS

## AYO, IN DEFENCE OF TECHNOLOGY

As a species we've almost reached an impasse with technology. On the one hand we've become extremely reliant on computers to help us build, heal, connect and learn. But on the other there's a growing fear of malignant AI, fake news, hackable life support machines and the loneliness that comes

with the digital age. This has inevitably led to a renaissance in analogue and nowhere more so than music. This can't just be chalked up to nostalgia, there is a genuine fatigue and disdain around all things digital but it's missing the bigger picture.

One of the genres that suffers most from the back-in-the-day rhetoric is Hip Hop. Some claim that it's lost its soul, moving away from poetic lyricism and more towards weird vacuous internet fodder. This in part is blamed on the shift away from analogue instrumentation and a move towards Digital Audio Workstations such as music production software like Ableton and Logic pushing increasingly faster production turnaround. But this overlooks the recent problem with copyright violations and sampling - something which was integral to old school Hip Hop. Therefore this makes modern production techniques an adaptive way to get round a problem.



The other upshot is that production and recording have become more accessible by moving the process from labels and studios to the bedroom. This means groups such as women and the LGBTQ+ community who might normally face hostility in those environments, can now access these tools.

Another integral factor in this is online audio hosting platforms such as Soundcloud and Bandcamp which attempt to shift the creative power balance towards artists. The community aspect of online audio sharing platforms has decoupled music scenes from physical locations and created exclusively online genres. These genres have strong sonic boundaries and aesthetics which are adhered to across the globe creating cohesive and recognisable styles (e.g Hyper Pop or Weightless Grime). This is something which would have previously been limited to things like venues and what equipment was available to hand (e.g electro and the TR-808 and krautrock and the Minimoog)

The most contentious contribution modern DJing is DJ software and corresponding controllers, favoured as a cheaper and more DIY option. Controllers have been met with disdain as they use sync buttons for automatic BPM matching but this overlooks how important they are for increasing equality in a scene traditionally dominated by white males. Controllers

are affordable and can be used in both home and club settings, meaning that those who cannot access Vinyl or CDJs can practice in their own home at their own pace without fear of judgement or intimidation.

While there are skepticisms around the reliance on technology, it is an increasingly important factor in redressing the imbalance in representation and wider inequality within music. Widening access is essential for progress and digital technology is the first step.

CR

## AN INTERVIEW WITH STORYBOARD P

While Scotland's First Waacking and Voguing Festival was happening at SWG3 and the Poetry Club, Communal Leisure was chatting with Brooklyn dancer Storyboard P, 'the King of Flexing' or 'the Basquiat of street dance', a couple of weeks before he performed at Tramway as part of Arika's Episode 9.

Storyboard — real name Saalim Muslim — has just woken up in New York, and hasn't had his coconut water yet. Speaking into the webcam, he's doing neck rolls and arm stretches, twisting his wrists to wake up.

"Dancing for me is like a superpower. It lets me create worlds. With no ceilings. And escape a lot of negativity or barriers. I have a vision, and I guess you just need to figure out what it'd take to create what you wanna create. Then you string together the resources to put it together."

Although he's danced in videos for Jay-Z and Flying Lotus which he says "was cool", and done adverts for Timberland, he says he works better practising his moves on his own, and is working on a new visual album for online at the moment.

"I've done a lot of big stuff over the years I guess, but it's always someone else's vision. There wind up being lots of vision boards and meetings. I like it when it's just me 'mutating', building up my flows, making up my own textures and grammar, treating my body like Jimi Hendrix's guitar, or extra-terrestrial creatures or a Claymation animation."

His dance style is a rubber boned, liquid ankled thing of incredible beauty, working in jerky krumping, graceful vogueing, weightless ballet, tortured body language, bendy contortion, slo mo gliding and computer-

style glitches. One of his signature moves is a type of hyper-elegant, greased-up choreography where his feet trace twisty figure of eights and appear to levitate off the ground.

"I watched a lot of Michael Jackson growing up. Homies on the street were floating and gliding 20 times better than him, but he was on his own level, he had his own global brand behind it, and shed light on that street culture. I watched him, Prince, Jimi, ballerinas, violin players — dancing's not limited to one style, I like to mesh it all together."

The music he chooses to dance to is important too. Two sublime videos from his vault are his bare-chest lip-sync to 'When Doves Cry' and a sequinned meltdown to 'Love Don't Live Here Anymore'.

"Of course I have a lexicon of movements I use — my grammar, my ad libs, my accent marks and my facial expressions, but I need the music to be weighty too. I'm a soul person. I usually pick music with pain and emotion in it. I guess it's about my own experiences; having things in you that you want to express but might not have a name for. I also absorb energy from the neighbourhood, or when I'm travelling, and dance that out."

