

Queerology Episode 102

Blake Mundell is COURIER

Original Air Date: July 14, 2020

- Matthias: 00:03 Hey, friends! This is Matthias Roberts, and you're listening to Queerology: A Podcast on Belief and Being. This is Episode 102.
- Blake: 00:14 What I just couldn't ignore was the fact that Jesus was nowhere to be seen. They promised more Jesus, and I felt abandoned.
- Matthias: 00:25 Blake Mundell is a singer-songwriter, sports massage therapist, and instructor of ethics, anatomy, and physiology at Mind-Body Institute in Nashville. During the fall, he works on the medical staff of the Tennessee Titans, and in the spring, writes and records music under the artist name COURIER. He currently lives quarantined with his partner, Tim, and dog, Jesse, who inherited his name from the protagonist of *Bridge to Terabithia*.
- Matthias: 00:50 Let's talk about *Bridge to Terabithia* for a second, because I went and saw that movie when I was a kid. Had no context for it. Thought it was going to be this cute little fantasy movie. And I don't want to give any spoilers, even though that was years ago, but something tragic happens. I was depressed for *a week!* That movie took a dark turn. I still get feelings when I think about that movie—I never read the book, so I'm just referring to it as a movie. Anyway. Anyway! *Bridge to Terabithia*. We could do a whole episode on that and trauma.
- Matthias: 01:22 Blake is happiest on a beach volleyball court—which... don't know how he finds that in Nashville. But.
- Matthias: 01:28 I'm so excited to have Blake on the show today. I feel like I often see comments on Facebook, or Twitter, or just various threads, where people are looking for good queer music to listen to. Blake is one of those people who makes really good music. We get into some of the stories behind his songs into this episode—play some clips of them as well—alongside talking about whiteness and what it means to do work with whiteness as a white person.
- Matthias: 02:00 Just as a heads-up, themes of suicide do come up in this episode.
- Matthias: 02:04 No announcements today, so let's just go ahead and dive in!
- Matthias: 02:07 Blake, hi! Welcome!

Blake: 02:08 Hey, Matthias! It's great to be talking to you.

Matthias: 02:10 Yeah. I'm so excited to have you here.

Matthias: 02:12 So to start, I'll ask a question I ask everyone: how do you identify, and how would you say that your faith has helped form that identity?

Blake: 02:20 Gosh, that question's hard. I've listened to this podcast a hundred times, so I knew this question was coming. Earlier this week, when I knew I'd be talking to you, I asked this of myself, for maybe the first time, and realized that it made me very anxious and that, perhaps, some version of this question is something that has always been with me as some sort of deep spiritual existential question that I have been trying to solve and still am. So in that anxiety, I reached out to a few friends and asked them, "Hey, who am I? Who would you say that I am," and got some good responses. But I heard from a good friend of mine, SueAnn Shiah—who I believe has been on this show before—and she challenged me to remember that as much as I want to think that I can come up with or form my identity in a vacuum, that it's always being formed within context, and that context is usually the people that I'm around and the community that I belong to, and friends, and family.

Blake: 03:26 So after thinking about that a little bit more, I would say—back to the actual question—I identify as a white, gay, cisgendered man. My pronouns are he/him/his. I feel a little more comfortable with calling myself queer these days—that seems to be the best fit for me, especially when thinking about the people that I'm in closest community with. And then... yeah, as far as my faith, that's another layer of difficulty because my faith communities have changed drastically over the course of my life but especially in the past couple years. So I think the big question mark there for me is... I wouldn't *not* self-identify as Christian, but I also don't necessarily feel comfortable self-identifying as Christian, even though I'm still deeply interested and hold deep affection for the person of Jesus. There's a lot there that I'm reevaluating and unpacking and... yeah, kind of holding some past experiences in tension with that. So. Yeah. It kind of runs the gamut.

Matthias: 04:32 Two things in that. The first... I guess this is three things now. The first is SueAnn Shiah. Like, my goodness.

Blake: 04:39 Yes. Oh, gosh. She's amazing.

