

The background is a vibrant blue with a textured, painterly quality. Overlaid on this are several black, hand-drawn concentric circles of varying radii. In the center of these circles is a red, stylized figure with its arms raised in a 'V' shape, resembling a person jumping or a bird in flight. The figure has a dark, irregular shape for a head.

# *See Through*

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## Editor's Note

**Kate McCaughey**

Historically, I've been a massive optimist. I rose-tinted everything in my life and daydreams, and I believed that everybody meant well and deserved nice things deep down. Optimism comes fairly naturally to me; I rarely take things too seriously, and often believe that everything will simply work out. Whilst this can be an asset in a, let's face it, borderline-apocalyptic society, it's definitely caused me problems. In the past I've allowed myself to become a pushover, struggled to develop a political compass, and even barricaded any sign of difficulty away from my life.

Over the years, I've been learning truly how valuable a dash of cynicism can be. I learnt to listen rather than remain ignorant, and to accept bad feelings and empathise. Letting a person cry, rather than encouraging them to stop, is sometimes the best medicine there is.

Not to develop difficulty trusting people, or to be certain you'll never get that thing you've been pining for, but to make the world a better place. Ignoring problems in the world doesn't make them go away, and treating some people, or situations, with caution might keep you safe. Cynicism allows us to interrogate the parts of our society that simply do not work. Rose-tinting is fine occasionally, to perk yourself up; glamorising working in your bed during a worldwide pandemic is not doing any harm. But rose-tinting bigger issues can lead to repression and ignorance.

So in 2021, let's try and stay balanced. Let's not sugar-coat the situation or repress bad feelings. Let's keep our heads above water, be prepared to question things and accept the things we *can* do, *when* we can.

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# How the government have manipulated education to their right-wing agenda and why it's made me a better teacher.

Georgia Pickles

My dislike of the Conservatives was ingrained in me at a young age. I've always considered myself left-wing, but I never realised how political education was until I became a teacher.

During my training there was a strong hatred amongst teachers for a certain Michael Gove. Now, many people know that in 2014 Gove changed GCSE's, I myself experienced the heartbreak of being told halfway through my GCSE's that all my coursework was no longer valid, and we'd be assessed wholly on exams. What wasn't communicated was the extent of how right-wing the new curriculum was.

As an English teacher I'm passionate about books, reading and writing; I believe they're the corner stone of learning. In school I remember reading literature from a diverse range of authors, now we only teach our pupils white British authors. In the National Curriculum guidelines Michael Gove sets out that he believes the English curriculum should be 'the best that has been thought and said' but this begs the questions; 'Whose thoughts?' and 'Who decides what we class as the 'best'?'.

Well in this case it was all what Gove thought was best. He got rid of all American texts; classics like 'Of mice and men' that many of us will remember in school are now gone. To ensure the poet John Agard was included in the poetry exam, examiners were forced to check when he received British citizenship so that the DfE could ensure he was 'British' enough. It could be said that Gove's changes to the GCSE adds to the 'Brexit Britain' culture we find ourselves in today.

Now when I found this information out, I was furious! Literature allows so many people to experience cultures different to their own, if we're only allowing young people to read white British authors then what kind of adults are we sending out into society? Racial and cultural inequality is rife throughout Britain. The public's disillusion of 'Britain for the British' can only be enhanced by excluding young minds from a variety of texts.

But I haven't let this infuriating situation dull my spark for igniting young minds to the power of literature, its only made me more passionate. Any opportunity I get to widen pupil's understanding of the world I go for it with full force. It is my belief that the more you know about culture's other than your own, the more tolerant you are. It could be said that Gove's changes to the GCSE adds to the 'Brexit Britain' culture we find ourselves in today.

Furthermore, the curriculum is alienating the most disadvantaged in our society. The works of Dickens and Shakespeare are a) extremely



difficult to read and b) completely unrelatable. Pupils who come from poverty have statistically lower results in their GCSE's, with 20% less free school meal pupils achieving average GCSE's than their peers. Could we attribute this to the curriculum maybe? We're expecting pupils to comprehend Shakespearian language whilst many are worrying where their next meal will come from. We're expecting pupils to relate to wealthy white British authors when they don't know if they'll be able to get a job when they leave school. If we taught pupil's Tupac poetry, Rupi Kaur, Onjali Q. Rauf, they could be inspired, empowered, and most importantly knowledgeable about people in the modern world, not some 'dead white man'.

Education is inherently political. Who chooses what is taught is able to mould the minds of tomorrow. It's time more people treat education as political and hold government accountable for the lack of diversity in the curriculum. We should be teaching literature from all over the world by BAME and LGBTQ+ authors, only then will we be raising the next generation to be tolerant and compassionate.

