

Real Review interview with Magali Reus	6
Jack Self	14
O.Disu & F.Ajao	18
Hannah Foulds	22
Stoya	30
Mark Campbell	38
Peer Illner	42
Theo Simpson	49
William Alderwick	50
Gavin J Blair	54
Yulia Rudenko	59
Huw Lemmey	63
Coco Coffman	74
Catherine Slessor	78
Jack Self	86
James Taylor-Foster	91
Harry Burke	95

"It might instead be more apt to imagine people as algorithmic performers, vessels or vehicles that replenish their most primal needs – for food, love, sex, sleep, comfort – in a more mathematical way. This aligns our personal relationships with our more externalised object-based interactions. Our need for

"Every webcam show that I do, is very emotional. It is definitely not a job I start, I stop, and the emotions are checked at the door. Emotion is embedded in every single thing I do."

Anna Bell Peaks, page 34

"Rather than pre-existing its social use, the gender binary is the result of its social function."

Peer Illner, page 46

"The act of smoking is self-evidently phallic. You put a cigarette in your mouth. You reposition it with your tongue. You light it. You suck on it."

Catherine Slessor, page 82

"The spread of contactless technology has put existential pressure onto everyday communication with strangers."

Jack Self, page 15

"At the end of the season viewers selected the winning couple, who then had to choose between keeping the house or receiving its equivalent value in cash (the stacks of money, incidentally, were presented in the shape of a house too)."

Yulia Rudenko, page 59

that can be locked into a relevant history or ideology, invoking something far greater than the sum of its parts."

James Taylor-Foster, page 94

"Presumably the objects in the collection are evaluated based on the tension between their quotidian qualities and their unique narratives."

Coco Coffman, page 75

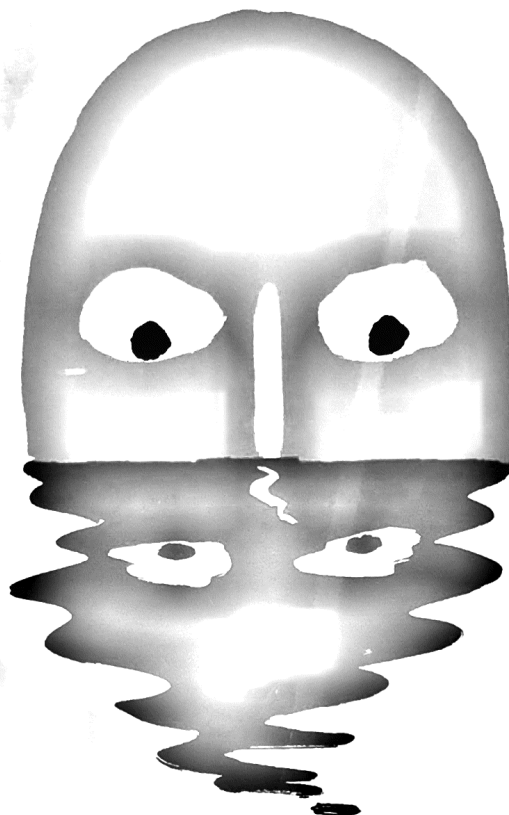
"The memory of the fuck, the heavy body, and the cold porcelain tile merge – the sight of a cracked tile is forever changed for you."

Huw Lemmey, page 73

"The mark of any competently designed flag is an intelligence of colours and shapes

