

# Maritime Adventures

John Paul Evans

“what adventure shall we have today Peter?”...

“let’s have a maritime adventure J.P”

As a child I was fascinated with the animation character ‘Mr. Benn’. He was a suited gentleman who would enter a magical costume shop and have adventures in his chosen attire. Looking back as an adult, this seemed to connect with a gay subculture in which men would often dress up to enact their fantasies.

The role of the sailor has particular resonance through the centuries for same sex attraction from the stories of Herman Melville through to Jean Genet, the mystique of this traveler of the high seas has great potency.

It’s at least interesting to propose that when an identity is suppressed the result is a need to explore that inner self through other means at our disposal. Some men respond to discovering that they are gay with the need to prove themselves ‘real men’ in the ‘real world’, whereas others dress up and explore a fantasy world of the imagination.

Judith Butler suggests:

“If gender is something that one becomes - but can never be - then gender is itself a kind of becoming or activity, and that gender ought not to be conceived as a noun or a substantial thing or a static cultural marker, but rather as an incessant and repeated action of some sort”.<sup>1</sup>

This comment on the process of ‘naturalization’, the way we become men and women through approved social codes that are reinforced through repetition is an interesting thought because it is something that the gay world has successfully transgressed.

Dressing up and role play allow us to explore worlds we thought we had left behind in childhood, a time where anything seemed possible, a time of pretense and make believe.

With costumes, models, cut-out effigies and the veracity of the photographic image, my partner Peter and I pretend to be 'real men' of the high seas, which in my case is a stretch of the imagination.

But in fancy dress we enter a state of 'becoming'...  
we are real men...men of the sea...seamen.

© John Paul Evans

This text is part of **What is lost... what has been**  
An exhibition by **John Paul Evans** shown at **Mission Gallery**  
26 March - 14 May 2022

Mission Gallery  
Gloucester Place  
Maritime Quarter  
Swansea, SA1 1TY  
United Kingdom

[www.missiongallery.co.uk](http://www.missiongallery.co.uk)  
[info@missiongallery.co.uk](mailto:info@missiongallery.co.uk)  
+44 (0) 1792 652 016

Mission Gallery



**ARIENNIR GAN  
Y LOTERI  
LOTTERY FUNDED** 

