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As part of the Barbican's "Feminist Literary Festival" a discussion on "Radical Kinship: Care, identity & reproduction" was held.

Radical Kinship: Care, identity & reproduction
New Suns: A Feminist Literary Festival
 5 Oct 2019, 16:00, Frobisher Auditorium 2

A panel discussion exploring current debates in reproductive justice and bodily autonomy.

Who benefits from advances in technology? When it comes to reproductive labour in society, such as caregiving and domestic work, technological 'progress' is often unevenly distributed along lines of class, race and geography. How might a feminist politics of care revisit the question of how technology can liberate all people – sexually, socially, economically and politically? What new technologically-assisted configurations of relationships and kinship can we envision to help achieve this?

Alongside chair **Reni Eddo-Lodge**, **Merve Emre**, **Sophie Lewis** and **Neel Raha** explore the impact of technology on contemporary understandings of 'belonging' and identity. They will navigate the many global struggles for bodily autonomy including reproductive justice, sex work decriminalisation, trans and migrants rights.

Reni Eddo-Lodge, author of best selling book 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race'. According to reviews it really is as confrontational as it sounds. Giles Coren in the Times reviewed and this paragraph I think may well sum it up.

So, finally, I read it. Turns out it's a weirdly inappropriate title as it's an entry-level book about structural racism in the UK whose retelling of black British history is the sort of thing that every black person in Britain would be very familiar with already, and whose ideas are ones that most black people will have thought about a lot. The only people who won't have will be white people. So then, paradoxically, it is a book entirely for them. Us. (By which I mean "me and other white people", not "me and you" — which would be a specious assumption.)

PS Coren's full article is well worth a read. I hooted.



Why I'm no longer talking to anyone any more

There's a book in the paperback bestseller lists at the moment called Why I'm No Longer Talking To White People About Race. It is by a 28-year-old author called Reni Eddo-Lodge, was published a year ...

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/why-im-no-longer-talking-to-anyone-any-more-skq6t...>

Dr Merve Emre, Associate Professor of American Literature, University of Oxford, authored a book on personality testing (The Personality Brokers). On paper Emre is possibly the only sane member of the panel. We'll see*.

*Nope, mad as a frog in a sock.

Sophie Lewis, author of 'Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family'. Now I have read some batshit stuff in my time, but this really takes the biscuit. Pregnancy is compared to *cancer*, women are 'gestators'.

touch. Kathy Acker was not citing these studies when she remarked that having cancer was like having a baby, but she was unconsciously channelling its findings. The same goes for Elena Ferrante's protagonist in *The Days of Abandonment*, who reports:

I was like a lump of food that my children chewed without stopping; a cud made of a living material that continually amalgamated and softened its living substance to allow two greedy bloodsuckers to nourish themselves.¹

The genes that are active in embryonic development are also implicated in cancer. And that is not the only reason why pregnancy among *Homo sapiens*—in Sadedin's account—perpetrates a kind of biological "bloodbath." It is the specific, functionally rare type of placenta we have to work with—the hemochorial placenta—which determines that the entity Chikako Takeshita calls "the motherfetus" tears itself apart inside.² Rather than simply interfacing with the gestator's biology

Whilst Lewis feels pregnancy is disgusting, equally abortion is beautiful, and an entirely positive experience. Especially if you're a performance artist and give yourself abortions. 🤢 Anyone who disagrees is an effing fascist, orwite?!

knowledgeable friend) to abortifacients. In 2008, Aliza Shvarts self-inseminated with fresh sperm and then "self-aborted," over and over again, every month for nine months, by swallowing pills, as a kind of art project.⁶ I'm curious what that perverse start-stop labor experiment was like. Shvarts's true, nondefensive thoughts on the matter are unfortunately obliterated by a wall of right-wing bellowing. Unsurprisingly, given that one would expect to feel good upon being extricated from a nonstop job one isn't willing to do, in general the experience of termination generates feelings of relief and cared-for-ness.

Lewis alleges that banning surrogacy makes women more vulnerable because they get moved to foreign countries (which is what actually happens anyway regardless, or else women are held in 'dormitories' in their homeland, so is this a blatant lie on her part?).

Surrogacy bans uproot, isolate, and criminalize gestational workers, driving them underground and often into foreign lands, where they risk prosecution alongside their bosses and brokers, far away from their support networks. In July 2018, thirty-three pregnant Cambodians were

Lewis' ideas are so woo-woo she'd make the Khmer Rouge blush. And there's 224 pages of this stuff apparently. I have no idea how this got published. Six 1 star reviews on Amazon.

