MANIFESTO

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WEAR A MASK

STAY SAFE! 😊

Cherie Bruce (Squidlykitten Art)
TALE OF LIFE AT BORDERS - I AM FOUR YEARS OLD

And then I passed through a living street of humans... something like humans... I could see the sun setting in its place. Like dead in its grave, I could see the shadows elongating. Making their presence visible. Here I met a little girl shine in her eyes; sparkling like stars... gleaming as if sun... asked me my age. I said four. Without a goodbye and with an insensible murmur she ran away.

I sat down with my lonely eyes. Soon after my thoughts started scribbling on the pages of memory, the things... the objects I have seen and possessed. Likes I have kept and dislikes I had believed.

Hello sir. What are you doing here? Don’t you have to go home? Can you hear me? What is your age-old man? There I saw a young lad dressed in his best attire, clad with life, holding his head high with dignity... like a bad malfunction of a speaker, I used my vocals saying: I have a home... I have a wife. I have two sons like you... and I can hear u properly... and I am four years old... hopefully, I have satisfied all the queries... laughter was all I heard.

Many people passed by... asked me who I was? Where I belonged? What is my age? Went away laughing, cursing... thought of me ill... old man who has lost his senses.

I heard the bugles. The trumpets as if a jungle stampede was about to enter my enclosure. The king arrived. Covered in gold and silk. Gained my attention. He was told by the pupil-by the ignorant creed that I reside here with peace and satisfaction...

Asked me who I was. The two kinds of approaches:

Getting up from the ground, I poured my heart out that an optimist or pessimist both have their sides of stories. Nobody wants to give in... and nobody wants to cross his or her fence and have a little peak at the other side... why should they? The religious are right and the comrades are left, but what is really on their right and what is really on their left? The optimist tries to comfort while telling the goods in the world... and the pessimist wants to inculcate all the pain in the other... self-pity, anxiety, depression, denial takes their places ad we fall prey to it...

The third kind is interesting rather intriguing to my thought and my belief... the ones who accept happiness... and embrace pain... celebrate misery... and still get up, still, look for the sky. The ones who know themselves... the ones who are close to the crux of their existence. The ones who live with truth and die honestly, I belong to this specie.

King: What do u do?
I live... I think... I speak... and I drink
I hide... I cry... I lie... I sleep... I fight...
I sing. And paint... I worship me lord... I read
I write
I fall and I rise...

King: You look as if u have lived a thousand years... your hair is silver...
Your skin has many folds... your eyes have stories, tales...
Backbone is curved with a load of pain....
You seem to be the lord of time... the king of rhymes...
Why do u belittle yourself by saying your four... you say u tell the truth...?
While you have lied to all my people... about your age... about your sage.
I had two lives... one I lived in ignorance and lies...
And the one in which I opened my soul’s eyes...
I learned myself... I learned about the human race... I stopped pretending

Began to search myself... who I had lost in culture, religion, and civilization... it’s been 72 years... I came out of my mother’s womb... but it had been 4 years since I was born.

The old man was asked where did he live. Husk voice, parched lips uttered in a no man’s land. Where the lives are small, where the only thing shines is a truth, at the border of your existence.
MY GIRLFRIEND BROKE UP WITH ME ON ZOOM
and said she wants
to see other people
virtually,
that the problem lies with her
internet connection
not mine—
“but we can still be friends” she said
her eyes faced her phone
as she texted some boy,
her face shined like Egyptian gold
(the same way she used to shine for me)
she saw my bottom lip quiver
and my nostrils flare
and heard a whispering winging sound,
she tried to leave the chat
but was slow moving the cursor:
she saw my ugly-cry (for the eighth time in our
five-month relationship)
“message me ok?” was the last words
she ever said to me.

quarantine-contemplation
there were county fairs and musicals,
there were meals shared with friends,
there was embracing and card decks and
holding hands, there was air.
there were dresses, swimming pools,
friend’s houses and thrift stores.
there were gyms in the morning
and June Pride Parades, and
sometimes even what seemed like balance.

