

2HB

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## CONTENTS

3.

»BENJAMIN'S SCRYING MIRROR«

Michael Ebert-Hanke

4.

UNDER THE DOME

Joanna Peace

7.

ALL WHORES ARE JACOBITES

Georgia Horgan

vol .22

# »BENJAMIN'S SCRYING« MIRROR

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Michael Ebert-Hanke

take a portrait of a person passed  
out of its picture frame  
over a white candle burning  
you light it on fire  
the glass from the frame you blacken  
with the portrait alight  
back goes the glass  
black facing inwards  
frame and candle  
you set up on a table  
start staring into the mirror black  
get rid of yourself  
and don't dare blink  
when black and glass  
do disappear  
tell me about the other side

# UNDER THE DOME

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Joanna Peace

A great glassy eyeball

The apex of the dome is like a great glassy eyeball I am craning my head back

To see.           Blue sky forming

Blue iris. Evil Eye

spinning out from metal pupil,

I am craning my head back

To see

To receive, if it will,

                  protection

A great glassy eyeball

There is a hill that I summit often for the clear view out of the city. Today it is cold but sunny at the summit and the wind whips my turquoise scarf between eyes and sky. I have *time* (such precious pleasure) and I am without company. Something tugs at my tailcoat, and, persistent, I turn my back on the coveted view and follow the tug down toward the darker side of the hill. On this side there is a glasshouse, I discover, t-shaped and facing it an abandoned Victorian hospital, all dark red brick and high windows that sprawls, embarrassed, next to its shining – healthy - pastel replacement.

The glasshouse appears like a stumpy totem at the end of a long narrow path, flanked on both sides by furry black trees, today tinged with fire from the winter sun. Once inside and under the dome I

let the warm damp trapped beneath the glass ceiling lift the winter sharpness from my skin.

My first stop is the decorative pond, where I linger amidst seething Koi carp of all sizes, orange and gold and muddy brown and lethargically swirling under large waxy leaves. I feel an obligation to stand there and. Contemplate. Isn't that what one is supposed to do with this small cup of murky water.

Continuing down the trunk of the 't' I turn right through a doorway and the ceiling suddenly drops and darkens. I am inside a narrow rectangle, made narrower by glass and mesh and stained chipboard. The walls are a leathery purple and the light is grey.

Stained yellow.

He  
eyes me,  
Manly, before  
beginning to pick under  
his

stained  
Yellow

wings.

'Sulphur Crested Cockatoo'  
critically endangered conservation status  
natural habitat: Woodland  
cage: Empty and knawed.  
Food: in bowl that says  
Rabbit

It whimpers  
At the padlock.

And me?

I look into its plastic orange mirror and I smell burning.

I follow the smell to a cage lit by a low-hanging red lamp. The light picks out warmly rippling sand, trails of the tortoise to whom this cage belongs. The tortoise is slowly banging against a board of painted emerald foliage, using his short back legs to push his heavy shell a few centimetres up, then turning around and crawling doggedly towards the other end.

And then I watch him do the same again.

And then he repeats.

As I move further along the narrow path that circles the cages stacked one against the other, I wonder at my determination to ...

experience this place. No comfort taken from the baubles and bells, and chatty labels and posters of the Grand Canyon stuck up to keep the desert spiders company.

I hear the next bird before I see him, two cages along. 'Tinney Parrot. Vulnerable. West of African Sahara. Habitat: Treetops'. Catching sight of his audience he takes his pink perch in his sharp beak and sets it violently swinging, crashing the sound against all four walls.

"Please don't bang on the glass"

I read

Pushing air hard into a  
Closed mouth.

Like throwing plates around a  
Kitchen  
is it?

Or flour.

Like the film I saw of a young woman who pretended to blow herself up in her kitchen.

I start walking towards what I think is an exit. A closed wooden door behind which I can hear laughing. I am pushed towards it by the final white bird in the final cage who is screaming like a baby. Why

can't they hear it? Why don't they come? I try the wooden door but it is locked. I knock. Wait. The laughing stops, and I can hear muffled deliberations. I peek between the plastic blinds and see a large formal table, men and women in dark suits sat around with piles of paper and tea and I knock again. The bird is still screaming. The door still won't open. I hear

shuffling behind me and, turning, see a small man in grey overalls.