Arika's sci-fi themed Episode 9 described him as practicing "a unified lived theory of Afrofuturist dance physics . . . in which bodies have to be sanctuaries that float — able to teleport, disappear, appear."

Despite the strong theme of black radical activism that has featured in Arika events in the past, Storyboard says he's "not really big on race".

"There's danger everywhere you go. In all cultures. Anywhere humans do things that humans do! I've danced in places where you could lose your life, or seen fights break out at battles where white dancers imitate black dancers with monkey moves. It's still never about the colour line for me. Although I'll never do backup dancing behind another artist, I won't do that."

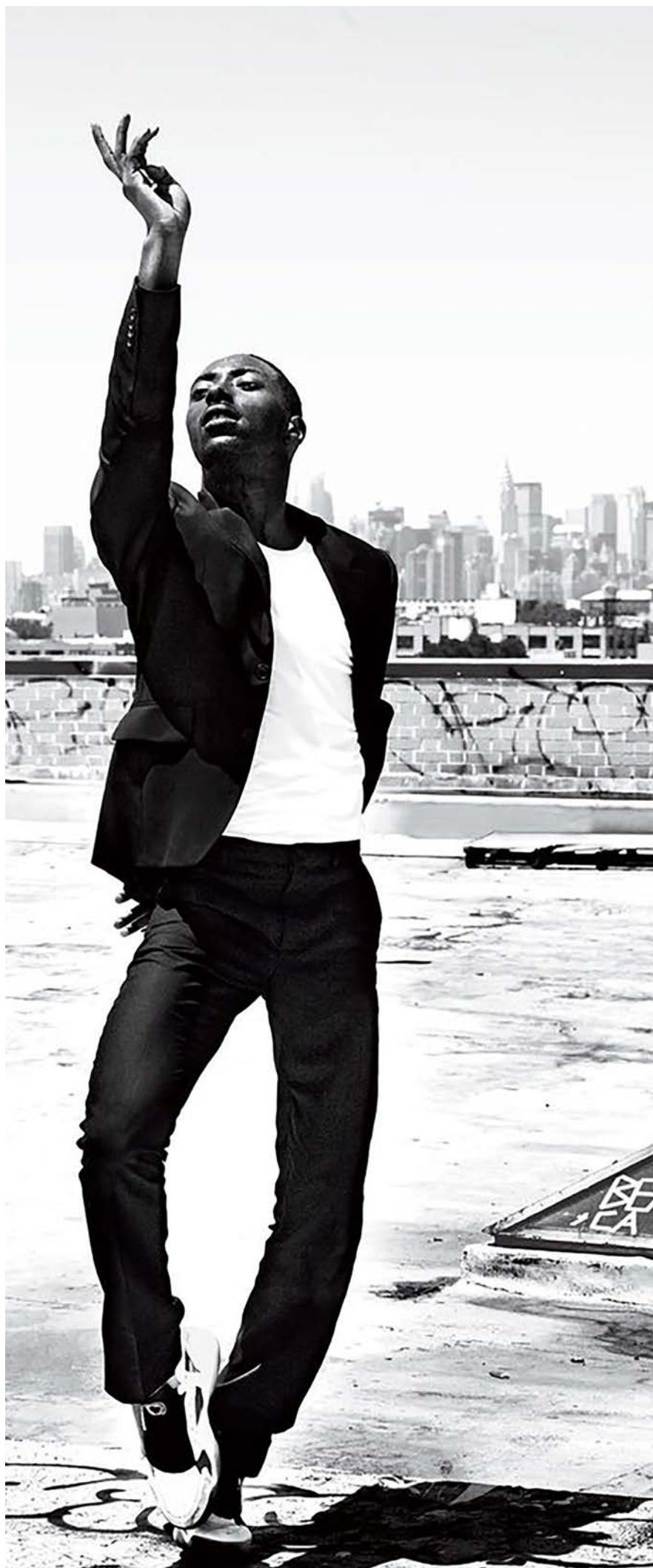
He's more about what he calls "playing with his own energy" and creating avenues for himself that didn't exist without the dancing.

"That's the difference between true legends and dancers who are just hot for the season. I'm a vanguard. I like to be a pioneer and be a creator."

