

# Three Spirits: Breakdowns Present, Past and Yet to Come

Janet Batsleer, Manchester Metropolitan University

## Abstract

This paper is a meditation on processes of social abjection within working-class life, on how they have changed and yet how they remain haunted by the possibility of an otherwise, especially in relation to bodily and mental and emotional pain and distress, anguish and torment, otherwise classified as depression, or nymphomania, or hypersexualisation, or anxiety, or paranoia and so on. Social abjection is a process of rendering certain lives and life experiences as unreadable except as social detritus. Working-class pain is abject, individualised and still often shamed. And the process of abjection is itself painful and not without the marks of struggle. Usually the role of women is to offer comfort and strength, often through classed practices of care and mothering (Crean,2018). But what happens when it is the women whose pain is abject? The haunting I am writing about here therefore is the haunting possibility of a return to a more collective approach to such distress, a return to a sense of future possibility as yet unfulfilled. In order to bring this possibility more fully to mind, I consider Martin Parr's photographs recently in an exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery and Alisha's poetry which was posted as part of her work with The Agency, (a creative project with young people). These rather different art works open up the question of how 'mental health' emerges as a threshold at which both capital-based violences and a resistant working-class affect can be found.

## Keywords

Social abjection, mental illness, working-class mental health, working-class art

'Get back to Middlewood', 'you'll end up in Rauceby like your mother'. Insert the name of the local County Lunatic Asylum anywhere in England and probably Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland too. 'Get back to ....' A taunt against a crazy looking man, or just against someone who isn't wanted and doesn't fit. A fearful, aggressive taunt. Such taunts have followed me and others in my family as long as I can remember. What follows is a reflection on a personal history of engagement with 'mental health' as working-class experience, through my working life in Manchester and through my family history in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. The buildings of the County Lunatic Asylums are now often demolished or else turned into luxury flats. They were enormous, with long echoing corridors, high ceilings and extensive grounds. Now they seem generous in their size and proportions. They were populated by working-class people, many of whom lived there for a lifetime. Among them were those who had shown no more sign of lunacy than to have children out of wedlock, or protest too angrily at or be traumatised by domestic or workplace violence, or who experienced trauma in war, or who went wandering when there was no one to care for them. The Lunatic Asylums were built about the same time in the nineteenth century as many of the pits were opening and the urban industrial areas were being developed. They closed in the late twentieth century as the pits, steel works and other factories were being closed.

Pain is common in working class life. So common it is often not worth commenting on. It is simply endured, well or badly. But the silences surrounding what we call ‘mental health’ (meaning ‘mental illness’) give form to a common and enduring pain that remains abject, is routinely individualised and shamed. It is also routinely unsupported. Casualised workers, on precarious contracts, have no support when they reach breaking point. This is often the breaking point when ‘low pay’ becomes ‘no pay’ in what social scientists call the ‘low pay no pay cycle.’

Social abjection is a process that renders certain lives and life experiences as unreadable except as social detritus. In such conditions, bodily, mental and emotional pain, distress, anguish and torment has been otherwise classified and experienced (in the past or now) as depression, or nymphomania, or hyper-sexualisation, or anxiety, or paranoia. Diagnoses of mild to moderate and severe mental illness remain prevalent in working-class life.<sup>1</sup> Such pain is classified in an ever-proliferating set of languages and diagnostic labels which nevertheless fail completely to disguise the possibility that much of this pain is socially instigated, part of working-class experience, can be struggled over collectively, could come to an end. What follows is a personal meditation on the ways this struggle has been lived and on the ways it might yet be lived.

