

RED FEMINISM IN THE AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM

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ABSTRACT

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This paper begins with a brief exploration the main currents of feminist theory today, and how economic and cultural neoliberalism has individualized and depoliticized feminism as an anticapitalist political project. Next, I argue why anarchism, although popular in the West today, is not a viable revolutionary project for women. However, critiques of alienation, ecological destruction, and the patriarchal fact of civilization found in several strains of anarchist thought are extremely valuable to today's red feminist theory. Instead, I argue that Marxism-Leninism as a theoretical framework, praxis, and historical example is the optimal political program and the necessary precondition for female liberation, specifically in a Western society run rife with totalizing bourgeois liberalism that so debilitates revolutionary politics. Drawing from historical examples of women's liberation under socialism and various works of feminist theory, and I will outline what this Red Feminism must entail, how it must differ from socialist feminisms thwarted by male supremacy in the past, and how today's feminists should take up the task of building this movement.

For Kaspar

*Thank you to Anna, Bob, my friends and family, and all
the red feminists around the world*

Contents

Introduction	4
Radical feminism over liberal and postmodern feminisms	7
Flaws of liberal feminism	8
Flaws of postmodern feminism	10
Why feminism must be anticapitalist	18
Rejecting anarchism	25
Liberal anarchism	25
Insurrectionary anarchism	33
Black insurrection	38
Female insurrection	41
On anarcho-primitivism	47
A Marxism against gender	54
Socialism and female liberation: history	57
Red Feminism in postmodernity	63
Bibliography	69

Introduction

We are in postmodernity, and neoliberalism is everywhere. It has infected our culture, our political movements, our schools, our financial institutions, our wars, our immigration, our production. It is in our feminism, our anticapitalism, our antiracism, our social networks. From the ruins of the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, neoliberalism emerged. As a mode of production, as a political project, it shapes how people think, function, and produce. It reinforces the already prevalent Western idealism and individualism, celebrates individual choice amidst worsening inequality and poverty, and exports its austerity policies to crisis-torn debtor countries around the world through the IMF and the World Bank. In addition to worsening conditions for working people around the world, neoliberalism shapes political resistance in the mirror image of itself¹ through postmodern philosophy and politics.² Contemporary feminism has been utterly depoliticized and left as a postmodern personal identity. This depoliticized liberal feminism leaves Western and privileged women patting themselves on the back for choosing to do whatever they want, including accommodating to patriarchy. Hyper-capitalist production continues its ecocidal destruction of our home planet, coerces millions to work in brutal conditions for meager pay, demands imperialist wars to uphold itself, and systematically kills the racial underclasses. Capitalism still structures our entire world. Labor still creates all value.³ The need for a strong, militant movement to end capitalism has never been more dire, or more out of reach. This is especially true for women,

¹ Harvey, David. "Neoliberalism Is a Political Project." *Jacobin Magazine Online*, 23 July 2016. Web.

² Ebert, Teresa L. *Ludic Feminism and After: Postmodernism, Desire, and Labor in Late Capitalism*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan, 1996. Print.

³ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud, "Post-Ality: the (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism." *Post-ality: Marxism and Postmodernism*. Washington, D.C.: Misonneuve, 1995. Print.

who are exploited in production and reproduction, who are commodified, sold, and used as objects, who are oppressed dually by capitalism and men. Capitalism and male supremacy reinforce and intensify each other. A feminism that does not overthrow capitalism will never liberate all women because there will always be women amongst the poor, the working, the enslaved. Feminism--that is, the kind that fights to end male supremacy--demands equality among human beings, and an end to the exploitation of all. In short, feminism must be communist.

History of socialist revolutions and socialist societies offer us many lessons about achieving women's liberation under socialism. Despite this, the challenges that women under socialism met from the capitalist world and from socialist men does not negate the fact that female liberation requires communism. To avoid the male chauvinism found in varying degrees in every single socialist endeavor in history, today's anticapitalists of both sexes need to learn from and reorient their struggle towards radical, historical materialist *feminist* socialism. There is no alternative.

My goal in writing this piece is to aid burgeoning feminists in developing their political and feminist theory. I wish to provide a polemical analysis of the different strains of both feminism and "libertarian socialism" popular today, and introduce Marxism as a highly relevant and ultimately most useful political alternative. My ultimate goal is to reintroduce Marxist-Leninist, or "Red" feminism into the minds of young feminists and left-wing activists, as well as to respond to questions likely to be raised by young people living in a profoundly anti-Marxist age.

The first section of my thesis will begin by situating contemporary radical feminism amongst other feminist trends, and will explain why today's socialist feminism needs to learn from many radical feminist theories and methods. Next, I will explain why socialist feminism

alone provides the structure and method necessary to seriously challenge and ultimately destroy male supremacy. In the second section, I analyze why anarchist or anti-authoritarian, decentralized leftist currents that have gained traction under neoliberalism are insufficient for both socialist and feminist revolution. In this section, I will also explore how some of these anarchist ideologies hold valuable feminist criticisms of human civilization, and thus feminism should incorporate or at least consider these criticisms for its own development. After explaining why anarchism as an anticapitalist ideology is a reflection of hegemonic neoliberal culture and ultimately unhelpful for women's liberation, I will assert Marxism, and specifically Marxism-Leninism as the optimal political methodology and theory for actualizing female liberation as well as advancing feminist theory. In the final section, I will lay out the manifesto of the new radical Marxist feminism, including what its beliefs and struggles are, and what makes it different from Marxist feminisms of the past. Finally, I hope to impart the necessity of a widespread rejection of liberal anticapitalism and liberal feminism, and of a renewed mass struggle for a Red Feminism.

Radical Feminism Over Liberal & Postmodern Feminisms

That is what theory about male supremacy means. It means you can rape. It means you can hit. It means you can hurt. It means you can buy and sell women. It means that there is a class of people there to provide you with what you need. You stay richer than they are, so that they have to sell you sex.

Andrea Dworkin, "I Want a 24-Hour Truce During Which There is No Rape"⁴

Radical feminism is most associated with the "second-wave" or women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Despite this, radical ideas about actualizing women's liberation, (or at least bringing about full equality to men) through socio-economic revolution have existed in theory and practice since the dawn of Marxism in 1848 and especially Leninism in the early 1900s. This is not to say that Marx, Engels, Lenin, and other male communists were the first or only radically feminist actors. Louise Michel, Alexandra Kollontai, and Clara Zetkin are examples of revolutionary feminist contemporaries of the men whose names carry greater historical legacy. Since the onset of third-wave ideology that coincided with the neoliberal economic and social programs in the West, radical feminism has declined in mainstream the consciousness. However, it offers the deepest, broadest base for today's revolutionary feminism. To best understand what radical feminism entails, we must first make visible and critique the most popular non-radical feminisms of today--what I refer to as liberal and postmodern queer feminisms. I will begin with the older of the two, liberal feminism.

⁴ Dworkin, Andrea. "I Want a 24-Hour Truce During Which There is No Rape," *Letters from a War Zone: Writings, 1976-1989*. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1989.

Flaws of Liberal Feminism

The feminists seek equality in the framework of the existing class society, in no way do they attack the basis of this society. They fight for prerogatives for themselves, without challenging the existing prerogatives and privileges. We do not accuse the representatives of the bourgeois women's movement of failure to understand the matter; their view of things flows inevitably from their class position.
 Alexandra Kollontai, "The Social Basis of the Woman Question"⁵

The core of liberal ideology conceives of the state, or society, as a collection of individuals that must improve the lives of the individual citizens living under it without impinging too much on individual liberty. It presupposes a natural equality among all people that is thwarted by the concepts of racism, sexism, etc which must be combatted through ideological campaign and equal rights-giving. The law must treat everybody equally, and at most assist in helping victims of prejudice and discrimination attain equal footing in the existing political, social, and economic order. Liberal feminism values the individual's freedom and choice within their lives and is loathe to consider the social construction of the individual or to connect individual experience to group or class status.⁶

Liberalism does not condemn the sex/gender system as such, that being:

. . . a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, social intervention. . . Gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes. It is a product of the social relations of sexuality. Men and women are of course, different. But they are not as day and night, earth and sky, yin and yang, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else.⁷

Gender is the mythology that structures patriarchy. It is a mythology of which traits, behaviors, and abilities belong with which biological sex, and how the sexes should interact. But it does not

⁵ Kollontai, Alexandra. "The Social Basis of the Woman Question," (1909) from *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai*, Marxists Internet Archive, 2006.

⁶ MacKinnon, Catharine A. "A Feminist Critique of Marx and Engels, A Marxist Critique of Feminism." *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989. 13-60. Print.

⁷ Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic of Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex." *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Monthly Review Press, 1975. 165.

merely separate into two equal categories. “It’s become popular in some activist circles to embrace notions from postmodernism, and that includes the idea that gender is somehow a binary. Gender is not a binary. It is a hierarchy.”⁸ Femininity encompasses passivity, sexual objectification, beauty rituals, self effication, and domesticity. Masculinity encourages domination, technological expertise, aggression, violence, and social organization outside the home. The male supremacy we are living under “takes that eroticized domination and subordination, and institutionalizes that into masculinity and femininity. So, it naturalizes, it eroticizes, and it institutionalizes.”⁹ Although masculinity necessitates the suppression of the caring and emotional self to create violent patriarchs, rapists, and soldiers, etc, the greater damage is done to the subordinate class of feminized women.

Naturalism is another tenet of liberal feminism. Conditions and traits forced upon women and men via gender socialization are supposed as pre-social and used to justify further sexual division. An example of this gender naturalism, or gender essentialism, would be the belief that women are naturally nonviolent, familial, and nurturing, and therefore are more suited than men to such labor and tasks as child rearing, domestic labor, cooking, cleaning, sewing, shopping, etc.¹⁰ ¹¹ Liberal feminism holds that whatever “natural” differences there are between men and women, they should still be treated equally in the existing social system, hence the prevalence of the term “gender equality.”

Liberal feminism believes that this “gender equality” requires women to be legally, economically, and socially equal to men. It does not fundamentally challenge how we conceive of femininity and masculinity, motherhood, domestic labor, the sexual division of labor,

⁸ Keith, Lierre. “Patriarchy vs Planet Earth - Radfem Reboot in Portland, Oregon Part 1” *Deep Green Resistance*, Youtube, 2012. 24:00.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Bengelsdorf, Carollee and Alice Hageman, “Emerging from Underdevelopment: Women and Work in Cuba,” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979.

¹¹ Ryan, Mary P, “Patriarchy and Capitalism in Antebellum America,” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979.

heterosexuality, capitalism, class exploitation, and the hierarchy of domination and submission intrinsic to all of these.^{12 13} Nor does it see how merely being treated equally with men leaves untouched the other hierarchies in our society that emanate from social divisions of labor and capitalist exploitation.

Flaws of Postmodern Feminism

Queer Theory has become a principal ideological arm of late capitalism. . .
Donald Morton, "Queerity and Ludic Sado-Masochism"¹⁴

The politics of such a ludic theory is that it blurs the lines between the powerful and the powerless, oppressor and oppressed. . . exploiter and exploited become shifting positions in the (Lacanian) Symbolic, open to resignification.
Teresa Ebert, "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism"¹⁵

Since the publication of Judith Butler's seminal "Gender Trouble" in 1990, the veritable postmodern third-wave "queer" feminism has taken firm hold of the progressive (read: formally educated) Western consciousness.¹⁶ Briefly, what is postmodern queer feminism? While some describe this branch of feminism as "postmodern," the mainstream movement calls itself "queer" and thus I will use either label to describe it. Firstly, queer feminism redefines the radical feminist definition of *gender* to mean a personal identity, or a self-constructing performance, that fits somewhere along a gender spectrum of masculinity and femininity, instead of the conservative "gender" which is firmly and comfortably situated at either extreme.

¹² Bengelsdorf, Carolee and Alice Hageman, "Emerging from Underdevelopment: Women and Work in Cuba," *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979

¹³ MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1989. Print

¹⁴ Morton, Donald. "Queerity and Ludic Sado-Masochism," *Post-ality: Postmodernism and Marxism*. 1995. 192.

¹⁵ Ebert, Teresa. "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism," *Post-ality: Marxism and Postmodernism*. Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve, 1995. 140.

¹⁶ Due to the historical usage of the word "queer" as a homophobic slur, I will not use it--in this paper or in the rest of my life--to describe anybody who does not first use it to describe themselves and their brand of feminism.

Second, it seeks to problematize, or perhaps just mystify, the traditional ways of conceiving hierarchy--specifically sexual hierarchy--as well as identify new ones. Queer feminism takes Butler's postulate that gender is a performance to create a new dichotomy: "cisgender" and "transgender." "Cis" people feel comfortable with the gender roles and norms that patriarchal culture assigns them according to their sex at birth. They are constantly becoming or performing the gender that patriarchy enforces upon their sex. Trans people do not, and seek to subvert the gender roles and stereotypes expected of them and instead perform a gender from across the spectrum, or somewhere in the middle. Masculinity and femininity are taken as value-neutral cultural facts, that combine and vary infinitely among individuals and that have no materialist basis or intrinsic hierarchy. Queer feminists assert that biological sex is a gendered construct of patriarchy, and thus has using it as a basis for defining any oppressed group is essentialist. The cis/trans dichotomy within queer feminism asserts that some cross-sexual segment of the population is comfortable with their gender roles and norms, otherwise known as "cisgender," and lumps both male and female "cisgender" people together in the same category as oppressors of "trans" or otherwise non-cis or "non-binary" individuals.¹⁷ Queer feminists are not the first by far to claim to move behind binaries. Those who reject binaries rooted in material history, Vladimir Lenin wrote, give in reality "no more than an ideological alibi because in their actual practices, they 'are continually sliding into idealism and are conducting a steady and incessant struggle against materialism.'"¹⁸ In this way, postmodern "queer" feminism and liberal feminism do more than form a sort of pact in the contemporary Western scene, but, from the Marxist historical materialist perspective (which I will establish as necessary for women's liberation throughout this piece), postmodern feminism is quite liberal itself. The liberal voluntarism of

¹⁷ Cox, Susan. "Coming out as "non-binary" throws other women under the bus," *Feminist Current*, 10 August 2016. Web.