If you missed Storyboard P, The Body Is A Sanctuary That Floats, 9pm and Speech Captions Body Language, as part of Arika's Episode 9, you can see videos from the performance on Arika's Vimeo channel. [arika.org.uk/events/episode-9-other-worlds-already-exist](http://arika.org.uk/events/episode-9-other-worlds-already-exist)

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Photo by Ruven Afanador



# IF MUSIC IS FOOD, WHY IS THIS THE WORST RESTAURANT IN TOWN?

There's a big sale on now at ASDA for do-it-yourself innovative laser cut wooden animal music band Christmas cards. Coincidentally, they contain an NSA-proof secret sound diffuser, which is imbedded directly into the card before the-day-after-Thanksgiving Black Friday shopping sprees. Early registration will typically blow out the average credit card and its micro chip mini transformer. Then it's made into a fully functional hacked pocket jammer. This provides evidence to the fact that the sound making device and the entity containing its byproduct might be instances of the same disembodied object.

This is perfectly illustrated at the deep K-hole zone half way through Roland Kayn's Rock You Like Tetris.(or use inverted commas) In its original form this piece was released as a special double sized 78 RPM vinyl record. The more advanced consumer/listener was invited to invest in a Sensurround converter that added extended-range bass as well as the illusion of olfactory artifacts. Low-frequency sounds were more felt than heard, providing a vivid complement to the album's onscreen depictions of earth tremors, bomber formations, and amusement park rides. Looking at its cross section, one would see a multitude of interconnected moving parts threaded through seemingly endless tendrils. Some of them were as wide and thick as Lou Ferrigno's neck while others were virtually invisible.

These appendages were all interconnected and continuous like the feedback music of David Lee Myers' recording project Arcane Device which, like the music of Roland Kayn, was originally and perhaps accidentally conceived and predicated on the theory of cybernetics. His approach to hardware allowed a hands free machine-driven feedback-controlled music that relied on small interchanges and exchanges in which the machine gradually removes minute cell clusters from the human host. This ultimately brought the machine closer to humanness via full parasitic camaraderie, allowing the machine's ears to become a net designed to gather information as it sends it out in exponential waves. This is the perfect opportunity to re-jig the tool and clarify

the cross pollination it affords itself through material output. Perhaps from this point forward we can think of this as Prosthetic Music.

And speaking of Conrad Schnitzler's modular and transportable Cassette Concerts, an old friend of mine who's now based in LA sent me this message a few days ago: "I've fallen into a bit of a strange new hobby of collecting noise cassettes and was wondering if you had anything available in such a format. Anything current I could order from you but if there's anything out of print, I could try tracking some stuff down on discogs if I know what to search for. I'm a little late to the tapes game here, but it's fun to learn about something new musically....". He continued, "205 things for sale under your name, but just 6 tapes....I bought my high school band's demos off this site, it's kinda wild what a resource it can be". It occurred to me that cassettes fit quite nicely into this idea of Prosthetic Music, so i'll focus on some things that have recently landed on the gutter side of my work bench. Andrea Pensado's music is a tight and loose gravel ride around the hay bails that fell off the culture wagon, perhaps intended as a distraction from inevitable lightning strikes. Her tools include smooth stones and a backgammon board with contact mics running through a crunchy sideways version of max MSP. She also uses her voice to recite nonspecific hexes like an enraged bruja or an apeshit adolescent. Her vocalization is full of language without real words and does not have the obvious tropes of sound poetry, nor does its intensity fall into cliches of catharsis. She is instead connecting human larynx to primitive (non) instruments to computer machine to extreme stereo field output, resulting in hard pushed speaker cones moving back and forth and all around.

