Trans men are men

What we can learn from the history of Colonel Victor Barker - local historical figure, "model gentleman", and violent Fascist.

Although we can't directly project our current understandings of gender, sexuality, and what it means to be transgender onto the past, we can understand certain historical identities as analogous to our contemporary frameworks, and Barker may represent one such case. Assigned female at birth, he began presenting as a man and using the name Sir Victor Barker around 1923. He then married a woman, moved into the Grand Hotel, joined the National Fascisti, went bankrupt, was arrested on multiple occasions, performed in a Blackpool sideshow, and died in obscurity under the name Geoffrey Norton in 1960. He used many names throughout his life, most of them masculine, and his gender expression remained fairly consistent - as such, Barker could arguably be considered to occupy a gender positioning analogous to that of a trans man in today's framework. When Barker was in his 20s, the term 'transsexualism' was coined at the *Institut für Sexualwissenschaft* in Berlin - whether this news reached Barker is not known. What is known, however, is that Barker spent several years as a member of his local branch of the Fascisti, supporting the same ideology that led to the burning of the library and archives of the *Institut* under Nazi power in 1933, in an attack that set trans rights and healthcare back by decades.

As such, Victor Barker's potential trans history is complicated on two fronts: not only because he lived in a time of rapidly-evolving language and frameworks around gender identity, but also because his far-right beliefs beg the question: is he worth remembering?

Should stories like his become part of our trans historical canon? Can we remember him without commemorating him?

Whilst it is very tempting to let Victor Barker fade back into obscurity, there may be some point to remembering him, in that his story exemplifies a set of overlapping systems of power which are still at play today. If we understand Victor Barker as a man, we must recognise that that manhood was constructed within a wider social system of misogynist power, which Barker was invested in maintaing through his far-right organising. We are also reminded that his whiteness is not negated by his gender non-conformity - that although he suffered under the rigid gender norms of his time, he nonetheless benefitted from the racist oppression of others, and was keen to uphold this hierarchy. Whilst his story may be considered that of a trans individual, it most certainly is not one of trans community, his politics being harmful to any gender non-conforming person with access to less privilege than himself.

If we must remember Victor Barker, this may be the only reason to: as a warning that individual success does not equal collective gain, and that an LGBTIQ+ identity is not necessarily a radical act in and of itself. To this day, our communities are threatened by countless "Victor Barkers": those of us privileged in terms of race, class, ability, or gender, whose personal aims of assimilation leave their more marginalised counterparts behind, and the status quo untouched. So, if we must remember Barker, let us do so with condemnation, and with a promise to do better - to never fight only for ourselves.

To start, why not support your local antifascist group(s)? Try visiting the Cowley Club, searching brightonantifascists.com, or attending a protest with Queer AF!

Trans women are women

Before her release in late 2019, trans woman Sarah Jane Baker spent the entirety of her 30-year sentence in men's prisons.

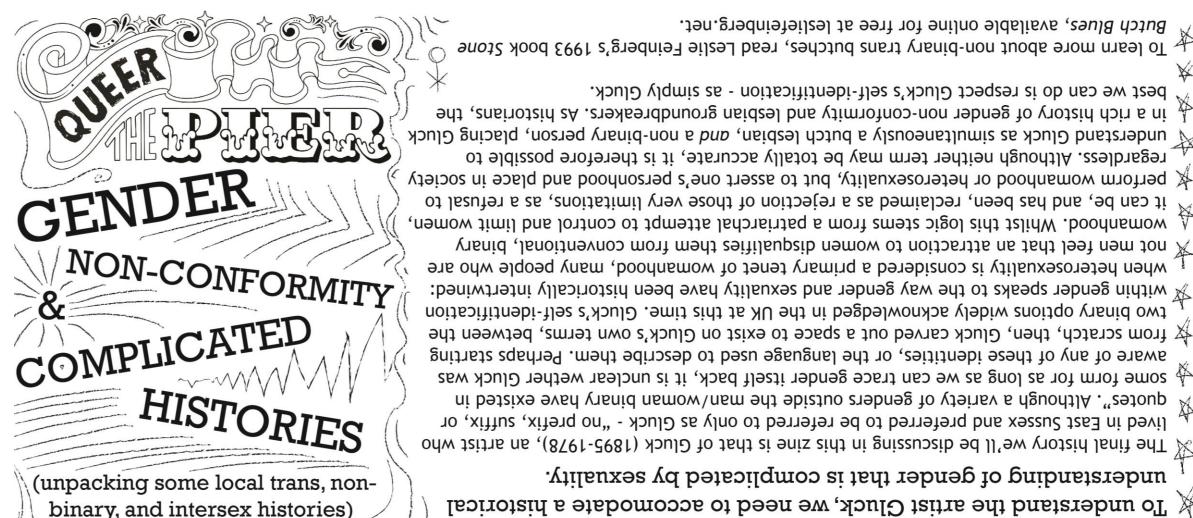
One of the more contemporary objects in Queer the Pier is a tapestry made by Sarah Jane Baker in 2019, during her time in the men's HM Prison Lewes. Baker was released by the 13th parole board to assess her case, after suffering 30 years of violence and abuse as a woman living in a series of men's prisons. Unfortunately, Baker's case is far from rare: current law regarding trans prisoners in the UK states that they must be housed in accordance with their "legal gender", unless they undergo a case review. Whilst rampant transphobia in UK media would have us believe that trans women pose an innate threat to cis women in prisons, trans people in prisons are actually far more likely to be victims of violence than to enact it on others. As always, there are multiple factors at play here in a 2019 interview with *Dazed*, Baker notes that she "was one of many working class people whose default was to go to prison", and many theorists have argued that the prison system unfairly targets those already marginalised under capitalism, including people of colour, sex workers, LGBTIQ+ people, people struggling with drug addiction, people who are working class, and disabled people. The violence enacted upon Baker is part of a much larger structure of power and oppression, one which she intends to keep fighting. Since her release, Baker has set up the Transprisoner Alliance, about which she notes: "Trans prisoners aren't just one group. (...) I have to represent everyone, or no one" (iNews, 2019). You can support Baker's work at transprisoneralliance.co.uk, or become a pen-pal to LGBTIQ+ prisoners with Bent Bars (bentbarsproject.org).

