

FINDING FREEDOM

slowslowzo





## ROUTES TO FREEDOM

### Crossing the Divide and Acts of Passing

All our dressing makes an impression. Passing is the act of dressing in another's clothes to be seen as Another. Dragging up is an overt act of passing. A proud act of transformation. And Drag makes a radical plea for acceptance. For all our Selves. To get one's drag on is not just to get dressed up but to transform. Changing is vital to the 'performative acts' that make up gender. If we consider the historical acts of changing ones sex by dressing up. Now trans values are understood in the mainstream of society; is the act of dragging up perceived as a lesser activity? If it is understood by those who have never attempted the transformation, and walked in another's shoes. Drag might be considered an act of detournement. An act to assist change in society by creating a rupture in what is considered to be Normal. Drag, first and foremost, is a personal act of self discovery.

### Becoming Oneself

Sometimes the constraints of Normality are so strong we resist the urge to grow into ourselves. Gender is not just a coat of constraint that renders us Normal or abnormal. The boundaries of the Normal can be suffocating, when we are straining to dabble in another walk of life that is Normally forbidden to us. For in the act of transformation an individual Passes as Another. Gender is only one aspect of the act of Passing which is written on the body, by an Authority that judges what gender should be.





So Passing might occur after transforming one's gender or race, or class. Binary definitions of male / female or black / white or rich / poor are not just problematic, but politically determined to separate and divide peoples. Passing is not just a need to circumvent the privileged position of male/white/rich over the female/black/poor positions. For the acts of Passing are personal acts of self discovery. When we discover ourselves, we discover not only our position in the world, but how we might change the world to accommodate us. Without ever having to be subservient to the dominant Normal demand: to change ourselves to fit into what is expected of us by behaving Normally. We do not have to know our place and stick to it. Even when we must dress up/Transform in secret behind closed doors.

### Acts of transformation and acts of entitlement

The Normal is a respectable status. Normality determines how we should or shouldn't behave, and we shouldn't be seen living out our real selves. The Normal determines that these acts of drag/ Passing should be considered to just be part of a dream or fantasy life. And our Fantasies are expected to be hidden and our dreams to be denied.

The pressure to deny ourselves by those who police the Normal is enormous. Regulations / Laws are made by those who hold power to persuade us to perform and live in a certain way. But if we attempt acts of transformation we unsteady the Normal rules. We become Another / the Other and understand another way of living. We can learn how to perform these acts of

entitlement, so we can reclaim power as the Another, as well as claiming power for our Recognised self.





## Recognition as Liberation

Acts of Passing/transformation/becoming oneself can bring privilege to the transformer by gaining Another position/status. Historically the excluded woman has often tried to Pass as male to gain work. Whether we consider this trouser wearing woman to be a transvestite, a lesbian in drag, a transman or intersexual, she is always in the act of Passing.

So how does a woman prepare to pass as a man? Tomboy credentials as a child might prepare a woman to take up the space of a man. For what it is to act as a man, in an attempt to project masculinity is not easily defined. It is not a lazy stereotype to say that men have the confidence to use space to their advantage. Traditionally a boy being raised for leadership might leave a woman trailing behind as a man. Or maybe it is not only that men have confidence to use space how they wish, but that girls and women are expected to compromise. Not to defer as such, but because large bags and clothing and heels hinder free movement.

So to use space as a man might, first ditch the bags and heels, and pack your gear into your trouser/jacket pockets. An androgynous female without curves may just need a swagger and some boots for confidence to Pass.

In the seventies, the artist/philosopher Adrain Piper dressed to pass as male, by using an afro wig, a tash and posturing with a cigarette in her mouth created her *Mythic Being* project. Piper added slogans to the

photographs of her male persona in the *I am the locus* drawings. Pipers posing as male demonstrates how the masculine position is one of focus. Our focus is on her as a man, as the world appears to revolve around him. Maybe this is a too feminist reading of the works, but Piper is liberated as a man.



## Small steps to Self determination

Sometimes we are Passing and sometimes we are not.  
Sometimes we are living authentically.  
And sometimes we are just pretending.  
Acting up and laughing out loud.  
Proud to break the binaries  
and transforming the world.  
Now we can rewrite the world.  
We can change and the laws can change with us.

## Routes to Freedom

If I could draw a map of our routes to freedom, I would have them all mapped out. A map with each route carefully plotted. If only the routes would fit on a single sheet, and not keep rising up and revolting. Our routes to freedom are not two dimensional. They twist and entwine and are almost extinguished at points in time.



We who survive are still seeking freedom. And to maintain the freedoms that have been obtained for us. Freedoms that have been fought for and thought out, imagined, created and legislated for. As freedom is not a mere Utopian Dream, our dreaming and drawings out are the beginning of our routes to freedom.

### Passing as an act of Trespass

Trespassing is an enactment, a practice and a performance. Above all trespassing is the reversal of power in a game regulated by the few over the many. If the game is defined by the rules, then the rules are the game defined. Defined by the few to rule over the many. We are expected to give time and work, not to take power. We are not expected to take power for ourselves. To enable ourselves with the power of self determination.

Breaking the binary 'definitions' is a huge step in gaining the power for self determination. A definition is not just a statement of 'fact', but of interpretation. \definitions are written into law through language. And if the law states that you are defined to receive the ultimate state sanction it can be fatal. The death penalty defines state sanctioned murder, for crimes such as treason. Treason is a crime where individuals might unsuccessfully take on state power to overthrow the state.

To Trespass is a lesser crime. Trespassing is the means by which individuals cross boundaries between the allowed and the unallowed. What we are allowed to do, may change over time and in different places. Some

individuals are not allowed to do anything because they are considered to be illegal peoples. An illegality based on the possession of land and property, place and situation, by the few instead of the many. So to trespass, is enacted with all the dangers of rule breaking, and the necessity of finding a place to belong and survive.

Passing, is to Trespass in broad daylight, in view of others. The others are without the knowledge that those who do Pass, are breaking the rules. Practising the art of Passing repeatedly weakens the rules that deem trespassing a crime, As rules weaken and are seen to be breaking, hope enables others to follow suit. And for others to join in with the TresPassing. In time it might make for a reversal in the law. And for a greater freedom for the self determination for all.





## Trespassing

Augusto Boal was concerned with breaking boundaries in the theatre. His spectators would actively take part as Spect-Actors, utilising theatrical forms to produce political theatre, a theatre that might not be a mere diversion, but thought an act provoking. In his work he sought to break boundaries that we all face, so as to change ourselves so that we might be able to change the world. For this was a theatre for all the oppressed.

And those living under the rule of strict law makers / dictators / military rule and under class oppressions.

Boal uses the methodology of trespassing to transform and transgress the laws of theatre. For Boal the theatre is more than a stage upon which Actors act.

“By transforming fiction, he (the Spect-Actor) is transferred himself.

This invasion is a symbolic trespass. It symbolises all the acts of trespass we have to commit in order to free ourselves from what oppresses us. If we do not trespass (not necessarily violently), if we do not go beyond our cultural norms, our state of oppression, the limits imposed on us, even the law itself (which should be transformed) - if we do not trespass in this we can never be free. To free ourselves is to trespass, and to transform. It is through a creation of the new that that which has not existed begins to exist. To free yourself is to trespass. To trespass is to exist. To free ourselves is to exist.

To free yourself is to exist.”

## Shortcuts

But before we seize power, I should tell you of the shortcuts I have taken. For I must confess that I have not always taken the straight and narrow path. As a child I might wander from the pavement, across the grass and along the well trodden path made by walking feet. Many feet wore out the grass and muddied these tracks. But these dirt tracks are shortcuts. A shortcut and a more direct route than the official metalled path. Even in the rain there was an appeal to walking on the muddy walkway. Away from the traffic and the prescribed route. Or I might create my own diversion and make my own route.