Matthias: 04:41 Amazing. If folks haven't listened to that episode with her... I truly think it's one of my favorite episodes that we've ever done on Queerology, so folks need to go look that up.

- Matthias: 04:50 Second... but that insight, though, of our identities being defined by our communities—the people that we surround ourself with. It's so true. And in some ways, it's so easy to get caught up in this "How do I identify myself" and miss the reality of... we are people formed within relationships, within community. I think that's a beautiful insight.
- Blake: 05:16 Yeah. It was almost, for me... I was having so much trouble arriving at a firm category for myself in terms of self-identification that I really couldn't figure out until I started thinking within the context of "Well, who are the people that I do belong to," and that opened a doorway to me.
- Matthias: 05:35 And what you said about your... the complexity of identifying as Christian. That's a tension that I feel, personally, so much. Closely. It's that, "Okay," like you said, "I wouldn't *not* identify myself as Christian, and yet." It's an uncomfortable label, especially in this current moment in time.
- Matthias: 06:01 But I would love to hear about some of that journey, of growing up, coming out. I know that's a huge question.
- Blake: 06:09 I would say that journey has just been all over the place. I don't know a good way to describe it in total. But yeah. I heard someone—I can't remember who right now, but—I heard someone talk about their faith identification—or their, I guess, religious identification—as being one in which they recognize that there are all of these different religious expressions within themselves that they could pull out at will or they could consult at will, and I've been able to relate to that most most recently.
- Blake: 06:46 So when I was super young... and growing up, my parents were nonreligious—in fact, were fairly antagonistic towards most religion, but especially Christianity—so I think that created what I would call a spiritual vacuum in my house. So for whatever reason, responding to that vacuum, it seemed like I would just seek out whatever spiritual experience or story or relic, or really just anything that in any way resembled spirituality—I sought it out. In fifth grade, I called myself a Buddhist—probably because I googled Buddha quotes that were probably falsely ascribed to him—but did everything I could in my fifth-grade mind to practice that sort of spirituality then. I got into Wicca for a little while, I explored all sorts of mythologies—I loved Greek and Roman and Egyptian mythologies—and sort of cycled through all of those things before coming into Christianity through almost an explosive conversion experience in which... I guess I'll get into it a little bit more.
- Blake: 08:00 I was dating a girl when I was in seventh grade, and she was the

one who introduced me to Wicca. So we would cast spells together, and... we would do a lot of things that I wouldn't necessarily—at least from my understanding of the Wiccan religion now—I wouldn't necessarily... I think we were just shooting from the hip with it. But anyway, she ended up undergoing an exorcism. So that was a very confusing, scary time for me. And she, one night, got her mom's car and drove it as fast as she could into a ditch and passed away. And I was convinced that the behavior that she showed in the months leading up to that event and something similar to that event would happen to me, and that it was going to happen to me soon. So, motivated by that fear, I looked out around me and was like, "I've experienced this thing that I would call evil," even though I didn't really know how, specifically, to define "evil" then. I just asked, "What's out there that can allow me to fit this experience into the framework of some faith tradition that could save me?" And that's how I got into Christianity—looked for a safe space at a Baptist church. Which would end up not being very safe later on. But, yeah.

Matthias: 09:30 Yeah. That experience of finding Christianity out of a place of fear. That feels true to my experience. Obviously I'm not trying to say they're the same experience in any way, but that sense of "believing these things, being a part of this community, is going to keep me from what I'm afraid of." In my story, it was hell. That feels like a... I don't know if I want to say a common experience, but that feels like a selling point that was used often.

Blake: 10:04 One hundred percent. Yes. Yeah, I kind of stumbled into it on my own, but I do think it's a common experience. And then it obviously begs the question, "Is that a good motivation for jumping into a major life change"—or at least it was for me. And I think that question remains to be seen. I don't think we ever have pure motivations 100% of the time—or even 1% of the time—but I am and remain thankful for finding my way into that church and for the tradition that I've been a part of since, even though it has been very painful at times.