## Stave 1

*The Spirit of Breakdowns Present: A moment in the life of a community arts project, encountered in 2017*

The Miner’s Community Arts Centre is a working-men’s club in Moston, a district in North Manchester which is a target seat for UKIP/The Brexit Party. The Miners Estate used to be known as the ‘rough as fuck’ estate right at the northernmost edge of the city of Manchester. It is a very long time since the mines were there (more than seventy years), and you only know now because of the subsidence under the houses. So Andy tells me, a stand-up comic who I met over coffee in the New Miners Community Arts and Music Centre (supported by Forever Manchester), with its big screen TV for sports and Manchester United banners everywhere. There was a quiet and focussed atmosphere in the rooms at the back that were once the pub or club snooker rooms but are now being used by a community arts project. Twelve working-class young people are here working on their own projects with the support of community-based youth workers.

Abdullah and Amin are discussing using different genres of music to link people together in a performance; Andy wants to reopen the local park café and encourage all children ...boys and girls...to go fishing. Tench, perch and pike. Kiara and Sam want to promote different African cultures through fashion. They say that tribes are represented by the different designs and cultures; their project will promote sewing and learning to sew; sell products and do fashion shows; promote knowledge of culture. They know which shop they can purchase the fabrics from; they will run pop up stores. It could be very cheap and affordable. Together with another two girls, they will hold a festival to spread African culture: there will be fashion, but also entertainment, face painting, music, art work, beauty. Maybe too there will be cooking classes with an experienced chef.

---

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25323051>, <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-poverty>

Chris says, 'I never had a desire to create a project until I came to think of it here.' Now he says he would like to have Origami classes for children to relax and enjoy their life. Thomas, is a wild and imaginative inventor. He wants to create a workshop where people can design and make stuff of all sorts. 'There are all sorts of ideas that I want to put on to young people.' Ben will make a film. On a low budget, with a few friends. (This is a place of friendship in Ben's mind.) He wants to share a passion for Cinematography. He links with Jo who is developing a Code Club. Irfan, an Afghan refugee, wants to run a project called '*Say Yes to Migrants*', 'to show we can do something for the community to show that migrants aren't always doing bad things.' He wants to bring together lots of volunteers to gain support in speaking English. Dylan wants to introduce people on his estate to gaming. He wants to work closely with people who are 'closed away and have anger issues.'

This is the context in which I first met Alisha Loco. She tells me she has overcome depression and ADHD as well as a suicide attempt through creative writing and wants to reach out to others of her own age and younger (aged 12-16) who are suffering. She feels she can work from emotion to find form especially in poetry and she tells me she sees the written word as a healing tool. She expresses particular moments in mental health crises in her writing, such as in the poem about a girl denying her pain and saying she is OK until it is almost too late for her. Alisha captures the way she is talked about and blamed by others: '*People around described her as unstable, she knew she was no angel.*' Her hurt is not yet visible in physical injuries. Alisha writes to alert others to the silent pain, '*You didn't see the hurt/but you should of been able to sense the alert*' and to the difference between responses to physical and emotional damage; '*What if she broke a bone, you'd make sure she wasn't left alone.*' She calls her website '*Open Minds but Silent Sounds*' and it is above all to the silence and inarticulacy surrounding mental illness and emotional distress that her work is responding.

(In the room the arts project is using there is a pastiche work of art about Maggie Thatcher with a Paul Weller song 'For liberty there is a cost. It's broken skills and leather cosh' and a copy of *The Star*, a Sheffield newspaper, with a headline saying 'We can never forgive her.')