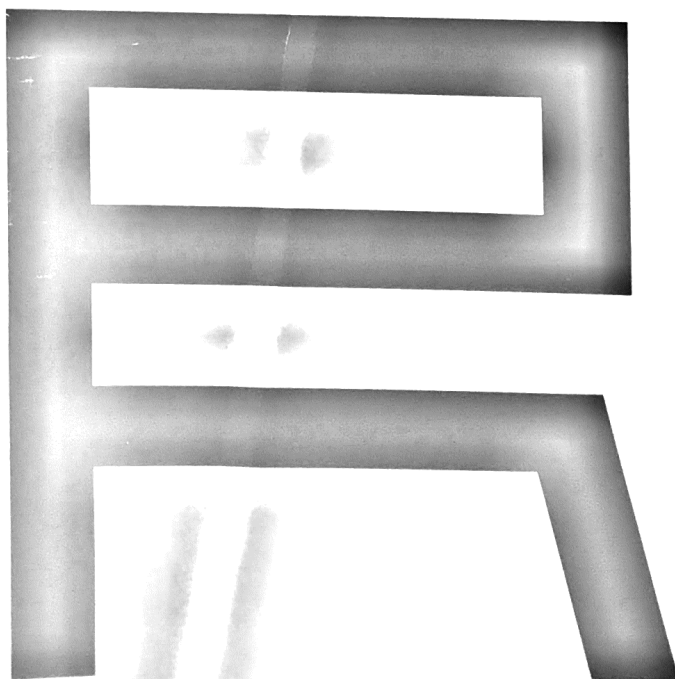
REAL REVIEW

4



REAL REVIEW
What it means to live today

Issue for Summer 2017
\$11/£8/€10
ISBN 978-0-9935474-5-4





prostitution, illegal immigration and services (tailoring, shoe making and household consumables). The diverse and claustrophobic interiority of the Mansions appears as a modernised, late-capital, version of the infamous Kowloon Walled City (demolished in 1994). The absolute interiority of Chungking Mansions rendered by Doyle in the harsh luminescent tones and colours of fluorescent lighting, the distortions, camera movement and blurred jump cuts reflecting the confusing orientation and fluid inhabitation of this interior.

In contrast to the astonishing cinematography of the film's first half, the following narrative is sedate, framing the meandering and inconclusive romance of the two lead characters through a pair of architectural figures – the apartment of the protagonist, also located within Chungking Mansions, and the Central-Mid-Levels Escalator, which is shown ascending through the apartment windows. (The familiarity with which the interior is photographed stems from Doyle's loan of his own apartment for the production.) The visual relationship between these two architectural figures – an interior and exterior, domestic and technological, static and dynamic – illustrates a gentle, at times accidental, mapping of Hong Kong and its inhabitants. Held in a series of overlapping visual connections, this architectural coupling bears witness to the possibility of existing within a modern city without touching the ground – a possibility later



described by Adam Frampton, Jonathan D. Solomon and Clara Wong in their *Cities Above Ground* (2012). This relationship also provides an architectural analogy of the film's fascination with departure and the indeterminacy of connection. Within this domestic interiority the characters circle around one another, unseen, climbing in and out of cupboards, passing by, like unspeaking – but equally unknowable to one another – versions of Godard's characters in *Le Mépris*' famous apartment scene (1963).

The sense of restrained desire is evident both in the characters' inability to profess their love for one another, and the forgiving cinematic image. For Barthes, the declaration "I-love-you" is literally useless, capable only of providing meaning to the moment it is uttered. Such declarations can only be truly significant, he concludes, when they are offered simultaneously: an almost impossible verbal synchrony in which one utterance is freed from the obligations of following the other, as if it depended on it. As the later work of Kai-Wei and Doyle suggests, such an apparently impossible synchronicity is possible in the visual image of the cinema. In their masterpiece, *In the Mood for Love* (2000), not only are the characters bound in an impossibly restrained and silent desire for one another – but the viewer themselves is suspended by the languorous camera movement and astonishing cinematographic imagery of a film that is saturated in desire. Any viewing of this film bears witness to this mutuality. There is no point talking about love when it is visually evident, as the final scene of *In the Mood for Love* suggests – the male lead breathes the secret of his affection into an ancient monastery wall. The architecture of this unspoken love is sealed in the visual image.