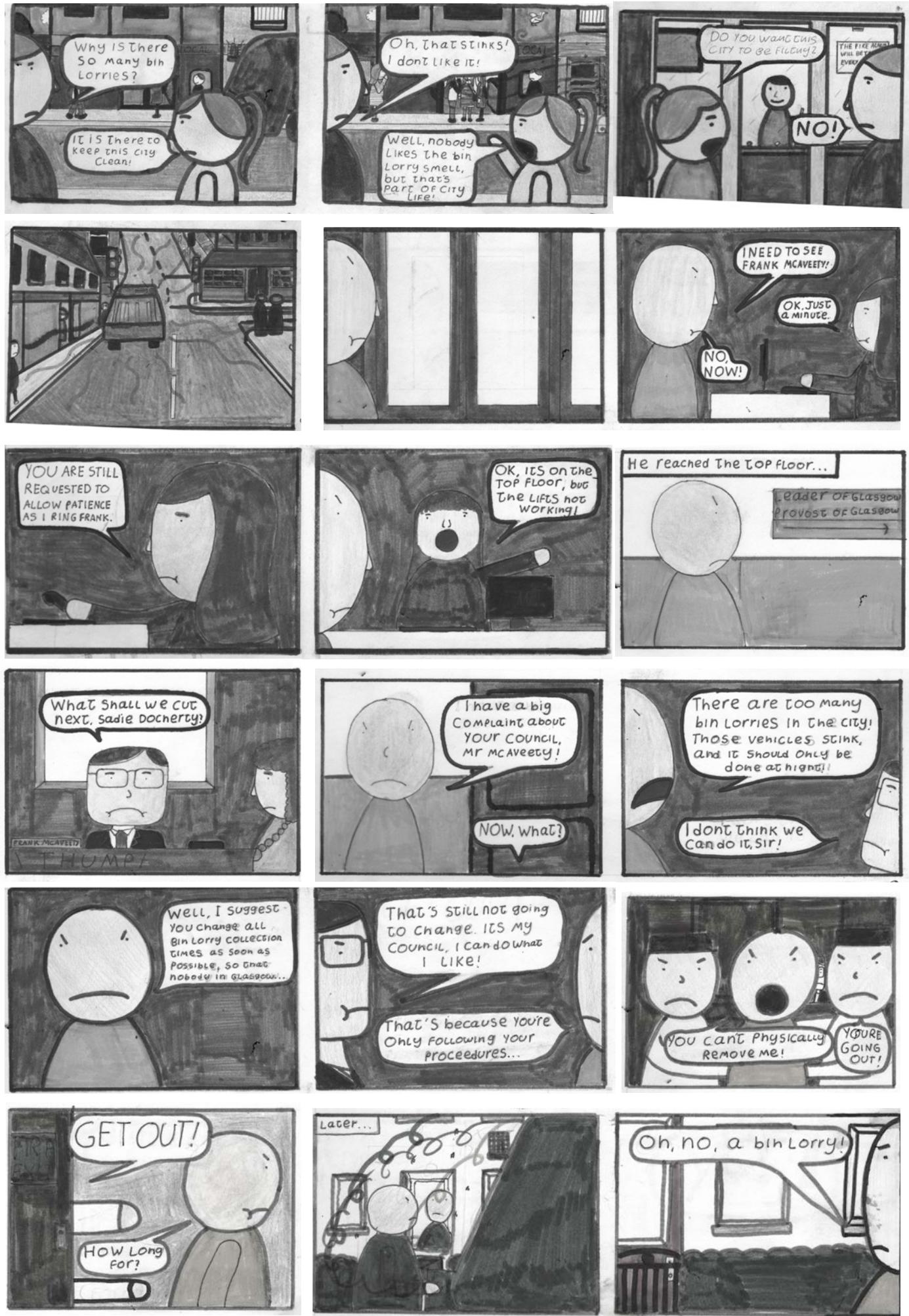
Her cassette, El Vacío De La Copia, on Ayurvedic Tapes is a clear and concise manifestation of the chaotic multiple shockwave of this combined assemblage of dry heaves. Each element, sound collage, bleak concrete noise burst and tangible bone crumble are woven together with precision and a clear sense of carelessness. She makes computer music with dirty edges. She is driving the bus over the cliff with a cheerful knowledge of the after effects included in Final Cut Pro for mass possession by a family of disembodied werewolves.

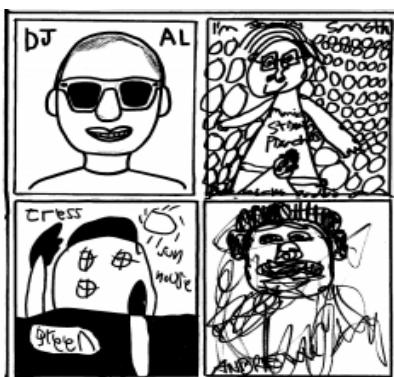
Herman von Helmholtz was a physicist who wrote the seminal work, On the Sensations of Tone as a Physiological Basis for the Theory of Music (1867). It addresses the physical and tangible issues that make sound function. He explains acoustics, vibration, waves, tone, dissonance etc. It also includes an appendix covering such topics as "Relation between the strength of sympathetic resonance and the length of time required for the tone to die away".