During the six months of the arts project Alisha made a website for her poetry which remained open between 2016 and 2018 (called *Open Minds but Silent Sounds*) and began to promote poetry writing as a way of making sense of depression, self-harm and attempted suicide. She invited other young people to join a writing process, and offered meditation as a tool at the beginning and end to help them manage their emotions. She says that she wants people in North Manchester to be more aware of mental health issues so that sufferers don't have to hide away. In this Alisha stands full square in the tradition of the Survivors UK, who were major contributors to the struggle within and against psychiatric oppression in the 1980's and 1990's. Alisha communicated silent and invisible hurt in her writing. *Open Minds but Silent Sounds* for a time involved twenty other young people in her local area. Their poetry points to an edge of experience. On the social housing estate that both Alisha and Dylan live on (and they are the only ones in this group who do; the others are in private rental places on the whole, or in accommodation provided by NASS, the National Asylum Seekers Service), every-one's mum, or nearly every-one's mum 'has mental health'. The diagnosis is being passed on from one generation to the next. So this condition is both common and invisible. A working-class girl in a working-class family doing what working class girls do perhaps means swallowing tablets. Mum's tablets might be at the centre of her life. The scars which women carry are of course not unknown to poetry. The elite poet Sylvia Plath, whose distress (what doctors now term

‘suicidality’) was a source of her poetry, wrote, ‘There is a charge/ For the eyeing of my scars’<sup>2</sup>, In contrast these scars carried on working class bodies of ‘my mum’s mental health’ are commonplace and scarcely merit a mention. Alisha’s writing is alert to the danger of the silence that has developed around this commonplace experience of depression: the dangers involved in some one being left alone. Evidence of the practice of self-harm and attempted suicide which Alisha refers to can be seen regularly in the A and E departments of hospitals. These cracks and tears, these scars are witness to the challenge of caring under neoliberal regimes. Such experiences can be found in all the places in which the cracks start to show in the long celebrated, maybe long-lost working-class ethic and culture of ‘community’: the places populated by the apparently disposable people.

Alisha seems a slight quiet girl but she has a real temper on her, she says. Then she tells us that she has been bullied and subsequently excluded from school, on the grounds that her skirt was too short. And she is stubborn, she says. Here it is again, that management of being woman, of being a working-class woman, through the management and control of our unruly bodies. Ties or no ties, skirts, trousers, head coverings. Alisha’s turn to poetry can be seen as a turn away from any simple somatising of experience, from any cutting of her arms or breaking of windows. Instead Alisha has a poetry website and her words instil a quietness and calm and offer a way through intense isolation to a place and possibility of connection. This is a good place to be in response to oppression. Her mother is strong and she took Alisha back to school and contacted the local paper (the *Manchester Evening News*)<sup>3</sup> to say that a whole group of girls has been stopped from taking their mock exams because Their Skirts Were Too Short. But still, Alisha needed to find her own ways to resist.

Alisha the poet is Linked In and has her sense of individuality in her presence on the World Wide Web, but she is still troubled by diagnoses. Or rather, untroubled by them and accepting of them, in a way. It is as if there is a medical explanation for all this (the so-called biopsychosocial factors). These terms can be used to sum up and disguise the reason we are now at the bottom of the heap and our schools have to send us home on exam days because our bodies and the clothes we cover them with and the places we put them and the parts of other bodies we get into proximity with and where we do that, all these things are wrong, wrong, wrong and shameful. So, if like Alisha’s, voices are quiet, it is because it is better and safer not to have a megaphone. With a megaphone, alongside our presence we broadcast our shame. This shame is now one of the blocks that builds the culture of silent sounds of abjection. It is also a stumbling block. It trips us up on a daily basis, and is a marker of a memory of suffering and trauma. Alisha’s whispered poetry gets into a slipstream that avoids this shaming process. The poetry is not a place of shame and offers a possibility of connection here in Moston, Manchester with amazing different others who might now constitute ‘the working-class neighbourhood’: like the Afghan boy who makes beats and gives Alisha a beat to perform to.