¹⁸ Ebert, Teresa. "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism," *Post-ality: Marxism and Postmodernism*. Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve, 1995. Print.

queer theory is evident through its heavy emphasis on self-selected gender identification as a basis of social position, for example.

On the website queerfeminism.com, one finds a manifesto that declares, among anti-racism and anti-imperialism (but notably not anti-capitalism) an opposition to “strict rules about gender and sexuality *that hurt everyone whether male, female, both, or neither*,” and the “blaming and shaming of trans people, queer people, *pruders*, *sluts*, and anyone who does not fit a narrow and arbitrary body standard.”¹⁹ Feminists not imbued with queer feminist rhetoric would find it shocking that a supposedly feminist website used a misogynistic slur to describe women, immediately after using a homophobic slur to describe anybody who is not straight and compliant with gender norms.

As South African feminist Desiree Lewis wrote:

Consequently, where it used to be legitimate to argue that the voices and interests of women were paramount in identifying how patriarchal domination marginalised a group on the basis of gender, the current ascendancy of ‘gender’ neutralises power relations and almost implies that the social categorisation and identity of women as women and of men as men is not of key importance. Revealing too is the way that ‘gender activism’ has successively displaced the term ‘feminism’. It as though the radicalism signalled by the latter term was being anaestheticised and patriarchal anxieties about change were being appeased.²⁰

In this quote, Lewis calls into question postmodern feminism’s obfuscation of structural analysis of oppression. She also hints at the connection between the ascendance of this “post-al” feminism and the 1970s threat of a radical movement for women.

Queer feminism’s popularity amongst the young and middle class--in other words, those educated in Gender Studies departments since the 1990s--has created a hegemony of postmodern queer feminism over the public and legal domain and eliminated tools for females to fight against their oppression *as females*. In this way, queer feminism is a kind of backlash

¹⁹ Queerfeminism. “Mission Statement: What is queer feminism?,” *Queer Feminism: Radical Opposition to Patriarchy*, Wordpress. Web.

²⁰ Lewis, Desiree. “Discursive Challenges for African Feminists,” *African Feminist Politics of Knowledge*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2009. 216.

against the politicized feminism of the 60s and 70s rooted in abolishing *male* supremacy. When men can legitimately claim status as oppressed women within your movement due to their individual gender identities, destroying male supremacy cannot exist as a political objective. In addition to being ecologically incoherent in its assumption of a natural cause of feminine and masculine personalities, “exclusive gender identity is the oppression of natural similarities. It requires repression. . . The division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women.”²¹ The resurgence of support for masculinity and femininity as naturalized concepts, although now detached from any sort of predicative biological origin apart from the mythical brain sex, is a step back for women’s liberation.

Additionally, queer feminism, in claiming gender-non-conformity for itself, falsely accuses radical feminism of supporting and reinforcing gender roles by, for example, asserting that women is synonymous with adult human female. To reinforce its validity as the only feminism against gender roles, queer feminism leads many of its activists to seek external validation for their postmodern theories, mainly from indigenous or non-Western expressions of gender under patriarchy. This ideology, which is rooted in white Western academia of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, identifies gender roles that differ from modern Western gender roles and claims them as queer / trans. It takes gender practices from people around the world, absorbs them under the banner of “trans,” and uses it to further the Western political ideology of postmodern feminism. The colonizing tendency of third-wave queer feminist academic discourse renders it not only a Western problem. It leads to Western queer feminist analysis and rhetoric’s enforcement throughout Western countries and non-Western countries through supranational “development” organizations. Writing about the formation of a “gender industry”

²¹ Rubin, Gayle. “The Traffic of Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex.” *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, Monthly Review Press, 1975. 180.

amongst neo-colonialist, neoliberal development in many countries in Africa, Desiree Lewis wrote: “The neoliberal cooption of feminist demands is not, of course, unique to Third World contexts. It is an overwhelming feature of contemporary ostensibly ‘post-feminist’ liberal-democratic societies. The hegemony of global imperialism is increasingly eroding feminism and radical cultural expression and discourses in civil society at an international level.”²² Her observation of the connection between “post-feminist” discourse and global imperialist capitalism is corroborated by other Marxist feminists, whom I will discuss at length later.

Importantly, postmodern feminism connects to broader postmodern philosophies emergent in the late 20th century that are currently debilitating radical anticapitalist resistance. Mas’ud Zavarzadeh elaborates on this connection, writing that “by announcing the arrival of a new society which is post-production, post-labor, post-ideology, post-white and post-capitalist,” these “post-al” ideologies of the postmodern era “obscure the production practices of capitalism--which is based on the extraction of surplus labor (the source of accumulation of capital).”²³ This is the philosophical and ideological process behind David Harvey’s assertion that neoliberal global capitalism “creates a mode of opposition as a mirror image to itself.”²⁴ Global neoliberal capitalism has therefore also created a feminism in a mirror image to itself. This process is critical to allow contemporary feminists to understand the economic reason behind the omnipresence of postmodern philosophy in “the institutionalized ‘left’” in this age of neoliberalism.²⁵ It is also critical for combating it in order to establish a truly threatening, revolutionary alternative to global neoliberal capitalism. In the following chapter, I will further

²² Lewis, Desiree. “Discursive Challenges for African Feminists,” *African Feminist Politics of Knowledge*, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2009. 211.

²³ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. "Post-ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism" *Post-ality: Postmodernism and Marxism*. 1995. 1.

²⁴ Harvey, David. "Neoliberalism Is a Political Project." *Jacobin*, 23 July 2016. Web. “And to some degree the mirror image confirms that which it’s trying to destroy.”

²⁵ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. "Post-ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism," 3.

elaborate the connection between feminism and anticapitalist struggle, which will in turn illuminate postmodernism's negative impact on both.

Postmodern feminism is just one branch of an ideological inundation, coinciding with the implementation of neoliberal economic policies in the 70s and 80s, referred to by some contemporary Marxist philosophers as "post-ality." "Post-ality, in other words, is a regime of class struggle against the workers" that seeks to question "totalizing" theories based on group or class analysis and definite projects of revolution, in favor of a play-, language-, and body-based philosophy that centers itself on accommodating "difference" between individuals.²⁶ In "foregrounding the agency of the subject," postmodern feminism "is in actuality an alibi to divert the subject away from 'making' and taking control of the means of making," otherwise known as *production*, and towards "the ultimate form of post-al resistance, 'making do': working within the system and with what the system provides rather than attempting to transform it."²⁷ This is why postmodern feminism, post-al anticapitalism, post-al antiracism, etc are not revolutionary theories and in fact hinder revolutionary development. These ideologies often masquerade as the most radical in their rejection of the "totalization" of Marxism, but in doing so, retain many of the hallmarks of liberal theory.²⁸ The rebuttal of neoliberal post-al philosophies will continue throughout this piece.

Moving forward, radical feminism sees that all hitherto existing societies have been patriarchal and male supremacist, to varying degrees. It seeks to abolish the categorization of male and female humans into two (or more) genders based on a hierarchical ordering of traits coded as masculine and feminine. A true radical feminism does not seek women's full integration into every level of the capitalist structure, and does not think that equality before the

²⁶ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. "Post-ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism," 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 3.

law will address women's subordination to men in any society. It questions the context and conditions that women's choices are made in, and criticizes how the glorification of choice, self-objectification, self-commodification, self-empowerment, and consent conceal the greater coercive forces that influence them. Additionally, radical feminism critiques trans and queer feminism's embrace of gender and the individual choice to perform whichever gender one desires.

The system of male supremacy comes down hard on non-conforming men and women, as movingly described online by members of the trans community. While switching gender identity may alleviate some problems on an individual level, it is not a political solution. . . it undermines a solution for all, even for the transitioning person, by embracing and reinforcing the cultural, economic and political tracking of "gender" rather than challenging it.²⁹

Importantly, radical feminism differs strongly from the conservative right in their critique of transgenderism. Right-wing criticisms of transgenderism originate from a reverence for the male supremacist structure of masculine man who dominates the feminine woman, and the violent need to enforce those behaviors. Importantly, the political Right seeks to "build an alliance between the ruling class and the petit bourgeoisie by suturing their conflicting economic interests through stabilizing cultural values," which includes patriarchal values.³⁰ Radical feminists, on the other hand, "look forward to freedom from gender. The 'freedom for gender' movement, whatever the intentions of its supporters, is reinforcing the culture and institutions of gender that are oppressing women."³¹ It is not merely criticism of postmodern feminisms reification of gender that differentiates radical feminism from other strains.

Many radical feminists, in attacking gender as the socially constructed differences enacted between males and females, also take issue with the sexual division of labor. Some

²⁹ Hanisch, Carol et al. "Forbidden Discourse: The silencing of feminist criticism of gender," *FeministUK*, Wordpress. 12 August 2013.

³⁰ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. "Post-ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism" *Post-ality: Postmodernism and Marxism*. 1995. 4.

³¹ Hanisch, Carol et al. "Forbidden Discourse," *FeministUK*, 2013.

radical feminists also oppose class as a hierarchy among women. However, radical feminists do not always make the leap towards Marxism as a revolutionary theory.

As important as radical feminism is for developing histories of women, and for making brilliant connections between such issues as militarism, ecocide, prostitution, male sexual violence, female reproductive autonomy, and motherhood, it lacks a definitive praxis for achieving a feminist world. Many radical feminists, such as Shulamith Firestone, have attempted to provide a plan for achieving sexual equality and female liberation. These attempts, while having moved radical feminism forward a great deal, are often critiqued and rejected by other feminists for various implausibilities or oversights.³² A revolutionary anti-capitalist theory--one that understands how and why these social differences have come to be so severe and that posits how to build a political movement that can seize power and begin restructuring society--is necessary. Briefly, I will give an overview of why feminism must be anti-capitalist. After this, I will examine the popular anticapitalist current of anarchism or “libertarian socialism” and begin to lay the foundation for the alternative of Marxism-Leninism, and specifically Marxist-Leninist feminism.

³² Eisenstein, Zillah. “Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy,” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979. 18-25.

Why Feminism Must Be Anti-Capitalist

Why, then, does socialism with its rigorous critique and powerful explanation of the destructive logic and injustices of capitalism seem so irrelevant--particularly for many feminists struggling to deal with the deteriorating global condition of women?

Teresa Ebert, "Towards A Red Feminism"³³

Without overthrowing the economic system of capitalism, as socialists and communists organize to do, we cannot liberate women and everybody else who is also oppressed.

Nellie Wong, "Socialist Feminism: Our Bridge to Freedom"³⁴

To understand why feminism must be anticapitalist, we must first understand what capitalism is. Capitalism is an economic system, or mode of production. All economic systems, in organizing how humans work, make things, distribute goods, and relate to each other, provide the base upon which the rest of society, like culture, politics, family, and media, is structured. Capitalism is characterized by private ownership of the means of production, which means land, factories, housing, and more. It is also characterized by a market economy, and production based on exchange value, not use value. This means that goods are produced based on how much they can be exchanged for, instead of how much utility they have for meeting the needs of human beings. Next, capitalism is characterized by wage labor. Workers are not compensated according to the true value of their labor, but instead according to a minimum standard required for keeping them alive and working.³⁵ Because the means of production (factory, farm, etc) are owned by an individual or corporation seeking to make a maximum amount of profit in competition with other firms on the market, labor is a cost in the production of a commodity just like the cost of raw materials. Therefore, labor costs must be minimized, driving wages down to the lowest legal and practical standard.³⁶ This is why chattel slavery, being an institution that

³³ Ebert, Teresa. "Toward a Red Feminism," *Against the Current*, No. 65, November-December 1996. Published on *Solidarity*. Web.

³⁴ Wong, Nellie. "Socialist Feminism: Our Bridge to Freedom," *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. ed. Mohanty, Chandra et al. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991. Print. 290.

³⁵ Marx, Karl. *Wage Labour and Capital*, trans. Friedrich Engels. (1891) Marxists Internet Archive, 1999.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

enables and legitimizes completely uncompensated human labor, was so widespread and economically significant in the world economy up to its abolition. Unpaid labor is optimal for competitive production for market exchange.

Capitalism, like the slave-owning democracies of ancient times and feudal-monarchic systems of the middle ages, creates a class society in which a very small percentage of the population that owns property obtains massive amounts of wealth through skimming off surplus value (e.g. “profit” in a production equation) from the labor of the masses of people. Capitalism is driven by competition on a market. There is no room for stagnation. If one capitalist is not always driving labor and material costs *down* to maximize the profit margin, by any means necessary, then some other capitalist in his own business *will*, and will consequently put the kind one out of business. This is why capitalism is a system demanding infinite growth, which means the ruthless destruction of human and natural resources, and which fundamentally cannot and will not spare any extra money to *be nice* and ensure it is taking care of the people or environment that it exploits.

Under the class hierarchy necessitated by capitalism, the masses of people (whose labor creates all value and who make the world go round) are made to miserably subsist upon low wages, are subject to chronic unemployment at the whim of the expansion and contraction of global markets, and are denied access to education, healthcare, and work based on their poor material circumstances. Already, in a raceless, sexless world, capitalism is exploitative of the masses of people. In the West, though, capitalism not only has created trans-Atlantic slavery, colonialism, imperialism, and the various forms of racism to justify it, but currently feeds upon and supports cultural and structural racism as a way of devaluing non-white labor for its own cheap use. The cultural systems of white supremacy and antiblackness also prevent white

workers from uniting with blacks against capitalism, for fear of black labor becoming equally valued and competitive with white labor on the market.

