

Class and Redistribution



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CLASS AND REDISTRIBUTION

ed. Farah Aksoy, Meagan Down, Corina Oprea

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**EDITORIAL
FOREWORD:
CLASS AND
REDISTRIBUTION**

Farah Aksoy, Meagan Down, Corina Oprea

This issue is the third in a series of e-publications edited by L'Internationale Online looking at concepts of political economy. Following the previous publications *Austerity and Utopia* and *Degrowth and Progress*, the present issue complicates two contested economic terms: *class* and *redistribution*. By inviting contributions from sociologists, political philosophers and artists, we seek to understand how these terms are utilised in institutional contexts and artistic practices.

Our approach challenges orthodox definitions of economic categories. Since the universal, ahistorical use of these categories is debatable, we accept, following historian Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'the[ir] dual nature', and interrogate their 'intellectual and social histories.'¹ It is urgent, for example, to question the Western cultural logic that governs financial practices and instruments such as insurance and property rights, and to expose the coloniality of an equation that synonymises productivity and profit, or custody and patrimony.

Class is a concept that engages many artistic practitioners. However, the meaning of class – as it was conceived and popularised in the early nineteenth century by Marx and Engels, as social relations *contra* their means of production – has changed radically as a result of social transformations. Feminist theory contests a narrow classification of labour based on commodified work and has instead made visible the spheres of non-commodified work, in order to theoretically dissolve the division between paid and unpaid labour. For this issue, leading Marxist-Feminist thinker **Frigga Haug** has delivered a transcript of an unpublished lecture from 2003, 'Marxism within Feminism', describing the associations between Marxist theory and the emancipation of women. Haug sheds light on a comprehensive set of subjects including work and labour between activity and practice, domestic labour, and socialist feminisms' futures.

Postcolonial and feminist perspectives call for plurality, since the white European male (waged) class subject that underwrites Marx's thinking can no longer be understood as an exclusive agent of transformation. How can alternative ways of perceiving class be advanced? Who is this 'revolutionary subject'? Any exercise in consciousness-raising requires critical engagement with Marxist ideas, norms and beliefs, as they are embedded in postcolonial imaginations. This approach acknowledges that systems of representation and patterns of legitimisation are deeply sedimented with relations of power.

1. Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Can Political Economy Be Postcolonial? A Note', in *Postcolonial Economies*, London: Zed Books, 2011, p. 32.

The protagonist of **Aykan Safoğlu's** essay *Aunt Yellow* (2021) is his Aunt Zerrin, who moved from Turkey to Germany as a *Gastarbeiter* ('guest worker') in the late 1960s. Reflecting on ways of remembering, he scrutinises the issue of migrant labour through the lens of race, class and gender. Referencing Audre Lorde's 1978 essay 'The Uses of Erotic: The Erotic as Power', Safoğlu attributes Europe's recovery from the Second World War to the working womxn, like his aunt, whose migratory labour healed wounds, whether by having to concede their place as subjugated, feminised immigrants, or by managing to be active participants in society.

'Feminist Movements in a Pandemic World – Towards a New Class Politics' by **Cinzia Arruzza** was written for this issue at a moment when the failures of the prevailing macro-economic system which devalues caregivers have become all the more visible due the Covid-19 pandemic. Strikes led by women and gender-nonconforming people – from Chile to Palestine – function, moreover, to voice societal restlessness in the face of rapacious capitalism. Supplementing Arruzza's contribution, we include the manifesto 'On Social Reproduction and the Covid-19

Pandemic: Seven Theses' (2020) by **The Marxist Feminist Collective** consisting of Tithi Bhattacharya, Svenja Bromberg, Angela Dimitrakaki, Sara Farris and Susan Ferguson.

Two works from **Rafał Milach's** series *The Archive of Public Protests* (2018) document large-scale public demonstrations against the further restriction of reproductive rights in Poland; namely, access to abortion. The series shares its name with The Archive of Public Protests (APP), an autonomous group and platform of around eighteen photographers, co-initiated by Milach in 2015 with the purpose of recording and collecting the visual character of social and political antagonisms within their regional context. Resisting an indexical quality or singular aesthetic value, the archive functions to circulate and disseminate material when collective voices of dissent are stifled by the ruling doctrine.