I had been repeatedly told from an early age to walk along these shortcuts. For if the track was obviously being used, then after a number of years it would become a legal right of way. So we had the power to walk and claim a little bit of land for us the people. This idea about rights of way stuck in my mind, so I was happy as a teenager to work on the clearance of overgrown and neglected footpaths. And once walking the countryside, I stupidly argued the case for a right of way through farmers land, with the aid of a map. Even as the farmer was holding a gun. I did not shy away from my quest and let me through eventually. And I walked on. Passing by.

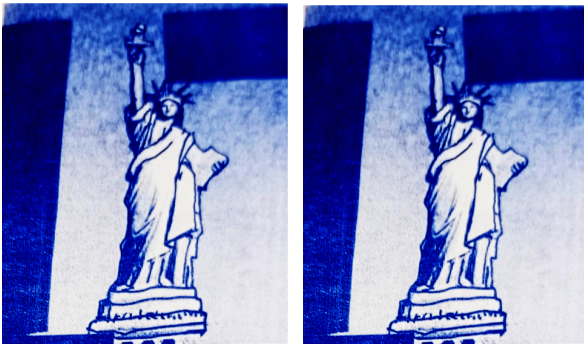




## Trespass - A Diversion from the Law

The mass trespass, by a group of politically motivated ramblers walking on privately owned land in the 1930's, eventually led to a change in the law. These fluctuating laws determine where and when walking is off limits on private lands, and do change when people fight for the right to roam. Those privileged with the ownership of this land might legally block walker's righters to walk over the lands. Look at the law more closely. In the UK there was more common land in the past, used by all to live on or for animals to graze. Enclosure acts took this land from the people and it was given away to the already powerful, to keep these already prominent landowners loyal. Because what can be given by the powerful can be taken away.

The Mass trespass walking movement that became the Ramblers should be considered alongside the many Squatters rights campaigns. When it is too expensive to rent anywhere to live, some seek a safer place than the streets to live. And risk breaking laws of illegal occupation. And of trespass.



## Trespassing Too

Trespassing is the breaking of a boundary normally associated with the Law of the Land. The Land is owned by the privileged few. Enslaved peoples might be considered to be tied to the Land, that is they are the property of the Landowners. For the laws of land and property go hand-in-hand. These laws exist to enhance the riches of the privileged few, at the expense of the many.

If we do not have land rights, we do not have any right to call a place home. Vagabondage and vagrancy are historical terms for a homelessness that is related to the laws of trespassing. A Trespass based on homelessness or wandering between places where an individual is not allowed to belong. And the acts of wandering/ roaming/ tramping between possible employment in a place where an individual does not have a right to belong, is fraught with danger. This unbelonging provides a freedom of sorts. An insecure freedom, that is not a safe place. And a freedom that can be taken away. It is a freedom because those who do not belong are not incarcerated for being free. But when those that do not belong are caught, any 'evidence' that laws have been broken, will lead to their containment. As those who do not belong are removed from society they do not belong to. For the evidence of illegality of those who do not belong might be that of an immigrant considered to be 'illegal', because they may be committing a crime of 'paperlessness'. For the administration or governance agents need to account for and keep tabs on all those who enter and exist within the boundaries of place.



The fear of immigration into 'one's country' and a fear of large influxes of people or ideas, fuels imaginations. Not just the imaginations of those who feel they have the most to lose, but also those who might come to power on an anti immigrant wave of fear.

The entry of many non allowed workers into the jobs market changes the conditions of work for all. Laws to protect the allowed workers do not refer to the non allowed worker. So in effect regulations to protect workers are lessened across the board. An influx of workers is blamed for poorer working conditions, because the influx increases competition in the jobs market. Not only do the immigrant workers get the blame for what is happening, but there is so little work that all workers fall into debt. And be liable to become homeless even when employed. Liable then to break the laws of trespass.

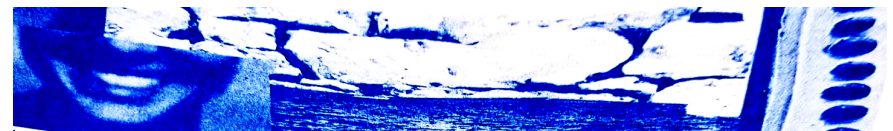
It is a vicious circle that sucks people in. When the confidence of workers to fight back against poor living conditions is broken, it's a downward freefall. Fair working conditions that have been fought for by the cooperation of workers, such as the 8 hour day and the workless weekend are now a distant memory for many. As distant as the only day's holiday being Christmas day. We have been successfully divided and ruled . Apparently.

So have the rules propelled the game into a crash course, where those who rule have disadvantaged themselves as well. The financially privileged may believe that money can buy security, but if societies fail

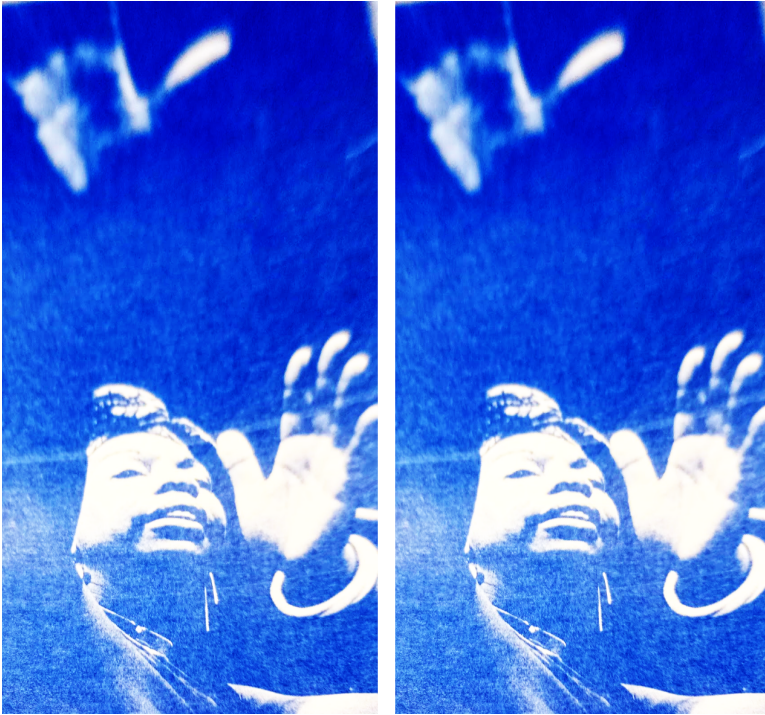
then we all fail. For there are few freedoms in a state at war. And if freedom has to be fought for, are we not always fighting for freedom? For the defiance of orders is what those who rule us fear the most. For the people must be contained and in order and under the control of those that do rule.

## Divisions

When Ancient Greek and Roman civilisations and democracies flourished, some people were considered to be worth voting rights and others not. The People did have voting rights , but not women, children or enslaved workers. So there were classes of People and not-People. A clear cut binary division, obscured by the further division of the not-People by the People. The scattered division of the many against the few People created a hierarchy, with the People heading up the top of the triangle at its apex. A pyramid. The not-People were placed in competition with each other according to rules , regulations and whims of the People. People named the not-People with their language. People formed the culture of the not-People with their culture. The languages and cultures of the not-People , would have been a threat to the People. The People were running the show and they wanted civilisation determined their way. And any show of self determination would be seen as an act of resistance to being ruled.







### In Reversal

Lazy stereotypes demonise those that are named and shamed. Language is the tool by which the enemy is first determined. An enemy of those that rule, might be named lazy. A Lazy worker is a hard worker, a worker who is enslaved. An enslaved worker is expected to work all hours for no pay under the threat of violence and the 'disciplining' of actual violence. The Lazy workers' hard work built our civilisations. And there were many lazy workers. So many lazy workers, that those who ruled needed to label hard work as lazy work. An about-turn. A reversal in language. A reversal in their language. A language that created the rules, the regulations, the laws of order and the laws of

nature. Those that ruled had it all sewn up. Jealous. Envious. Those that ruled knew we wanted a piece of the action. So they invented aspiration, to stop us manning the barricades. And we kept on working, harder and harder. Lazy and unproductively till the end.