Clearly, if I am gestating a fetus, I may feel that I am in relationship with that (fetal) part of my body. That "relationship" may even ground the sociality that emerges around me and the infant if and when it is born, assuming that we continue to cohabit. But I may also conceptualize the work in a completely different way—grounding an alternate social world. I may never so much as *see* (or wish to see) my living product; am I not still grounding a bond with the world through that birth? For that matter, people around me may fantasize that they

And finally, last, but not least, Nat Raha, a transactivist, who has written lots of papers, including one on how "Transfeminine brokenness" materialises through "negative states, transmisogyny and material precarity" (i.e. 'orrible terfs what don't believe in lady dick).

Transfeminine Brokenness, Radical Transfeminism

South Atlantic Quarterly, 2017

The affects of transfeminine life and their relationship to the material conditions undergirding such life are under-theorized in transgender studies and queer studies. This creative and critical essay conceptualizes transfeminine brokenness through negative experiences and emotions, drawing connections between such negative states to transisogyny and material precarity. The essay intends to politicize transfeminine brokenness for a radical transfeminism. It argues that the material basis of transfeminine brokenness involves the marginalization of the labor of trans women and trans feminine people within a radicalized and gendered division of labor under capitalism alongside transisogyny within queer, trans and feminist spaces and communities.

The essay defines radical transfeminism as a collective political praxis and critique which centers transfeminine bodies that are or find themselves precariously employed, poor, overworked and/or pathologized. Radical transfeminism is oriented around forms of care and support amid conditions material precarity, which include cultural production, political protest and solidarity and forms of socially reproductive labor.

The essay historically situates such bodies and the labor they undertake at the crossroads of the political ascendancy of the far right in parts of the world, and the 'transgender tipping point'. Focusing on the context of the United Kingdom, it argues that the securing of national borders throughout the fabric of public and private spheres undermines lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights. Responding to recent discussions considering transfeminism, trans people of color and the politics of prison abolition, the essay argues that the cultivation of radical transfeminism as both a life praxis and political practice may inaugurate a more livable world. The essay calls for the transformation of the material conditions that fracture transfeminine life.

Nat Raha

Edinburgh College of Art, Design, Post-Doc 12 • Mentors 118

Dr Nat Raha is a poet, queer / trans* activist, based in Edinburgh, Scotland. Her research addresses sexuality and gender, critical theory and contemporary poetry and poetics, through creative and critical methods. She is a published researcher on the 'Creating the Seventies: Unearthing pre-HIV/AIDS queer sexual culture' project at the Edinburgh College of Art. She recently completed her PhD thesis, 'Queer Capital: Materialism in queer theory and post-queer poetics', at the University of Sussex. Her current research also investigates radical transnationalism, race in UK poetry and poetics, and queer and trans poet cultures.

She is the author of three collections and numerous pamphlets of poetry - her third book, 'of atoms, body & fullness', was published by Barker Human Press in November 2016. She has performed her work internationally and her writing has been published in numerous magazines and anthologies.

Nat is co-editor of the *Radical Transfeminism* zine.

Co-organiser, 'Creating the Seventies: Unearthing Queer Europe then and now' conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, 14-16 March 2016.

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Poetry & Poetics (MA), University of Glasgow, Scotland, 2014/15

Research Support Assistant for 'Creating the Seventies: Unearthing Pre-HIV/AIDS Queer Sexual Culture', Edinburgh College of Art, Edinburgh, Scotland, 2015-16

Co-organiser of the Race & Poetry & Poetics in the UK symposium, London, UK, February 2016, steering group member: <http://www.rqpapuk.com>

Co-organiser of the Radical Transfeminism conference stream, London Conference in Critical Thought, London, UK, June 2015

Supervisors: Natural Science and Feminist Scholarship
Address: Edinburgh, Scotland

Okay, so I've set the scene for you tweeps a Barbican programme manager introduced panel discussion and the festival was about 'feminist approaches to technology' and the discussion would 'explore feminist models of family and how technology can advance this'.

Remember those words tweeps because there weren't heard again during the discussion.

Each panel member had 10 minutes to talk about themselves and then there was a short Q&A at the end.

Sophie Lewis went first - word salad galore. 'Surrogacy shouldn't belong to anyone'

and the title of her book 'Full Surrogacy Now: Feminism Against Family' could interchange to 'Full Family Now: Feminism Against Surrogacy' and it would still mean the same thing.