THE EBB AND FLOW OF GENDER

Peer Illner

On the first of August 1986 I was born six weeks early in a hospital in Berlin-Spandau. As is often the case with premature babies, one of my lungs was underdeveloped and I couldn't breathe properly. Since the hospital didn't have a neonatal emergency wing, I was rushed to a clinic in Berlin-Schöneberg, where I spent the first few weeks of my infancy in an incubator, hooked up to various machines and tubes, to complete my unfinished gestation process. As you can imagine, I was delighted to learn that foetal surgeons at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (unsettlingly abbreviated as CHOP), successfully tested an artificial womb, designed to keep babies born after only 23 weeks of pregnancy alive. Born barely halfway into a normal pregnancy, these babies weigh around 500 grams, their eyelids are closed and they appear a glistening pink – their skin is so thin that their blood shines through.

Breathing is a major issue for premature babies. Their lungs lack the millions of alveoli that absorb oxygen in fully developed humans. Low oxygen levels in the body can easily lead to heart and brain damage. However, excessively high oxygen may lead to exaggerated growth of blood vessels, particularly in the eyes. Ventilating these infants in a way that protects their immature bodies from lack of, or overexposure to, oxygen is one of the central tasks of neonatal medicine. The artificial womb tackles this issue by submerging the baby in a so-called biobag. Much like a cybernetic black box, the biobag has one port for inputs, where medications and amniotic fluid are funnelled inside, and one port for outputs, where the same substances are drained from the bag after absorption. As biobag designer Alan Flake explains, the artificial womb has thus far only been tested on premature lambs. However, he is confident that "babies could be incubated in the system within three years in the first clinical trial".

The artificial womb's consequences for neonatal medicine cannot be overestimated. In the UK, one in nine babies are born prematurely. While currently, the chance for infant survival after 23 weeks is only at 15%, the artificial womb is set to increase the odds dramatically. In its animal test phase, the biobag-encased lamb fetuses developed into fluffy white sheep over several weeks, and suffered no consequences later in life. However, apart from its success in this clinical trial, discussions of the artificial womb are overdetermined by the technology's future possibilities. It is easy to imagine that the entire gestation process could one day be outsourced to artificial wombs, located exterior to (or in the absence of) a human body. When combined with In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), a process that already permits egg fertilisation outside the human organism, it becomes possible to conceive of the future of biological reproduction as an entirely technical affair. This would make sex,

gender and the family largely obsolete as social institutions. The technology for this is more or less in place. It's just a matter of waiting for its sufficient development. Alan Flake is keenly aware of these implications. Even though cautioning that, "I don't want this to be visualised as humans hanging on the walls in bags", the conjured image persists – whether endorsed or disavowed by the neonatal surgeon.

Throughout the 20th century, the prospect of fully automated reproduction has inspired futuristic musings, both utopian and dystopian. Heralded by progressives as the technology to achieve a *scientific socialism*, in which human production as well as reproduction could be carefully engineered, it has been seen by conservatives as a recipe for disaster, in which kinship ties are disembedded, and nuclear families destroyed. To properly review reproductive medicine's latest advance, the hopes and aspirations that have been historically pinned to such technologies in order to assess their contemporary implications.

In the interwar period, the cultural imaginary of artificial reproduction experienced a hitherto unparalleled boom. Flourishing in science, as well as in popular culture, the idea of detaching the reproduction of the species from human sexual behaviour held great appeal. In line with socialist aspirations to develop a more rational administration of society through the full automation of production, biologists believed that reproduction too could be handled more efficiently. Though ideas of bioengineering would soon be compromised – following the Nazi's experiments with eugenics in the 1930s – biofuturism was very much *en vogue* in progressive circles. As the Marxist biologist J.B.S. Haldane surmised in 1923:

We can take an ovary from a woman, and keep it growing in a suitable fluid for as long as twenty years, producing a fresh ovum each month, of which some 90 percent can be fertilized, and the embryos grown successfully for nine months, and then brought out into the air."