now, there are lit screens,
bright art, eighteen-hour periods of sleep,
and too many apps in my phone.
there are microwave dinners,
pajama bottoms and the illusion that yesterday
was three months ago and last year
was only several minutes long.
the air is different.
there was peace and panic all at once.
a reassortment of obligations.
a little ease, with a rush of distrust,
everyone carefully announcing that they
don’t really believe in dying
and that they would simply not be dying
if it meant they could not go outside.

it was a three-month conversation between
ourselves and the world about what
the outside really is and why we have
passionately convinced ourselves that
everything must be external.

you’ll laugh with friends and believe in death again
and know what a week feels like again and maybe
next year, dinner will still be cold in the middle,
naps will be shorter and you’ll take hugs for granted.
there will be the outside then.
Preparations for the Voyage

Oz Hardwick

One step at a time, I’m getting back to normal. I have hung my shirts in colour order and filled my bag with key texts and cereal bars, peeled the tape from around the windows, and cut a path back out to the road. Life mirrors art, so I’m turning Bosch to face the wall, pressing demons like wildflowers for future generations, and tacking up Claude Lorrain’s socially-distanced idylls. I have checked my diary and checked my temperature, checked tide tables and my paperback translation of Nostradamus, and checked my spam folder for anything important that may have gone astray. There was nothing important. It’s so long since I wore shoes that I have forgotten how to tie laces, and I am so attuned to Zoom and Skype that my speech is out of time with the movements of my lips. On the garden gate there’s a robin, singing a welcome or a warning; from deep in the hedge, a blackbird observes me with its beady yellow eye; and up, up, up, weaving the threads of the first vapour trail I’ve seen in forever, an albatross ruminates on the sea: Even though it’s beautiful, it says, you should stay away.
“Next Year, In Jerusalem”

I've been studying to become Jewish for about eight months, and, at the time of writing, three of those have been spent in isolation due to COVID-19. Practicing Judaism in quarantine has been a strange experience. Almost everything about Judaism as a culture is built around doing things with your community. All the religious rituals and festival days are intended to be done with others, so my shul was thrown into uncertainty when we could no longer worship and celebrate together. However, someone made the amusingly apt observation that there are few things more Jewish than hiding at home from a plague and washing your hands a lot.

The shul adapted quite well. We hold Shabbat services via video call every week. Trying to sing together through time delays and audio interference is hard but we muddle through. The Hebrew classes and study groups are done online. I attended a Yiddish music concert via Zoom. I watched talks given from people’s homes at the virtual Liberal Judaism Biennial Conference. Holocaust Remembrance Day was conducted solemnly and quietly over hundreds of screens.

We had our Passover Seder by video call as well. It was my first Passover since deciding to become Jewish, and while I’m glad we found a way to stay connected during quarantine, I can’t help but feel a bit like I was robbed of the first Passover experience I should have had. For many, the video calls help them feel more connected, but for me, it only emphasizes our separation. So, my experience is a conflicted one. Taking part in the community cements my sense of belonging, and the feeling that I am meant to be a Jew, but being confined to remote contact often compounds my feeling of isolation rather than assuages it.

I can only imagine how much greater such a feeling must be for those who have been bereaved during the lockdown. My Rabbi has comforted grieving families remotely, including conducting funerals where almost no-one may be present. We are unable to properly mourn the dead, as well as feeling like our own lives are on hold. So it goes on the list of ‘Things we’ll do when this is over’. It’s the only way some of us can keep functioning, by putting our pain aside for now, to focus on getting through it, with the resolution to deal with the pain in the future, when it feels safer.

However, there are ways Jews (and trainee Jews like me) can take solace. One of them is the principle of pikuach nefesh (Hebrew for “saving a life”). It’s the principle in Jewish law that the preservation of human life overrides virtually any other religious rule. It means that, even if I have to stay in quarantine another three months, or even longer, in order to protect others from harm, then not only must it be done, but it is worth it.

The other thing I do to cope may not initially seem related, but it is. I cultivate my island in the game ‘Animal Crossing: New Horizons’. Aside from it being a cute, low stress way to spend time, I built some of my faith into my island by naming it ‘Jerusalem’. At the end of the Passover Seder, it is custom to say “Next year, in Jerusalem.” It finishes the Seder’s journey from reflection on the suffering of the past and present to a wish for wholeness and freedom for all in the future. It is our way of saying that we hope for next year to be better. For justice to triumph over wrongdoing, peace over suffering, and joy over sorrow. So, tending to a virtual island called Jerusalem is my small way of keeping that hope in my mind through quarantine. So that perhaps it can become a reality.