Patriarchy and male supremacy have existed since long before the development of capitalism and industrialization. However, capitalism uses male supremacy for its own benefit. As described above, male supremacy creates gender to sort human beings into a hierarchy of sexes. These hierarchical concepts of gender in turn “naturalize” themselves as being biologically determined and inevitable. Capitalism preys upon these cultural concepts of inferior womanhood to reduce the value of work that women are relegated to doing: “preparing food, healing, making garments, caring for children.”³⁷ The masculine gender, created to perpetuate male supremacy, naturalizes the idea that male labor involves management, leadership, technological expertise, trained skills, physical strength, and rational organization. This is the sexual division of labor. This is not a value-neutral division. “As far as the proletarian woman is concerned,” wrote Russian revolutionary Clara Zetkin, “it is capitalism’s need to exploit and to search incessantly for a cheap labor force that has created the women’s question.”³⁸ Patriarchal capitalism devalues “feminine” labor and accentuates the social and financial significance of male labor outside the home, thus isolating women further within it, where their labor is unpaid, unorganized, and boring. It propagandizes a cult of femininity, motherhood, and the lavish home to drive consumption.³⁹

On the contrary, masculine labors facilitate the ability to lead, to gain political and social power, to dominate, and to obtain wealth--in short, to be a powerful, intelligent, skilled mind and social being. “In European thought, despite the fact that society was seen to be inhabited by

³⁷ Cockburn, Cynthia. “Technology Production and Power.” *Inventing Women: Science, Technology, and Gender*. Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1992. Print. 200.

³⁸ Zetkin, Clara. “Only in conjunction with the proletarian woman will socialism be victorious,” (1896) *Clara Zetkin: Selected Writings*, ed. by Philip Foner, trans. by Kai Schoenhals, International Publishers, 1984. Transcribed for Marxists Internet Archive in 2002.

³⁹ Ryan, Mary P, “Patriarchy and Capitalism in Antebellum America,” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979.

bodies, only women were perceived to be embodied; men had no bodies--they were walking minds."⁴⁰ Of course, with racism and bourgeois elitism added in, the proportion of men seen as intellectuals became more restricted. The development of capitalism in the 17th and 18th centuries both contributed to and relied upon the existing patriarchal system of gender to construct reliable consumers, devalued female laborers, unpaid support for male laborers, and reproducers of the working class.⁴¹

Similarly, capitalist production seized upon ethnic differences to justify unequal social divisions of labor. Entire systems of race science sprang up to reverse-engineer justifications for social inequality constructed to meet the needs of capital. Further, capitalism, having developed primarily in Europe, requires expansion into the third-world to access their labor power, natural resources, and increasingly their consumer markets. This is shown through the trans-atlantic slave trade, the colonization of the New World and establishment of a slave plantation economy, the "scramble for Africa" style occupational colonialism in the South and East through the second world war, post-independence IMF-style financial neocolonialism in those same "independent" countries, and various other forms of imperialism. Half of the population of the third world, whose resources, land, and communities are pillaged and destroyed by exploitative industry from the West, are women. As it has done in the West, capitalism preys upon existing patriarchal gender roles in the third world, but also modifies them to meet its needs through European cultural and religious hegemony. The eradication of communal life and privatization of resources--in recent years, in the shadow of debt to European banking institutions--strips

⁴⁰ Oyewumi, Oyeronke, "Visualizing the body: Western theories and African subjects" *African Gender Studies*. New York: Palgrave, 2005. 7.

⁴¹ Eisenstein, Zillah. "Developing a Theory of Capitalist Patriarchy," *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979.

indigenous people, especially women, of economic autonomy and drives further urbanization and dependence on capital for subsistence through wage labor.⁴²

In addition to destroying indigenous women's way of life and economic semi-autonomy within their own communities, imperialism requires violence to enact and sustain its economic exploitation. Imperialism uses both wars of conquest and warfare of various intensities against insurgency and nationalist guerilla movements to sustain itself. Examples of these imperialist wars range from the centuries of European settler expansion through Indian wars in North America, the French in the Algerian War of Independence, various European nations against the numerous independence struggles of African nations, the French and Americans in the Vietnam War, and many more. War requires macho militarism and traditionally male armies. Patriarchal war means rape of the conquered women. War-torn areas are economically destabilized, resulting in women and girls being sexually exploited for money. The only way to end war for resources, cheap labor, and market expansion is global communism and production to meet human needs. The endless pursuit of profit and the resulting destruction of communities around the world comes down especially hard on women.

In the first world and third world, patriarchal capitalism commodifies women's bodies and sells women and girls through prostitution, pornography, and illegal sex trafficking. It propagandizes consumption of women for profit. It commodifies gender roles, enforces female consumption and physical modification to meet beauty norms in order to sell products. Capitalism means mass culture and private media aiming to maximize consumption, female insecurity, female exploitation, and working-class male misogyny and racism to prevent class unity. In industrializing England in the 18th century, "the main obstacles" to organizing women laborers "were the male unions and social customs. . . Why their response was to exclude women

⁴² Federici, Sylvia. "Globalization: The Destruction of the Commons and New Forms of Violence Against Women" Lecture given at the University of Texas at Austin on 24 October 2016.

rather than to organize them is explained not by capitalism, but by patriarchal relations between men and women.”⁴³ Men fought to keep women unorganized so women’s labor would never compete with theirs, instead of supporting women’s unions and uniting as a class against the bourgeoisie. In this way, capitalism uses and perpetuates male chauvinism and male supremacy to exploit the working class.

Working women make up the vast majority of the female population. Bourgeois women (who own the means of production), who are either bourgeois by birth, through the economic union of marriage, or who have been beneficiaries of bourgeois feminist achievements of the past 100 years, are not in a position to fight for the radical reorganization of society towards communism that is necessary to economically and socially liberate all women. Abigail Adams, wife of American founding father John, is a prime example of how bourgeois feminists quickly turn reactionary at questions of economic liberation for the poor. In a letter to John dated March 31, 1776, Adams urges him to include legislation “more generous and favorable” to women than his ancestors, and to

Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular [sic] care and attention is not paid to the Laidies [sic] we are determined to foment a Rebellion [sic], and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.⁴⁴

Her husband responded, mockingly, that men giving up “the Name of Masters” would “completely [sic] subject Us to the Despotism of the Peticoat [sic].”⁴⁵ Modern men’s rights’ activists seem to have taken a page directly out of John Adams’ book. However, in 1787, when indebted, imprisoned, and impoverished men and women farmers in western Massachusetts launched Shays’ Rebellion against high taxes and exploitative financial practices, Abigail Adams

⁴³ Hartmann, Heidi. “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex,” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979. 222.

⁴⁴ Adams, Abigail. “Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams, 31 March - 5 April 1776 [electronic edition].” *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. page 2.

⁴⁵ Adams, John. “Letter from John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 April 1776 [electronic edition].” *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society. page 4.

wrote in a letter to Thomas Jefferson that “ignorant, restless desperadoes, without conscience or principles, have led a deluded multitude to follow their standard, under pretense of grievances which have no existence but in their imaginations.” On this exchange, scholar Michael Parenti rightly added, “Talking about the poor men and women who challenge her class interests, she sounds exactly like John Adams talking to her when she argues for women’s rights.”⁴⁶ The poor and exploited women of Shays’ rebellion did not count in Adams’ feminism. When not anticapitalist, it is impossible for feminist advocates to be truly fighting for all women.

It is clear by now that that not all feminisms are radical, antiracist, or anticapitalist, despite all three being necessary to liberate the women of the world from exploitation and male supremacy. Be that as it may, it is not immediately clear which type of anticapitalism is best suited for liberating women (and men) workers.

⁴⁶ Parenti, Michael. "Male terrorism and the political economy of gender oppression," *BabyradfemTV*, uploaded to Youtube, 22 Oct 2016. lecture given 1993.

Rejecting Anarchism

A revolution is not a dinner party. . .
Mao Zedong, "Classes and Class Struggle"⁴⁷

Anarchism is notorious for spawning dozens of anarcho- and anarcha- branches and variations within the umbrella of opposition to the state. Due to the dire global situation that capitalism and market-based economies have brought us to, as well as my above assertion of the importance of anticapitalism for feminism, my analysis of anarchism will only regard those that could be classified as economically or politically “leftist,” that is, that are in opposition to the state and capitalism. These various anarchist ideologies’ criticisms of the state and capital vary among them, which I will analyze in their own respective section. Although anarchists can and do spend hours arguing about the distinctions between their dozens of splinter ideologies, I divide contemporary anti-capitalist anarchist activity into three distinct ideological categories: liberal anarchism [my term], insurrectionary anarchism, and anarcho-primitivism.

Liberal Anarchism

A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is.
Friedrich Engels, “On Authority”⁴⁸

I include within this category of left-wing anarchism: anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism, organizational anarchism, and plain old “anarchism.” Left-wing anarchists who support communistic economic arrangements today often call themselves “libertarian socialists.” This means that they hold socialist economic views while denouncing the perceived authoritarianism or lack of personal freedom produced in actual socialist countries in the world. By extension, they also reject said countries’ Marxist, Leninist, Maoist, etc

⁴⁷ Mao, Zedong. “Classes and Class Struggle,” *Quotations from Mao-Tse-tung*. Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967.

⁴⁸ Engels, Friedrich. “On Authority,” *Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2nd ed, 1978. 730-733.

“vanguard-ist” socialist ideologies and strategies in general. Libertarian socialists ostensibly value liberty (or personal freedom, or democracy) equally or more than the abolition of capitalism. This is what prevents them from adhering to an “authoritarian” Marxist-Leninist ideology, which is also socialist.

As Noam Chomsky, the celebrity libertarian-socialist anarchist intellectual, argued, by quoting anarcho-syndicalist pioneer Rudolf Rocker, “anarchism is necessarily anticapitalist in that it ‘opposes the exploitation of man by man.’ But anarchism also opposes ‘the domination of man over man.’ It insists that ‘socialism will be free or it will not be at all.’”⁴⁹

Anarchists such as these, like most anarchists, stand firmly against any sort of “hierarchy,” including social hierarchies produced in socialist countries with a state. A popular young anarchist who makes educational Youtube videos under the name “Libertarian Socialist Rants” summarized the widespread foundational principle: “Anarchists believe that social hierarchies, including but not limited to capitalism and the state, should be dismantled if they cannot be proven to be just or necessary.”⁵⁰ He continued: “The state is a centralized institution with a monopoly on the use of violence. . . Large concentrations of power tend to attract a specific kind of people. . . those who desire the exercise of power.”⁵¹ By monopoly on the use of violence, Libertarian Socialist Rants refers to the police force, prison industrial complex, military industrial complex, and legal system, all of which socialist revolutions and later countries employ to protect and enforce their political system. Chomsky explains that anarcho-syndicalism “reflects the intuitive understanding that democracy is severely limited when the industrial system [of production] is controlled by any form of autocratic elite, whether

⁴⁹ Chomsky, Noam, and Barry Pateman. *Chomsky on Anarchism*. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005. 123.

⁵⁰ Libertarian Socialist Rants, “Arguments Against Anarchism,” video hosted by Youtube. 8 November 2013. Web. Accessed 20 November 2016. 0:15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

of owners, managers and technocrats, a “vanguard” party, or a state bureaucracy.”⁵²

Anarcho-syndicalists argue for essentially the same world we have now, except without nation states and capitalist ruling classes, but instead a bottom-up structure based on syndicates or trade-unions in workplaces, which would be run by the workers, managed by democratically elected representatives, and federated in a representative structure. The difference is that the people on the bottom, the workers, would be the ones electing their representatives and making decisions about their workplaces, government, and lives. It has no inherent critique of work or of industrialism and its ecological consequences.

Other anarchists in the more radical tradition are not as thrilled with the concept of representation held so dearly by anarcho-syndicalist theory. Peter Gelderloos wrote:

Democratic organizations with any form of representation can quickly become bureaucratic and authoritarian. [...] Organizations should be temporary, tied to the need they were formed to address, and they should be overlapping and pluralistic. Otherwise, they develop interests of their own survival and growth that can easily conflict with the needs of people.⁵³

The assumed fact of organizational self-preservation is central to anarchists’ critique of “authoritarian socialism” and its uses of a socialist state and a “red bureaucracy.” Anarchists disagree with Marx’s theory that the state needs to wither away over time as the society transitions toward communism. They believe that the state, being an organization of “people who like power” will never allow itself to wither away.⁵⁴

Marxists hold that a socialist state is necessary to enforce socialist policy that will change the material conditions of people’s lives that currently give rise to the need for a state.

The state is, therefore, by no means a power forced on society from without. . . Rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel.⁵⁵

⁵² Chomsky, Noam, and Barry Pateman. *Chomsky on Anarchism*. 127.

⁵³ Gelderloos, Peter. “Insurrection vs. Organization.” The Anarchist Library. June 2009. Web. Accessed 20 November 2016.

⁵⁴ Libertarian Socialist Rants, “Arguments Against Anarchism.” 1:50.

⁵⁵ Engels, Friedrich. *The Origins of Family, Private Property, and the State*. As quoted in Lenin, Vladimir Il’ich. *State and Revolution*. Marxists Internet Archive, 1999 (1918). 6.

The state is formed to prevent this fractured, antagonistic society from continuously struggling for a just distribution of resources. As the material antagonisms intensify with human technological and productive development, the state alienates itself more and more from the mass society that it controls.

One young communist who makes educational videos under the name “The Finnish Bolshevik” argued against anarchism thusly: “It is a naive and childish idea to believe that a bunch of evil men just got together and invented the state to oppress everyone. The state arises naturally because there are certain material realities, material conditions that create it. . . It arises naturally because of class contradiction” created in a class society, where only one class, now the capitalist class, is in power.⁵⁶ “The state cannot be abolished, it can only wither away, once the material conditions that give rise to the state have been eliminated.”⁵⁷ He continued: Marxism never claimed to reach statelessness immediately, unlike Anarchism. Marxism has a rational theoretical explanation for why Socialist states and Anarchist societies didn't achieve statelessness, but Anarchist ideology is clueless about it, instead opting for denial. This makes Anarchism a purely faith-based ideology.⁵⁸

It is this Anarchist belief in the transformational power of ideas or “idealism” -- that once a society decides to be anarchist immediately, it can, without need for government, the state, police, or prisons -- that substantiates the charge of liberalism from Marxists.