### Common Routes / Different Trajectories

But it need not end there. We have common routes. And we might deviate and travel along different trajectories; but we all want the power for our own self determination. But all of Us, are also Them. Us and Them is not a clear cut binary division. It might also be a continuum Us/Them. And if we are generous then we also want self determination/freedom for Them as well as Us.

Nelson Mandela spent many years in captivity, imprisoned for fighting apartheid as the leader of the African National Congress. In his memoir the 'Long Walk to Freedom', Mandela states how he had a 'hunger for freedom' for his own people and also for all peoples:

'I knew as well as I knew anything that the oppressor must be liberated just as sure as the oppressed. A man who takes away another man's freedom is a prisoner of hatred. He is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness. I am not truly free if I am taking away someone else's freedom, just as surely as I am not free when my freedom is taken from me. The oppressed and the oppressor are robbed of their humanity.'



Apartheid separated the black majority from the white minority in South Africa. Minority rulers need to divide and rule to keep power from the majority. By segregations. Authorities like to single out individuals to applaud or terrorize when a movement for change occurs. Individuals who are at the forefront as spokespeople and figureheads. So those that terrorise can pop them off one at a time. Martin Luther King Jr as spokesperson for the Civil Rights Movement in the USA peacefully challenged the segregations and sought equality for all people of colour. For he was fighting on behalf of striking cleaners at his untimely death.

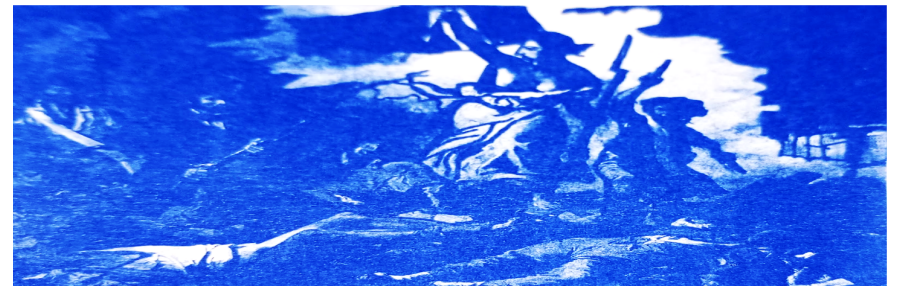
The quests for equality have diverged and been entwined. Protests have connected those who fight injustice and war, against the slave trade, racism and colonialism. And protesting for women's rights, people of colour's rights, gay / lesbian / bisexual / trans / queer / intersex rights. Disability rights and immigrant rights. Each protest devises a route to self determination. By boycotts and occupations. By critiquing the culture, laws and language of those whose demands are discriminatory. Reworking, remaking and reinventing. Reversing the strategies that authorities use to enforce difference.

## Breaking Binaries

At the point of High European colonisation the imperialist stance was quivering. To preempt any challenges to their authority, the English used science in a culture war. Scientific Darwinism utilised divide and rule strategies; classifying and placing white

English people ahead and the Irish, Mediterranean, Asian and African peoples, lower on their scale. This state sanctioned racism not only created a justification for racial discriminations, but also for divide and rule strategies.

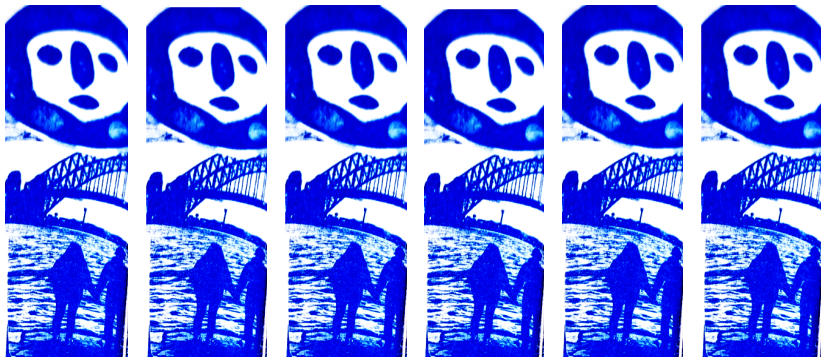
The categorisation craze so beloved of scientific Victorians, divided, named and examined different species and people. Collecting and exhibiting. And evaluating their findings. And sometimes it was black and white. A division. Between the best and the worst. Or the right and the wrong.



Or men and women. The seeds for breaking this binary were sown by second wave feminists. Feminists proposed gender as a means to explain the socialisation of female to femininity and male to masculinity. Gender as socialised behaviour was thus separated from the sexed body. And to defy the idea that biology is destiny. Feminists were reading representations and rewriting language. Reinventing institutions. Reentering the workplace in positions of power. And defining patriarchy as the power that rules via institutional structures, dividing us by privileging men over women.



Post-structuralist thought breaks the binaries. Foucault uncovered the life of Herculeine Barbin, an individual raised as a girl and when examined as an adult found to be male. We might now think of Herculeine to be intersexed, as the sex/gender boundaries are less pronounced. For Herculeine the pressure to be Normal or Pass as Normal must have been intense. Yet classified in the biological category of 'pseudo male hermaphrodite', the classification implies that s/he was not even a real/ Normal / adequate hermaphrodite. And somewhat deviant.



## Deviant Diversions

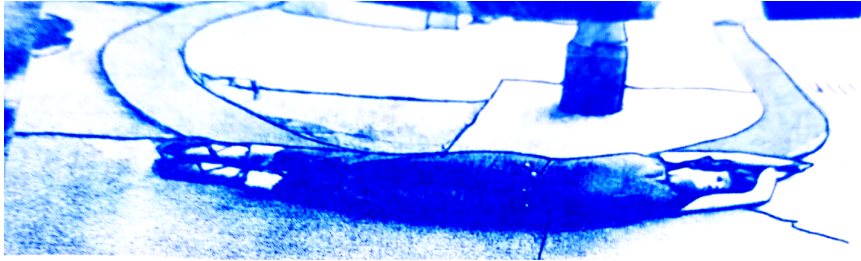
Trespassing is the action of the deviant, passing boundaries of the not allowed into the allowed. And successfully appearing Normal. Even if later caught. A deviance is a behaviour or attribute of someone or a group of people who are considered Normal. Sometimes this lack of Normality is criminalised. Incarcerations to separate the deviant from the Normal occur, even when criminal acts have not been committed. The importance of keeping up appearances, to not upsetting the Normal applecart is widely held by those who promote Normality. Deviance

is a sociological term, that describes in different societies where the allowed and not allowed, does differ in time and place. And the borders of Normality are fluid, some people who do not fit the Normality test may have special attributes that lead to their acceptance by normals. And where deviance is not visible, the individual may pass as Normal.

Who but the mad, would gain the most from breaking the deviant / normal, insane / sane, homosexual / heterosexual dualities. The turnabout for mad / queer thought is Foucault's breakdown / breakthrough book, 'The History of Madness'. Foucault is scathing of 'deviant' / mad peoples being separated from society in the great Incarcerations, where little was done to treat symptoms of madness/mental distress successfully. And the whole system fell prey to Unreason, as the maintenance of the mental institution was deemed to be the main goal of the system, concludes Foucault.

Later in 'Psychiatric Power', Foucault considers how the institution was a place where young girls were mentored to become hysterical at their doctors/mentors wishes. And a place to take those denounced as mentally unfit, with little regard for the facts. Did the Incarceration model lead to the myth of curelessness for those who suffered with mental illness and were forever labelled mad /deviant.