- Ash Alexander (2nd June, 2020)
Your Fuckbuddy After Quarantine

Kristan X

Corn Stanley Roberts discusses how the queer community is coming together to cope with feelings of isolation during a lockdown.

I don't feel real.
It's a thought that would cross my mind every so often even before lockdown, but sitting around the house 24/7 I find it coming up several times a day. And from speaking to friends over the phone about this feeling, it seems it's not just me.

The importance of community for queer people has been understood for some time now; the seminal documentary Paris Is Burning, which explores the world of New York City's Ball culture in the 1980s, depicts how for the gay men, transgender women, and drag queens that attended those balls, that world was the only place they could feel 'real'. As Dorian Corey explains in the film:

"In real life you can't get a job as an executive unless you have the educational background and the opportunity. Now, the fact that you are not an executive is merely because of the social standing of life. Black people have a hard time getting anywhere and those that do are usually straight. In a ballroom you can be anything you want. You're not really an executive but you're looking like an executive. You're showing the straight world that I can be an executive if I had the opportunity because it can look like one, and that is like a fulfillment." It's no wonder this film resonates with queer audiences now, thirty years after its release; many young queer people will recall the first times they went to a gay bar or a drag show, and how that environment could feel so much more real than the world outside. Stone Butch Blues, Leslie Feinberg's groundbreaking novel on lesbian identity and queer community, also describes this feeling when the novel's narrator, Jess, first visits a gay bar:

"What I saw there released tears I'd held back for years: strong, burly women, wearing ties and suit coats. Their hair was slicked back in perfect DAs. They were the handsomest women I'd ever seen. Some of them were wrapped in slow motion dances with women in tight dresses and high heels who touched them tenderly. Just watching made me ache with need. This was everything I could have hoped for in life."

This too reflects exactly how I felt when I first started going out to gay bars. I grew up in rural Wiltshire with a small, close-knit group of queer friends. There wasn't much of a wider queer community nearby for us to socialise with, so most nights we would get drunk at each other's houses, play video games, and watch RuPaul's Drag Race together. We spent all year looking forward to Pride, when we'd be able to go into the city and actually be around other people like us.

When I turned 18 and moved to Brighton for university, I found I could be around people like me any night I wanted. I started going to gay bars, and suddenly I wasn't the most flamboyantly dressed person in the room by default. Suddenly, I was around people that liked cheesy Eurodance 'school disco classics' as much as I did. Drag was no longer just on my TV screen, pre-recorded from a studio in Los Angeles; it was two feet away from me, reading my awful DIY haircut to frills. When I came out as trans, gay bars were the only places I could go where people would consistently use my pronouns, and the first places I could experiment with my gender presentation without fear of ridicule. These spaces were
everything I had been waiting for as a lonely queer teen, and they quickly became my second home.

It’s been a good few months now since I’ve been able to go out to a queer party. The last time I did go out, though I didn’t know it at the time, ended up being the ‘last normal thing’ I did before the lockdown. With that community and sense of belonging gone all of a sudden, my mental health took a downturn. I had little reason to wear a binder around the house – they’re uncomfortable, sweaty and restrictive – so I stopped having those moments where I’d catch a glimpse of my reflection in a shop window and see myself with a flat chest. My hair grew out – I’d seen enough of my friends’ ‘quarantine haircuts’ to put me off having a go at it myself. I found myself no longer surrounded by people that fuelled my feelings of gender-affirmation, and I went through a short phase where I even started to question my gender identity. I stopped feeling real.

There are a few things I do now to try and feel more grounded. Leaving the house (safely and responsibly, with a mask on, socially distancing from others) is one. Taking the time to put on my binder, wear something that gives me gender euphoria, and go out into the world makes me feel a lot more steady and a lot more sure in myself – and I’m aware that it’s a privileged to be healthy enough to do this. Listening to queer artists and reading queer books helps me to feel connected to my community when I can’t see them in person. And as we always do in a time of crisis, the queer community has come together to support each other through this weird time; almost every weekend now I find myself tuning in to a digital drag show. Seeing local performers, albeit through a screen, eases the agitation of waiting for our world to open up again.