Matthias: 10:45 That feels like a really beautiful way to hold some of that tension there—that sense of "I'm so thankful for this" *and* acknowledging the fact that it's been incredibly painful.

Blake: 10:57 Yeah. Even how we started—when we started talking about community... I think throughout most of my college years and even after I really came to terms with my sexuality, there was a sense of camaraderie that I would experience with Christians even in a place that was incredibly painful. As soon as I started admitting that to people, I voluntarily checked myself into a conversion therapy program and was there for not a terribly long time, but I would still

encounter those pieces of advice and that language for years after. And although it was incredibly... I would even say abusive and damaging, it, at the same time, still taught me vulnerability with other people and how to exist in tension with other people. And while I in no way am saying that to try to justify real harm and real abuse... yeah. It's exactly what you said—I still can't deny the fact that I learned a great deal about how to exist in community, even though I exist in a completely different one now, from my time in more conservative Christian traditions that I was a part of for most of my 20s.

Matthias: 12:17 So you're a recording artist. You make music. You do a lot of things in your life, but this is one element that's... you're currently working on a new album, you have a new single coming out here really soon. I'd love to hear about that!

Blake: 12:30 Honestly, so much of that has been informed by what we've just been talking about. So I came out to Nashville in 2007 to do the music thing. I wanted to be a worship songwriter, and I was a part of that community and had a publishing deal and all of those things. I became disillusioned very quickly with the industry out here and started writing my own stuff. It was more folk-y, singer-songwriter-y, very earnest songs, and then went on tour with a pop band—a pop-punk band, so it was like, painting our nails, doing eyeliner, the whole nine yards—and realized through that tour that deep down I love pop music and always have, and somewhere along the way thought that it was unintelligent, or... I don't know. But I got over that and moved back into pop. So that's when I made a transition from making music under my own name to making music under the name COURIER, which is... I call it a "concept artist" for lack of a better term, because most of the music that I create under that term was written about the experiences of other people.

Blake: 13:44 So my first project—it was called *The Present Tense*. It came out a few years back. Each song on that record was written about the life experiences of each person in the small group that I was a part of at that time. So I wrote all those songs in secret, invited them all to a show, played it all for them... it was an incredible night. Honestly one of my favorite memories to this day. But we turned that into a record, and a lot of the feedback that I would get about that record was that it helped people see the people in my small group—it helped humanize them. And I think it is true that sometimes the more specific that we can get about things, the more that it can apply generally to all people. So when I was thinking about the next project that I wanted to embark on, I was thinking, "Cool. So if that's what this whole thing is about—if humanizing other people is... if that's what I've found the main goal of this music thing for me to be,

then..." I just started thinking, "Who are the people in my life... honestly, who need humanizing the most? Who are the people that really need to be seen in all of their dignity for my listeners the way that I see them?"

Blake: 15:01 So all that was happening at the same... it was late 2016. It was during the time of Kaepernick's protests. Just a side note—I work for an NFL team, so I was privy to a lot of conversations that were going on. I was hearing a lot of experiences from countless people, Black men especially, who have had experiences being stopped by the police and arrested for no reason. So all of that was swirling around in my mind as well. So I had this idea for this project, and one of the first people that I took it to was SueAnn, and asked SueAnn, "Hey, I'm a white, pretty straight-passing dude who is thinking about making these songs in collaboration with my friends of color, with my LGBTQIA+ friends, with an array of friends who fall in the margins. Is this something that's appropriate for me to be doing, given the vast history of white artists appropriating Black work and Black stories?" So we had a conversation about that, and she said, "I think you should do it, but just know that you'll get flak from everywhere, and you're gonna mess up. But even while you're messing up, know that it's okay, but you still need to do everything you can not to mess up." So that's stuck with me, and that's been at the core of this project from the beginning.

Blake: 16:30 There's been tons of conversations about what collaboration looks like, where the flow of money is happening, and where that goes and comes from. All of those conversations are conversations that wouldn't have been happening in a different context with a different project, but. So anyway... it got delayed a little bit, but I'm closing in on the finish line now, and put one single out about a month ago, and another one will be coming out on the 17th that I'm really excited about.