Foucault's writings give an intellectual kicking to those who deem the vilified and the scapegoat unfit for consideration. He reconsiders how we read the world. Line by line. And sentence by sentence. Laws had deemed homosexual acts as illegal. So homosexuality had been associated with furtive behaviours, rule breaking, criminality and madness. Incarcerations and treatments. Medical, religious and intellectual arguments were utilized to uphold tradition. But collective defiance steadily broke the laws. And Queer rights in the continuum mingles lesbian / gay/ bisexual / trans / intersex thought.

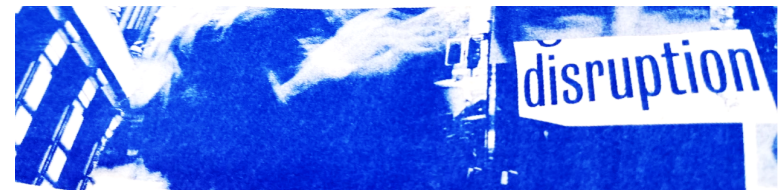
But where desire that is not straight is deemed to be a deviance, performing / passing for straight is still a necessary device. Passing as another gender may be interpreted as transgendered behaviour. And when females try to pass as male for safe passage or to define themselves as male it is loaded erotically.

Foucault's biographical writing on the hermaphrodite Herculine Barbin highlights the difficulty of an individual fitting into a society whose sex and gender is not clearly classified. The sexually ambiguous have not only been classified as deviant, but surgically reconstructed as normal, as either male or female.

Trans and intersex individuals fight to have their gender recognised with or without surgery. A gender which may not be male or female but another.

The biologist Fausto Sterling challenges the biological model of gendered duality. Critiquing the normalisation of individuals to a fixed male or female gender dependent on genital size/function or reproductive ability to be female. The normalisation is surgically enacted on small children without concern for the child's needs or desires. So as not to cause an upsetting of the Normal and its biological sex dyad. Playfully Fausto Sterling conceived a five gender 'scale' to explain the gender continuum. Now the ties of gender have unfurled the boundaries to define oneself as other to female or male are limited only by the imagination. But how far will such self determination be accommodated?

If the gender dyad that is so important in informing our identity, has been broken how will it liberate us from the laws of other dualities? And how does it inform our understanding of ourselves in relation to others? Could we use this understanding of ourselves in relation to others? Could we use this understanding to find a way forward in self determination, if Us and Them is a continuum?





## Distractions

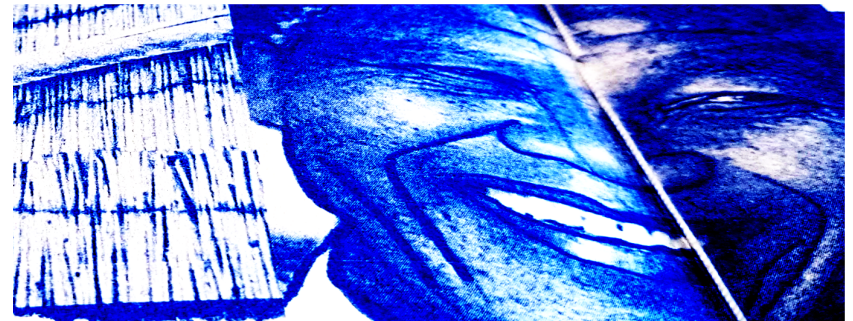
And if we can acknowledge that Us and Them is a continuum, Us/Them, will we view other people as so different. If we recognise our differences for what they are? Will we name / reclaim / denounce other people as intrinsically other? Ryszard Kapuscinski, in 'The Others', suggests why we might distance ourselves from those who we deem as Other, 'The Other is a looking glass in which I see myself and in which I am observed, it is a mirror that unmask and exposes me, something we would prefer to avoid.' This two way recognition, if recognised, reveals our identities to ourselves and each other. We may be unsettled by the experience, but if we can accept this diversity, we no longer need to be divided by those who would rule over us.

Augusto Boal again states, 'to transform is to be transformed. The action of transforming is, in itself transforming.' Insiders and outsiders are transforming societies. But change brings hostility from those whose power must diminish. The counter arguments from those who resist the self determination of others, whilst closely guarding their own, are persuasive when they come armed with threats. Are they a sign of failing adequacy or an inability to move along with progressive values?

However, it is a threat that we have to take seriously. Armed threats turn to armed conflict at the flick of a trigger. And Trespassing under the threat of death is a dangerous and sometimes necessary business.

## The Road to Self Determination

So how do we begin to walk the road of self determination? Nelson Mandela had many years of imprisonment to consider how freedom might be achieved. He emphasized that the oppressed and oppressor must both be liberated:



'The truth is that we are not yet free, we have merely achieved the freedom to be free, the right not to be oppressed. We have not taken the final step of our journey, but the first step on a longer and even more difficult road. For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others. The true test of our devotion to freedom is only just beginning.'

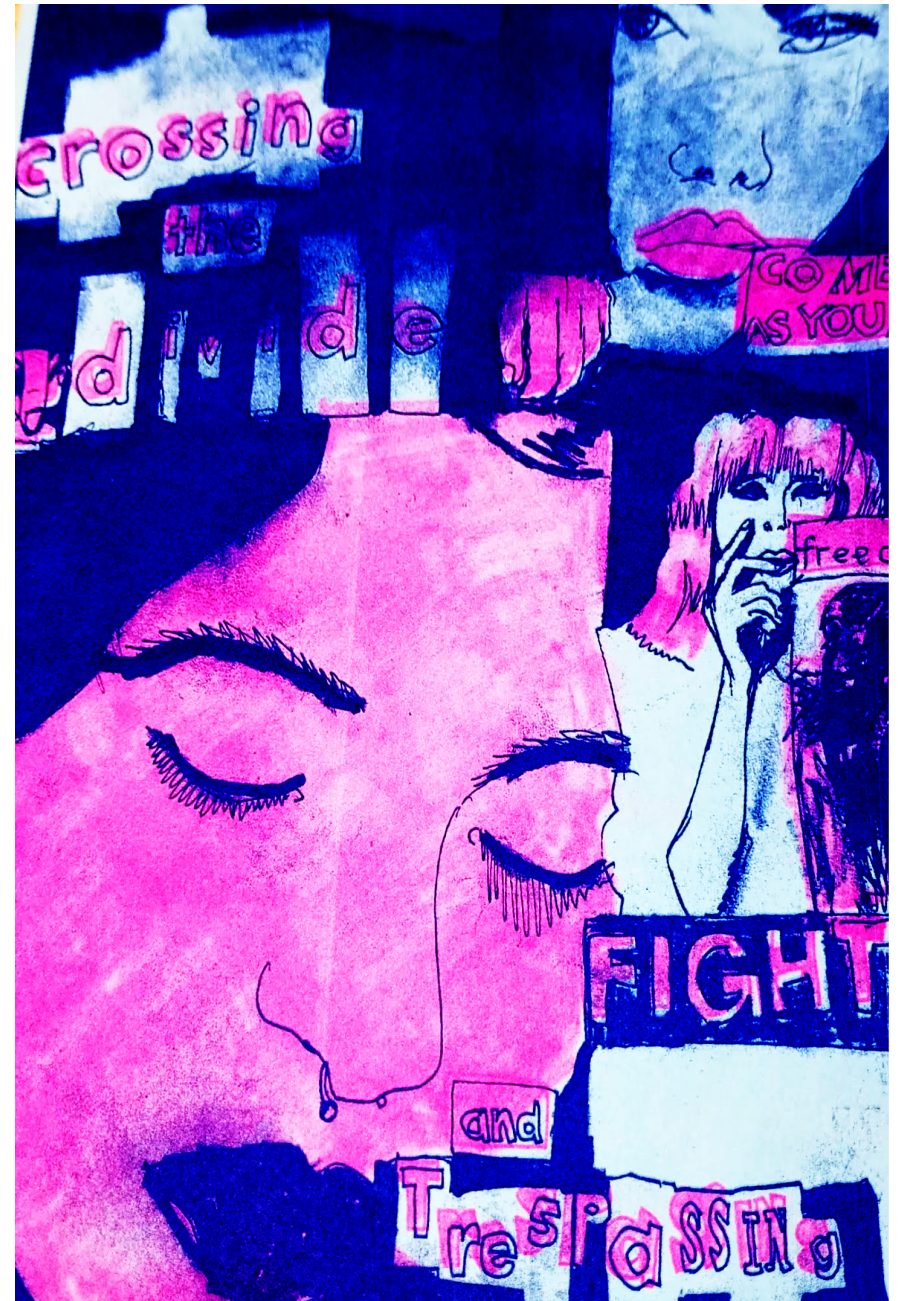
Nelson Mandela was acclaimed as a fighter for freedom when apartheid was abolished in South Africa. But also considered to be a terrorist by some. Imprisoned for his part in the fight against the ghettoisation / apartheid regime. A regime historically formed by European colonising forces. The counter resistance of colonial regimes and the expansionist desires of other states, has been the source of much warfare. Pre-capitalist mercantile