## Stave 2

*Spirit of Breakdowns Past: Prestwich Mental Hospital in Art Photos and other Lunatic Asylums*

Martin Parr’s photographs<sup>4</sup> from his 1972 project called Prestwich Mental Hospital were shown again in a new 2018 exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery. They can be found in Natasha

---

<sup>2</sup> ‘Lady Lazarus’, Sylvia Plath, 1964 <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49000/lady-lazarus>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/manchester-communication-academy-short-skirt-12527060>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.martinparrfoundation.org/product/prestwich-mental-hospital>

Howe's catalogue 'Martin Parr: Return to Manchester' published by the art gallery and on the Martin Parr foundation website. I became entranced and obsessed by these photos as like Parr I was a visitor to a Mental Hospital in 1972, visiting my mother, as I continued to do throughout her life which effectively ended in an overdose on a psychiatric ward in the late 1990's. There is something polished and shiny and troubling about Martin Parr's early photographs of Prestwich Mental Hospital, a hospital on the outskirts of Manchester. This is like and not like the polishing undertaken by clinicians to find the right diagnoses and the right medication for the people who are poorly and poor and need a bit of help right now. There is an objectivity in Parr's photographs and a certain deliberate lack of empathy. These are not sentimental working-class family snapshots. Parr was introduced to Prestwich Mental Hospital when the brother of a friend with whom Parr was studying at Manchester Polytechnic was admitted there. In Parr's own commentary on the work, he says he was immediately taken by the possibilities of the space.

In front of Martin Parr's photographs of Prestwich Mental Hospital, I feel a terrible reproach. I do not know the women there. I wonder about the friend who introduced Parr to the space, and about his brother. Is his brother still alive, and if he is, is he still on drugs, and if he is not alive, how did he die? Is he being cared for or neglected 'in the community'? Here though is my brother and my sister and my mother, in any case, reflected back to me and reproachful. My own family members were both forcibly and voluntarily detained in such places at that time. Prestwich Hospital closed finally in 1996, having once been the largest mental hospital in Europe. Rauceby Hospital, my family alma mater, closed in 1997. I do not however think that the working-class political rhetoric of comradeship or brotherhood ordinarily extended to there. Football did though: the football field photograph in Parr's exhibition offers a hope of connection, only to deny it cruelly.

The great football field is empty as the footballer looks rather shyly out at the camera. His stance is ungainly and he is entirely alone on the pitch. He reminds me of Jack Charlton, slightly bald, in an all-white strip, Leeds United. I do not know whether the inmates at Prestwich played in a Wednesday or a Saturday league. The footballer's stance (soccer we mean here) does nothing to suggest that he is missing the other twenty-one players. His isolation is intense. Football pitches, established places of working-class community life, were usually packed out with men, on the field and on the terraces. His isolation is intense, even while he is connected through the football strip, the boots and socks and through the white lines that are already fading, no longer newly marked, and through the empty goal, to a whole way of life and way of being a man. This way of being stretches back through the industrial period and was still finding expression as a form of 'working-class culture' in the North West of England in the 1970's. Even now in 2019, when all the top UK football teams are recruited internationally and the players are multimillionaires, football still retains its significance as a working-class sport. It is still one of the only sports in England not dominated by men and women of privilege, who began their sporting careers in the English Public Schools which offer an elite education to the wealthy.

I gaze at him, and think about Parr, the boy photographer from Surrey newly arrived in Manchester in 1972. The footballer seems awkward, standing so still. He is ready to move, to run for the goal, to hear the roar of the crowd or the applause of his girlfriend, who has turned up to watch him play, and to get wet standing on the side-lines, standing by the touchline on a Saturday afternoon. But he is a fifty-year-old man, or he looks it. He was born nearer the beginning than the end of the most violent of centuries, and was sent to Prestwich in the middle of it, long before the 'post' in post-industrial. What is he doing here now on the walls of

Manchester City Art Gallery and why was he there, then, in Prestwich County Lunatic Asylum? Did he once go quite crazy so his mother had to care for him until she died, and now he is here, as his sister was too old herself to cope with him and anyway did not want to? We can only make an informed guess. A guess informed by our experience of the lives of working-class people, who no longer had any recourse to family support and had to face the shame associated with places like this. The Workhouse. The Lunatic Asylum.

Most of the other photos are of women.