[break]

Matthias: 16:57 Have you heard something on Queerology that's made a big impact on your life? Do you now follow one of my guests because you've met them here? Because of the format of Queerology, you get to meet people in a way that lets you relate and connect. There's something uniquely personal and intimate about the conversations that happen here. If this is something you've experienced, then help me keep these conversations going by making a financial gift and becoming a Queerology Active Listener. You'll get access to the Active Listeners Facebook group right away: a place for all of us to continue these conversations throughout the week. All you need to do is jump over to patreon.com/matthiasroberts, choose your gift

amount, and you'll be an Active Listener! It's really easy. That's [patreon.com/matthiasroberts](https://www.patreon.com/matthiasroberts). I really look forward to meeting you in the Facebook group!

[interview resumes]

Matthias: 17:50 One of the songs that you've recently put out is called "White Tears," and one of the lines in it really stuck out to me: "If I give up my power, I give up the thing that binds me to my people." I think especially in the context of that conversation we started with, of "our identities come from our communities," that's a powerful line.

Blake: 18:14 Yeah. Gosh, that song... I've just spent a lot of time talking about how these songs were written about other people's experiences, but I was actually challenged by SueAnn in the writing of this project to turn the mirror on myself in terms of race, because it wouldn't be right for me to tell the stories of all of my friends and how they find belonging in their own racial categories without me doing the same work for myself, which white people tend to do a lot.

Blake: 18:47 So that song was written as an interrogation of my whiteness and was called "White Tears" because I think there's a great deal of emotional labor that we must do as white folks in what time we have when we're not actively trying to dismantle the systems that oppress our siblings of color. So that line, "If I give up my power, I give up the thing that binds me to my people"... I think we have to be real about the glue that holds our communities together. I think we have to understand that... well, I'll give myself as an example. My ancestors were mostly Irish and Scandinavian, but especially my Irish ancestors, when they came over, had to do a lot of work to give up their Irish heritage in order to assimilate into whiteness. Gave up customs, ways of speaking, even—we changed my last name. It used to be spelled differently, and then it became quote-unquote "Americanized." And that was, too... they sacrificed all those things on the altar of whiteness to gain societal power. So that song... what it's about is the realization that whiteness, yes, oppresses... or, the system of whiteness, rather, is a system that oppresses and kills people of color daily, and has for the history of our country, but it also costs us something. And I don't think that that's something that we necessarily should be processing with our siblings of color, but I do think that it's something that we should be processing with each other.

Blake: 20:25 I think of Voldemort as an apt image for what whiteness does in that Voldemort... in order to gain more power and live longer, he made these things called Horcruxes. By doing that, he would have to kill somebody, and the process of killing somebody split his soul, and

he would use that fragment to create this thing that would give him more power. In a sense, it's like... in order to dehumanize other people, we also dehumanize ourselves. We also lose touch with our own humanity. Again, I think that that work is something that needs to be done. Just like any of us who have had to repress part of ourselves for a long time know that it tends to come out sideways at some point—it's hard to keep things repressed without some sort of negative consequence. I think the same can be said for feelings of white guilt, feelings of white fear, white shame, white anger... I think those are all things that we can't brush aside because we want to cling to the idea that we're one of the good ones. We have to process those, either with a therapist or on our own or with other white friends, so that we don't end up hurting our siblings of color, even while we're doing the most important work, which, again, is to dismantle the systems that oppress our siblings of color.

Matthias: 21:55 Let's play a clip of that song.

COURIER: 22:02 If the world was a hotel we all moved into
Then I'd expect to have a key to every room
Then I could belong anywhere I choose
If the world was a hotel we all moved into

Who are my people? Who is my tribe?
Can crooked instruments draw steady lines?
If I give up my power, I give up the thing that
Binds me to my people

White were the tears I cried—I don't wanna die...