Contained as we are in the small, low room, we peer closely at one another. His eyes are curiously round and very black, and as we stand there he cocks his head to one side, then to the other, as he shifts gingerly left and right. I go to shout, to scream like the white bird, but the man's silence sings my words and they peel away unspoken.

The grey man turns and walks back the way I came in and I follow him. The ceiling lifts again and blue returns under the dome. I feel the panic recede. Just before we reach fresh air he stops and turns to me.

Would you like to know the secret of Koi keeping? He asks me.

Yes, I say.

As Koi keepers we are water keepers first

and fish keepers second.

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**i** *Under the Dome* was the title of a magazine produced by patients of Bethlem Hospital in the 1800s. The name was taken from the hospital's only decorative feature, which was a central cupola, later replaced with a glass dome. I came across this magazine within the exhibition 'Bedlam: the asylum and beyond' at the Wellcome Collection, in 2016.

# ALL WHORES ARE JACOBITES

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Georgia Horgan

## Part One, Eleanor

On 11 December 1394, a case was brought to the Mayor John Fressh and the Aldermen of the City of London. John Rykener, calling herself Eleanor, having been found *Ut cum muliere* or 'as a woman', was caught lying with John Britby by a stall in Soper Lane.

In a separate examination brought before the Mayor, John Britby confessed he was passing through the high road of Cheap on Sunday, and approached John Rykener, dressed as a woman, and believing he was a woman, asked if he could pay her for sex. Rykener consented, and they went together to the aforesaid stall to complete the transaction, where they were caught by patrolling officials and taken to the jail.

At the court Eleanor verified her customer's account. She named the woman who had procured her, one ambiguous 'Anna', and that a certain Elizabeth Brouderer, who kept a house outside the eastern side of the Bishopgate, first dressed them in women's clothing. Eleanor then describes her career in detail, citing her sexual conquests and clients as monks, nuns, various clergymen and people of high status. Having worked as an embroiderer and a tapster

## All Whores are Jacobites

Their gendered career choices suggest they lived most of their life as a female.

It is possible to ascertain from her name that Elizabeth, Eleanor's mentor, was almost certainly too an embroiderer; these weren't family names at the time but by-names given to individuals, based on occupation.

it would seem the court didn't know quite what to make of them.

This document stands virtually alone

To better understand how the case was viewed, we turn to what offenses Eleanor could have been charged with in light of the details of the case: prostitution or sodomy.

It was this subtlety that problematized Eleanor in the eyes of the court.

unlined striped hoods

meretrix,

understanding of the deployment of the term

“detestable, unmentionable, ignominious vice” is mentioned, but not sodomy.

What is left is a scenario that perplexed the court;

what emerges from the account is that medieval society's construction of sexuality was defined by gender distinction as opposed to sexual behaviour or 'identity'. For the medieval courts, gender appears to be drawn along performative lines pertaining to occupation, personality or dress.

The contemporary definition of prostitution and homosexuality by-and-large regards the former as an act or occupation, and the latter as an identity or subjectivity. In the medieval psyche, these statuses were inverted.

In this respect, sex work was intimately tied up with femininity. For a man to be considered a prostitute would, then, have been an oxymoron.

not about the status of being a homosexual, but the act of anal intercourse.

Sodomy feminized one of the male bodies, threatening to obscure the sharp distinction between gendered bodies and gendered orifices. But, if the feminized male body is already feminine, then, in the medieval psyche, where does the transgression lie?

*modo muliebri*

*ut cum femina*

*ut cum muliere*

Middle English verb *rekenen*

In 1392, two years before Eleanor's case was recorded, Richard II had suspended the City of London's liberties and imprisoned all the local officials on the premise that they had failed to control riots that had broken out that year. Only after the City agreed to pay 10,000 marks (approximately £6,666 13s. 4d.) was the City's autonomy restored. This was marked with an absurdist ritual, where the king and queen were led from Tower Bridge up Cheapside, and presented with gold crowns by a beautiful young virgin and a boy dressed as an angel. The City was a bedchamber, the citizens a bride, and Richard II a bridegroom.