In this sequence of photographs taken at Prestwich Mental Hospital one in particular seems to me to stand out from the others in the harshness of its revealing objectivity. Two particularly ordinary women, toothless as was so common in my childhood then or with bad teeth, two older women, standing under the benign protection of the staff who have turned them into figures of fun. Round their necks are two placards announcing them 'Miss Prestwich 1972' or 'Miss Prestwich 1971'. They look out proudly at the viewer whilst the staff who have decorated them for Christmas stand, equally proudly it seems, behind them. I wonder how these women be other than figures of fun and dire warnings to those current beauties with much more of a claim to the 'Miss World' titles. Memento Mori. Give the residents a paper hat and a flag to wave at a photographer for some Royal Jubilee or other. Lives deteriorate, and the loved ones who are still just about sane look on, powerless to intervene. In any case, the young women standing behind Miss Prestwich 1972 have become the focus of my attention. They are young and their nurses' uniforms are crisply ironed and starched. This is in stark crisp contrast with the shabby, sagging but rather comfortable looking cardigans, buttoned up over equally sagging bodies, which are the special outfit for both the Misses Prestwich. The title speaks of glamour and a kind of meat market all at once. But the picture is the shadow of both of these: a competition of the decrepit and dilapidated, taking place in the old rag and bone shop of the ward. Now I am sure these young nurses were brought up to respect their elders. I was, although often I didn't. I am forced to remember, what I learned first in childhood and what I see still visiting other family members in care homes, how hard it is in fact to be dealing with the blood or with the faeces of the incontinent day in and day out. It is hard to be dealing with no longer disciplined frail and mortal bodies, with the strange communication and the non-communication that happens in homes for the demented and insane. No wonder at all then that there are days when the places must turn to carnival and everyone (everyone on the staff that is) gets giddy, turns up the music, sings loudly to the Karaoke and makes merry or even gets drunk. I imagine 'If you were the only girl in the world' sounding out loudly as Miss Prestwich reaches out again blatantly asking for a kiss, for a touch, for love, in the only way that is left to her. Oh Mother! And here is Martin Parr, noticing the kind of space which a place like this offers to a photographer.

The Lunatic Asylums like Prestwich grew up in the same period as the industries and, like the industries, they closed. Richard Hoggart, in the classic account of working-class culture 'Uses of Literacy' (1957), wrote, whilst the industries and the asylums were both going strong, of how the sentimentality about and the attachment to 'Mother' grew up at the heart of working-class cultures in which both 'home' and 'Mother' were given an apparently elevated standing. 'Be it never so humble, there's no place like home.'

So when the ones who could not be held on to (because they were insane) were let go of, think of the shame and shaming of failure to provide a home and care that accompanied that. Shame was and is complex. It is shameful at some level not to have been able to care, not to have been able to provide. I associate this in my own family with attempts at and failure to continue in

‘being respectable.’ I am sure this should not be generalised across all working-class responses to a family member going to Middlewood; or Prestwich; or Rauceby or one of the other places. But a failure to care and a handing over of a family member to such a place was experienced as a shameful event.

Shaming is a ruse of power. Like someone sitting in the stocks as punishment, the laughing stock is a place where someone is put to be publicly shamed and humiliated. You can throw things at them if they are in the stocks and it is permitted to mock them. Power can be shamed but usually only in carnival mode and only for a day. (Putting teachers or clergy in the stocks and paying to throw wet sponges at them: a fundraiser. In the past, those seeking admission to Holy Orders had to undergo ‘The Humiliations’.) But the powerless are shamed routinely at the hands of the powerful, and sometimes at the hands of their own community. Such experiences of being scapegoated and put outside the bounds of community life (being sent away to Middlewood or Prestwich) are close to the sacred, to Homo Sacer, to bare life, to life that had no place in the settled order of the industrial respectable working-class community.