Catherine MacKinnon, a post-Marxist and feminist lawyer and scholar, explains that “liberal theory exhibits five interrelated dimensions that contrast with radical feminist theory... These are: individualism, naturalism, voluntarism, idealism, and moralism.”⁵⁹

The charge of liberalism is made against the centrality of the individual and individual freedom in anarchist doctrine. “Individualism involves one of liberalism’s deepest yet also

⁵⁶ Mäkinen, Tomi. “Response to Libertarian Socialist Rants & the ‘Red Bureaucracy,’” video uploaded by TheFinnishBolshevik to Youtube. 18 July 2016. 11:50.

⁵⁷ Mäkinen, Tomi. “Actually Existing Anarchism Pt. 2 (CNT-FAI Catalonia),” video uploaded by TheFinnishBolshevik to Youtube. 1 July 2016. 0:30.

⁵⁸ Mäkinen, Tomi. “Response to Libertarian Socialist Rants & the ‘Red Bureaucracy,’” Video description.

⁵⁹ MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. 45.

superficially most apparent notions: what it is to be a person is to be a unique individual, which defines itself against, as distinct from, as not reducible to, any group.”⁶⁰ David Harvey, the Marxist geographer, criticizes the centrality of individual freedom in anarchist ideologies by explaining its historical roots within liberalism. “The concept of the free individual bears the mark of liberal legal institutions (even of private property in the body and the self) spiced with a hefty dose of that personalized protestant religion which Weber associated with the rise of capitalism.”⁶¹ A radical praxis based on the liberation of oppressed groups from exploitation by other groups does not and cannot leave room to accommodate every individual’s personal desires.

Capitalists use their freedoms to exploit workers. Men use their freedoms to exploit and abuse women. A complete restructuring of society to mandate the equal distribution of resources, the elimination of exploitation and hierarchical division among citizens necessitates authority, force, and time.⁶² The crystallizations of the bourgeois state’s monopoly on violence (the police, military, prisons, etc), that are used “for the suppression of the proletariat by the bourgeoisie, of millions of working people by handfuls of the rich, must be replaced by a ‘special coercive force’ for the suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat (the dictatorship of the proletariat).”⁶³ Those in positions of power will not willingly renounce them, and the collective endeavor of the exploited to force this abdication of power will necessarily be authoritarian. “The exploited classes need political rule in order to completely abolish all exploitation.”⁶⁴ The state is the tool of one class to suppress another class, and the capitalists, the rapists, the white supremacists, etc must be suppressed to eradicate their material and cultural grounding.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Harvey, David. "Listen, Anarchist!" DavidHarvey.org. June 10, 2015. Accessed November 20, 2016.

⁶² Lenin, Vladimir Il’ich. *State and Revolution*. Marxists Internet Archive, 1999 (1918). 14.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 13.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 17.

⁶⁵ Lenin, Vladimir Il’ich. *State and Revolution*. 14.

Anarchists want revolution, they want to restructure society to be egalitarian, but they do not believe in using any means to achieve it that would impinge on liberty or be authoritarian.

Engels provides a damning criticism of anti-authoritarians and anarchists in 1873 that could not ring more true today:

Have these gentlemen ever seen a revolution? A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is; it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all of which are highly authoritarian means. And the victorious party must maintain its rule by means of the terror which its arms inspire in the reactionaries. Would the Paris Commune have lasted more than a day if it had not used the authority of the armed people against the bourgeoisie? Cannot we, on the contrary, blame it for having made too little use of that authority? Therefore, one of two things: either that anti-authoritarians don't know what they are talking about, in which case they are creating nothing but confusion. Or they do know, and in that case they are betraying the cause of the proletariat. In either case they serve only reaction.⁶⁶

Engels' closing assertion touches upon the significance of anarchist, and hence liberal, currents of thought for radical movements. They must be combated.

Anarchism's liberal "roots" show through its dominant "feminist" currents. In preaching its own softened, depoliticized, individualistic version of radical politics, it most often takes up rhetorical or physical arms against truly radical theories and practices that upset its worldview. It is apparent in the vitriol spewed towards radical feminists by anarchists who prescribe to a postmodern liberal feminism. "TERFs" [trans-exclusionary radical feminists] and "SWERFs" ["sex work" exclusionary radical feminists] are blatantly banned from online anarchist spaces.⁶⁷ To paraphrase Engels, if liberal-postmodern feminists actually *do* understand radical, Marxist analyses that are materially required for female liberation, and they still fight against them, they are betraying women and the revolution. Contemporary liberal anarchism's pro-pornography,

⁶⁶ Engels, Friedrich. "On Authority," *Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 2nd ed, 1978. 730-733.

⁶⁷ "Anarcho-Communism" page, *Facebook*. 25 September 2016. Web. Accessed 20 November 2016. "ATTENTION: This page is now under new collective administration. TERF/SWERF/Tankie/non-anarchist admins have been ejected."

pro-legalized-prostitution, uncritically sex-positive outlook shows itself openly to anyone who browses popular anarchist websites.

The average anarchist Reddit user, with the deepest of radical feminist analyses of the violent patriarchal power relations propagandized by pornography and with unwavering commitment to the women and children enslaved, raped, murdered, and traumatized by the porn and prostitution industries, receives sixteen “up-votes” for the following: “the porn industry is very disgusting and needs to be unionized or something heavily, but (consensual obviously) porn as a concept is pretty great.”⁶⁸ Here the “voluntarism” tenet of anarchism’s liberal ideology reveals itself. One recalls the words of V.I. Lenin: “The spontaneous working-class movement is by itself able to create (and inevitably does create) only trade-unionism, and working-class trade-unionist politics is precisely working-class bourgeois politics,” and in this case, patriarchal politics.⁶⁹ Even among supposedly radical anarchists, feminist consciousness cannot be raised beyond the thought of unionizing the most brutal and oppressive of misogynistic industries. It takes a properly revolutionary politics to see that full abolition of the sexual exploitation of women, however “authoritarian” it may seem to the pimps and pornographers, is fundamental to female liberation.

In Athens, Greece, on the graffiti-covered walls of the semi-autonomous anarchist neighborhood of Exarchia, itself a heartland and beacon of hope for anarchists around the world, one can read such rebellious and feminist slogans as “sex, drugs, and anarchy.”⁷⁰ Contemporary anarchism’s unquestioning embrace of postmodern gender identity politics

⁶⁸ HamburgerDude, comment on “Are you anti-porn?” r/Anarchism, Reddit.com. April 2016. Web. Accessed 20 November 2016.

⁶⁹ Lenin, Vladimir Il’ich. “Chapter III, section F: Once More “Slanderers”, Once More “Mystifiers”,” *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of Our Movement*. Marxists Internet Archive, 1999 (1902).

⁷⁰ First-hand experience, June 2016.

betrays its liberalism. Radical feminist Robert Jensen offers this radical eco-feminist critique of transfeminism:

Such medical practices [as hormone replacement therapy and non-essential cosmetic surgery] are part of a deeper problem in the industrial era of our failing to understand ourselves as organisms, shaped by an evolutionary history, and part of ecosystems that impose limits on all organisms. . . Transgenderism is a liberal, individualist, medicalized response to the problem of patriarchy's rigid, repressive, and reactionary gender norms. Radical feminism is a radical, structural, politicized response.⁷¹

Such is the materialist perspective.

On the other hand, transfeminist anarchist manifestos are busy outlining inaccurate histories of the second-wave feminist movement,⁷² lamenting the female liberation movement's lack of focus on trans-women aka males, and claiming that transfeminism emerged from black feminism--as if there are no black radical feminists who critique trans ideology, or that trans-critical feminism is inherently white. In the most liberal fashion possible, "the Transfeminist Manifesto states: 'Transfeminism believes that we construct our own gender identities based on what feels genuine, comfortable and sincere to us.'"⁷³ Later in the piece, transfeminist anarchism takes issue that feminism's "definition of woman is generally reliant on what is between a person's legs."⁷⁴ It follows that females must have always, invariably been, throughout written history to the present, oppressed by males, simply because of their feminine personalities. It follows that women are enslaved, beaten, raped, and murdered by men not because women are female, with female anatomy, female reproductive organs, and female sex organs, but because most women *feel like* and *identify* with an abstract "femininity" and value-neutral womanhood, just like some men. Anarchism's unilateral support of this plainly anti-radical feminist ideology does not bode well for those seeking liberation from both male

⁷¹ Jensen, Robert. "Some basic propositions about sex, gender, and patriarchy." *Dissident Voice*, 13 June 2014.

⁷² Rogue, J. "De-essentializing anarchist feminism: lessons from the transfeminist movement." The Anarchist Library. 2012. Web.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

supremacy and capitalism. A feminism focused on the end of male supremacy must be materialist, that is, focused on the concrete material origins of gender and patriarchy in the exploitation of the female body--not on idealist notions of innate gender identity and free-floating, value-neutral femininity.

Insurrectionary Anarchism

I consider that today society is like a train on a track headed for total dehumanization. We are the motor that powers the train, its engine, its passengers, and its wheels. The driver has the cruel face of capitalism and the copilot is the lazy, faceless State. The tracks are not made of rose petals, they are made of blood and corpses, bodies solitary or piled in mounds, of people who wanted to resist or change that frenetic course.
 Yiannis Dimitrakis, "Letter from Korydallos Prison"⁷⁵

The second main cluster of anarchist thought I categorize as insurrectionary anarchism. Insurrectionary theory is as old as modern anarchism, taking its roots in individualist and egoist theory and illegalist practice of the 19th century. Responding to the fact that the state holds the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, it encourages individual and small "affinity group" acts of rebellion, violence, property destruction, and even assassination aimed at the state and capital to inspire others to the anarchist cause. This praxis is known as "propaganda of the deed," and is widely accepted in many anarchist currents, although often criticized by Marxists and revolution-minded communists. Insurrectionary praxis has been in place for over 150 years, although late-modern (contemporary) instances display some uniquenesses in regards to their alignment with anti-alienation and anti-symbolic primitivist theory.

Writing about the beloved-in-hindsight but doomed-to-fail anarchist revolution of Catalonia during the Spanish Civil War in 1936, David Harvey critiques insurrectionary theory:

The radical affinity groups pursued insurrectionary tactics that produced a "growing disquiet" about their "elitism" and the undemocratic ways in which they would launch

⁷⁵ Dimitrakis, Yiannis. "Letter from Korydallos Prison," *We Are an Image from the Future: The Greek Revolt of December 2008*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 2010. 39.

continuous insurrectionary actions. They depicted their actions as “catalytic” rather than “vanguardist”, but most people recognized this was anarchist vanguardism under another name. The insurrectionists expected and appealed for mass support (which rarely materialized) for actions decided upon by no more than at most a hundred but in many instances just a dozen or so members of a particular affinity group. . . What is the point of insurrectionary action, [the anarcho-syndicalists] said, if there is no idea let alone concrete plan to re-organize the world the day after? . . . If, as seems to be the case, the world cannot be changed without taking power then what is the point of a movement that refuses to build and take that power?⁷⁶

Marxists assert that theory glorifying insurrection over organized revolution smacks of individualism, counter-productivity, impulsivity, and hypocrisy, but that does not dispute the fact that rebellion and insurrection do occur by will of the masses during certain political moments.

A fantastic contemporary example of insurrectionary anarchism in practice can be found in Greece. The precise social and political history of modern Greece has contributed to the relative widespread popularity of anarchist ideas in the country.⁷⁷ Since the beginning of the left-wing student-based uprising against the military junta on November 17th of 1973, Greek university campuses have been designated a legal and physical safe haven for left-wing and insurrectionary activity. The fall of the junta is also when the contemporary anarchist movement began, filling the vacancy left by the defeated Communist Party. The popular embrace of anarchist ideas, combined with a recent history of an inflated social-democracy welfare-state which collapsed into a proper neoliberal austerity hellscape following the Greek debt crisis of 2010, has fostered an environment in which insurrectionist praxis is mainstream among mass anarchist politics. Though anarchist activity can be found in almost every major city in the country, the semi-autonomous neighborhood of Exarchia in Athens embodies the Greek anarchist ethos most.

⁷⁶ Harvey, David. "Listen, Anarchist!"

⁷⁷ Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future: The Greek Revolt of December 2008*. Edinburgh: AK Press, 2010. 5-7.

There is no greater example of Greek insurrectionary praxis than the events of December 2008. “It didn’t begin on December 6th,” wrote one participating anarchist. “The insurrection was always here. In every individual or every group of people that reacted against the state and authority.” Nonetheless, in Exarchia, a neighborhood already “in a way liberated from the police,” on December 6, 2008, two cops shot and killed an unarmed, 15 year old Greek teenager named Alexis Grigoropoulos.⁷⁸ Within hours, the local university campus--site of the 1973 uprising and anarchist political center ever since--was occupied by activists, and police in Exarchia were attacked. The people’s response spread throughout the city and rest of the country within hours. Soon gatherings and attacks against police developed into widespread insurrection--planned and spontaneous destruction, attacks against capital and authority, occupations of strategic locations, looting, burning, propagandizing, and smashing of symbols of wealth and alienation.

The next morning [the streets] were a surrealistic place. . . The whole street covered with stones, pieces of metal, anything that could be thrown. Burnt cars. Cars flipped over. Smoke. It was like a moonscape. Very quiet. . . But you didn’t see anyone going to work. . . it was like time stopped.⁷⁹

But it wasn’t just young, angsty, Greek-born anarchists rioting. Two participants describe “immigrants from any race or country, blacks, Eastern Europeans . . . high school students, lumpen proletariat--people who live on the streets . . . all ages from the first night.” It was an uprising of the discontented against the bourgeois status quo.

The insurrection is a physical event--real property is smashed, giant city Christmas trees are set on fire, a real boy was shot--but it remains an ideologically charged abstraction, at once “a social explosion” entirely belonging to the populace, but not available for all to politically embrace--namely, as we will see, for Marxists who criticize insurrection as ultimately inferior to

⁷⁸ Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future*. 117.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 121.

revolutionary action. The anarchists simultaneously claim it and do not claim it as theirs: “We don’t understand the insurrection as an expression of the process of our ideas or a clear manifestation of anarchist organizations in society, but as a social explosion, as the expression of the needs of people who are oppressed, exploited, tortured.”⁸⁰ Not every purportedly anti-capitalist group was on board with the violence. A Greek expat in London remarked at the irony of seeing British Marxist-Leninists--whom she calls Stalinists--demonstrating against the Greek embassy, seeing how “the day before, the chief secretary of the Communist Party in Greece renounced the uprising and the violence. So I went up to them and told them to piss off.”