economies were expansionist, provoking wars to claim land , monies and peoples. The communist /dictatorships of the proletariat offered no more freedom to the majority of the people. So to claim power for ourselves may seem Utopian and counter to how states are expected to run.

### Determined Diversions

But power is in a state of transition, between groups of people. And the powerful do eventually lose their power and privilege and die. So we should not be put off claiming the power to meet our needs, whether we act in plain sight or clandestinely. To act alone is a lonely pursuit, if sometimes necessary. To trespass boundaries set by an authority is not without danger. But a successful mass trespassing might start in a small way. And in a similar fashion to chain migration, mass trespassing really needs someone on the inside. One who works on the inside , and can let a few others by the back door, they can then communicate for more to come and join them. And then there is a surge forward that can not easily be contained.







## CAN YOU OPEN THE DOORS TO FREEDOM WITHOUT THE KEYS?

### Who is the Prisoner?

Ben Okri's 'freedom artists' daub on walls the question 'Who is the prisoner?', in his book 'The Freedom Artist'. And in my search for doors to freedom, I will consider locked in environments, the prisons and who are they for? Okri opens the book stating that we are all prisoners, and I would like to quote a short passage to demonstrate how some of us feel the effects of this prison.

From Chapter 6: 'It is written, in a lesser legend, that in a prison the size of a country there are prisoners who had been there for generations. Their original crimes had been forgotten in the fog of time. Families gave rise to families and were scattered through the length and breadth of the vast prison. There were whole tribes of eternal prisoners.

At first the prison was modest. Then the accumulation of acts designated crimes led to astronomical multiplication of prisoners. Anything could be a crime: deviation from normal thought, unusualness in dress, questions about the nature of time, speculations about the nature of the soul, paintings that distort reality, writings that cause unease, the inclination to think too much. The most serious crimes were those that questioned the nature of reality.

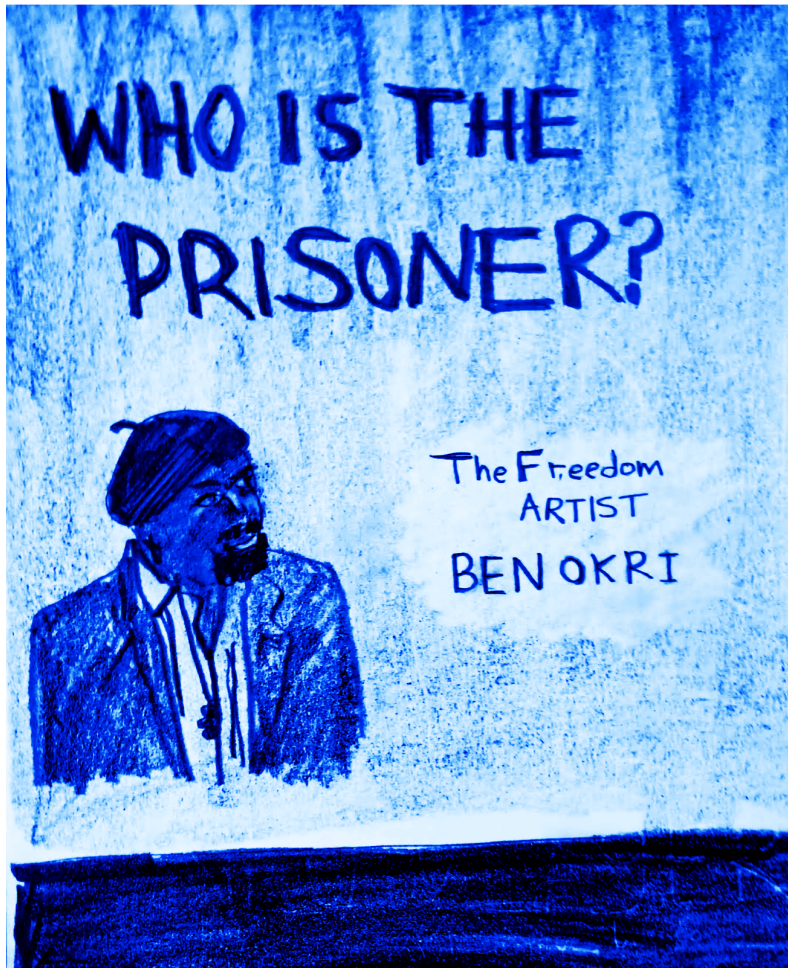
At some time or other most people found themselves on the wrong side of the law. It became necessary to extend the prison till it took on the proportions of a country. Then it was proposed that an entire continent be devoted to containing the exploded criminal



population that was humanity. Soon there were more people in prison than outside it.

The prison became the world.'

Can we escape this prison? Can we escape any kind of prison and find the doors to freedom?



### The Locked Door and the Keeper of the Keys

Why are the doors locked? To keep those inside safe or stop those inside from leaving? To inspire fear of internment in the outside population or to keep the wrong ones inside, without hope of escape.