Feminists have also endorsed artificial reproduction throughout the 20th century. In 1970, the hope for fully technicised human reproduction formed the cornerstone of the Marxist-Feminist manifesto *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone. Firestone argued that due to developments in reproductive technology, society was now able to question biological fundamentals such as sex. Indeed, as anticipated by Haldane, all the objective conditions for such a radical re-evaluation were in place. The only thing preventing the technological overturning of sex roles was that the scientific institutions were still in the hands of patriarchy.¹

Drawing on Marx's arguments about the political fettering of society's productive relations, for Firestone, scientific progress too was artificially held back by

gender and the family largely obsolete as social institutions. The technology for this is more or less in place. It's just a matter of waiting for its sufficient development. Alan Flake is keenly aware of these implications. Even though cautioning that, "I don't want this to be visualised as humans hanging on the walls in bags", the conjured image persists - whether endorsed or disavowed by the neonatal surgeon.

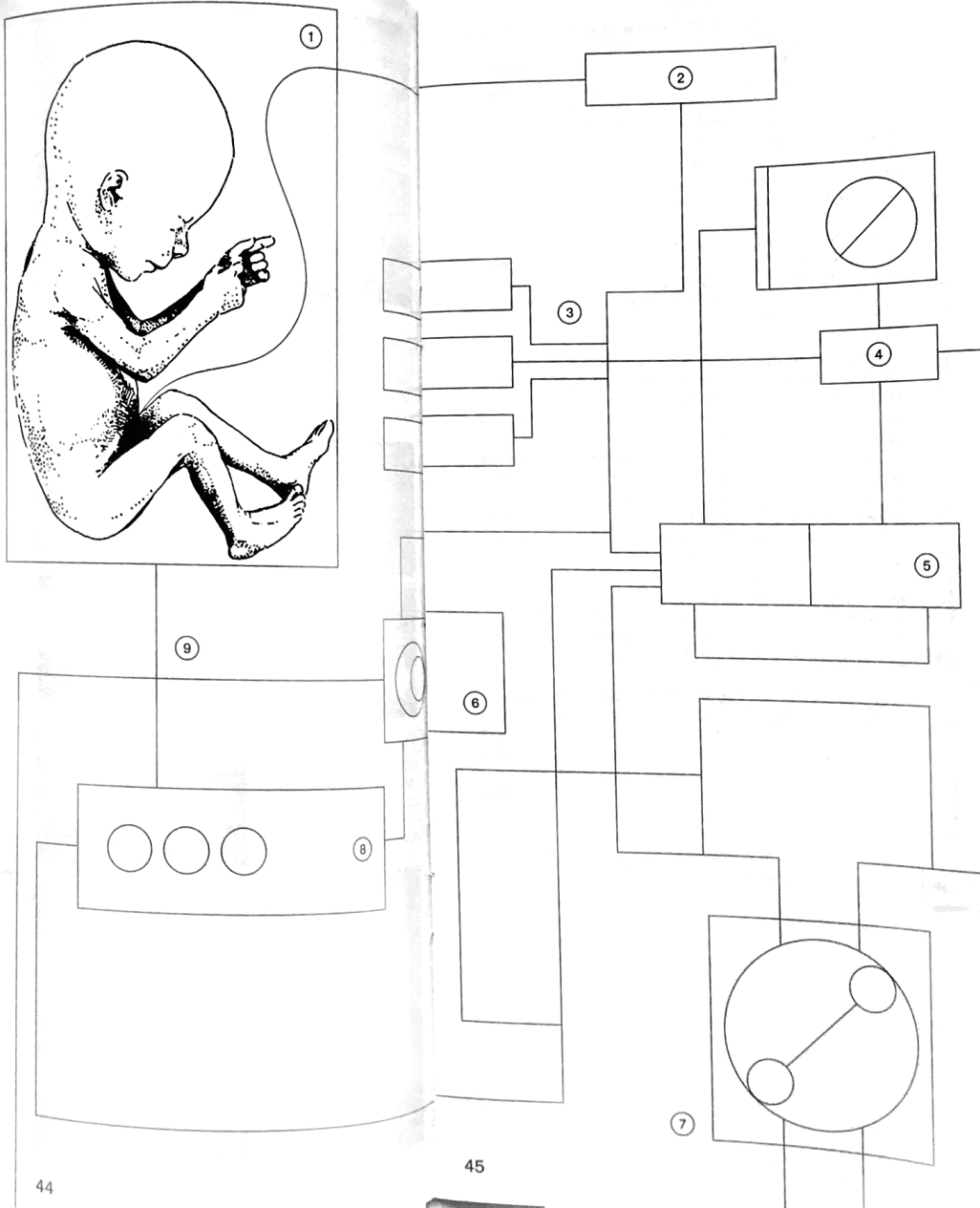
Throughout the 20th century, the prospect of fully automated reproduction has inspired futuristic musings, both utopian and dystopian. Heralded by progressives as the technology to achieve a *scientific socialism*, in which human production as well as reproduction could be carefully engineered, it has been seen by conservatives as a recipe for disaster, in which kinship ties are disembedded, and nuclear families destroyed. To properly review reproductive medicine's latest advance, the hopes and aspirations that have been historically pinned to such technologies in order to assess their contemporary implications.