81

The communist / anarchist division is very present in Greece, with anarchists regarding the Communist Party as compliant with the state, and the communists having “internalized [the] defeat” of the brutal civil war after the end of World War II.⁸² “The first anarchist uses of violence in demonstrations was a way to let everyone know that the anarchists were different. . . they didn’t compromise with the state like other leftists did.”⁸³ Leninists are mistrusted because of their vanguardist ideology, which anarchists see as an insult to the revolutionary masses and a hierarchy in itself. However anarchists “don’t wait for the police to attack [them], [they] attack first,” regardless of the wishes of the masses in the peaceful demonstrations.⁸⁴ It is, in the words of Harvey, “anarchist vanguardism under another name.”⁸⁵ When Marxist-Leninists decide to support the masses’ insurrection, with the ultimate ideological goal of elevating rebellion to politically informed revolution, it is appropriation. However, when anarchists hit the streets to

⁸⁰ Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future*. 120.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 185.

⁸² *Ibid.* 15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Harvey, David. "Listen, Anarchist!"

provide politically charged albeit important “counterdiscourse” about sex trafficking, racist attacks, and state violence to the rioting masses hungry for political education, it is anarchism.⁸⁶

Here we see a hypocrisy within anarchist theory that is also present in their historical reverence of revolutionary Barcelona during the late 1930s, during which revolutionary anarchists of the CNT used, amongst such “anarchic” devices as a legislature and militia, labor camps. Reads a revolutionary Spanish Anarchist--not Stalinist--newspaper: “The weeds must be torn out by their roots. There cannot be and must not be pity for the enemies of the people, but . . . their rehabilitation through work and that is precisely what the new ministerial order creating “work camps” seeks.”⁸⁷ In addition to imprisoning and “rehabilitating” right-wingers, defending their revolution and defeating capitalism meant the anarchists needed to engage in war--a decidedly un-anarchist activity since they are against authority and discipline. The same publication also declared: “To accept discipline means that the decisions made by comrades assigned to any particular task ... should be executed without any obstruction in the name of liberty, a liberty that in many cases, degenerates into wantonness.”⁸⁸ Here, anarchists discover that liberal individualism, held so dearly, reveals itself to be bourgeois and counter-revolutionary in practice. “Consistent anarchist line: It’s okay when we do it,” remarked the Finnish Bolshevik, “It’s not okay when the Bolsheviks do it.”⁸⁹

In one of his final writings before his death, libertarian municipalist Murray Bookchin conceded:

Anarchists may call for the abolition of the state, but coercion of some kind will be necessary to prevent the bourgeois state from returning in full force with unbridled terror. For a libertarian organization to eschew, out of misplaced fear of creating a “state”, taking power when

⁸⁶ Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future*. 170.

⁸⁷ Seidman, Michael. *Workers Against Work: Labor in Paris and Barcelona during the Popular Fronts*. University of California Press. 1991. 69.

⁸⁸ Bolloten, Burnett. *The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. 236.

⁸⁹ Mäkinen, Tomi. “Actually Existing Anarchism Pt. 2 (CNT-FAI Catalonia),” video uploaded by TheFinnishBolshevik to Youtube. 1 July 2016. 8:20.

it can do so with the support of the revolutionary masses is confusion at best and a total failure of nerve at worst. (Bookchin, *The Next Revolution*. 2014. 183)⁹⁰

Coming from a man known around the world for a lifetime of anarchist writings, this liberal self-criticism is damning.

Black Insurrection

. . .the race line [has become] itself a class line, one that is entirely consistent with the neoliberal redefinition of equality and democracy. It reflects the social position of those positioned to benefit from the view that the market is a just, effective, or even acceptable system for rewarding talent and virtue and punishing their opposites and that, therefore, removal of “artificial” impediments to its functioning like race and gender will make it even more efficient and just.
Adolph Reed, “The limits of anti-racism”⁹¹

In his essay “Insurrectionary vs. Organization,” mainly about and inspired by contemporary anarchism in Greece and published one year before the 2008 riots, anarchist writer Peter Gelderloos finished his commentary with a blunt and quite accurate criticism of anarchism’s “largest problem”: whiteness. “Those of us who were raised with white privilege were trained to be very bad listeners,” he wrote, ignoring the role masculinity plays in social domination.⁹² Instead of leaving it at vague accusations of privilege, gives specific examples: “preserving a movement narrative that tells the stories and contains the values of white people, and refusing to recognize the importance of white supremacy as a system of oppression every bit as important as the state, capitalism, or patriarchy.”⁹³ The importance of the last system, I would argue, anarchists do not always recognize either. He criticizes “the insistence that white supremacy is nothing but a tool and invention of capitalism, perfectly explainable in economic

⁹⁰ Bookchin, Murray, as quoted in Harvey, David. "Listen, Anarchist!" DavidHarvey.org. June 10, 2015. Accessed November 20, 2016.

⁹¹ Reed, Adolph Jr. “The limits of anti-racism,” *Left Business Observer*, No 121. September 2009. Web.

⁹² Gelderloos, Peter. “Insurrection vs. Organization.” The Anarchist Library. June 2009. Web. Accessed 20 November 2016.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

terms.” On the other hand, Adolph Reed argued against the classification of racism as a separate issue to economics.

The contemporary discourse of “antiracism” [and identity politics overall] is focused much more on taxonomy than politics. It emphasizes the name by which we should call some strains of inequality—whether they should be broadly recognized as evidence of “racism”—over specifying the mechanisms that produce them or even the steps that can be taken to combat them.⁹⁴

These inequalities, which are based on perceived “difference” between people, are “always *difference in relation to the system of exploitation*” of global capitalism. “Social differences, in short, are material effects of the changing contradictions in the divisions of labor.”⁹⁵ This focus on the materialist origins of oppression is often lost on anarchist analysis. The rejection of the basis of social inequalities on historical materialism is not an unfortunate oversight, but fundamental to the foundation of anarchist ideology.

Although the anarchist writing about December 2008 mentions black immigrants participating, insurrectionary praxis is complicated by anti-blackness. Immigrants, especially visibly non-Greek and non-white immigrants, are at high risk in Greece of attacks by fascists, right-wingers, and police. Black immigrants declared their solidarity in the December 2008 insurrection, but wrote about their inability both live freely in Greek society (“freedom stops at my apartment’s door”) and to confront police officers, writing “[the cop] will take my residential card, he will take away my personal belongings, he will hit me whenever he wants. . .”⁹⁶ A Sudanese refugee in Athens wrote, “They could find a dead body after all the riots . . . turns out to be an immigrant and it doesn’t matter... They can kill us much easier than they can kill Greek people.”⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Reed, Adolph Jr. “The limits of anti-racism,” *Left Business Observer*, No 121. September 2009.

⁹⁵ Ebert, Teresa L. “Feminism and resistance postmodernism,” *Ludic Feminism and After: Postmodernism, Desire, and Labor in Late Capitalism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996. 134. Emphasis original.

⁹⁶ Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future*. 151.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 187.

African immigrants in Greece are not alone in feeling paralyzed before police. Here, at a conference on the University of Texas at Austin campus about antiblack police violence, liberal activists and students expressed frustration at white “manarchists” who feel safe enough to attack police at demonstrations but leave the black people attending with the greatest risk of being arrested. Black insurrection in the US can make amazing progress in a short period of time, but the crackdown is most intense. In the 1960s, J. Edgar Hoover made it one of the FBI’s top priorities to completely shut down any black power, black nationalist, or civil rights group, epitomized by the super-secret and profoundly illegal COINTELPRO program and the 100-bullet assassination of Black Panther protégé Fred Hampton in his home in Chicago.⁹⁸ The murders of countless black civilians have been on the public radar in the US in the past 5 years, with notable examples such as Korryn Gaines, who stood her ground armed in her own home against a police invasion. It is difficult to imagine how black people are supposed to rebel en masse, when the risk of murder by police, or of extreme sentences for rioting, exemplified by Josh Williams, a 20-year old black man with no prior arrests, who has been sentenced for 8 years for attempting to set a store on fire during the Ferguson rebellion.⁹⁹ If insurrection is the only valid way to end oppression, and avoid the hierarchies and authority produced inevitably by organizational tactics, how can insurrection be made *not* for-whites-only? When insurrection is entirely black, the state crackdown is severe. If it is mixed, then the black participants will be killed or imprisoned first. How can insurrection be made viable for black people, if it is the only path to human liberation, which necessarily includes black liberation? and women’s liberation?

⁹⁸ Taylor, Flint G. “The FBI COINTELPRO Program and the Fred Hampton Assassination,” *The Huffington Post*. Web. 3 December 2013.

⁹⁹ Stewart, Mariah. “This 20-Year-Old Is Serving The Longest Sentence From The Ferguson Protests.” *The Huffington Post*. Web. 11 May 2016.

Female Insurrection

*The subordination of bodies to violence and to the symbols of the ruling class
can not be reversed with hidden hierarchies. Aside from the cop...
Also kill the sexist in your head!
An Athens feminist group, "Communiqué"¹⁰⁰*

If ritualized, organized violence is a cornerstone of patriarchy, how shall women embrace it in their struggle?¹⁰¹ An Athens feminist group wrote a communiqué, in a fit of rage, declaring their frustration with the insurrection. They criticize capitalist exploitation of female bodies, the state and economy corralling women into domestic reproduction, the omnipresent sexual harassment, the liberal feminism assurances that "equality" is coming. But then, they criticize their supposed comrades in the street, who call cops "cunts" and "pussies," then after hearing the women protest those words, threaten to "make you shut up" "if you do not know how." "The word 'cunt' (and the body part itself) is already denigrated in the social hierarchy of gender. This relationship is reproduced everywhere. Now also in the street!" Women see the dual monster where white men only see one. They battle against the external system of social organization, but they also need to scream at their comrades to "kill the sexist in your head!" who otherwise would never think to.¹⁰²

Sexism from male comrades is an omnipresent, seemingly permanent problem for women who organized on the left. Much of the women's liberation movement of the 60's and 70's was born directly from women's disillusionment or disgust at their treatment in their respective movements, whether with the Panthers, the Civil Rights movement, the New Left, the anti-war movement, or the Chicano movement. Robin Morgan wrote in her iconic essay,

¹⁰⁰ Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future*. 247.

¹⁰¹ Zerzan, John. "Patriarchy, civilization, and the origins of gender," *Twilight of the Machines*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2008.

¹⁰² Schwarz, A. G., and Tasos Sagris. *We Are an Image from the Future*. 247.

“Goodbye To All That,” forty years before the Greek feminists of the December insurrection: “that’s what I wanted to write about—the friends, brothers, lovers in the counterfeit male-dominated Left. The good guys who think they know what Women’s Lib, as they so chummily call it, is all about—who then proceed to degrade and destroy women by almost everything they say and do.”¹⁰³ Today’s men raised on hardcore pornography, a reification of gender from the transgender movement, and a few liberal feminist slut-walks, do not give much hope for women radicals looking for an relief from the patriarchal pseudo-comrades of the past 10,000+ years.

Beyond this, to hit the streets during a nighttime chaos of rioting men and to have physical confrontations with male cops requires a lot of macho confidence and male privilege. Speaking of the Watts Riots of 1965 in Los Angeles, a community activist said, “This was a male revolt directed at the white power structure [...] During the riot, the women were out on the streets, cheering the men on.”¹⁰⁴ Amidst endless propagandizing declarations of the righteousness and awesomeness of insurrection in Greece, many of which were admittedly beautifully written, I was shocked to find the open letter of Pola Roupa, a member of the anarcho-communist, anti-imperialist, designated-terrorist group Revolutionary Struggle. A notable exception of Greek female anarchist militancy, she describes her failed attempt to hijack a helicopter to liberate her comrade-cum-husband from prison, the statement’s goal being to raise public awareness of her identity, so the next hypothetical helicopter pilot would not resist. This time, the pilot of the chartered helicopter had refused to cooperate and crashed the helicopter, but Roupa escaped, and is still at large. Painting a vibrant picture of the helicopter hijacking, she insists that the pilot himself had been armed, that it was not an unequal fight.

¹⁰³ Morgan, Robin. “Goodbye to all that.” Fair Use Blog. 2007 (1970) accessed 20 November 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Horne, Gerald. *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995. 39.

“The second mag was from his own gun, which he dropped from his hands during our scuffle during flight. And as for me, of course I had a second mag. Would I go to such an operation with only one mag?” She also refers to her bank “expropriation” the previous summer, which funded her life in “clandestinity.”¹⁰⁵

A notable warrior indeed, however her context and politics differ from the individualist insurrectionists on the street in December 2008. She is a part of a tight knit terrorist group that has carried out incendiary attacks against banks and the US Embassy in Athens. They do not advocate for generalized smashing and destruction of the leviathan, mere rioting, but instead “[invite] all other guerillas to create a joint anti-capitalist movement in armed struggle and “social revolution.”¹⁰⁶ Roupa herself wrote: “These are links in a chain of revolutionary planning aimed to create more favourable political and social conditions, for broadening and strengthening revolutionary struggle.”¹⁰⁷ Very distinct from the anti-organizational, anti-social insurrection of the individualists. Roupa herself is evidence that women in a tight-knit group of trusted comrades can engage tooth and nail in armed revolutionary struggle. It seems as though individualism, unsurprisingly, leaves individuals to their own liberty--their own wantonness, their own white or native-born privilege, their own anti-cunt and anti-pussy prejudices. Remarkably Catharine MacKinnon on the necessary conclusions of anti-state ideology, “women are left to civil society, which for women has more closely resembled a state of nature,” both of male domination, and of white supremacy, imperialism, and colonization.¹⁰⁸ Historically though,

¹⁰⁵ Roupa, Pola. “[Greece] Open Letter of Pola Roupa about the Attempt to Break Nikos Maziotis out of Koridallios Prison.” *Contra Info*. March 13, 2016. Accessed November 21, 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Kalmouki, Nikoleta. “‘Revolutionary Struggle’ Claims April 10 Bank of Greece Bomb.” *Greece Greek Reporter*. April 25, 2014. Accessed November 21, 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Roupa, Pola. “[Greece] Open Letter of Pola Roupa.”