Shame, a prevailing form of affect both shaping and rebutted in the direct gaze of Parr’s photographs, comes into being as a collective emotion, which nevertheless sharply divides families and communities. As a woman dedicated to care, I feel shamed in the gaze of these photos for not doing enough. We are shamed for not protecting the community which saw its frailest members taken into the asylums, which were always located at some distance from the centres of population, virtually impossible to access without a car. Parr’s gaze is that of an outsider and shares in that imposed distance. But it also demands, from this viewer, a kind of reconnection with a working-class politics of solidarity and care.

### Stave 3

#### *Spirit of (Revolutionary) Breakdown and of Solidarities Yet to Come*

At the point of the defeat of the 1984-5 Miner’s Strike in the UK the issue of how the politics of mental health might be addressed within the Labour Movement was sharply in contention. Helen Spandler is the current editor of *Asylum* magazine,<sup>5</sup> which was founded in Sheffield by mental health workers and activists in the North of England who had actively supported the 1984-5 Miners’ Strike. In 1986 they became involved in campaigns about ‘Community Care’ which the Thatcher Government was introducing. They were keen to see patients freed from the old mental hospitals but (rightly as it turned out) fully aware that the impact of the closures might be to leave them isolated and unsupported in the ‘community’ which was now breaking up. In this context, some activists looked to the models of *Psichiatria Democratica*<sup>6</sup> in Trieste, with its workers co-operatives and collective social support. When *Asylum* was founded, two key members of the collective were psychiatrists Alec Jenner and Tim Kendall, and they invited members of *Psichiatria Democratica* to visit the UK (Spandler, forthcoming). Helen Spandler writes:

Lyn Bigwood, a psychiatric nurse and active trade unionist in York, heard about the Italian’s visit and contacted Jenner. After talking with her, Jenner persuaded a couple of the Italian visitors to stay on to speak at a conference she was organising in Wakefield. The event was for ‘rank and file’ Health and Social Service workers to

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://asylummagazine.org/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=it&u=http://www.psichiatriademocratica.com/&prev=search>

discuss the implications of closing the mental hospitals and emerging community care policies. The conference ended up being ‘dominated by reports and discussions of the Italian experience of just such a policy (*Asylum*, 1986, 1.1: 2).

At the end of these discussions, a decision was made to set up a magazine to introduce and promote the idea of democratic psychiatry to a British audience. The three co-founders: Jenner, Bigwood and her partner, Phil Virden established *Asylum* to continue discussions and debate the possibilities of democratic mental health care in the UK. It was produced with the help of a small group of Yorkshire-based mental health workers, ex-patients and other interested parties. Appropriately, given its connections to *Psychiatria Democratica*, the magazine was printed by a local worker-ex-patients’ co-operative for a number of years.

Helen knows these stories well as a key member of the current *Asylum* collective. I know different versions as my brother Phil Hutchinson was a member of this ex-patient co-operative, Print Aid, and was also a member of the original *Asylum* collective. Through our conversations I learn over and over again of the importance of the fragile forms of solidarity offered first by the Print Aid Co-Op in Sheffield, Yorkshire where the magazine was printed for many years and then by *Asylum* magazine. *Asylum* continues to offer a collective voicing of working-class suffering, and elation, and frustration, and exclusion, and joy in the context of struggles both with psy-professionals and, most significantly recently, with the regime of sanctions and punishments associated with claiming welfare benefits in the UK.

Mark Fisher (1968-2017) was one of the keenest commentators on the way the working-class experience of mental and emotional distress changed in the period following the defeat of the Miner’s Strike, the end of the Cold War and the success of what he called ‘Capitalist Realism.’ He highlighted a form which he termed magical voluntarism - a formation in which we come to feel our individual will is all powerful and can change our social circumstances – and its inevitable shadow, depression, and associated worthlessness, uselessness and inferiority which accompany our individual failures to bring about those changes. Where once there was shame at the failure to care for a family member, there is now shame at the inability to be resilient, to ‘pull yourself together.’ Depression, and taking the tablets that go with depression is now widespread. This is a systematic cruelty, not an individual pathology.