In the interwar period, the cultural imaginary of artificial reproduction experienced a hitherto unparalleled boom. Flourishing in science, as well as in popular culture, the idea of detaching the reproduction of the species from human sexual behaviour held great appeal. In line with socialist aspirations to develop a more rational administration of society through the full automation of production, biologists believed that reproduction too could be handled more efficiently. Though ideas of bioengineering would soon be compromised - following the Nazi's experiments with eugenics in the 1930s - biofuturism was very much *en vogue* in progressive circles. As the Marxist biologist J.B.S. Haldane surmised in 1923:

We can take an ovary from a woman, and keep it growing in a suitable fluid for as long as twenty years, producing a fresh ovum each month, of which some 90 percent can be fertilized, and the embryos grown successfully for nine months, and then brought out into the air."

Feminists have also endorsed artificial reproduction throughout the 20th century. In 1970, the hope for fully technicised human reproduction formed the cornerstone of the Marxist-Feminist manifesto *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone. Firestone argued that due to developments in reproductive technology, society was now able to question biological fundamentals such as sex. Indeed, as anticipated by Haldane, all the objective conditions for such a radical re-evaluation were in place. The only thing preventing the technological overturning of sex roles was that the scientific institutions were still in the hands of patriarchy.¹

Drawing on Marx's arguments about the political fettering of society's productive relations, for Firestone, scientific progress too was artificially held back by



existing patriarchal-bourgeois power relations. "In the hands of our current society", she cautioned, "and under the direction of current scientists (few of whom are female, or even feminist), any attempted use of technology to free anybody is suspect." What did the promise of artificial reproduction hold for 20th century feminists?

According to Firestone and others, women's reproductive function has been a key element in the historical development of capitalism. It is the fact that women can bear children that has made them relevant for classed societies that centre on wealth accumulation and economic output. This is because, as Michel Foucault has argued, population – in dynamic relation with variables such as the size of the national territory, the abundance of natural resources and demographic development – is a key factor for the wealth of nations.

Because women are responsible for the reproduction of the species, understood as bearers of labour power, their reproductive power has historically become subject to intense subjugation and policing. Early capitalist accumulation was centred on the development of a new sexual division of labour, subjugating women's labour and women's reproductive function to the reproduction of the workforce. Importantly, in the radical Marxist view, it is this enlisting of women in the reproduction of workers that turns biologically uncertain differences of sex into a key social distinction. Rather than pre-existing its social use, the gender binary is the result of its social function. In the words of the French communist group *Théorie Communiste* (TC):

The possession of a uterus is an anatomical feature, while "baby maker" is a social distinction that turns this anatomical feature into a natural distinction. Within the nature of this social construction and constraint, that which is socially constructed (women) is always sent back towards biology.