Matthias: 22:58 I think I want to sit here for a moment longer, because you mentioned, like, this is work, as white folks—you used the phrase “emotional labor”—this is emotional labor that white folk, that we, need to be doing. And that's such an interesting term, because so often I see the term “emotional labor” in a sense of “We need to step away from doing emotional labor,” or “We need to pay people for doing emotional labor,” so on and so forth. And what I'm hearing in what you're saying is, “No, no, no. As white folks, it's our responsibility to do labor that is going to be truly emotional.”

Blake: 23:38 Yeah. I think it's labor that needs doing. So if we don't do it, someone's going to be doing it, and so often that falls to our siblings of color to do. So I think, yeah, we're responsible for those emotions, when all too often we want to project them onto the people around us and have our guilt be assuaged by somebody when, yeah, that work is... I think it does involve labor. I think it is hard but necessary for us to be doing.

- Matthias: 24:10 Yes. So important. And it brings to mind this image of white tears, which in larger critical race theory is this defense mechanism of white people breaking down in tears in order to bring... to recenter, to bring attention back. And I think in your song, there's this sense of... these are real tears, but they're not tears that are... there's a place for tears.
- Blake: 24:39 Yeah. And that was the goal of the song. The title carries a couple different meanings. I wanted the title to be "White Tears" because I wanted to alert people of color that "Hey, this song is a myopic coming-to-terms with my own whiteness, and though it's something that I think needs doing, I don't want to shove that work onto my siblings of color." So it was both a term to, I guess, send a message to folks that were like, "Yeah, these are white tears in the sense that 'I don't want to see your white tears. I don't have time to wallow in white defensiveness.'" So it's both that *and* the reality that whiteness does cost white people something, that if we don't do the work of dealing with these real emotions, that they will come out sideways at some point in time. So, yeah, I think it's both/and.
- Blake: 25:42 But if I could think of a metaphor for this, it would be... I always try to boil things down to interpersonal relationships. So let's say there's a soldier in war, and under orders of the general, this soldier comes and attacks a civilian. In the process of attacking the civilian, the soldier is also hurt. Let's say the civilian is very seriously hurt, and the soldier loses a few fingers. So realities have changed for both the soldier and the civilian. The civilian was the victim. Their life was changed most drastically. But I think the soldier also has to come to terms with the fact that his reality has changed as well. He's going to live life with the minor inconvenience of losing some fingers but also with the sense that he carried out these heinous orders from a general. Now if that soldier wanted to process those feelings which need to be processed if there's going to be any sort of reintegration into society, I think that that soldier would need to go and process those feelings with, maybe, other soldiers who have had similar experiences, or someone else, but it would be vastly inappropriate for that soldier to try to go to the person that he victimized and try to process his new lived reality with that person.
- Blake: 27:07 So, yeah, I think, bringing it back to us, we have to be doing the work of becoming whole people again, because whiteness has distanced us from our own humanity. We need to be working to get our own humanity back. First and foremost—again, I want to keep driving this home because we can really easily fall into the cracks of making anti-racism an adventure of personal growth for us, which it's not. It's about dismantling these unjust systems—but I think that in the process, in the cracks of time that we have available in which

we're not actively engaging in that fight, I think we should be processing our own junk, because we've got a lot of it.