Quarantine seems to make the days merge into one another and it’s easy let things like keeping in touch with friends slide. Seeing someone over Zoom is by no means the same as spending time together in real life, but it does take the edge off. The UK Government has recently announced that it’s alright to meet up outdoors in small groups, and I have already spent a couple of afternoons in parks talking to friends - two meters apart, of course. The isolation is easing, and I’m still scratching at the walls waiting to be able to go to bars again.

I miss my friends. I miss the drag scene. I miss getting dressed up to go out.

I miss the warm feeling of hearing someone use my pronouns without hesitating.

I don’t know what the long-term effects of this lockdown are going to be – not just for me, but for my friends, my community.

What I do know is that our community is strong, and we’ll help each other through this.

I’m more sure of my queerness than ever before. I’m starting to feel real.

Corn Stanley Roberts
You’ve Got To

You’ve got to look forward,
to appreciate looking back.
You’ve got to be derailed,
before you marvel at the track.
You’ve got to weather the storm,
to cherish sunnier days.
You’ve got to do the hard work,
before you earn the praise.
You’ve got to admit you’re lacking,
to enable you to learn.
You’ve got to lose your marbles,
before you celebrate their return.
You’ve got to end up lost,
to savour being found.
You’ve got to endure silence,
before you treasure sound.
You’ve got to suffer in defeat,
to applaud your own success.
You’ve got to clear a pathway,
before you can progress.
You’ve got to climb the upwards slog,
to enjoy the downward slope.
You’ve got to reach the last resort,
before you just rely on hope.
You’ve got to look back,
It’s impossible not to.
But keep moving forward
because, simply - You’ve got to!
Cerulean Gold Rush

Developing shades of Rubiks hues rearrange me daily
I’m just grateful that, I’ve got Hand sanitiser
bubblegum flavoured
If I taste it will my words be cleaner?
Will the contactless swipes of open mouthed smiles place me in danger.
Will dirty scoundrels panic by me in the Tesco queue?
These the bubbles upon which I chew.
I breathe
I smell blue
Fresh as skies without planes and cars.
The only see side I know now a face on a screen from a far.
I smell blue.
Sinking sorrows over solemn stories from six degrees of separation.
Sweetness soured by selfish sods.
I chew on what remains and gums our times.
I smell the chance to truly sanitise.

Adrian McKenzie
It's such a weird time to be alive.

People keep saying things like:

I can't wait for things to go back to normal!

But... Normal is politicians lying without consequence.

It's safe!

Normal is our NHS being sold to the highest bidder.

Normal is what got us into this.

I don't want normal. I want change.
Margaret Are You Grieving

I have painted my nails four times since the lockdown started
I painted them silver
matte black
five different colours, one for each nail
(purple, blue, teal, green and yellow)
and orange
A bright orange like fire,
like heat
between your legs
Margaret is at the store buying bread
She tried to ask the shop attendant where the soy milk is
even though she doesn’t drink
soy milk she just needed someone to look at her
she feels invisible
touch starved
She feels like dirt
falling through cracks
almost every day of her life
her skin like crepe paper
her mind still razor sharp
she is on edge
at the store
asking for something she doesn’t need
for a simple human connection

Ragna Amling

But the man jumps back
making sure to keep a distance
of two metres
(or more)
between them
He explains
where to find the soy milk with a vague gesture
behind him but she can’t hear what he is saying she is
nodding, blood
rushing in her ears
tears
stinging in her eyes
she turns away
pretends to be okay
with his nonhelp
making her way to the checkout
she has always been low
maintenance
she can’t imagine painting
her nails five different colours
like the girl scanning her bread and her
can of peas
Back home
(alone)
She looks at the phone
It hasn’t rung since last week
a telemarketer
they are still working
during the pandemic
The supermarket is open
for another hour
Maybe next week
I will paint my nails blue.
Margaret is staring at the phone, waiting.