¹⁰⁸ MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*. 160.

when women are organized, in women-only or feminist-minded groups, they participate in militancy and violence as much as men.¹⁰⁹

Adding to the liberalism in its ideological foundations, I have yet to encounter a solid, materialist answer from anarchism of how it will succeed in making its egalitarian revolution happen. I did stumble upon a “Radical Feminist Anarchists” Facebook page, which intrigued me, given the apparent problem of how to enforce the destruction of patriarchy without being caught looking authoritarian. On their uploaded photo of graffiti which read, “burn all prisons to the ground,” (a typical anarchist sentiment) I asked them where, then, they would put all the rapists and child molesters, to which they replied, “They would be killed.” When another feminist communist asked them who would kill the rapists in a victim-blaming patriarchy, i.e. our current sex-hierarchy that stretches back the past 5,000 years, the anarchist replied, “An anarchist society wouldn’t be a victim-blaming patriarchy. Anarchism is explicitly egalitarian.”¹¹⁰ Patriarchy simply would not exist after anarchism. Who can believe it has been this easy all along?

Peter Gelderloos has some suggestions for us again. Outlined in the chapter of his book “How Nonviolence Protects the State” devoted to patriarchy, his main plan of action for anarchist feminism is to build a healthy, healing feminist culture. “Most of the work needed to overcome patriarchy will probably be peaceful, focused on healing and building alternatives” “complemented by militantly opposing institutions that propagate exploitive and violent relationships.”¹¹¹ He emphasized the importance of encouraging women to defend themselves against violence now. He added, true to the nature of the book,

¹⁰⁹ Gelderloos, Peter. “Nonviolence is Patriarchal,” *How Nonviolence Protects the State*. The Anarchist Library. Web. Second Edition. 2007.

¹¹⁰ “Radical Feminist Anarchists” page, Facebook. Photo shared 5 September 2016. Web. Accessed 20 November 2016. Photo of graffiti on wall, reads “Burn prisons hug cats.”

¹¹¹ Gelderloos, Peter. “Nonviolence is Patriarchal,” *How Nonviolence Protects the State*.

Killing a cop who rapes homeless transgender people and prostitutes, burning down the office of a magazine that consciously markets a beauty standard that leads to anorexia and bulimia, kidnapping the president of a company that conducts women-trafficking—none of these actions *prevent* the building of a healthy culture.¹¹²

I wonder why he did not simply write “kill all rapists, and men who buy sex,” like the Radical Feminist Anarchists, and instead opted for a more symbolic approach. Perhaps it was his maleness speaking.

This all sounds, however violent, somewhat like standard radical feminist praxis. What cannot be used here, though, is law. No matter how global, how systematic, how massive the structures exploiting women are, it rests on individuals and affinity groups to enact single attacks. This is where his reasoning gets murky. “The Western concept of justice, based on law and punishment, is patriarchal through and through. Early legal codes defined women as property, and laws were written for male property owners, who had been socialized not to deal with emotions; ‘wrongs’ were addressed through punishment rather than reconciliation.”¹¹³ Law is wrong because it has been male supremacist so far, which is bad because they are emotionless, and because law comes from liberalism. He implies transgressions should be amended through feminist reconciliation, not unproductive punishment, immediately after he advocates killing rapists and blowing up CEOs. My stance is not to reject the killing of rapists, but to demand clarity, consistency, and a *plan* from anarchist theory, which it cannot and historically has not provided.

We see time and again the presence of, or at least the objection to, misogyny and racism within anarchist movements. If the means must reflect the ends—which is why anarchism *exists* as an ideology of immediate communism, opposed to the Marxist withering away of the state--and thus the future ends can be taken to reflect the current means, how will anarchism

¹¹² Gelderloos, Peter. “Nonviolence is Patriarchal,” *How Nonviolence Protects the State*. The Anarchist Library. Web. Second Edition. 2007. My emphasis.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

achieve egalitarianism if it cannot spread radical feminism among its members now? What tactics will it use beyond influencing ideas and purging its problematic members, which would further reduce the relative number of anarchist radicals who plan on reshaping the entire political system in their image? We must not forget Engels' statement that a revolution is the most authoritarian thing there is.

It is only through gaining control of the state that the workers will acquire the resources and apparatuses of power to enable them to control the means of production. The nation-state in late capitalism continues to be a necessary site in the international struggle to end the exploitation of people's labor and wrest the ownership of the means of production away from a transnational bourgeoisie.¹¹⁴

An elimination of exploitation requires a seizure by force (organized violence) of the means of production and a removal of enemies of the people, who refuse to cease their exploitative activities. These acts require "the proletariat organized as a ruling class."¹¹⁵ The doctrine of Lenin, which reminds us that "the supersession of the bourgeois state by the proletarian state is impossible without a violent revolution," has historically achieved victories over the exploitative bourgeoisie, and consequently made incredible gains for women under the Marxist feminist policy that existed.¹¹⁶

Contrary to anarchist belief, "the abolition of the proletarian state, i.e., of the state in general, is impossible except through the process of 'withering away'."¹¹⁷ The *bourgeois* state is a social relation whose aim is to suppress the majority of workers for the minority of capitalists. The *proletarian* state is the only tactic to protect revolutionary gains and mandate radical changes to society. The proletarian state is the means that the working people have to transition to a classless society where women and third-world people will be free of exploitation. A simple

¹¹⁴ Ebert, Teresa. "Toward a Red Feminism."

¹¹⁵ Marx, Karl, *The Communist Manifesto*, as quoted by Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich. *State and Revolution*. 13

¹¹⁶ Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich. *State and Revolution*. 15.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

smashing or abolition of the bourgeois state alone will guarantee nothing for the exploited and oppressed.

On Anarcho-Primitivism

More and more we are immersed in a postmodern ethos of appearances, images, and veneers. Everyone can feel the nothingness, the void, just beneath the surface of everyday routines and securities.
John Zerzan, *Elements of Refusal*¹¹⁸

Anarcho-primitivism encompasses the most totalizing criticism of current human society. It argues that the beginning of history and civilization, with the key development of agriculture, marks the start of human oppression, patriarchy, and all social hierarchy. Like liberal anarchists, primitivists value individual liberty and autonomy, but realize that the actualization of a stateless communism requires the abandonment of complex, globalized industrialism and the readoption of a primitive human society. Unlike “promethean” anarchists who believe there is “a contradiction between technology’s *positive nature in principle* and its dominating nature in practice, that is, . . . inserted into capitalist relations of production,” anarcho-primitivists criticize technology as part of a “‘maximalist’ anarchist critique of hierarchical civilisation, and of its His-story of domination and destruction from the beginnings of domestication, agriculture and the state.”¹¹⁹ Anarcho-primitivism rarely offers a prescription for its actualization beyond the rejection of approbation of various primitivist actions against “the Leviathan.”¹²⁰ However, many theorists have deep insights into the nature and origins of systems of domination that cannot be ignored or dismissed by contemporary communists. Not

¹¹⁸ Zerzan, John. *Elements of Refusal*. Columbia MO: Columbia Alternative Library, 1999. 1.

¹¹⁹ Gordon, Uri, “Defining a broad-based anarchist politics of technology,” *Anarchism and political theory: contemporary problems*. The Anarchist Library. 2007. Web. Emphasis mine.

¹²⁰ Perlman, Fredy. *Against His-story, against Leviathan!: An Essay*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1983.

all anticapitalists who endorse a critique of civilization support primitivism, despite all this. This is a line we will pick up shortly.

As Uri Gordon describes in his summary of anarcho-primitivist ideology, there is are “very strong political, ecological and emotional concerns over industrialism, technology and hyper-modernity.”¹²¹ This is true. Anti-civ anarchists emphasize the emotional damage that domination and hierarchy inflict on human beings, more so than traditional Marxists. “Marxists have, by way of contrast, historically been far too preoccupied with the labor process and productivism as the center of their theorizing,” wrote David Harvey, “often treating the politics of realization in the living space as secondary and daily life issues as contingent and even derivative of the mode of production.”¹²² For anarcho-primitivists, the politics and emotional bankruptcy of modern industrial and postindustrial daily life are one of the primary and most easily identifiable symptoms of “the pathology of civilization.” John Zerzan, a prominent anarcho-primitivist theorist, lamented the “pathological state of modern society: outbursts of mass homicide, an ever more drug-reliant populace, amid a collapsing physical environment.”¹²³ The pathological descriptor is not merely a metaphor. He added that tuberculosis, malaria, and diarrheal disease did not emerge until agriculture, that plagues and pandemics require cities, nutritional diseases are caused by the restricted diets brought by staple-food agriculture, and that dental degeneration, cancer, and anemia are all “hallmarks of agriculture.”¹²⁴

This is not alienation and degeneracy that can be solved by communalizing anything. Zerzan broadens his criticism of civilization to a critique of the origin of human disembodiment

¹²¹ Gordon, Uri, “Defining a broad-based anarchist politics of technology.”

¹²² Harvey, David. “Listen, Anarchist!” DavidHarvey.org. June 10, 2015. Accessed November 20, 2016.

¹²³ Zerzan, John. *Twilight of the Machines*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2008. vii.

¹²⁴ Zerzan, John. “Elements of Refusal.” *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2005. 72.

and removal from nature, according to him: symbolic thought, written language, ritual, and religion.

Problems introduced by complexity or hierarchy have never been resolved by symbolic means. What is overcome symbolically remains intact on the non-symbolic (real) plane. Division of labor for instance, eroded face-to-face interaction and eroded people's direct, intimate relationship with the natural world. . . Life becomes fragmented; connections to nature are obscured and dissolved. . . . Symbolic thought turns people in the wrong direction: toward abstraction. . . Symbolic culture demands that we reject our "animal nature" in favor of a symbolically defined "human nature".¹²⁵

Our species-alienation cannot be fully solved with a decrease of daily labor as Kropotkin hoped, or with a collectivization of production. "Daily labor--routine, repetitive motions for long hours at a time--is at the heart of [the worker's] being," "there is a central core of nonlivingness in [the worker.]"¹²⁶ Animals in farms, cages, and corrals get depressed. Horses in stables can develop harmful habits out of boredom if left without toys for too long. Humans are animals, too.

Primitivism takes a rejection of human exceptionalism to its logical conclusion. We must be animals again.

Criticizing civilization does not need to entail a primitivist goal or idealization. Anarchist Wolfi Landstreicher catches the inherent hypocrisy and amaterialism of primitivism as a political program.

The ideology of a past Golden Age is at best pure speculation. . . Although [primitivists] may avoid the accusation of a hypocritical use of science for their own convenience in this way, they do not escape the problem of basing their perspective on an external ideal. In fact, these primitivists have simply revived the humanist ideology with a twist: "primal" human nature becomes the "real" self we must discover and strive to attain. Being a form of humanism, this perspective is moral in its essence. It attempts to provide a basis for revolution without class struggle by replacing this with "primal war", but since the latter has its basis in our alleged "primal nature", and not in our actual confrontation with the circumstances the present world has imposed on us, it is simply a moral ideal of how revolution "should" come about.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Zerzan, John. *Twilight of the Machines*. 7.

¹²⁶ Shepard, Paul. "Nature and Madness." *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2005. 78.

¹²⁷ Landstreicher, Wolfi. "What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?" *Barbaric Thoughts: On a Revolutionary Critique of Civilization*. The Anarchist Library. Web. February 10, 2010.

In the same anti-civilization anthology containing Zerzan's rejection of all agriculture, James Axtell praises the open, communal, plant-based agricultural practices of Native Americans from the northeast.¹²⁸ Selective praise by Westerners of indigenous practices to reinforce idealist politics is not uncommon.

In a similar vein, radical feminism criticizes as colonialist the contemporary transgender movement's co-optation of various indigenous gender practices from around the world and lumping of them under their own constructed banner of "trans". Landstreicher is a voice of reason:

However, there is one very significant lesson we can learn from examining what is known about non-civilized people. Civilization has shown itself to be a homogenizing process. This becomes especially clear now that a single civilization has come to dominate the globe. It could even lead one to believe in a set human nature. But looking at what we know about non-civilized people, it becomes clear that there are vast varieties of ways that humans can live in this world, endless possibilities for relating with oneself, each other and the surrounding environment.¹²⁹

Primitivism is lambasted and loathed by communists partly because of this abandonment of class struggle, and partly because of the implications of a *deep ecological* or animalistic viewpoint. The latter was apparent when the Austin based Maoist collective Red Guards Austin condemned anyone who promoted "one of the most vile theories that flies under the flag of anarchism," because it is "in practice trans-antagonistic and antagonistic to the struggle for an end to disability."¹³⁰ Primitivism's ability or desire to abandon class struggle is also both a symptom and cause of its popularity in the West. For the materially oppressed, no matter how psychologically miserable modern life is, waiting for the apocalypse to free them of civilization is not an appealing option. Like insurrectionism, this is both unproductive and idealist. "Much of

¹²⁸ Axtell, James. "The invasion within: the conquest of cultures in colonial North America," *Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House, 2005.

¹²⁹ Landstreicher, Wolfi. "What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?" *Barbaric Thoughts: On a Revolutionary Critique of Civilization..*

¹³⁰ Red Guards Austin. "Criticism of the Unprincipled Actions of the MonkeyWrench Books Collective." *Red Guards Austin*. Wordpress. July 22, 2016. Accessed November 20, 2016.

the rhetoric these days about the ‘coming insurrection’ (announced by The Invisible Committee (2009) in 2007 in France but yet to materialize) is just that: rhetoric.”¹³¹ To paraphrase David Harvey, self-liberation through adoption of a primitivist lifestyle is “all well and good, but what about everyone else?”¹³²

Some anti-civ anarchists reject Zerzan and primitivists’ amaterialism and lack of analytical depth. It is from this position that a materialist, Marxist analysis can take hold. “Declaring [time, language, and symbolic thought] to be the source of our problem involves forgetting that they originate in social relationships, in real or perceived needs and desires developing between people” under economies of accumulation and market exchange.¹³³ While it is refreshing to see that these words came from another self-described anarchist under the pen-name Wolfi Landstreicher, it still does not address anarchism’s fundamental lack of feasible means for altering social relationships and its over-valuation of the individual.