Lewis wasn't *for* surrogacy btw, because what happens to brown people in foreign countries is

really rather awful isn't it? Rather she was for the abolition of the family, but mostly Lewis wanted to talk about Janice Raymond and the toxic world view of 'terfs, swerfs and serfs' (latter being 'surrogacy exclusionary radical feminists').

Lewis looks forward to a time when children will belong to themselves. Alleged that Raymond said there was a global conspiracy by men to make women into gestators and @ / ObjectUK was hideously pushing this idea too.

Lewis went on a long rant about Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* and stated that it was a de-raced slave narrative (it isn't - fictional society is racially divided) and anti-historical (yeah, it's science fiction).

Lewis said we are not living in the *Handmaid's Tale* and

that Abraham Lincoln never wanted to free African-Americans from slavery really.

Lewis did anti-Atwood rant to avoid talking about her book I think and ended posing the question 'what would happen if gestational labour was withdrawn?'

Also Lewis, why don't pro-choice demonstrators be more gusty and dress up with 'foetus props'?

Merve Emre said she was involved in two projects - her 'Once and Future Feminist' - spoke to egg donors, surrogates and IVF users to compile book.

ACCORDING TO the New York papers, the first artificial womb was discovered—not invented—on the night of February 24, 1894, in a “queer little shop” on East Twenty-Sixth Street. The shop’s owner, a reclusive scientist named William Robinson, was roused from sleep by the personal physician of E. Clarence Haight, a Madison Avenue millionaire whose wife had died in childbirth and whose daughter had been born weighing less than two pounds. Desperate to save the baby, the physician begged Robinson to give him something to keep her warm. Robinson hurried to the back of his shop and emerged with what he called his “artificial womb”: a black steamer trunk with a sliding window cut into the lid, a cruder version of the infant incubators soon to debut at the Great Industrial Exposition of Berlin in 1896. “The Little Tot Has Been

Emre said ‘gestation is a kind of work’ and when signing contract with a private equity firm, firm had contractually offered 50 USD if she wanted to take HRT for egg donation. Emre felt this could help work/life balance and help women get stuck into careers.

‘Gestation work is unequally distributed’ and ‘all reproduction is assisted’ but can be ‘temporally different’. Emre most concerned by ‘continued privatisation of the family’.

This all lead to Emre’s second project - Family Estrangement. What claims can those who have that status claim from the state in terms of financial resources? Is experiencing estrangement herself and involved with standalone.org.uk

Being estranged didn’t have a political status but many are disowned by family for being queer, religious reasons, being the first one to go to uni (class). When family no longer ‘mineable’ as place of care you end up tethered to the state instead - which caused problems.

Nat Raha introduced himself as a poet and academic and wanted to talk about reproduction for trans people and that we were now in a ‘post-gay marriage moment’ and that ‘same sex marriage was transphobic’.

Raha asked what does austerity look like for trans and queer people? Spectre of Brexit loomed, but ‘some of us are still alive’. Systemic defunding of services esp affects queer people who often live outside of formal family structures, but support from ‘our lovers’ and

‘community’ made it poss to keep ‘surviving’.

Raha said trans people didn't have access to basic healthcare and lives were threatened and this hadn't changed in 10 yrs. No psychiatric assessment needed now for GD diagnosis.

Then 5 minutes later said no access to hormone tx or sx unless had psych assessment.

Raha didn't want to discuss TW pregnancies for time being (Q for future) then read off a bit of paper that trans people exp reproductive injustice as forced to choose between sterilisation or

having kids straightaway and that this was akin to eugenics.

Raha stated that not enough research had gone into whether taking HRT would sterilise you and the lack of research = lack of care by state. The community were helping keeping each other alive.

Too often trans people were told not to do things and Raha refused 'bio-political policing' from the 'gender cops'.

Eddo asked the panel to explain what did the term 'privatised family' mean?

Lewis responded nuclear family invalidated black lives and was imperialist in

nature and actually created gender - e.g. sons and daughters. Slaves didn't have property rights over their gestational products.

(Mind blowingly racist stuff isn't it - all of which went over head of Eddo)

Eddo and panel laughed about the ridiculousness of people who do gender reveals and apparently there was a cake on SM the other day which had a gender reveal - and isn't that silly? (yeah pouring scorn on themselves - so dim)

Emre said family and work providing the areas in which identity was formed and that the family reproduces capitalism.

Raha said there had been privatisation of resources, esp caring and that gay marriage had 'privatised queer intimacy'.

Eddo sneered that David Cameron had said his biggest achievement was gay marriage and the audience laughed.

Eddo correctly sensed that the question hadn't been answered so she pushed again and asked the panel to describe what the alternative models of family might look like.