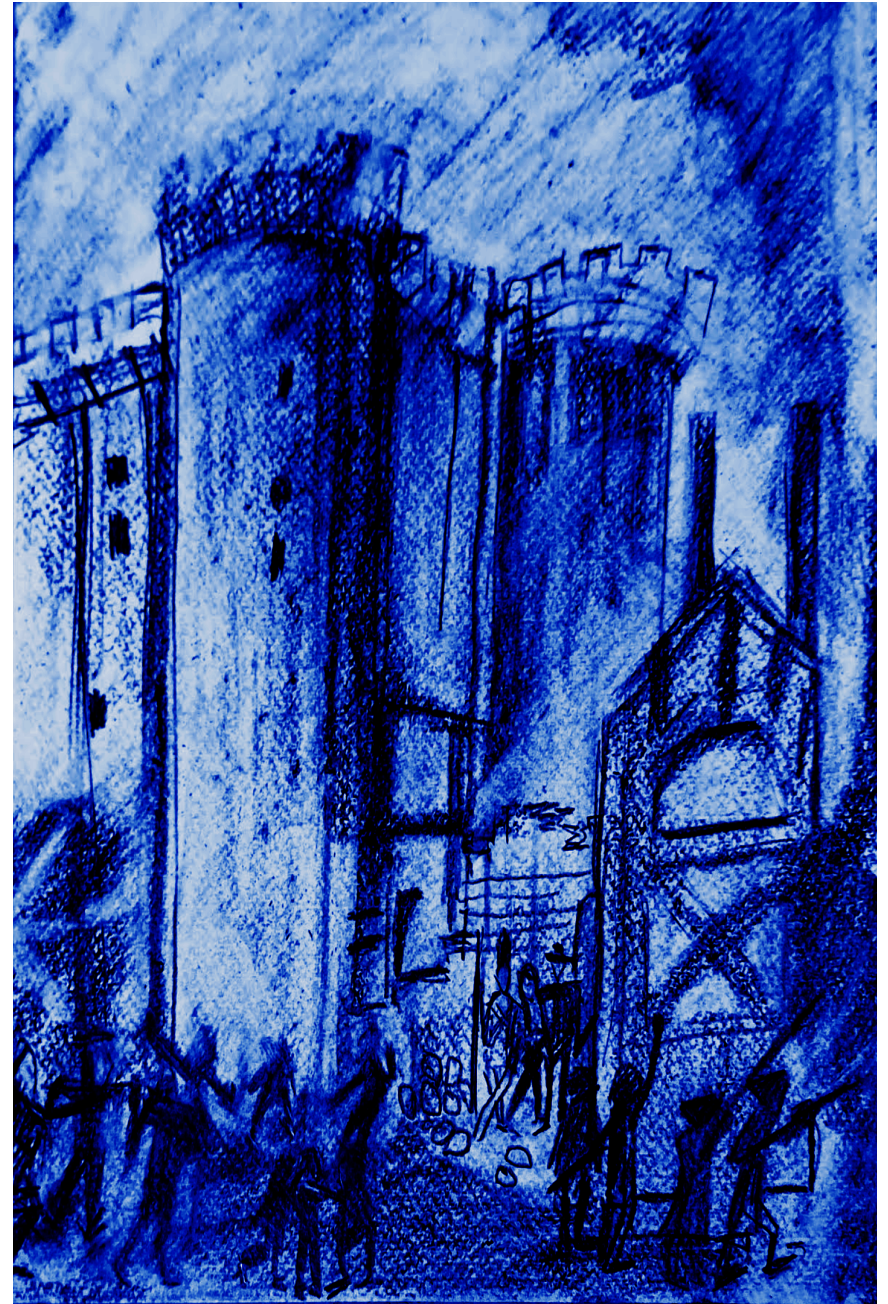
Behind the locked door is the forbidden. Forbidden to know and hidden away. Secreted from society some people spend their time and their life behind locked doors. In these secure environments the inmates must make their home. The incarcerated must create a home space, in these places where there is no privacy and no right to a private life. All that is private is also public here. The authorities have control over every aspect of the prisoners or the patients' lives, behind the locked doors and sometimes barely barred windows.



But who are the ones who lock the doors and are the keepers of the keys? How do they hold such power? Before the fall of the ancient regime in France, the power was firmly in the hands of the aristocrats. Written by Charles Perrault 'Bluebeard's Castle', is a story about a libertine who murders his brides behind the locked doors of his castle. How was this fiction suitable for children to read? The story was meant to be a moral tale to warn of the dangers of curiosity? However Perrault delights in this telling of this tale, where his rogue Bluebeard warns his new bride not to use a particular small key. This key unlocks a torture chamber filled with previous brides. Perrault is particularly concerned with the details of the anxious bride when she does use the forbidden key. The bride discovers the secrets hidden behind the locked door for herself.

Bluebeard's previous wives hang up against the walls, the room covered in blood. The key is tainted with the blood of the brides, and cannot be wiped clean. The new wife hides this key, but under interrogation, Bluebeard retrieves the bloody key. The new wife must play for time to be rescued, with the help of her sister and the brothers of the brides murdered.

It's a strange tale which tells us more about the libertine flavour of the French court, and how they might amuse themselves, than as a useful warning to children. Unless the children are to be warned against the power of those who hold the power and are the keepers of the keys.





## Can you Open the Doors to Freedom Without the Keys?

The storming of the Bastille prison, in Paris, on 14 July 1789, was the spark that fired the prolonged French revolution. The Bastille housed only a few prisoners at that time, but included the infamous Marquis de Sade. The freeing of the prisoners was a symbolic act rather than significant in terms of numbers.

To attack establishment carceral institutions was not something new. In London only 9 years earlier, on 6 June 1870, the Gordon Riots rioters ransacked the notorious Newgate Gaol and freed 300 prisoners, before heading to the Fleet prison. The discontent evident in the Gordon Riots was led by the anti catholic popularist Lord Gordon, who had stirred up his crowd of supporters to riot. But were the frenzied activities of the mob essentially anti-establishment? The Newgate Gaol was later rebuilt with its notoriety intact.

The physical destruction of the Bastille was as significant as the freeing of prisoners. It was a blow to the ruling establishment of the ancient regime. A sign that the times were changing and a new order would be put in place, by setting fire to the prisons in defiance of the ruling order. These places of punishment and houses of correction where the laws of the land were implemented were destroyed, as the mob rejected the Law. The nine day disruption of the Gordon Riots only temporarily threatened London. However, the destruction of the Bastille prison was the beginning of the end for royal and religious rule in France. The

Bastille prison destroyed and flattened, the emptied space where it once stood, now has a monument that commemorates the French Revolution.







## Imagining Hysteria: Poses and Performances

Asti Hustveldt in her study of 'Medical Muses', considers the lives of the hysterics. And the doctors of hysteria, Charcot and his colleagues at the Salpetriere Hospital. Hysteria was a difficult disease to define, but under Charcot's reign at the Salpetriere hospital much visual evidence was recorded.

Andre Broulliet's painting (and later etching by Lurat) depicts a lecture on hysteria with Charcot demonstrating the effects of hypnosis on 'Blanche'. The cleverly composed painting centres the doctor, lecturer and performer Charcot. To his left upon the table sits a number of instruments which he will prod and provoke his patient. Further left his audience of doctors and



students sit or stand absorbed in the performance by Charcot, Blanche and his colleague who holds Blanche stable whilst she swoons backwards. His eyes fall down upon her breasts. Blanche is somewhat undressed, barely keeping herself decent. With little assistance, but from the elderly nurse and ward girl standing on her right, holding her hands out to catch her as she slumps down.

Doctor Jean-Martin Charcot, did himself pose for his portrait. Posing for a photograph, as 'the Napoleon of the Neuroses', with his right hand tucked inside his coat like Napoleon's distinguished stance. A copy of which was treasured by his pupil Sigmund Freud.

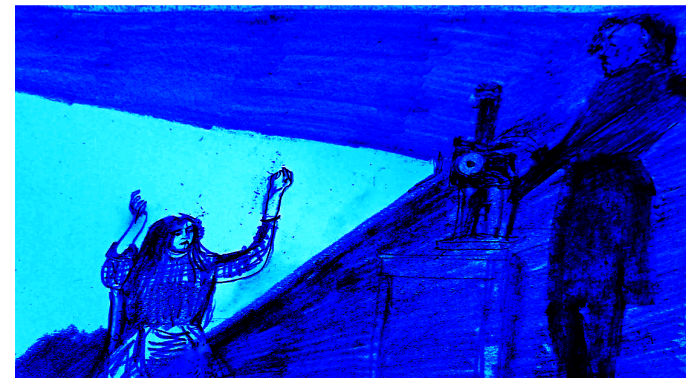
Photography was used most successfully in bringing Charcot's work to a wider audience. The girl-woman 'Augustine', sits in her hospital gown on the bed in the photographic studio within Salpêtrière hospital. Her gown sometimes falls down, as the posed photographs become more elaborate and dramatic. These photographs recorded the hysteria in action, recorded the patients reacting to the photographer and recorded the locked-in experiments on the hysteria ward.

Regnard takes 'Augustine's' photograph entitled 'Passionate Attitudes: Ecstasy', whilst she is having one of her 'fits' in the photographic studio. Many of the photos of hysterics are blurry, because the hysteric moves too fast for the shutter speed. But 'Augustine' poses long enough for Regnard to take a striking and

well composed photograph.

Husveldt details the extent of the locked in experiments at Salpêtrière Hospital. To define the limits of this diagnosis Hysteria / Hystero-Epilepsy, which was meant to affect only those in the menstruating years. Novel experiments were carried out, to find out exactly what? What is this science that uses hypnosis to play with the patient/ ward girl 'Augustine'; so that she becomes rigid and can be placed between two chairs and no further support? As if in a magical pose. What were these experiments trying to prove? Or was it just a source of amusement that they could do this act and photograph the evidence.