Landstreicher understands that how the fact that the capitalist mode of production organizes society into groups relative to one another (although he still emphasizes the individual) lies behind and alongside all oppressions, especially the primitivist foci of ecocide, patriarchy, modern misery and decadence, etc.

These social relationships make us dependent upon a massive technological system over which we have no control. And the physical harm of this system — the poisoning of rivers, the irradiating of food, the spread of toxic chemicals and engineered genetic material everywhere — is integral to its existence.¹³⁴

He calls out the evangelism and moralism of primitivist theorists, upholding fantastical Christian ideology under a new banner--replacing Eden with primitivism, the moral ideal with humanity’s true animal nature, Armageddon with the fall of civilization. “Defining wildness as a

¹³¹ Harvey, David. "Listen, Anarchist!"

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ Landstreicher, Wolfi. “What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?” *Barbaric Thoughts: On a Revolutionary Critique of Civilization*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

model turns it into a moral value that stands above us and our daily struggles.”¹³⁵ This is an easy trap to fall into when exploring the origins of domination and oppression, the fantasy of an ideal world that once was, that can give us a model for our future. Especially for feminists, we must remind ourselves to step out of the fantasy and acknowledge that even though patriarchy has not always been this severe everywhere, a perfectly feminist world has never existed. And if it did, it would be as much a construction of contemporary anthropologists’ minds as it was based on fact.

Landstreicher’s push for a revolutionary anti-civilization politics bridges an incredible amount of ground between the seemingly polar extremes of primitivism and Marxism, without going all the way. He remains enamored with anarchism’s everyday decentralized revolution. He sees that materialism and a basis of the social relations of production are necessary for revolution, without venturing to embrace a historical materialist praxis for changing those social relations. He even speaks to the necessity of education about revolutionary history, presumably speaking about the numerous Marxist-Leninist revolutionary successes and not merely the few anarchist revolutions of modern history that upon closer inspection function in a rather authoritarian manner. “A critical encounter with the revolutionary past is too useful a tool to give up in the battle against this civilized world. Each of these struggles can be seen as part of an unfinished social war,” or in Marxist terms, the material dialectic of history, “in which knowledge of the aim and the enemy become gradually clearer, but only if we encounter and wrestle critically with this past, rather than seeking a mythical past to use as an ideal.”¹³⁶ Despite this assertion, he goes on to admit that anarchism does not have any past revolution to base their strategy on, but that this is a good thing. Despite calling for the rearrangement of social relations to full communism, which is the end goal of Marxist socialism when it is free to

¹³⁵ Landstreicher, Wolfi. “What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?”

¹³⁶ Landstreicher, Wolfi. “What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?”

progress unantagonised by Western capitalist imperialist competition, and despite its historical successes to learn from, he refuses to entertain Leninist revolution as a viable strategy. After reprimanding the primitivists for their wanton fantasization about the decay of civilization, and being aware of the level of technology and production which the Earth's population currently depends on, he wrote that it is unfathomable to "talk of seizing the current means of production for any purpose other than destroying them."¹³⁷ He does not mean to destroy the bourgeois state apparatus, but the factories and farms themselves. How vast of a difference can there be between men who wait for the decay of civilization and those who go make it decay faster by blowing up the means of production?

Teresa Ebert, criticizing contemporary ecofeminist writers heavily influenced by the poststructuralist philosophy of our neoliberal era, explained that

They essentialize technology and growth as in-and-of-themselves destructive, not seeing that it is a question of the uses of technology and growth for profit, rather than to meet human needs, that is the fundamental problem. As a result it is technology that is said to be the problem, rather than capitalism. . .¹³⁸

The fact that technology has been alienating and oppressive to laborers since it has been used to maximize extracted surplus value in slave-owning, feudal, and capitalist societies is lost on critics of technology. Subconsciously, however, primitivists must be aware of this difference, because they simultaneously decry all agriculture while praising indigenous societies that used sustainable agriculture in the context of egalitarian social relations. This brings us to a necessity of a political framework beyond primitivism while learning from its concerns.

¹³⁷ Landstreicher, Wolfi. "What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?"

¹³⁸ Ebert, Teresa. "Toward a Red Feminism."

A Marxism Against Gender

Historical materialism haunts feminism.
Teresa Ebert, "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism"¹³⁹

Anarcho-primitivism and its critiques of domination and productive civilization become relevant to feminist theory when they try to understand the origin of patriarchy. Zerzan wrote that "no anthropologists or archaeologists, feminists included, have found evidence of [matriarchal] societies. . . There was, though, a long span of time when women were generally less subject to men, before male-defined culture became fixed or universal," that is, pre-civilization. He goes on to call gender "the single cultural form of greatest significance."

We know that division of labor led to domestication and civilization, and drives the globalized system of domination today. It also appears that artificially imposed sexual division of labor was its earliest form and was also, in effect, the formation of gender. . . Masculine and feminine signs are present in the first cave art, about 35,000 years ago. Gender consciousness arises as an all-encompassing ensemble of dualities, a specter of divided society. . . With band societies, it is no exaggeration to say that the presence or absence of ritual is crucial to the question of the subordination of women. Gayle Rubin concludes that the 'world-historical defeat of women occurred with the origins of culture and is a prerequisite of culture.'¹⁴⁰

Anarcho-primitivist evangelists are not the only ones to acknowledge the ultimateness of sexual inequality.

Russian Marxist feminist Clara Zetkin wrote: "This social illegality represents, according to Engels, one of the first and oldest forms of class rule."¹⁴¹ Marxists men, and occasionally orthodox Marxist women as well, often come into conflict with radical feminists in their belief that women's struggle for liberation is just a subset of the greater class struggle, and that a communist revolution will secure sexual equality. The above assertion from Zerzan relays the problem with this male Marxist view. Patriarchy goes deeper than capitalism and class

¹³⁹ Ebert, Teresa. "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism," *Post-ality: Marxism and Postmodernism*. Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve, 1995. 113.

¹⁴⁰ Zerzan, John. "Patriarchy, civilization, and the origins of gender," *Twilight of the Machines*. 13-15.

¹⁴¹ Zetkin, Clara. "Only in conjunction with the proletarian woman will socialism be victorious."

exploitation. Gender, being the social meaning ascribed to sex, may be the most enduring and relentless oppression to throw off. It is the basis of culture, domestication, agriculture, accumulation, and human alienation from nature. It is the basis of *difference*. It serves as the grammar to the hierarchies inherent in human civilization, it structures how humans make sense of sexuality and acts of heterosexual intercourse, reproduction, kinship systems, child raising, and cultural reproduction. Socially conceived differences between males and females create organized family and kinship structures, and determine who does what labor, who has access to resources, and who controls whom.

The social division of labor by sex can therefore be seen as a ‘taboo’, a taboo against the sameness of men and women, a taboo dividing the sexes into two mutually exclusive categories, a taboo which exacerbates the biological differences between the sexes and thereby creates gender. The sexual division of labor can also be seen as a taboo against the sexual arrangements other than those containing at least one man and one woman, thereby enjoining heterosexual marriage.¹⁴²

In Western cultures, gender socializes men to be aggressive, dominating, and violent, while socializing women to be passive, submissive, and weak. It is not value-neutral. The idealist postmodern notion of moving beyond binaries and situating bodies as sites of reappropriation of the consumption of gender obscures the productive realities which exploit women under capitalism and perpetuate both a male hegemony and culture of male sexual terrorism.

Communism, in aiming to achieve a society where each is equal to all others and all are equally materially provided for, requires a comprehensive, specific strategy and dedication to confronting and eliminating gender from its population. Only an elimination of gender and a properly feminist Marxism can address material resources, the division of labor, and the culture of male violence. We must reject the Armageddon evangelism of the primitivists, who preach that only a return to the garden of Eden will save the damned humanity. Knowledge about the supposed sexual equality of primitive societies “is always speculative, partial and biased, and

¹⁴² Rubin, Gayle. “The Traffic of Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex.” 178.

does not provide a basis for a revolutionary critique of civilization.”¹⁴³ It is never possible to recreate the past. We can only construct the future--a future without gender. A future without a feminine nature to provide justification for the relegation of female workers to the houses, to the kitchens, to the laundries, to the sewing machines. A future where policy, propaganda, law, and culture is dedicated to combatting male violence. Marxist feminists must move forward with the militant demand for liberation from exploitation for all, this means never settling for a socialism run *by men* who will ultimately only be able to create and govern over a socialism *for men*. The feminist failures of past socialist projects will educate contemporary feminists about how and why women’s liberation was hindered, and how today’s praxis can work to prevent a recurrence.

¹⁴³ Landstreicher, Wolfi. “What is a revolutionary critique of civilization in the realm of ideas?”

Socialism and Female Liberation: History

. . . the bourgeois and their supporters hoodwink the people with talk about freedom in general, about equality in general, about democracy in general. . . Ask them: Equality between what sex and what other sex? Between what nation and what other nation? Between what class and what other class?
Vladimir I. Lenin, "Soviet Power and the Status of Women"¹⁴⁴

Under socialist regimes have the most serious and successful efforts at rapidly bringing equality between men and women been made. Socialist regimes have brought more women into the workforce more quickly than any liberal bourgeois regime in history. The inclusion of women in the workforce was not only a feminist goal, but an economic and productive necessity for socialist regimes struggling to industrialize and modernize underdeveloped countries at breakneck speeds and build economies that could afford to collectivize some domestic chores. China provides a rich example reinforced by the experiences of women in Cuba and the USSR.

Judith Stacey wrote that "one cannot help but feel that the transformation of the status of Chinese women is little short of miraculous."¹⁴⁵ The lives of women before the socialist revolution in China were violently patriarchal. Social relations and access to material resources were dictated by status within the extended family, which was severely misogynistic to the point of female infanticide, foot binding, childbride sale, and regular wife-beating. Survival depended on women's compliance to the patriarchal system, the only alternative being suicide. In the 1919 case of Miss Chao Wu-chieh, that meant "female martyrdom . . . by slitting her throat in her bridal chair to escape the intolerable fate of her arranged marriage."¹⁴⁶ During the Civil War period when male labor power experienced dire shortages, women in the countryside were mobilized to sustain the economy of the country. This time saw the rapid decay of the already

¹⁴⁴ Lenin, Vladimir Il'ich. "Soviet Power and the Status of Women." V.I. Lenin Internet Archive, Marxists.org, 2002 (1919). Web.

¹⁴⁵ Stacey, Judith. "When Patriarchy Kowtows," *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979. 330.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 317.

dying Confucian extended family structure. Feminist consciousness among organized working and peasant women exploded. In 1948, the Communist Party had to issue a new resolution urging women to continue to fight against their patriarchal families, while maintaining that sex struggle remained a contradiction within and among the people, *not* a bonafide struggle like that of the workers against the landowners. Patriarchy could be resolved culturally, while capitalism required force and violence. In Maoism, sex antagonisms divided the working class. Male supremacy was not defined as exploitation, and women were not revolutionary agents in their sex-based oppression, but only as comrades to men in their class-based oppression. “Revolution differs according as it is true revolution or false revolution. It does not differ according to sex.”¹⁴⁷ In this way, women were required to put aside their own sexual revolutionary interests and align with men along class-lines in order to best achieve socialism, which, according to party doctrine, was in the best interest of women anyway.¹⁴⁸ The revolutionary feminist fervor of peasant women needed to be quelled. Their centuries-long miserable oppression at the hands of men fostered a separatist feminist militancy among peasant women’s groups. From the inception of the communist movement in China, however, the revolutionary vanguard “miserably underrepresented” women.¹⁴⁹ The proclamations and propaganda issued by the party on its lines of acceptable feminism were necessarily permitted if not written by male leadership. “The incestuous father-worship cult of Chairman Mao” reigned supreme, even among the few elite female leaders.¹⁵⁰ Drastic feminist projects were rejected by the male-dominated party.

Through family and marriage reforms, industrialization, economic expansion, and the creation of some social organizations to support material access, the time period from the civil war through the Cultural Revolution saw incredible change for women in China. Women’s labor

¹⁴⁷ Stacey, Judith, “When Patriarchy Kowtows,” 317.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 309.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 310.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 320.

was needed to build socialism. Young peasant women could now obtain divorces from elderly husbands, secure their livelihoods independently through work, tie themselves to their society through local party and workplace organizations, and relieve some of the burden of domestic labor and child raising through partial collectivisation and family reforms demanding men's participation.¹⁵¹ Despite these positive changes, much remained to be pursued and achieved. As well as being the first laid off in times of hardship, women were relegated to feminized, usually lower-wage professions. These womanly professions, in China and in Western countries, usually fall within the bounds of "preparing food, healing, making garments, caring for children."¹⁵² Unsurprisingly, "village men opposed the plan" to throw themselves equally into household labor and childcare to compensate for the advancement of women into the socially productive workforce.¹⁵³ Like in every hitherto existing productive society,¹⁵⁴ skills involving technological knowledge, machine operation, and supervision were reserved for men.¹⁵⁵ The hierarchical sexual division persisted, justified by the "sexual differences . . . accepted as natural and desirable by most Chinese."¹⁵⁶ Additionally, because ideological change among men was not strongly attempted, many women taking advantage of their new legal and social rights were attacked, murdered, or ostracized by their patriarchal communities.¹⁵⁷

Male domination of the central party apparatus necessarily results in a weakening of feminist fervor and policy. When faced with women as revolutionary agents, the vast majority of men will react against them. Men have real privileges to lose. "Within the family [the man] is the

¹⁵¹ Stacey, Judith, "When Patriarchy Kowtows," 313-318.