Leading curriculum developer Christine Counsell sums the argument up very simply.

"Curriculum is all about power. Decisions about what knowledge to teach are an exercise of power and therefore a weighty ethical responsibility. What we choose to teach confers or denies power."

And we are definitely on the wrong side of history.

**My name is Georgia (She/Her), I'm 22 and live in Leeds with my boyfriend Ben and our dog Ruby. I graduated from Leeds University in 2019 with a degree in English and Theatre, and naturally decided to become an English teacher. I'm currently in my second year of teaching and loving it. My own school experience was very varied; I spent 5 years at a fairly poor state school and then in 2014 gained a scholarship to a local private school to complete my A-Levels. This showed me the massive disparities in education and has made me passionate to bring excellent teaching to every single child, no matter their background.**

# Grey Street and Earl Grey were both named after Charles Grey

# Kate McCaughey

They've been saying the lido will make a  
comeback for decades now,  
But all we find is pools from the tide  
And relocated rocks.

An oil spill on the coast  
Stopped everyone swimming that summer.  
Instead, we drenched vinegar on soggy chips  
And watched the lifeguards vacate the beach.

That was the year someone told me Santa  
Wasn't real,  
But it meant my Dad got a bigger glass  
Of port because he didn't have to fly a sleigh.

I know you like to keep the teabag for the next cup,  
But I don't see the point when they're less  
than 2p each,  
And we all like a fresh cup in the morning.  
And we all deserve a fresh cup.

The Monument looks smaller each year  
When I wait for a friend, or a date to arrive,  
Eyeing up Waterstones wondering if I have  
Time to nip in.  
But it makes it easier to spot the familiar face  
Around all corners.

Everything shrinks and wrinkles and chips  
And fades.  
But since I realised that, I started looking up,  
From the doorways and the sale signs  
And the bored business meetings happening in  
Cafe bay windows.  
Grey Street has some really gorgeous architecture.

Kate McCaughey (She/Her) is a writer living and working in her hometown, Newcastle Upon Tyne. She writes poetry and articles, usually focusing on the LGBTQ+ experience, contemporary social issues, classism and nature. She is currently working part-time to save up for a Masters in Creative Writing and Publishing, as well as (trying) to finish her first novel. When she's not busy working or typing, she's usually analysing people's birth charts, playing with her dog or thinking about making a cup of tea.

**Fabrizio Bagnoli**





Fabrizio Bagnoli is an Italian photographer based in London. He specializes in portrait, travel and interior photography. He is fascinated by anything quirky and odd and tries to reflect that in his pictures. During lockdown he found himself working on a more introspective project which started with irony and ended up darker than expected.

You can find his work on his website [www.fabriziobagnoli.com](http://www.fabriziobagnoli.com)



# The Long Read

**Wilko's**

**Lauren McCaughey**

**Wilko's - Grainger Street, Newcastle - May, 2017**

"What?! How have you never had a Parma Violet?"

She steered him across town to the one shop she knew for certain would sell them. He laughed at her determination. They had been walking, as they had done a few times now, around the city centre with little sense of direction or purpose. In the way that young people do when there's nothing to do and not much money to spend, and they haven't quite broken-down entry into each other's family homes. There can only be so many tea and coffee stops. They giggled and teased as they walked down busy streets and into Wilko's, shuffling down aisles with grins on their faces.

"Ahh they've only got the giant ones."

"Are they any different?"

"Course they are! The tiny ones are smooth and like perfectly shaped to your fingertips."

"Surely you're getting more for your money if they're bigger though?"

"You don't eat them for the value for money."

"Well, I'm sure I'll get the sentiment."

Packet in hand, they stood in a doorway along from the bus station, carefully tearing back the flimsy plastic and paper. They still hadn't kissed yet, but somehow sharing those small sugary sweets felt just as intimate. They had two each, and he took the opened packet home. They sat on their retrospective buses home, mouths curled at the corners shyly, sugar still on their lips.

**Wilko's - Grainger Street, Newcastle - August, 2017**

It's a cloudy and sticky day, the summer heat lingering a bit too long. She's wearing a tight t-shirt and is nervous about sweat patches. He thinks the humidity makes the prospect of holding hands a little too risky. The holidays are disappearing like smoke in air. With each weekly meeting, they've cracked a little more into each other's heads, slowly realising what makes the other tick. They've asked each other big questions like 'what's the scariest thing you've ever seen', 'what was your happiest moment as a child' and 'do you prefer a morning or evening shower'. He knows how she takes her tea and she knows which sandwich he'll pick from the counter. Her friends dig for answers after every date.