Lewis laughed and said 'kill all children' and told an untrue story about Japan having a day when all kids use the public transport system on their own, even those as young as 2. Then something about her friend's bookstall downstairs and that the words 'kill all children'

had been removed from a bag they were selling or something. Nuclear family was less natural than other forms of family and that queers were refugees from it.

Raha said alt families were borne out of necessity for queers.

Emre repeated she was attending estrangement support

groups and was exiled from the family. Vocab to describe this didn't exist.

Lewis said family was the place of murders, rape and sexual assault so what did we mean when we say we would treat someone 'like family' (tee hee) and wanted to build a commune.

Raha said only families are recognised by state, and Eddo chipped in that families are given cash incentives by the state.

Audience member asked was 'carceral feminism' worth pursuing. Eddo explained the term as meaning using criminal justice system to punish misogynists.

Raha felt LGBTQ hate crimes could receive higher sentences as a deterrent but that he believed prisons should be scrapped. Also, the 'state doesn't want us to live'.

Eddo felt imprisoning misogynists wouldn't change anything long term.

Lewis said carceral feminism was white feminism and that treated brown people (trafficking victims) badly. State doesn't recognise black family. (Interestingly Lewis had a little moment at this point in which she gasped out 'sorry' probably addressed to herself as she knew she was talking complete and utter crap. Emre reached out and touched reassuringly.)

Another question from the audience along the lines of: how do we create a new family structure?

Emre said incrementalism and having access to change. Had hosted Lewis at Oxford and they laughed

'have we achieved full surrogacy yet?' and answer was 'no', yet they still laughed. Perhaps refusal of gestation for comfort rather than necessity was more positive?

Raha said nuclear family was at heart of wealth distribution and when people inherit big houses they should

be turned into communes. Lewis wanted 100% inheritance tax and most of all 'children's liberation'. Emre said 'children belong to themselves'.

So to recap, panel did not once address the issue of technology, had no insight or ideas on how a commune-style society would work

practically nor any arguments as to why this was a better model than people looking after their own sprogs.

Finally, the UK govt. is currently reviewing surrogacy laws - were they not aware of this? Because they didn't mention it once.

The UK consultation ends 11 Oct - pls respond





How to respond to the UK Surrogacy Consultation in 10 easy minutes

Should babies be on sale as commodities in the UK? Should disadvantaged women be paid to be a 'breeder' for people much richer than she is? Should those richer people become the legal parents of th...

<https://nordicmodelnow.org/2019/08/30/how-to-respond-to-the-uk-surrogacy-consultati...>

Next steps

The consultation is now open and will close on 11 October 2019.

Comments and responses to the consultation can be sent using the online form:

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/law-commission/surrogacy>

However, we are happy to accept comments in other formats. If you would like to a response form in word format, do email us to request one. Please send your response:

By email to surrogacy@lawcommission.gov.uk

OR

By post to Surrogacy Team, Law Commission, 1st Floor, Tower, 52 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AG.

If you send your comments by post, it would be helpful if, whenever possible, you could also send them by email.

If you have any questions, you can contact the team at:

surrogacy@lawcommission.gov.uk

Saw quite a few trans notables in audience and pretty sure most were university gender studies students (sold out about 140 seats).

Although on one hand it's depressing that a major arts venue platformed nonsense, it did cheer me that they couldn't even cope with the most

gentle uncritical questioning from people 100% on their side.

They have no answers, they're just poor little rich boys and girls, who know that one day they really will inherit the half million £ house from mummy & daddy and they have no intention of sharing it with you or me.

The things that toddlers come out with in these post-modern households!

Merve Emre
@mervatim

Toddler: Where are you going?

Me: To give a talk.

Toddler: No one is going to come.

Me: Maybe not.

Toddler: No real people. Just ghosts in Peppa Pig masks.

14:20 · 05 Oct 19 · Twitter for iPhone

New Suns retweeted

Merve Emre
@mervatim

Update: The toddler told me, "You do not look cool," as I left the house; but no one in the audience was a ghost in a Peppa Pig mask; had an excellent conversation with these wonderful people & some strong martinis with [@reproutopia](#); & [@NewSuns_](#) is my new favorite festival.

New Suns @NewSuns_ · 20h

Radical Kinship—@fullncommunism @reproutopia @mervatim @renireni explore how a feminist politics of care might revisit the question of how technology can liberate all—& technologically-assisted configurations of relat...

Correction on this tweet, the figure Emre said was offered was 50K USD



Right-on feminist communism.



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