Richard, accompanied by his queen, is invited to enter his marriage chamber — itself symbolic of London — where we are told Londoners were ready to yield their bodies and be directed. Rather than being offered a crown by an angel on Cheapside, the king is instead solicited by a lustful Yorkshireman. Instead of consummating his relationship with London in a bridal chamber, enabled no doubt by his<sup>2</sup>

royal rod,

Rick is instead fucked over a stall in a side street.

Their sexual passivity is inscribed in Latin verbal construction.<sup>1</sup>

It's hard to ignore the resonance of Ryk and Rick, a diminutive form of Richard.

offer up a black mirror to Richard's ostentatious ceremony –

## Part Two, Elizabeth

The backdrop of Charles I's brutally silenced and violently broken body political pornography juxtaposed images of a raucous, sinisterly polyvocal and fragmented republican body politic.

authoritarian head of state was usurped by a chaotic, three-headed prostitute, fracturing the familial ties of inherited property and class systems, dragging

Mrs Creswell was a successful brothel madam who ran bawdy houses in Shoreditch, near St. Leonard's, and on Bartholomew's Close in the City. Although now her entrepreneurship could arguably be viewed as individualistic or libertarian, her rise from poverty to prominence

What makes sexual representations pornographic is when these representations, otherwise understood to be intimate and personal, are introduced into a space that is public and shared. In this context, the private and public spheres are collapsed together, as the intimate and personal nature of sex overwhelms the corporate social relationships understood to govern these spaces.

For instance, pornography's logic of social interaction presumes that anyone objecting to the appearance of its sexual representations in the workplace has a personal conflict with his or her coworkers, not that rules guaranteeing full and equal access to places of employment have been violated. As such, pornography is designed to corrode any sense of shared identity or social obligation by pitting coworkers against one another.<sup>3</sup>

bawdry obviously contravenes homosocial relationships and the property ties that cement them.

A stickler

the degraded purveyor of bastard capitalism.

recreational sex, amorous republic.

In *The Whore's Rhetorick*, Mrs Creswell's entrance in to the home of a dissipated cavalier

doe-eyed daughter Dorothea, this trespass is literal.

However, during the time this polemic was written, the textile merchants were wooed into suppressing the uprising they had financed not thirty years earlier. A variety of protectionist acts were past by the Cavalier Restoration Parliament in the period from around 1660, where the exportation of cloth was prohibited, the use of forced labour was sanctioned, and the production of cloth in as a sideline by both religious institutions and brothels alike was criminalized. The reasoning behind this manoeuvre to seduce their old enemies of the clothiers was the intention to put idle hands to work, leaving little time for rabble-raising. Therefore, the Restoration patriarchal state's construction of

the well-disciplined textile labourer's body

Tory political pornography was particularly well placed to exploit this connection between textile mercantilism, class identity, and civic peace. Prior to Dorothea's father's financial ruin, her ornamentation performed a kind of public or common labour as it signified her wealth,

insipid slut

"a great enemy of all Enclosures, for whatever she has, she makes it common."

tacitly

pornographic

analogous to the haberdasher's store of "Pins, Needles, Laces, Thimbles and such like stuff"<sup>4</sup>

crypto-conservative

mouth piece

disciplinary haberdashery<sup>5</sup>

The real Mrs Creswell died in Bridewell prison, likely from tuberculosis. In her will she left a clergyman £10, about the equivalent of what a bawd would get for providing a client with a good prostitute, on the condition that he speak nothing but well of her. The obliging cleric wrote her eulogy as:

*She was born well, she lived well, and she died well; for she was born in the name of Creswell, she lived in Clerkenwell and died in Bridewell.*

### Part Three, Sarah

Sarah Wesker was born in the Rothschild Buildings, now off of Flower & Dean Walk, in 1901. An active Jewish garment trade unionist, she was instrumental in leading the strikes against the Rego, Polikoff and Simpson factories, and gaining minor local celebrity in 1926 when the Daily Herald splashed: “Trouser workers strike for a farthing a pair.” The all-female workforce at Goodman’s factory had walked out, led by the young trouser machinist named Sarah.