Intersex people have always existed

Georgina Carol Somerset was the first openly intersex person in the UK, and lived and worked in Hove - but was she also trans?

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As with trans histories, tracing our intersex ancestors is complicated by the shifts in language and understanding around intersex conditions over time, as well as by the variety of body types, hormones and chromosomes that fall under the intersex umbrella. We also have to question the science that defined the boundaries of binary sex, and the racist, misogynist, homophobic and transphobic biases of those who wrote that science. It can be tricky to determine wether some historical figures were intersex, trans, gay, or excluded from Eurocentric ideals of gender - or all of the above! The life and work of Georgina Somerset reflects the ways in which trans and intersex histories can be intertwined - born in 1923, she was assigned male at birth by doctors but underwent gender confirmation surgery in 1957, acquiring a new birth certificate that listed her name as Georgina, and her sex as female. She then became the first woman in the UK to marry in a church after changing her legal gender. In a 1994 letter to the Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine, Somerset notes that she does not consider herself 'transsexual', but a 'physical and genetic hermaphrodite' - however, she shows an awareness of a shared struggle with the trans community in her 1961 study Over the Sex Border, in which she draws attention to medical and social anti-trans bias. Here, we must respect Somerset's right to self-identify as intersex, not trans, whilst noting that both communities have struggled against the same legal, medical, and social structures, and affirming that we have much to gain from each other's victories - so why not work together? Try oiiuk.org for more information on intersex advocacy, particularly on ending nonconsensual genital surgery on intersex infants and minors in the UK today.



Adrian S. Devaney

Butch Blues, available online for free at lesliefeinberg.net. To learn more about non-binary trans butches, read Leslie Feinberg's 1993 book Stone

best we can do is respect Gluck's self-identification - as simply Gluck. in a rich history of gender non-conformity and lesbian groundbreakers. As historians, the understand Gluck as simultaneously a butch lesbian, and a non-binary person, placing Gluck regardless. Although neither term may be totally accurate, it is therefore possible to K perform womanhood or heterosexuality, but to assert one's personhood and place in society it can be, and has been, reclaimed as a rejection of those very limitations, as a refusal to womanhood. Whilst this logic stems from a patriarchal attempt to control and limit women, not men feel that an attraction to women disqualifies them from conventional, binary when heterosexuality is considered a primary tenet of womanhood, many people who are mithin gender speaks to the way gender and sexuality have been historically intertwined: two binary options widely acknowledged in the UK at this time. Gluck's self-identification A from scratch, then, Gluck carved out a space to exist on Gluck's own terms, between the aware of any of these identities, or the language used to describe them. Perhaps starting some form for as long as we can trace gender itself back, it is unclear wether Gluck was quotes". Although a variety of genders outside the man/woman binary have existed in

nuderstanding of gender that is complicated by sexuality. To understand the artist Gluck, we need to accomodate a historical

Heritage South Meek

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Trans history is intersex history, is gender history, is gay history, is bi history, is complicated history!

When we talk about trans people in the past, we need to talk about sex and gender in the past - with binary sex and gender, as we understand them today, being a relatively recent invention: a product of Western colonialism and a complicated interaction of interlocking systems of violence. The same is true for sexuality - the notion that sexuality is something you are, as opposed to something you do, is equally recent, and equally complex.

As such, when we look at people from the past, we need to question our own assumptions - of what gender (non-)conformity looks, acts, and feels like; of the language we use and the language they used; and of the ways gender is informed and complicated by other factors across time and culture.

For example: does it make sense to call someone transgender if they lived in a culture where gender wasn't rigid, mandatory, or tied to an inaccurate notion of binary biological sex?

Can we distinguish between a trans person and a gay person if the society they lived in considered heterosexuality an intrinsic part of womanhood, or manhood?

How do we separate intersex history from the history of racist, misogynist, homophobic and transphobic science that continues to enable violence against intersex communities to this day?

And how do we understand a history of gender non-conformity primarily written by those who did conform, or by those whose race or class afforded them positions of power despite their gender transgressions?

In this zine, we'll unpacking a few of the more complicated histories in Queer the Pier, and asking how histories of gender non-conforming individuals can become histories of the societies they lived in, and the ideologies that built them.