Crueler still, 'Blanche' barebacked, had the date traced in large letters and numerals with an instrument on her back. Strangely the raised marks lasted for a month. The doctors may have decided it was something to do with the hysterical nature of 'Blanche', rather than the force of the doctor administering harm to his female patient. Like in so many of the tests.







## The Locked In Experiments

Hustveldt has delved into the scientific published papers on Hysteria to find the case studies of hysterics and to understand their life stories. Such as the hysterical history of Augustine, in fact the teenager Louise, with her case notes written up by the doctor Bourneville.

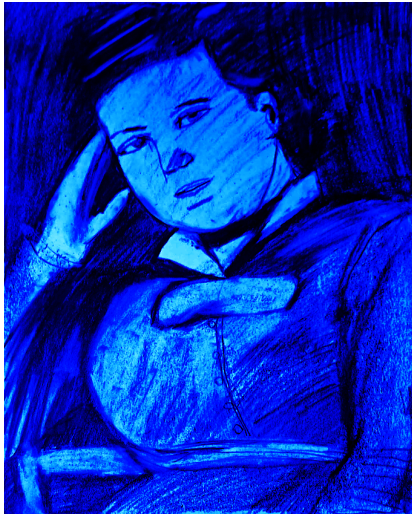
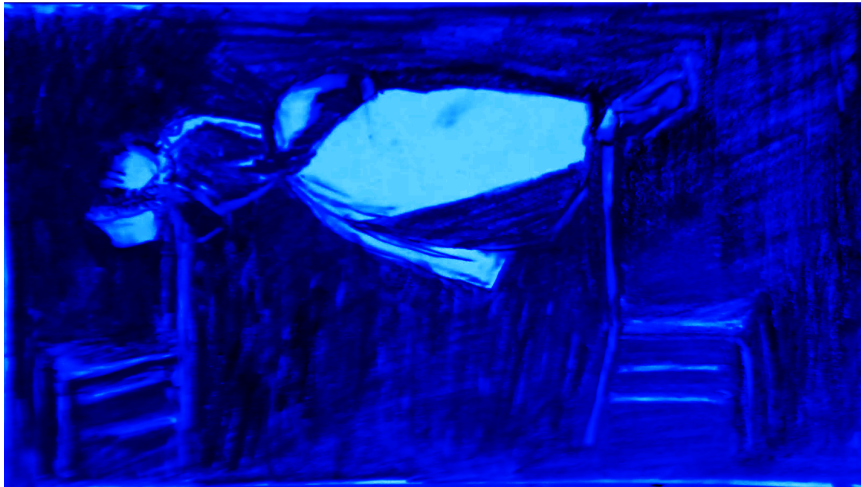
However, Charcot, the leading figure in the discovery of Hysteria, was not particularly interested in what the young women had to say about their experiences/traumas. Charcot was focused on the discovery of the symptoms that lead to hysteria, and thus the results of the experiments.

Hysteria or Hystero-Epilepsy was a strange diagnosis. Did the 'epileptic' style fits, the 'paralyses, spasms and convulsions' happen before the admission to hospital or was it through the diagnostic process and subsequent incarceration and testing programme that these symptoms become apparent. Did the testing process cause the 'fits' or other neuroses, leading to an inability to recover? Were these young teenagers merely lab rats, to be abandoned to the mad wards when the testing became too much for them? And to work within the hospital whether they recovered or not.

'Augustine' originally worked as a ward girl before the diagnosis of Hystero-Epilepsy and was under the testing regime for 18 months. Before 'recovering'. Working as a ward girl again, but still a 'volunteer' for the experimental treatments, including hypnosis, she 'relapsed'. She was taken back to the hysteria ward and



further treated. Older and wiser, she made several attempts to escape this medical prison.



## Escaping the Establishment

The young women who were deemed to be hysterical, were considered to be somewhere between sane and mad, but still incarcerated for life. So was it any surprise that the hysteric 'Augustine', real name Louise Gleides, escaped from Salpêtrière Hospital in disguise.

This was not her first attempt to escape. She was nineteen and had been in the Salpêtrière Hospital for five years. First as a ward girl, then as a patient and a ward girl again, before her final 'illness'. She cannot escape the testing and experiments even when she works as a ward girl. She attempts to escape by running away. Even damaging her knee before being brought back. But she does make it out, for Augustine has a lover M who she escapes to.

According to Husveldt, Bourneville added to the case notes that she was thinking about a mysterious individual called M. All 'Augustine' would say was the initial M, when talking about him, because that's all Bourneville needed to know. How had she met M, had he been at one of the public lectures?

Augustine spent years being scientifically treated and played with by the doctors. What was the alternative to escape, but a life being experimented on or hard work as a ward girl or in the laundry or worse life on the mad wards. She had the sense to plan and make escape attempts because that was the only way she was going to work her way out.



Augustine first attempted to leave, when she had been confined to a cell as a patient, after much agitation, breaking windows and tearing her straitjacket. After 2 months confinement she breaks free, but is found in a cold bath and sent back to the ward. Later In July she was caught escaping from a concert at the Salpetriere. She injured herself on her return to the ward, falling from a chair and breaking her kneecap. Finally, in September she escapes disguised as a man.



## The Cells

Malcolm X said this about captivity;

'Any person who claims to have deep feeling for other human beings should think a long, long time before he votes to have other men kept behind bars - caged. I am not saying there shouldn't be prisons, but there shouldn't be bars, a man never reforms. He will never forget. He never will get completely over the memory of the bars'.

These words of Malcolm X are cited in Olivia Laing's book, 'Everybody: A Book about Freedom. Laing considers how imprisonment in cells and punishments affect the mind and bodies of those held captive.

'Confined to a cell, Malcolm was able to see that he had been imprisoned since he was born, and to consider the possibilities of fighting back.'

Laing acknowledges that the access to the prison library at the progressive Norfolk Prison Colony with its abundance of history books, especially the anti slavery and abolition collection, gave Malcolm Little the knowledge to rehabilitate himself. Malcolm's reading in prison changed him to be a man who wanted to educate other prisoners about systematic racism and to fight back. Knowledge is power, and after leaving prison Malcolm X gained the power to lead the Nation of Islam. A power too revolutionary for the system to ignore.

Furthermore, Laing states that, 'Anyone who attempts to enlarge the freedoms of the body has to reckon with the institution of the prison, one of the state's most formidable weapons for limiting and curtailing emancipation movements of all kinds and itself the focus of centuries of activism and reform'.

Even the non violent civil rights movement under Martin Luther King Jr's leadership, led to many arrests and imprisonments for acts of civil disobedience. A leading figure in the movement Baylin Rustin imprisoned many times and set on to the chain gang



with its pointless, but dangerous hole digging. Baylin concurs with Malcolm X that those imprisoned never forget the incarceration, returning to society with a 'heightened resentment and desire for revenge'.

So what is the point of imprisonment if it's not the rehabilitation that the reformer John Howard desired? Laing suggests that prison is an 'inescapable system for free labour, continuing the practices of slavery under the guise of punishment'. Those who leave without any money or support will of course be rearrested and return.

And what effect does imprisonment have on the mind of those imprisoned? Edith Jacobson, a psychoanalyst in 1930's Berlin, was imprisoned by the Nazi's for her political work. Laing details how Jacobson wrote about the mental ill health of the female prisoners and their experiences of depersonalization.

'Prisoner after prisoner complained of feeling as if their body or some part of it - a limb, the genitals, the face, the bladder- was no longer theirs. These 'estranged body parts', might feel bigger than they really were, or tiny, numb, foreign even dead. People described a sensation of being outside themselves, of watching someone else altogether go through the motions of movement or speech. Under the crushing pressure of prison, body and psyche had become unhitched'.

Jacobson thought that the 'sadistic' nature of the guards led to their strict enforcement of the rules, and

the subsequent 'depersonalised' response of the female prisoners.