Less than five feet tall, “arrestingly sallow”,  
Crimean spa

fantasy

She was as fluent in Yiddish and English, making it easy for her to relate to the older women in the sweatshops

The fascist party were due to march through Stepney, the heart of London’s Jewish community, on 4 October 1936. They were met on Cable Street by

*¡NO PÁSARAN!*

Despite her formidable reputation as a communist and organiser, Sarah is best known through the thinly veiled theatrical version of her in the play by her nephew Arnold Wesker, *Chicken Soup with Barley*. Written in the kitchen sink drama tradition, the play begins with revolutionary euphoria.

Thinks internationally

‘kitchen’ alone is used for thirty four times in the text.

Fascists

rogue landlords

money lenders

criminals

sex workers

‘English’ jobs.

There are few dramas with communist heroes. The place for Reds is under the bed rather than in the living room.

feels domestically.

All the angst of society in compressed in to the family’s kitchen

The motherhood-home-kitchen motif can be tied to Wesker’s Jewish origins. Family is considered to be very important for the Jews; for that reason the image of the family eating around a table recurs in the play. As Hannah Arendt explains in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Jews are always associated with the image of family.<sup>6</sup>

Closer examination points out that Sarah is rather articulate and she is often occupied with eating or cooking; oral libidinal pleasure.<sup>7</sup>



Similarly, in the last scene Sarah insistently tries to feed her son and he rejects it ultimately.

Her counterparts are always damaged males and they are antitheses of her; she is strong, they are weak; she is articulate, they are silent; she is active and energetic, they are passive, or even paralysed.

*All right then! Nothing, then!  
It all comes down to nothing!*

*People come and go, wars destroy, accidents  
kill and plagues starve – it's all nothing, then!  
Philosophy? You want philosophy? Nothing  
means anything! There! Philosophy! I know! So?  
Nothing!*

*Despair – die then! Will that be an achievement?*

*You don't want to do that. So what if it all  
means nothing? Please, don't let me finish this  
life thinking that I lived for nothing. You've got to  
care, you've got to care or you'll die.<sup>8</sup>*

On the other hand, Sarah's articulacy and pressure upon men creates a postmodern image of the dominatrix.

It becomes a play about the collapse of faith.

**Written for a performance and video screening, 23.02.2017**

## WRITERS' BIOGRAPHIES

### MICHAEL EBERT-HANKE

Michael Ebert-Hanke is a poet and photographer based in Berlin. He spends most of his time researching obscure, occult or geeky things and makes work out of possibly interesting intertwinings. He is also founder and editor of the humble publishing project *graum.xyz – raum für freien text und dichtung* (*graum.xyz – space for libre text and poetry*) and teaches photo-theory at Muthesius Academy of Fine Arts in Kiel, Germany.

### JOANNA PEACE

Joanna Peace is an artist and educator based in Glasgow. She has contributed to exhibitions, events, residencies and publications across the UK and internationally. Joanna is a Lecturer in Sculpture & Environmental Art at the Glasgow School of Art and facilitates participatory projects with a number of organisations. At the crux of her practice is the act of writing, acts that are transformed into myriad public forms. Writing becomes publication, becomes performance, becomes the genesis of moving image, writing becomes support for others' exhibitions and becomes the catalyst for building community. Her longstanding interest in psychological and structural space and female subjectivity demands that her work emerges from direct experience, seeking to extend the sensation of particular bodies in particular places.

### GEORGIA HORGAN

Georgia Horgan is an artist based in Glasgow. Recent exhibitions and projects include: *All Whores are Jacobites*, Public Exhibitions, London, 2017; a two-person exhibition with Clunie Reid at Celine, Glasgow, 2016; *Saturday*, Glasgow International 2016; *Neo-Pagan-Bitch-Witch!*, Evelyn Yard, London, 2016; and *Machine Room*, Collective, Edinburgh, 2015. In January 2017 Georgia presented a performance at the ICA as part of *Witchy Methodologies*, an event organised by Anna Bunting-Branch with Holly Pester, Candice Lin, Patrick Staff, Linda Stupart and Travis Alabanza. Her writing has been published by Panel, Collective, The National Galleries of Scotland, Transmission and Orlando journal.

### ENDNOTES

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