

Corridor CHAIN/MAIL

Issue 2: Merseyside/Cheshire



#1 The Kindness of Terraces, 2020

As once-bustling city centres lie empty and bare, and busy-bodging regulars flee the stasis of the suburban high street, our worlds have become much smaller. The pandemic has forced us into hiding, where each chapter of the ‘new normal’ feels less ordinary with every frustrating plot development.

Boredom is at odds with the neverending news cycle, whilst procrastination is the outspoken antithesis to constant correspondences and infinite to do lists. In these unprecedented times, the herd is wakeful, uneasy and lacks immunity to perpetual contradictions.

Post-Brexit Britain has in many ways divided further, as infection rates soar and the blame game persists; as institutions lament the state of the arts, but not the (mental) state of artists; as accessibility loses yet another battle to an increasingly digital world, designed for and open to only the young and tech-literate, isolating millions.

Yet the idea of isolation feels all the more strange in a city like ours. Liverpool is famously a village, and somehow Merseyside and Cheshire are part of that village, too. Communities and neighbourhoods in many areas feel determined and strong, rather than torn and frayed by quarantine measures.

The kindness of strangers is more noticeable than ever. Whether people are ‘masked up’ to protect their peers, or giving their time and hearts to vulnerable neighbours, local charities and food banks, connections continue to form, support sustains and tenderness treads through the terraced streets of Toxteth.

In this moment, be kind to yourself, and let that kindness be infectious.

#2 **You Can Find Me After,** **2020**

I've always loathed solitude, especially at night. Now, the streets are empty, the music has stopped; no more shattering of glasses, no more cries of lovers' quarrels. Even the children have stopped playing. My body had familiarised the sound of banshee screams once piercing my skull habitually between the hours of 11pm and 2am. Now, my feeble attempts to indulge in the people watching of the past fail, and the nights grow longer in this absence. I decide to download a series of apps, paying subscriptions to the lonely trends circling the internet with money I don't have. If only it could drown out the hours of silence, and replace the chaos I had despised until now. I notice as the weeks lengthen, people turning to social media

in desperation, seeking comfort as they express their fears, share the radical changes in their sleeping patterns, and the strange angst suffered as once-familiar outdoor smells and sounds pose a new threat: hostility. These words hang in the air of my room at night, whispering fears and insecurities into my sleep, the darkness stretching beyond my four walls creating a weight that makes my palms sweat. My bones ache, and my mind is lost. I struggle to recall the features of my loved ones as I fall into empty dreams, surrounded by faceless creatures; human shells, void of passion, intimacy. I decide that is what I must become — an empty shell, and I will find myself again once it is all over.

#3 **Living History, 2020**

Fatally essential news to consume every day, for everyone on the planet. Narratives compete for clicks, and commenters fight over whether we can believe any of it.

No more cheek to cheek but screen to screen

'Is your mic on? What did you say?'

'Is this better?' 'Yeah it is'

'Have you heard about the new rules, next Tuesday?'

We need to know what is happening
and what to do to keep everyone safe,
and we need to stay informed, because
the world is seeing a lot of change.

But sometimes living through history
can be slightly overwhelming;
now and then, we turn off the news
only to share memes about how we're feeling.

Running out of shows and films
Turn to streams, podcasts, vlogs,
anything to fill the silence
and to break up the day's groundhog.

And as we sat and waited,
hoping for a vaccine,
new movements with raised fists emerged
in protest of horrific recorded scenes.

And so again, the world was watching
as more stories were emerging,
and our attentions torn between
so many important findings.

'Wait until we have children,
and we tell them of this time!'
Could they even imagine this,
the struggles we have to climb?

These days we live in now
will fill up pages upon pages
of the history books to come,
that will be remembered for ages.

And so we must ask each other,
in-between the stages of fear,
if we will be proud of our actions today,
when we look back on such a year?

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#1 Sinéad Nunes is a writer, editor and arts professional based in Liverpool. She is Merseyside and Cheshire's Regional Editor for Corridor8

[@sineadawrites](https://twitter.com/sineadawrites)
thefemefolios.com

#2 Layla Josie Wortley is a writer, poet and researcher in performance art and Greek mythology, based in Cheshire
seemefindme.wordpress.com

#3 Katie Shirley is an artist, curator and creative writer with interests in philosophy and sociology based in Merseyside
[@katieshirleyart](https://twitter.com/katieshirleyart)

Cover:

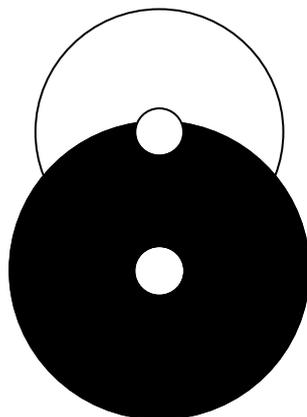
'Flight Through the Window',
That Girl Prints, 2020

That Girl Prints/Johanna Wilson is an artist, lecturer and print maker, currently exploring creating cut and paste collages using intuition and found images

[@thatgirlprints](https://twitter.com/thatgirlprints)
designedbythatgirl@gmail.com

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