

# Cultural Capital Doesn't Pay the Rent

## A Queer Memoir

### Jessica Lawless

*Cultural Capital Doesn't Pay the Rent* is a story about loss, economic survival, and three decades of organizing against the interlocking hellscapes of neoliberalism. Jessica Lawless's memoir is a queer, anarcho-punk history of community care and healing justice.

An original member of Home Alive, the Seattle-based, feminist self-defense collective founded as a response to the unsolved rape and murder of a beloved friend, Lawless takes the reader into subcultural spaces of the 1980s and '90s where anticapitalist concepts of race, gender, and sexuality were developing against the backdrop of the Christian right's early culture wars.

Digging into their personal archive of pre-internet flyers, meeting notes, zines, photos, newsletters, exhibition announcements, journals, and funeral programs, Lawless explores the somatic impacts of remembering and forgetting. Her attempts to leave violence in the past lead her to the institutional violence of academia, the absurdity of the Los Angeles art world, the crushing poverty of cyclical subemployment as an adjunct professor, and the heartbreak of working in the labor movement.

Reflecting on the past while entering menopause, Lawless crafts a narrative that twists and turns along a winding path, continually rejecting normative conclusions. *Cultural Capital Doesn't Pay the Rent* is a moving account of abolitionist feminist resistance that will inspire anyone who's experienced the hopes and hypocrisies of leftist activism.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Jessica Lawless** is an artist and one of the cofounders of the self-defense collective Home Alive. Her artwork has been shown in galleries across the US, included in international anarchist and queer film festivals, and censored by a Catholic university. She was a regular contributor to *make/shift* magazine and periodically contributes to the *Anarchist Review of Books*. Jessica wrote the introduction to *Lady Lazarus: Confronting Lydia Lunch* (Questing Beast, UK), contributed a chapter to *Resolutions 3: Global Networks of Video* (University of Minnesota Press), and had pieces in the anthologies *Feminisms in Motion: Voices for Justice, Liberation, and Transformation* (AK Press) and *Places Like Home* (Literary Kitchen). A former adjunct professor and labor organizer, she lives in Sacramento, CA with her partner Von and their two toothless cats.

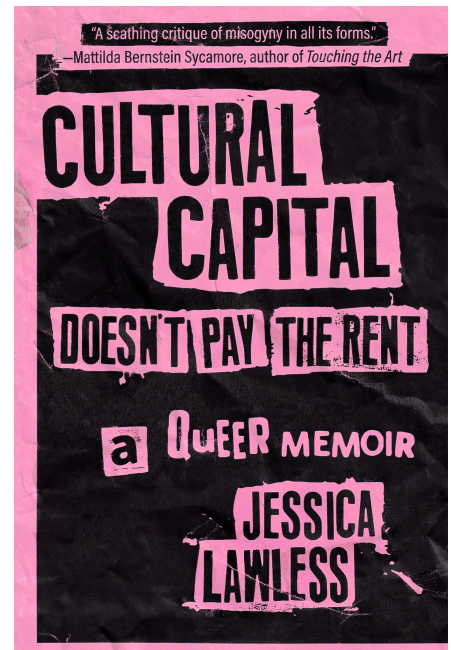
### ACCOLADES

"Granular in detail and expansive in scope, *Cultural Capital Doesn't Pay the Rent* bursts with the possibilities of self-actualization, mutual aid, and collective struggle. Resisting the redemptive arc to tell the truth about surviving domestic violence, the myth of upward mobility in academia, and the limitations of union organizing, Lawless offers not only a scathing critique of misogyny in all its forms but also an abolitionist analysis grounded in a quest for accountability and a desire to transform everything. I dare you to read this book without sobbing."

—Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore, author of *Touching the Art*

"In a voice all her own, Jessica Lawless takes readers on a journey that so many of us will recognize, through all the failing institutions of the past several decades: the family, the workplace, the activist movements promising to save us. She writes of her life with unflinching honesty, sparing herself least of all, through punk rock and queer community, in feminist self-defense work and art practice and finally labor unions. She offers no easy answers but dares to dream of movements that are built on a different set of values: an abolitionist feminist labor movement, one that challenges us once and for all to find meaning in our connections rather than our work."

—Sarah Jaffe, author of *From the Ashes and Work Won't Love You Back*



### SUBJECT CATEGORY

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