The labour of love is always a dissident and discontented labour. It is happening in places now termed in popular culture ‘shit estates’ through small initiatives such as the one Alisha took part in. And so I want to raise the ghosts of the asylum in living gatherings as part of a process of raising what we can term ‘care consciousness’. Classed social relations of care are found in both waged and unwaged labour most often in the past and to this day undertaken by women. There is emotional labour too involved in affirming the right to be cared for and to feel belonging as well as in affirming the need to feel love and give care as well in encountering the pain experienced in neglect or abandonment. This emotional labour is full of discontent with a class system which drives us into positions where we are forced to neglect the very values of care which are woven through the narratives of working-class women’s lives.

Mental health workers from North Manchester were amongst those present at the meeting with *Psychiatria Democratica* and also at the Chesterfield Conference of 1987 alongside members of the Hearing Voices Network and *Asylum* Magazine collective. This was a gathering in Chesterfield Derbyshire – when Tony Benn was MP for Chesterfield - what the UK Press termed ‘the loony left.’ Those present who were connected even if loosely with *Asylum*- myself included – wore lapel badges saying ‘We are the loony left.’ When new movements which are

reported in *Asylum* –for example ‘Recovery in the Bin’<sup>7</sup> - challenge once again the hegemonic prevalence of medical diagnoses of - both distress and recovery, locating clearly once again the social, political and environmental conditions, in which diagnosed mental illness emerges, I celebrate. ‘We live in a time when it is not only animal species that are disappearing; so too are the words, expressions, and gestures of human solidarity. A cloak of silence has been forcibly imposed on emancipatory struggle: the struggles of women, or of the unemployed, the ‘marginalized’, and immigrants - the new proletarians’ (Guattari, 1989: 134).

As a result of the work of collectives such as *Asylum Magazine*, the extinction of forms of solidarity is not yet complete. *Asylum*, ‘Recovery in the Bin’ and others stand in continuity with the working-class ‘care consciousness’ which formed a significant aspect of the movement to close the County Lunatic Asylums: those spaces whose possibility inspired the photographer Martin Parr. The ghosts of both the survivors of the Lunatic Asylums and of the survivors of the Miner’s Strike are crying out to be freed from the prison of collective depression. The imagination of a more collective transformation of class society and of new forms of solidarity makes its ghostly presence felt. We are haunted by a future that failed to happen, when the Yorkshire Trade Unionists met with the founders of *Asylum* magazine in the 1980’s, in the aftermath of the Miner’s Strike. It is a future that therefore remains as a possibility, a tangible hope for Alisha and all the rest.

### Author Bio

**Janet Batsleer** has worked for 30 years in the field of youth and community work. Her research has focussed on anti-racist and feminist approaches to youth work; on the theory and practice of informal education in youth work settings; on alternative education traditions and the resources they offer to people whose lives are conducted at the margins of the mainstream. She is currently leading a team on a significant three-year ethnographic study of young people’s social and political participation across seven European cities, including Manchester: the [Partispace](#) project. Her publications include: *Young People and the Struggle for Participation*, 2019, Routledge, *Youth Working with Girls and Women in Community Settings: A Feminist Perspective*, 2013, Ashgate and *Rewriting English*, 2013, Routledge.

### Bibliography

- Fisher, M. 2009, *Capitalist realism is there no alternative?* Zero Books, Winchester.  
Guattari, F. 1989, ‘The three ecologies’, *New Formations*, no. 8, pp. 131-142.  
Hoggart, R. 1957, *The uses of literacy*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.  
Spandler, H. 2019, ‘Asylum: a magazine for Democratic Psychiatry in England’ in Burns, T. & Foot, J. (eds) *Franco Basaglia: international perspectives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://recoveryinthebin.org/>