## Closing the Asylums

If you have heard of Franco Basaglia it would be because he was known as the man who closed the asylums in Italy. The process of reform began in the 1960s with experiments in Gorizio, but Trieste is the place where all began to happen.

The director of the large Asylum in Trieste was Franco Basaglia in the 1970s. Basaglia was the figurehead of the Psichiatria Democratica (Democratic Psychiatry) movement, who led the process of reforming the large



asylums across Italy, and the Law 180 (the Basaglia Law) against forced treatment in hospitals helped the closure of all the asylums in Italy.

Trieste was at the forefront of this revolution in care, where community mental centres and a small emergency ward in the hospital were put in place. A bar and restaurant was established to be run by patients called *Il Posto delle Fragole* (Wild Strawberries), now it is an ex-patient cooperative. Most importantly none of these facilities had locked doors or used restraint. Vincenzo Passante states in *Asylum Magazine*, 'The system was, and is, sustainably based on negotiation and compromise rather than coercion'.

Passante reports that the changing regional political system had led to a different approach to care, influenced by the far right. The reforms that had broad support in the 1970s are now being changed with non-Basaglian influenced management being put in place and the services being cut so not functioning as successfully as they used to.

According to John Foot in his comprehensive text on the work Basaglia, *The Man who Closed the Asylums: Franco Basaglia and the Revolution in Mental Health Care*, Basaglia almost gave up the project to close the Asylums after the incident in Gorizio.

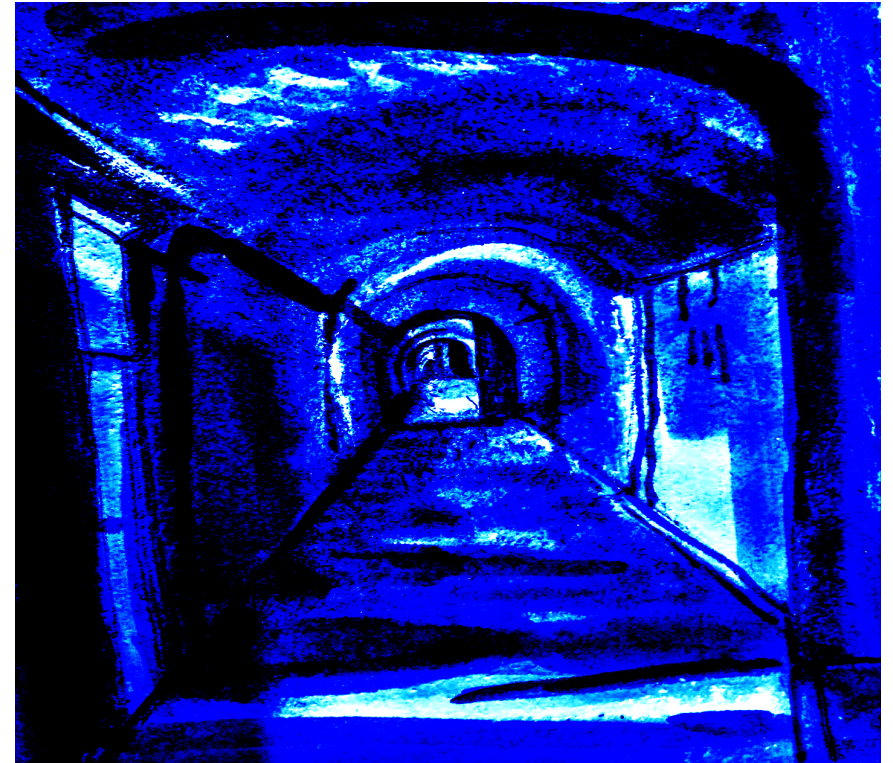
Gorizio was where Basaglia and his team experimented with opening up the wards, and having general meetings run by the patients. The incident, the murder by Miklus of his wife happened on a visit home from the

ward. Basaglia and Salvich on his team were to be prosecuted as well as Miklus, but only Miklus, deemed criminally insane, served time for murder.

Yet Basaglia didn't give up the project, finding that the therapeutic communities that had originally inspired him were not enough. The reforms could easily be reversed if they merely changed the nature of ward life. Basaglia was intent on closing the institutions and he did so at Trieste, and Franca, his wife and others continued the work after his death.

Would the reforms have happened without the revolutionary mood of 1967-8? The popularity of Basaglia's book, *The Negated Institution*, about the Gorizian experiment in opening up the institution, came at the same time as R.D. Laing's *The Divided Self* and *The Politics of Experience*, and *The Dialectics of Experience* Conference. Also Goffman's *Asylums*, Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti - Oedipus*, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation*; all theorising to understand the institutions in place, so as to radically reform them. In practice by destroying them and the need for them. The 1968 movement's slogan was 'la libertà è terapeutica' (Freedom is therapeutic).





### Can you Work your Way Out of the Doors to Freedom?

If an incarcerated individual has any agency it is through their imagination that the imprisoned person can set themselves free.

But why do so many people find themselves to be prisoners? What is the purpose of mass incarcerations? Have Incarcerationists long forgotten the value of rehabilitation and the facilities merely punishment spaces now? Or cynically a place where



cheaply paid work from prisoners happens? And experimental treatments are still performed on vulnerable and mentally distressed adults in hospitals and prisons, such as ECT.

Because incarceration is big business in for-profit prisons, claiming money from the state authorities. This profiteering business is known as the Prison Industrial Complex. Those that resist the increasing numbers of black men who have been imprisoned call for Abolition of the whole system. The Black Panthers were at the forefront of this resistance and Angela Davis is still a prominent voice for Abolition.

In 'Abolition. Feminism. Now.' Davis (et al) argue that Feminist Abolitionists should 'work against the Prison Industrialised Complex, border patrols, the incarceration of disability, and against the criminalisation of protests'. In turn 'working for mutual aid, cop - free schools, reproductive justice and dignity for trans lives'. And rebuilding the 'systems', so services are in place for 'high quality education, housing and healthcare.' More controversial is how to deal with gender based violence or 'intimate violence', by rejecting policing and prisons. This non-carceral approach sees 'intimate violence as a microcosm of macro systems of violence in capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy and other forms of oppression'. Are authoritarian oppressions the source of the violence done as intimate violence? How about the freedom from violent experiences for an individual? How might individual boundaries be respected and boundary-pushers deterred?

The for-profit system certainly needs an overhaul. The for-profit incarceration facilities don't just run prisons, but refugee holding facilities, care homes for aged and disabled peoples, and private mental hospitals. The health of the vulnerable individual always comes second to the profit motive. How can anyone leave the facility, if there is no financial incentive to release the individual?

So what if anything can be learnt from the Italian abolition of the old Asylums. Basaglia and his associates found inspiration in therapeutic communities, experimented within the hospital system and made plans for the future. Repurposing the buildings in the changeover from asylum to a place for everyone to use. When the asylum was closed in Trieste community services including cooperatives for ex patients were put in place.

Though as time passes the Italian revolution in care for the mentally distressed is lost as the politically hostile environment squeezes out the innovations.

Important questions need to be raised about the medical diagnoses and 'experimental treatments' on those incarcerated in state approved houses of detention. Surveilled, sometimes by intrusive cameras in their rooms, and under a regime with punishments meted out if they resist or try to escape, vulnerable adults do not have the right to leave. Only when scandals come to light do we find out what injustices have occurred, such as at Winterbourne where vulnerable adults were mistreated.



Sometimes it seems as if nothing changes for the better, the lessons that could be learnt from the reports critiquing systematic abuse are ignored. The regeneration of old buildings and the sales money appears to be more important than the health or well being of those that were turfed out of the facilities. Day centres that created communities have closed, as the political stance of those who govern is that the vulnerable should work even when unwell, pained or terminally ill.

Only by working together can any change be enacted. The key must be found to unlock the doors, or outsiders must work their way inside to open the doors to let out the insiders.