The New York City based percussion artist, Sean Meehan, has been doing occasional public readings of this tome over the past few years. He has now released a very limited abridged book-on-tape version of *Sensations of Tone*. It is designed to look like an old school book-on-tape, from the nerdy graphic design to a library call number on the spine under clear tape. The interior of the case has an unexpected addendum in the form of two tuning forks meticulously tucked into one side of the tape case. They serve as a practical intervention to be utilized while listening to the tape or simply used as personal resonator for getting the pitch bug out while waiting for the overtones to die out. The recorded content of the tape is as amazing as its shell. I'm very familiar with Meehan's voice and can easily imagine it in my head. Therefore I was slightly shocked in a gentle fluffy way when I first put on the tape and heard someone else speaking and then another voice, and I will leave it there for now so as not to spoil the whole tamale. In fact interested parties can actually listen at the source, as Meehan writes in his official release email, "If you prefer not to have more clutter in your life, but are otherwise interested, please contact me to arrange a listening at my home. (You too will leave fed.)"

Sometimes a conspicuous object planted in an innocuous setting can derail expectations or trip off a series of events leading to an unexpected extraordinary rendition of personal identity. Like the time when I recently went to check out the sarcastically named The Modern Institute performing at The Rum Shack. They have a reputation for outrageous antics like simulating live psychic surgery on a Neil Hamburger impersonator, or sideswiping an Art Ensemble drum circle while playing a cover of Hamburger Lady on instruments made of gummy worms and discarded meth-pipes. On this occasion they fulfilled all of my expectations with a churning King Sunny Ade breakfast special bathed in intermittent sunlight. They even brought a guest onstage midway through the set, in the form of an inflatable mylar bag entity intended to grow with every strike on a blue tooth midi-controlled snare drum. I scored their tape "Another Exhibition" which is housed in a blobby blue ectoplasm encased spray foam shell. I tried to insert the awkwardly shaped thing into my cassette player which caused the machine to seize up like Jack Torrance at the end of *The Shining*. I ended up listening to it on bandcamp instead and was very pleased to hear that it was indeed an album comprised of 13 different covers of Gary Numan's "Me! I Disconnect From You".

# WEE AL'S COMIC

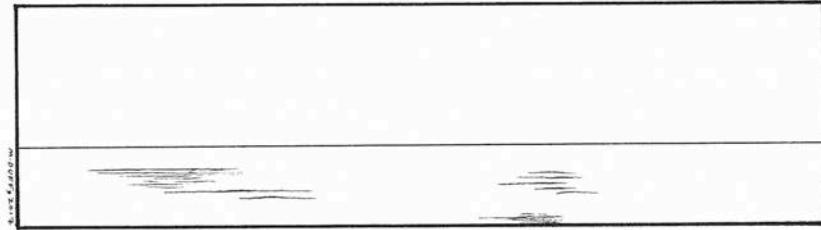
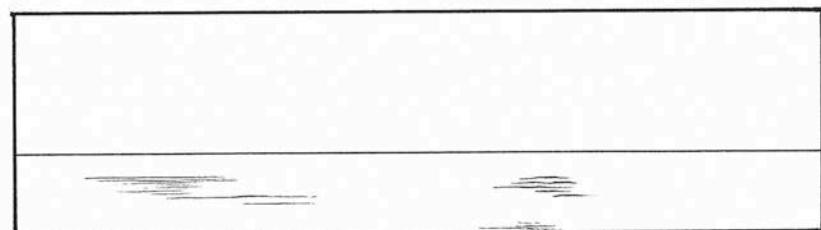
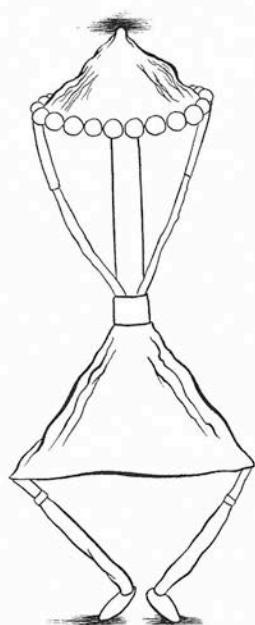




Wee Al is a comic book artist and radio-producer on the show 'Abbie Crew Take Over' on Subcity Radio.

Every week you can join DJ Al, Smooth Andrew, Manic Jacqui and the Wonderful Jamie for an hour of Abbie Madness with songs and chat. They pride themselves on having a diverse taste in all kinds of music and film. DJ Al enjoys music from the 1980s, and enjoys talking to radio people. He has a great sense of humour as does his co-host Manic Jacqui who got the nickname because of her passion with Manic Street Preachers. The rest of the team being Smooth Andrew who likes Smooth Radio, and the Wonderful Jamie are sending groovy vibes over the airwaves in super style. Tune in for a solid hour a month of prime entertainment, excellent presenting and the best music known to man!

Available at [www.subcity.org/shows/abbiecrew](http://www.subcity.org/shows/abbiecrew)



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empty FLOOR and BELOW.





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