- Matthias: 27:54 So you have a new single coming out.
- Blake: 27:58 Yup.
- Matthias: 27:59 Love to hear about that.
- Blake: 28:00 So, new single. It's called "Conversion." A little bit of backstory: when I started writing for this record, I was still... I guess I would call it "Side B." My theology at that time was... I'm not sure how to nail it down, but it was far from affirming, of myself or anyone else. So I had a friend that I went through conversion therapy with, and he dropped out a lot sooner than I did and came out for the second time in his life, and fully affirmed himself and deconstructed and reconstructed his theology around sexuality. And he wrote me a letter. And in the letter, he pretty much laid out, like, "Hey, I've been trying so hard to do what everyone wants me to do in this program, and it's not only not working, but it's hurting me." So I remember reading his letter for the first time and wanting so badly to empathize but knowing that I needed to hold these theological walls in place so that I wouldn't, in my mind at the time, "get swept along."
- Blake: 29:09 So it was much later that I sat down to write a song about him that I thought about his letter. I dug it back out, and as soon as I started reading the letter again, I got those same feelings, where it was like, "Oh gosh, I can so easily access this pain that he seems to be communicating, but I need to maintain these walls because I don't want to feel this too deeply, because what would that mean?" Eventually, I decided, "If I'm going to do this project justice, if I'm actually going to do my friend justice in this collaborative endeavour with him," that I needed to offer him the same courtesy and the same dignity that I was offering all of the other people that I was collaborating with and really try to get into his experience. So I read the letter again and let the walls down, and this song rose up from that. There was one line in there that really shook me to my core, and it just dropped into my lap. There are lines that you work really hard for, and then there are other lines that seem like little gifts from the Divine. This was one of those lines. In the second verse, it says, "What they call freedom feels more like abuse." And when I wrote that, I was like, "Oh my gosh, that feels so true, and that hurts so bad." This song wasn't the only catalyst that led me to reconsider my convictions and to destroy those walls and to finally affirm myself and others, but it was definitely one of them. So that's this song.
- Matthias: 30:51 Let's listen to a bit of it.

Blake: 30:52 Yeah!

COURIER: 30:54 Don't know how to handle this
 Don't know who it is I've been trying to convince
 God or myself or you
 And I can tell you what they'll say
 Lack of trying or a lack of faith
 But what they call freedom feels more like abuse

I gave you the letter 'cause I couldn't stick around
 I love you, but I won't let you take me down

You can't keep me in, and you can't take me down
 You can't take me down

There's a shine in my soul
 Can't change what you can't see
 You can't change what you can't see
 There's a shine in my soul
 Can't change what God made me
 You can't change what God made me

There's a shine in my soul...

Matthias: 32:21 That sense of "I need to hold these theological walls in place"... that being literally a barrier from experiencing empathy. When you say that... I know what that feels like in my body. I've done that before. There's something so heartbreaking, and it's a very real thing. To a point, I still do it! It's not something that's deeply in my past. As you talk about this sense of "As I began to empathize, as I began to let those walls down," it literally transformed your life. You started questioning your own theology, you started coming out, you had this whole process, simply from experiencing empathy or letting yourself take down those walls.

Blake: 33:10 Yeah. Gosh, that's such a great point, too, in the sense that it's a process that's ongoing and will be ongoing probably as long as I live. I'm a Four, so I value quote-unquote "authenticity"—letting people in on what's going on deep down. But there were certainly parts of my life that I would compartmentalize and put in a box and justify away. I think, Matthias, my story is one in which I felt like I did everything by the book. Textbook... listening to all of the advice from my pastors about what I needed to do and how I should think about myself. Because we're all told—or most of us are told—"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure," so we shouldn't be listening to what our own experiences are telling us. And I think reading that letter was one of the first times where I was like, "Gosh,

maybe I should be listening to this. Maybe I should be listening to my experience.”

Blake: 34:11 I was told by my pastor... I was 26 or 27—this was when I thought I needed to live a celibate life. I was told by my pastor, “I don’t think you have the gift of celibacy because you’re depressed all the time. I think you should marry a woman.” And even though everything in me was like, “That does not feel right,” that’s what I did. Literally did every step that I could to usher in the promised fruit that my pastors told me would come. The hard part was, not only was no real fruit showing up, but what was showing up seemed rotten and dark. They would say, “Yeah, you probably won’t be as happy as a normal man”—you know, quote-unquote “normal” man would in a quote-unquote “normal” Christian relationship—“but at least you’ll have more Jesus,” right? “Maybe you won’t experience as much happiness in life, but this suffering will bring you closer to Jesus as Jesus suffered.” What I couldn’t ignore was that Jesus was nowhere to be seen. They promised more Jesus, and I felt abandoned. So I think the tipping point really was listening to my experience. And yeah, like you said, that’s a process that I’m still learning how to do and feel like I’m still not even very good at but one I want to get better at.