"You STILL haven't kissed him yet?! A peck doesn't count!!"

"Why don't you invite him back to yours?"

"Are you sure you even actually like him?"

Their remarks sometimes make her feel itchy, but then, she's never felt so much trust for someone, and glancing at his lips as his speech breaks into a smile makes her stomach flip. She secretly loves that she's found someone who makes merely brushing hands with as they walk feel like they're undressed. She wonders how the back of his neck will feel in her hand.

They're stood under the 'Homeware' sign, rows of small clocks staring back at them. She's biting her lip in concentration. Another soon-to-be-student mills around next to them, looking blankly at Tupperware.

"I don't even know if I need a clock."

"I guess, when you've always got your phone."

"But for decoration maybe? I'm not spending more than a fiver."

He sighs, having become aware of her ability to turn a quick shop into a 20-minute dilemma.

"So, what time are you leaving on Saturday?". He tries to keep his voice light and casual.

"Probably quite early.".

She's wondered when an appropriate point to is invite him down for a visit. Will he want to? Is it too soon for a full weekend together?

He doesn't want to intrude on her first few weeks, knowing that she's nervous to make friends and get to know people. But he's wondered whether she throws her hair up in a bun before bed, or leaves it, curls sitting on her shoulders. He loves that he slowly learns each of her freckles with every conversation they have.

### **Wilkos - Arndale, Manchester - March, 2019**

"So, what are you wanting to drink?"

"I don't mind".

"Well there's rum left at home, so coke? Or we can get something else? Beer?"

"I really don't know. I'm easy. I don't know if I want to drink or not".

"Right".

They are stood in a sea of fizzy pops, cans, bottles and crates. They are both tired, but she is scanning for the perfect caffeinated

beverage to get them through the night. He is exhausted by her attempt to pep up.

"Are you actually wanting to go to this or not?"

"I don't know".

"Well that's not very helpful. She said to try get there for 9, it's 8 now".

"Right".

"Can you just give a yes or no. Do you want to buy drinks?"

"I'm just not really in the mood. To stand around drunk people I don't even know".

"I honestly don't mind if you don't want to but can you just tell me now so we can decide what we're doing please".

"Mmmmm, can I be bothered?" His face twists with the question to himself.

"Look I don't mind going on my own, I'd rather you just said than force yourself if you'll be grumpy all night".

He gives her a look reserved for those tiring, biting moments when people argue despite having the same opinion.

"Right, make up your mind. We've ran out of loo roll". She turns and stomps out of the aisle, frustrated but hoping she looked great and dead dramatic in her spin. He watches her. His lips almost burst into a laugh before remembering he's pissed off at her and stopping himself.

## **Wilkos - Arndale, Manchester - September 2020**

"Oh I love that plate".

"Imagine it in, like, sage green. Or dark orangey-red".

"Arghh oh my god you're right".

Their new favourite hobby is browsing crockery and throws. They wander along to the electricals.

"Ah, I would love a red fridge. With a matching kettle and toaster".

He stops at a shiny slow-cooker.

"Wow this is reduced to £30. That's so good, from £75".

"Woweee! Imagine a big spicy lentil stew. With sourdough we would eat for one day before it goes stale".

They stay, stood still in front of the gadget. Inside that glossy cardboard box is the daydream of a small cosy flat. It's a little bit small for the two of them both but the rent is good. They've

cleaned the torn fabric sofa it came with. His guitars are shoved precariously next to the TV. She's hung prints and posters and plants in every possible gap. Their phone chargers and laptop chargers and various cables are tangled in the corner under the desk.

"Let's buy it".

He laughs.

"Yep, sounds good. We would get so much use out of it".

They smile hesitantly and turn to each other.

"Do you reckon? Should we?"

They giggle.

"Maybe we should".

"Like, just to have it ready, you know?"

"Can just put it away until then".

They carefully place the slow-cooker onto the conveyer belt. They double bag it to carry it home.

**Lauren McCaughey is a filmmaker and budding screenwriter currently based between Newcastle and Manchester. She is in her final year of Filmmaking at Manchester School of Art. Her work aims to explore human relationships, comedy and class. Her current project (expected release June 2021) is a humorous and confessional snapshot of sisterhood. In her spare time, you can find her making mini pots and attempting latte art with shop's own-brand oat milk.**

**You can her work via her Instagram [@laurenmcc.film](https://www.instagram.com/laurenmcc.film)**