Jim Tran

Sleeping Softly

Once upon a time in a tiny town called Hertford there lived a wonderous building
called a theatre who welcomed everyone from near and far with wide open arms;
but one day a very wicked virus came to visit!

Fortunately the big decision makers in London quickly realized that the wonderous
building must stay safe and never let the wicked virus enter so they magically put it
into a deep sleep - just like Sleeping Beauty in the famous fairytale and that is the
way it must stay dreaming softly in the shadows of the ancient castle park.

But just like every good take this is not the end because way up high between the
clouds in a gigantic glass building many warrior scientists are waging an epic battle
against the wicked virus and one day in the not too distant future they will win!

They will win and the evil virus will disappear back where it came from and our
wonderous theatre will yawn and stretch and welcome every one of us back in with
wide open arms.

Stay Safe :-)

Tricia Waller

#ASIANSNARENOTTHEVIRUS
When kissing you became illegal

I flung envy grenades at all couples (however unhappy) under one roof.

Cursing my distance from you
that I need to haunt these walls,
drift to gather tins
and graze grass with just
my shadow.

We only apparate on screens
stutter and pixelate longing-router bulbs flickering lighthouses
as a nation strains its soul
through windows too small
for the amount of light we need
to grow in.

My skin had just learnt
what warmth meant
and now I need to cool
un-caressed for weeks.

Must whisper the ripples
of your touches
back into cells
that are dimming
and hunkering down
for winter.
How COVID19 effected a Blind Person. (2020)
Kerrie Gray
Boringgirl

the situation:

TAP!

Outcome a):

Well, then I said she should...

Outcome b):

How does anyone walk around here?

Outcome c), yes this happens.

Can't you look where you're going??

No, I'm blind.

During lockdown-isolation...

Ring Ring

SWING

Hello?

Hi, just Guide Dog VI,

calling our clients during the pandemic. Have you been stressed at home due to

the virus?

Actually, I've never walked around so freely!

There's nobody to run into around.

I wish everyday was like it is now.

That's a bit marred.

End
Craig Henderson

Thank ffff... [insert preferred deity or expletive here] that the film is already shot! Very little film and TV is getting shot at the moment, for obvious reasons, but mercifully my film is in the can. In fact it's already been taken out of the can, snipped up into thousands of pieces and rearranged into a story that makes sense. We're just doing the finishing touches of post-production now.

And the unexpected thing I'm finding during lockdown is that it's all going very smoothly! In some ways smoother. There's less to do while in lockdown and fewer distractions. The post-production team is spread miles apart but the internet means that virtually everything we want to achieve is possible: Our composer sends us demos of the music to review and we have video conferences to discuss them. Our editor is working away by himself doing the final few visual effects. Likewise, our Sound Designer is mixing all of the audio.

They recently discovered that some of the actors dialogue wasn't recorded perfectly, so we had to get them to do new lines to dub on. That wasn't a problem, even when the isolated actors didn't have proper recording equipment: "Don't worry Craig, the mics on phones are fine these days, just tell them to put a sock on it instead of one of those foam thingies!" Best of all are my meetings with my co-producer in virtual reality. It's hard to worry too much about lack of travel when you can hold a virtual meeting in a chalet in the mountains! I don't take any of this for granted. When I left university in 1997 the internet was still quite embryonic and wasn't really of any importance in our lives yet. If Covid-19 had arrived then, what a different experience this would have been! But as things stand just now, although the pandemic, represents a huge human tragedy, it also represents a time to be creative, reflect upon our lives, and reassess how we want to live. (whisper it quietly; it's not all bad!!)

Because I'm Four

I don't understand why I can't hold your hand
Pass a toy to my friend
Play catch standing at each end of the playground
We thought you liked it when we share

I don't understand why we can't play with the sand
Where all the teddies have gone
Why there are no cushions to sit on in this classroom
Our school feels empty and cold

I don't understand how we all have to stand
At the gate in a line
Come in one at a time when you call us
And what is that blue thing on your face?
Where is your smile?

I don't understand why all the grown ups look worried
Why you don't laugh as much
Why we are told again and again we absolutely must
Be "2 metres apart"
What is a metre?
What is it part of?
If there are 2 of them why does it still sound like they need a friend?