Matthias: 35:41 As you describe that, like, “You may not be as happy, but at least you’ll have more Jesus.” Those are words that I heard in one way or another growing up—this idea of linking suffering right now to promised abundance later, or at least a coping abundance currently, because of Jesus. This is going to be really strong language, but that’s really fucked up! It’s so manipulative. I could get on a soapbox here, but it makes me think of Kevin Garcia and his coining of the phrase, “Bad theology kills.” You’re describing this sense of... maybe it wasn’t actual physical death, but moving towards death instead of life.

Blake: 36:38 Yeah. Matthias, if I’m being very honest, it very nearly did kill me. Those words have definitely rang true. It *does* kill. Several years ago, I would have thought, “That’s an exaggeration,” but it’s not. It’s very real. Those false promises and that manipulation had very real consequences on my mind, on my emotions, on my physical body, even. You know?

Matthias: 37:07 So as you look forward to this new album that’s releasing—so you’ve released one single, you have this new single coming out here in a couple days, and then a full album dropping later this year—what are you most excited about?

Blake: 37:22 What’s so wild is that the question at the heart of this record is the

same question that I ask in “White Tears” and that all of the co-participants in this record have been asking as we have been creating it, which is, “Who are my people?” And what I had no idea would be the case when I started this was that is a very real question that I have had to ask myself and try to figure out in the last couple years. So it feels almost prophetic in a way, even though I feel uncomfortable using that term a little bit. I’m so excited to release this within the context of community, to celebrate with the other people who have worked so hard with me along this process, and I’m excited to see the joy that does spring to life in me for this project. I really think that some of the best art is done when the artist is really doing it for themselves, as selfish as that seems. The personal becomes universal.

- Blake: 38:27 Well, the record tells this story. There’s a central narrative arc. It begins in dust, in my hometown and some of the problems there, and it ends in dust, which is this echatological imagining that I tried to do in song form. In the very first song, there’s a line in which I say—and this is one of the first songs that I wrote for the record—there’s a line that says, “Right there in the corner of every room I walk into, I see the child I used to be watching, searching for something that survived.” When I think about that image, I think about the child in me that for the better part of my life was looking on and being like, “Are you going to continue to discard a huge part of who I am?” And what I love about the last song is that it’s an affirmation, a welcoming into a new equitable, just reality in which we are all welcome as we are. So the last song seems to say to that child, “I will not discard any part of you. You are totally welcome here.” And I’m excited to see what that story not only does for me but for the people who listen to the record.
- Matthias: 39:47 I love that. You said you were a little bit uncomfortable with the word “prophetic”—which I understand; I get that—and it brings to mind that in some theological streams, the idea of “prophetic” simply means “naming what is true.” And in that sense... it sounds like you’ve named what is true.
- Matthias: 40:06 How can people find your work?
- Blake: 40:10 It’s kind of hard to find me, but on Instagram—I’ve tried to change my Instagram name forever, and for whatever reason, Instagram won’t let me, but—it’s @blakeamundell on Instagram. Twitter is just @blakemundell. Most of my work you can find by googling COURIER, or the website is therealcourier.com.
- Matthias: 40:30 Blake, thank you so much for joining me. This has been lovely.
- Blake: 40:33 Yeah. I love this. Thanks a lot for having me.

- Matthias: 40:36 You can find Blake’s music anywhere you listen to music by looking up COURIER. His new single, “Conversion,” releases Friday. Blake is on Instagram @blakeamundell and on Twitter @blakemundell.
- Matthias: 40:49 Queerology is on Twitter and Instagram @queerologypod, or you can tweet me directly @matthiasroberts.
- Matthias: 40:55 Queerology is produced with support from its listeners. To find out how you can help keep Queerology on the air by becoming an Active Listener, head over to patreon.com/matthiasroberts. Another really easy way to support the show is by leaving a rating and a review. Do that right in your podcast app, or head to matthiasroberts.com/review and it’ll take you right there.
- Matthias: 41:15 As always, I’d love to hear from you. If you have ideas of what you’d want to hear on the show or just want to say hi, reach out! I’ll get back to you.
- Matthias: 41:22 And until next time, y’all: byeeee!