This rigid gendering under capitalism has produced two distinct spheres of activity. A public sphere, historically occupied by wage-earning men; and a private sphere, historically occupied by stay-at-home women. Because of the historical subjugation of women to the reproductive function, the political horizon of radical feminists, such as Firestone, is the abolition of gender. Rather than being technologically-determinist, Firestone's analysis therefore contained a revolutionary demand. It was only once society and its scientific institutions were in the hands of feminists that technology's full potential could be achieved. Necessary for Firestone's *Feminist Revolution* was thus a combination

between Marxist efforts to overthrow class society and the full development of reproductive technologies:

The elimination of sexual classes requires the revolt of the underclass (women) and the seizure of control of *reproduction*: not only the full restoration to women of ownership in their own bodies, but also their (temporary) seizure of control of human fertility [...] And just as the end goal of socialist revolution was not only the elimination of the economic class privilege but of the economic class distinction itself, so the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself.

Firestone saw two ways to abolish gender: either take over the means of production or revolutionise the means of reproduction. While spearheaded in the 1970s, this programme of liberation via technology found particular admirers in the cyberfeminists of the 1990s – among them Donna Haraway, Sadie Plant and Rosie Braidotti. However, while Firestone advanced technology as a stringent rationalisation of the means of reproduction, cyberfeminists such as Plant insisted on the irrational, unconscious and unruly becoming of technology to immanently subvert patriarchy in an unplanned way. Staying true to the manifesto format, the latest advance in Firestonian gender abolitionism is Laboria Cuboniks' *Xenofeminist Manifesto*, with its call that "we must engineer an economy that liberates reproductive labour and family life." However, what these futuristic musings neglect is that since the 1970s, the greatest driver in the loosening of gender's stranglehold has been capitalism itself. Contrary to the optimistic beliefs of techno-feminism, the gender binary has not primarily been prised open by technology or

radical feminist organising, but rather by key demographic shifts in the historical unfolding of capitalist crisis.

This claim needs backing up. In the aftermath of WWII, when generous Marshall Plan cash-injections enabled the unparalleled boom of postwar reconstruction, national economies in Western Europe required more labour than they could feasibly provide. One result was the ideologically conservative pronatalism, characteristic of the 1950s, which encouraged large family size and yielded the Baby Boomers. Another, more important, result was the large-scale import of migrant workers from the periphery to satisfy

the core's insatiable demand for manpower. For instance, between the late 1950s and 1973, West Germany recruited a total of four million migrants to work the blue-collar jobs of its *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle). In 1973 however, Western economies entered into a protracted crisis. While the reasons for the downturn are contentious, (economists trace it back to a series of oil-shocks and systemic overproduction in manufacture) the results are less so: Deindustrialisation in the West and the off-shoring/outsourcing of production to cut costs. While the service sector was able to cushion the ensuing unemployment for a limited period of time, services are insufficient to rekindle economic growth in the long term. The result is the endemic unemployment that has become characteristic of Western societies since the 1970s.

With the economic crisis came sexual liberation. Domestic labour markets were oversaturated relative to their demand for workers, while population numbers in the periphery kept exploding. This meant that natalism could be laid to rest, since a lack of labour power did not represent a problem for capitalism any longer. Indeed, in historical perspective, the 1970s were the time of the most advances in progressive gender policies and reproductive medicine. The birth control pill was widely accessible, In-Vitro Fertilisation became a medically viable option, and abortion rights were introduced in many countries. Through advances in medicine and health care, women began to have fewer children – and sometimes no children at all. Maya Andrea Gonzales sums up the effects that the labour surplus had on gender relations:

By the 1970s, [...] maternalism was largely dead. The world was overpopulated with respect to the demand for labour. *Women were no longer needed in their role as women* [...] The importance of these facts cannot be overestimated. They explain why, in our period, the straightjacket of the heterosexual matrix has had its buckles slightly loosened, for men as well as women (and even, to a small extent, for those who fit neither the categories of gender distinction, nor those of sexual difference).