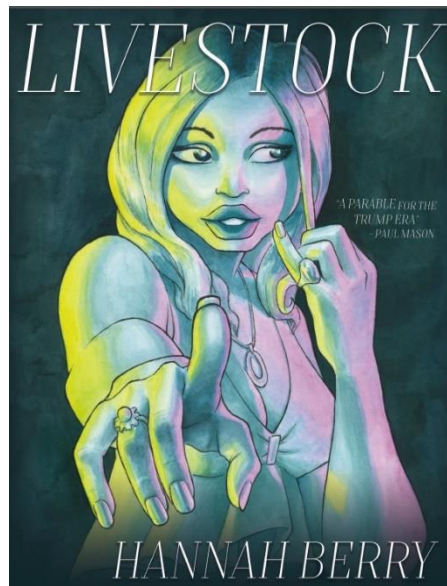# Livestock by Hannah Berry (Comics Laureate 2019-2021)

[Comedy]

A blisteringly funny, fiercely inventive and scathing socio-political satire which doesn't content itself with blasting the blithe disingenuousness of politicians and pop stars – both increasingly vapid and transparent in their self-serving mendacity – but focuses its ire also on their equally unprincipled co-conspirators: the spin-doctors who combine their calculating machinations in a coordinated affront on the public's intelligence in order to benefit both parties and bury what little remains of the truth.

This is the core conceit: that the same PR agency could be as adept at manufacturing long-term, soap-opera strategies for celebutards as for political parties' inept ministers; and that those twin sleights of hand might be mutually beneficial then gobbled up by an enthusiastically complicit media so that everyone involved can make far more money. I'm not entirely sure why I filed this under fiction.

Clementine Darling is up for a fourth consecutive victory as Best Female Singer *and* Political Spokesperson. It's a single award.

"Well done, Clementine!" "Thank you, I'm literally beside myself!"

Clementine, swaddled in her PR company's limo, is asked if she knows Devon Ayre from boyband Daynjaryuz whose top hit was 'Undress 2 Impress'.

"Uh-huh." "Well, he's going to be your new boyfriend."

Clementine's cheery face flickers not one jot. She's been listening to a song she's never heard before.

"I like the song a lot!" "Oh good! That's your next single, to be released next month."

It's due to tie in with the passing of a new Human Rights Act.

Berry plays to perfection each iteration of this deviously entwined distract-athon, orchestrated to bump any hard political news from the front-feed of 'What's Trending' by using headline-grabbing click-bait. Clementine's entire career as a pop-star is but a means to that end, giving her access to vacuous Daytime TV husband-and-wife chat shows masquerading as news (so satiating what little demand there is for it) where she regurgitates her pre-scripted politics. Although let's not forget that Clem's trajectory is itself highly lucrative, especially when sent on a crash-collision course with that of arch-rival Coral (last boyfriend: Devon Ayre) whom we first see on 'What's Trending' with a new *look* in order to launch her new *book*. The two ladies know that they share the same publicist; they're just too dim to comprehend that they're being played against each other.

The 'What's Trending' front page is reprised throughout, forming a laugh-out-loud narrative of its own. It's that sort of graphic novel: craftily constructed with multiple, layered threads. However beautiful each antagonist might be they still appear toad-like, with big mouths and squat faces like they've drained an entire of pond full of Botox. The colours are sickly rather than bright and primary for this whole sordid affair is designed to make you feel queasy, and we haven't even approached the issue of the day which is the government's back-door endorsement of human cloning... to the private sector.

If lack of scrutiny gets your goat then this will have you chewing your own leather leash off.

The publication of Hannah Berry's LIVESTOCK pre-dated Russelll T. Davies's 'Years And Years' on TV, both of them saw what was coming both overseas and over here: the preference for politics as entertainment from a public more likely to vote on Britain's Been Brainwashed than during any actual General Election. Berry and Davies essentially predicted Boris Johnson as PM.