In the end
I'd like all my friends here
I'd like my own classroom
With my own teacher
With their hand on my shoulder if I feel sad
With our assemblies packed full of singing
And be able to bring my own bag to school

But
This is the way it is now
We are learning how
Some things are different
And some things are the same
We have to play new games
We still talk about our feelings lots
But have special plastic wallets instead of pencil pots

One thing is for sure
I am getting really good at washing my hands

Nell Gilbert

Concept Art for Crooked Frames by Chloe Henderson
Recipe: Lockdown Surprise

Cost: considerable

Preparation time: 3 months initially (buying ingredients and equipment), then just try it and see.

Ingredients:
• 400 toilet rolls
• Shiny new bread maker
• 50 lbs bread flour (various types)
• Hundreds of weevils (to be found in split bags of unused flour)
• Other stuff you have hoarded unnecessarily

Method:
1. Turn the bread maker on for the first time and start to read the instructions.
2. Abandon the instructions as too complicated.
3. Chuck in some flour (weevils will be included, no need to separate), water, salt and any other food items you have hoarded and not needed to use.
4. Press start.
5. Stand back.
6. Once the machine appears to do something, leave the kitchen.
7. Spend a few hours writing twitter posts criticising scientists and experts.
8. Return to kitchen, turn off bread maker and throw the results of the exercise in the bin. Use some of the toilet rolls to clean up the mess.
9. Repeat until all ingredients are used up.

Final tips:
• Stay optimistic.
• Good luck.
What is happening at Coin-Operated Press?

This month has been a whirlwind adventure! The launch of Coin-Operated Press has been fantastic, and we are so excited by all of your responses to our little zine thing so far. I want to thank everyone who has shown us love this past month, and I am so humbled by your outstanding support. This enterprise was born out of Lockdown, and even though we are separated by the distance of different cities, together we are a stronger creative team... even if we are currently having to manage everything through the dreaded Skype!!

I want to take a moment to thank my wonderful partner, Stuart, for being gloriously encouraging as I constantly mutter strange zine ramblings at him and he manages to make sense of them and help us out! Love you, Moo 😘

WE DID THE THING!! Onwards and upwards my wonderful zine friends...

Coin-Operated Press: Established 20th May 2020

We launched! Coin-Operated Press is officially a thing! Thank you all so much for your support so far, and we cannot wait to take you on this zine adventure with us!

Happy Launch Party Day!!! Cheers!

We launched the Coin-Operated Shop with our first Activity Pack!

Combat the COVID Blues with our first ever Activity Pack! Issue 001 is a 10-page activity pack for everyone to enjoy! Inside this special launch edition you will find an introduction to everything Coin-Operated Press, including: hand-illustrated colouring pages, fun puzzles, and lots of resources to help get you started with zine-making.

A note from Katie...

Thank you so much to everybody who has supported Coin-Operated Press so far! We started this company in earnest in the middle of lock-down, from our homes in two separate cities, unsure of whether people would even care. It has been really wonderful seeing all the little hearts illuminating on my phone screen!

I don't think we would have finally taken the plunge with Coin-Operated Press, if it wasn't for the support of our partners. I want to take this opportunity to thank my fiancée, Aeryn - for all the tea and love that fuels my days <3

Quaranzine is our first ever collaborative zine! We want to say a special thank you to everybody who submitted work to us, we were completely blown away by your reaction to our call-out!

Applications are now open for Coin-Operated Press's LGBT BLACK LIVES MATTER Zine! We are a white-owned and operated company. We are here to listen and hold space for Black voices. We need to speak out while not silencing black voices. This month's theme is for our Black LGBTQ+ community. 100% OF THE PROFITS GENERATED FROM THIS ZINE WILL GO TO BLACK VISIONS COLLECTIVE. As we want to hold space for minority voices, this call out is for Black LGBTQ+ - only. Please do not submit if you fall outside of this community. The deadline is midnight BST on Tuesday 30th June 2020. Please send submissions to coinoperatedpress@gmail.com

Merch sneak peek!!! Coming soon... Stay tuned...