¹⁵² Cockburn, Cynthia, "Technology production and power," *Inventing Women: Science, Technology, and Gender*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1992. 200.

¹⁵³ Stacey, Judith, "When Patriarchy Kowtows," 327.

¹⁵⁴ Cockburn, Cynthia, "Technology production and power."

¹⁵⁵ Stacey, Judith, "When Patriarchy Kowtows," 328.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Jancar-Webster, Barbara. *Women under Communism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978. Print. 131.

bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat.”¹⁵⁸ Just as in a socialist revolution, the workers must lead their own liberation. In the early years of the USSR, the Bolshevik government made a series of radical legal changes regarding women. Almost immediately, they legalized divorce and stripped religious institutions of legal marrying power, followed by the legalization of abortion and recognition of unregistered cohabitational unions. After instituting quotas for women in vocational schools to accelerate the introduction of women to the workforce, women made up “one-third of the labor force and 41% of students in higher and technical education” by 1936.¹⁵⁹ In 1922, the Soviet Labor Code instituted protections for working women’s overall and reproductive health, which was “much needed at the time” of “frequent reports of women who had so overstrained themselves physically that they had ruined their health or damaged their uteri.”¹⁶⁰ While some labor laws were based on physical differences, some laws were drafted to protect “motherhood” as “a social function” for society, and therefore had a more conservative effect in the long-term that preserved the sexual division of labor.

Marxist feminist visionary Aleksandra Kollontai’s *Zhenotdel* women’s division was behind many of the radical changes, but also their consequences. In the USSR as well as China, sometimes the state plowed forward with radical legal change to destroy the old patriarchal order without having the material resources or policy to support women in the new order while male exploitation and predation continued to exist. This led to many women becoming destitute and overburdened when their husbands could divorce them at any moment and leave them propertyless, with children (and even unemployed, during the Soviet liberal New Economic Policy years).¹⁶¹ A significant lesson to learn from the Soviet and Chinese endeavor is

¹⁵⁸ Engels, Friedrich. "II. The Family." *Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Chapter 2 (IV). Marxists Internet Archive, n.d. Web. 20 Nov. 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Jancar-Webster, Barbara. *Women under Communism*. 126.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* 123.

that “the infrastructure that would give them a new place in society as rapidly as circumstances demanded” is essential during feminist revolution. To merely abolish the old patriarchal system, with its placements and paternalistic protections of complacent women, without securing a place for women in the economy and social structure leaves women to bear the burden of feminist transformation. Ideological change in men is critical to the security of women in tumultuous times.¹⁶² These are mistakes that must never be repeated.

In Cuba, the socialist revolution has brought stunning advances for women’s equality, but similar patterns of setbacks emerge. In the first five years after the revolution in 1959, massive efforts were made to eliminate illiteracy and train the population for useful jobs. The ratio of male to female in public schools was brought into balance. Most women were channeled into traditionally feminine jobs.¹⁶³ In 1964, the state began initiatives to bring women into the workforce, with the large harvests of 1970 bringing in the most. By 1974, “seventy percent of Cuban women workers had joined the labor force in the years following the triumph of the revolution.”¹⁶⁴ Some women were celebrated for joining traditionally male jobs such as sugar cane harvesting, but the sexual division of labor was maintained through culture and state propaganda. It was seen as natural, for example, for women to be educators of young children and childcare providers.¹⁶⁵ The regime took women’s equality seriously, even when taking steps to reinforce the sexual division of labor. In 1968, the Ministry of Labor passed resolutions reserving certain job categories exclusively for women, which they argued would protect them. Despite these reactionary aspects, in 1973, Fidel Castro condemned in a speech the “residual

¹⁶² Jancar-Webster, Barbara. *Women under Communism*. 136.

¹⁶³ Bengelsdorf, Carollee and Alice Hageman, “Emerging from Underdevelopment: Women and Work in Cuba,” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979. 276.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 278.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 279.

male chauvinism and supermanism [sic] and all those things that are still a part of us” that lead to women being discouraged from achieving educational and career success.¹⁶⁶

The maintenance of a sexual division of labor hurt women workers through the “double shift.” The state never endeavored to get men into the household labor as women were entering the workforce. This double shift means women are overburdened and prevented from flourishing in local political organizations that provide skills and opportunities for leadership advancement. This demonstrates the circularity of male leadership in the communist party. Male self interest assures a lack of effort to alleviate women’s burden. “Men wanted to assure that women would continue to perform the appropriate tasks at home.”¹⁶⁷ Male reaction to radical feminist ideology creates blindness or disregard for the problem of gender. A socialist praxis that assumes that women’s homecare is natural discourages men from participating in domestic labor and childcare. This is not a subjective issue of correct or incorrect revolution, but a fact that inhibits women’s full equality.

¹⁶⁶ Bengelsdorf, Carollee and Alice Hageman, “Emerging from Underdevelopment.” 280.

¹⁶⁷ Hartmann, Heidi. “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex.” 218.

Red Feminism in Postmodernity

A massive transfer of wealth from the working class to the owning class has taken place. . . the idea of a progressive politics as simply a question of changing representations . . . has become too hollow to be convincing.
Teresa Ebert, "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism,"¹⁶⁸

We must not be like some Christians who sin for six days and go to church on the seventh, but we must speak for the cause daily, and make the men, and especially the women that we meet, come into the ranks to help us.
Eleanor Marx, "Speech on the first May Day"¹⁶⁹

By now we can see that liberal feminism, postmodern feminism, and anarchist feminism are incapable of abolishing capitalism and the sexual division of labor, and thus ending women's exploitation and subjugation. Liberal feminism does not challenge the capitalist mode of production. It does not

consider the existing social order (capitalism) to be what it is because of the accumulation of capital as the result of the appropriation of the labor of the many by the few. . . Even when these theories deploy the concept of class . . . they theorize class in such a way that it is more an index of political, cultural, and psychological practices than economic and material ones.¹⁷⁰

Liberal feminism's emphasis on agency and individual choice results in a complete phobia of radical criticism and systemic analysis of material oppression that includes the choices of many women. Liberal feminism, like political liberalism in general, rests on principles of voluntarism (choice rhetoric), the transformational power of ideas, and the free market. This is evident in liberal feminism's uncritical embrace of prostitution, femininity, beauty norms, female capitalists and entrepreneurs, and more. Far from criticizing how Western women's consumption choices affect women in the global South, liberal feminism even refuses to criticize how these consumers' choices have even been manufactured by capitalist patriarchy.

¹⁶⁸ Ebert, Teresa. "(Untimely) Critiques for a Red Feminism." 119.

¹⁶⁹ Marx, Eleanor. "Speech on the first May Day," (1890) *Eleanor Marx*. Vol 2, ed. Yvonne Kapp. Pantheon, 1976.

¹⁷⁰ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud, "Post-ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism." 47.

On the other hand, postmodern philosophy and postmodern culture in the West emerged from the ashes of the organized labor movement, the liberating hopes of anticolonial movements in the global South, many Marxist-inspired movements of the 60s and 70s in the global North, and the Western radical feminist movement. This amalgam of postmodern thought, termed “post-ality”, rejects Marxism with a call for a decentralized, non-hierarchical, consumerist, localized, playful alternative to neoliberal capitalism. “Post-ality” as the announcement “of a new society which is post-production, post-labor, post-ideology, post-white and post-capitalist,” obfuscates a Marxist understanding of the totality of global neoliberal imperialist capitalism, and with it, the understanding that accumulation is at the root of women’s subjugation.¹⁷¹

Both of these theories shift the theoretical focus from the producer, who is nowadays located far out of sight in sweatshops across the global South, to the consumer. This is a progressive Western subject “who daringly consumes objects” and uses her body and language to “[deconstruct] the binary” of class, sex, etc as “resistance to capital.”¹⁷² However, both the liberal and postmodern ideologies “perform the dominant ideological task of bourgeois knowledges, which is to construct concepts that remove (or at least reduce) the class antagonisms” and sex antagonisms, I would add, “from the social relations of property,” production, and reproduction.¹⁷³ The sexual division of labor, key to capitalism’s devaluation and subsequent super-exploitation of female labor, cannot be abolished “until we eradicate the socially imposed gender differences between us.”¹⁷⁴ We need to conceptualize class antagonism and relations to the means of production as central to our present society in order to fully

¹⁷¹ Zavarzadeh, Mas’ud. “Post-ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism” *Post-ality: Postmodernism and Marxism*. 1995. 3.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* 46.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Hartmann, Heidi. “Capitalism, Patriarchy, and Job Segregation by Sex,” 232.

criticize gender, the sexual division of labor, and male sexual terrorism's role in upholding material male supremacy.

The tendency of some radical feminists to treat male supremacy as resulting from some innate masculine essence of domination, and to view all women, including white bourgeois women, as equally oppressed, renders the movement incapable of both appealing to the women workers of the world and liberating them. The Combahee River Collective, in their renowned statement of 1977, wrote that the lesbian separatism in vogue with white radical feminists

... leaves out far too much and far too many people, particularly black men, women, and children. We have a great deal of criticism and loathing for what men have been socialized to be in this society . . . But we do not have the misguided notion that it is their . . . biological maleness that makes them what they are. As black women we find any time of biological determinism a particularly dangerous and reactionary basis upon which to build a politic.¹⁷⁵

Not all radical feminism, of course, “completely denies any but the sexual sources of women’s oppression, negating the facts of class and race.”¹⁷⁶ When radical feminism becomes alert to the centrality of accumulation, production, and the sexual division of labor as roots of women’s subjugation--and sees that the liberation of workers from the yoke of capital is necessary for feminist liberation--it faces two options. Either align oneself with one of the strains of radical anticapitalism such as anarchism, primitivism, or utopian socialism, or use historical materialism and Marxist theory to fundamentally reject liberalism and all it entails.

Anarchism, as I have outlined above, is heavily influenced by liberal political theory and postmodern ideology. It emphasizes individualistic notions of liberty and anti-authoritarianism--which is itself a reaction against concepts created by Western anti-communist propaganda campaigns to laud the social relations of liberal capitalism. While its nebulosity and structurelessness appeal to many Western youths rebelling against the

¹⁷⁵ Combahee River Collective, “Statement.” *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, Monthly Review Press, 1979. 367.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

violence inflicted upon their communities by the neoliberal state, the failure to differentiate between the tyranny of the bourgeois state and the necessity of the proletarian state is a theoretical shortcoming.

In conclusion, the quest for a radical anticapitalist feminism that will offer a structural analysis of women's oppression and offer a plan for a liberating social system leads us to Marxist feminism. Due to the pervasive influence of postmodernism on contemporary academia, feminism, philosophy, and even state policy, arriving at a ruthless rejection of all things "pomo" is not going to be easy for the West. Fortunately, one can always begin with oneself, with the hallmark of feminist organizing: consciousness raising. Once one becomes radicalized and introduced to Marxist/feminist ideas through literature, media, or friends, it only takes a simple conversation or informal meeting among friends to begin discussing personal experiences and current events in their relation to Marxist feminist ideas. Consciousness raising groups among friends and community members are instrumental in introducing and simplifying Marxist feminist theory for working women.

The space for revolutionary organizing, however, is not in the party, on a website, or in a lecture hall, though these are all useful tools. The revolutionary space is the workplace, the home, the community center, the women's shelter. Organizing a workplace, neighborhood, or community towards collective action is the weapon of the proletariat, both male and female. Housewives and domestic workers have historically been left out of union organizing due to the isolated nature of their work. This does not mean that collective action and union organization are not possible, it only means that they have historically been neglected.¹⁷⁷ I believe that organizing women at the point of their labors, wherever that may be, will give the 21st century women's movement economic strength. A social movement that focuses its efforts on periphery

¹⁷⁷ along with all other feminized occupations and women workers in mixed-sex occupations.

symptoms of the white supremacist capitalist patriarchal world order will only ever achieve reforms, reforms that will always fail to root out the source of the injustice. That is not to say that these tangential injustices are not of critical importance, rather that the worker's power comes from her work, and her economic weapon is the strike. In Iceland, the feminist gains won by women's movements were jump-started by the women's general strike of October 24, 1975. On this day, 90% of the female population, across all professions, went on strike to highlight the indispensability of women's work to the functioning of society. Every year on the same day, Icelandic women go on strike. Despite their internationally recognized feminist culture, Icelandic women's protests of the persistence of economic inequality continue to this day.¹⁷⁸ Iceland is not a fully communist country, nor does it implement gender-abolitionist and Marxist feminist policy to eradicate the sexual division of labor fully. However, this example offers insight to the potential of the women's general strike.

In the neoliberal economic and legal times of today, such actions and organizations are not going to be easy, fast, or even guaranteed. With the rising tide of right-wing populism and the ecological consequences of capitalism's ruthless consumption, it has possibly never been as dangerous, difficult, or unexpected to propagandize and organize for revolutionary action. With every conversation, every shared book, and every informal meeting, powerful movements are born. It is not enough to let the right propagandize and organize before our eyes while whining that the age of radical movements are over. The postmodern shift in focus from production to consumption has made the West forget of the power at our fingertips, 40, 50, 60, 70 hours per week. Labor is still the source of all value, and women create more than half of it. What the women workers of the world need is not a postmodern alternative to Marxism, a "something else."¹⁷⁹ We need a Marxism that has learned and grown from the past, a Marxism that engages

¹⁷⁸ Johns, Steven. "The Iceland women's strike, 1975." Libcom.org. 24 October 2016.

¹⁷⁹ Zavarzadeh, Mas'ud. "Post-Ality: The (Dis)simulations of Cybercapitalism."

with history, and is borne out of it. The time to abandon postmodernism and liberalism in the women's movement is now. Red Feminism has been waiting for us.

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About the Author

Emily Sullivan grew up in northeastern Connecticut and earned her B.A. in Plan II from the University of Texas at Austin, a week after her 20th birthday, in 2016. This project is a product of her intellectual and political development alongside her partner and close friends. She hopes to spend the rest of her youth hiking and backpacking around various countries, working on organic farms, enjoying the planet while she still can, mastering her French and Swedish skills, and working with socialist feminist groups.