Sharon Hayes's *In the Near Future, Warsaw* (2008), stills from which we are including in this publication, was an exercise in revisionism. Long interested in the intersection of public life and public art, Hayes reworked overheard or common slogans from historical demonstrations and resistance movements, and walked them around the streets of Warsaw, often as direct echoes to their original site of elocution. Text reading 'Women Destroy Walls' could be a sardonic reference to Jacek Kaczmarski's 1978 protest song, 'Walls' – an anthem of the Polish trade union Solidarność (Solidarity) – as much as it could be a phrase from the contemporaneous iteration of the International Women's Day Strike. Beneath the Palace of Culture and Science, banner in hand, Hayes reminds us that our stories often coincide, and that through disruption, we may see their crossings.

The cultural production of ideas is not a self-determining process. How ideas interweave, overlap and counter fixed

categories requires attention to the constructions of race, gender and sexuality against any notion of dominance. In this way, the economist Eiman O. Zein-Elabdin has developed the term 'postcolonial economy' and employed it in the contemporary African context. Zein-Elabdin conceives of an economic system embedded in cultures shaped by ambivalence and uncertainty that produce 'unpredictable eco-cultural patterns.'² Following this line of thought and positioning anti-colonialism and anti-racism within an intersectional Marxist-feminist framework, political theorist **Françoise Vergès** advances a decolonial analysis of accumulation in her text 'On the Politics of Extraction, Exhaustion and Suffocation' (2021).

The spectre of global climate catastrophe is ever present, an important point in Françoise Vergès's text. As communities in close proximity to hazardous waste facilities, landfills and large air polluters attest, we must be attentive to environmental human rights and theories of distributive justice to try to counteract a politics of destruction. **Cian Dayrit's** counter-mapping practices and textile works examine ideas of cultural supremacy and identity as they are embodied and reproduced in the methodologies of maps, monuments and institutionalised forms of archiving. Dayrit's works, informed by the experience of colonialism from the perspective of the Philippines, critique how imperialism and its ongoing aftermath destroy and diminish certain regions, while they also offer an imagination of alternative territories.

Institutional and artistic practices guide us through an exploration of cultural belonging, reimagination and knowledge

2. Zein-Elabdin 2011, 55, 2009 - Zein-Elabdin, Eiman O. 2009. "Economics, Postcolonial Theory and the Problem of Culture: Institutional Analysis and Hybridity." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 33(6): 1153–67. ———. 2011. "Postcolonial Theory and Economics: Orthodox and Heterodox." In *Postcolonial Economies*, eds. Jane Pollard, McEwan Cheryl, and Alex Hughes. London, New York: Zed. Books, 37–61.

production. In the series of five drawings *Marx Pather Bhumika 1* (2021), **Naeem Mohaiemen** reinterprets Bengali-language book covers from the radical tradition – on leftist concepts, Marxists theories and feminist emancipatory practices. With a nod to the circuits of reproduction, he questions the poetics of the revolutionary subject.

Noah Fischer, an initiator of Occupy Museums and member of Gulf Labor Artist Coalition and G.U.L.F., targets the global systems and local conditions that exploit migrant workers and art workers with his dystopian cartoon series, *The Giant Pit* (2021). Taking the example of Guggenheim Abu Dhabi to fictionalise an unbuilt museum as one of its sites, the drawings make visible the crossings between economic and social inequity within art institutions.

The pandemic has firmly reminded us of the essential inconsistency within dominant systems that rank profits over the necessities of life-making or social reproduction. Social reproduction includes all relationships essential to the sustenance of life now and in the future. Care and domestic labour – cooking meals, caring for the elderly, or assisting in education – is an essential component of social reproduction, but not its only aspect. The cultivation of practices of community work or self-care produces social bonds and a healthy ecosystem. Opposing decline means caring for people, for the land, for local collectives, and for the direct reproduction of life.

Solidarity is assumed as the pursuit of equality-based relationships of interdependency. **Ingela Ihrman**'s video work *Oilbird with Nestling* (2021) reinforces awareness of a more-than-human nature with a potency to be valued, retelling the disengagement of humans from the convolution of environmental developments with the female artist body at its centre.

THE CURRENCY OF PLUNDER

Cian Dayrit

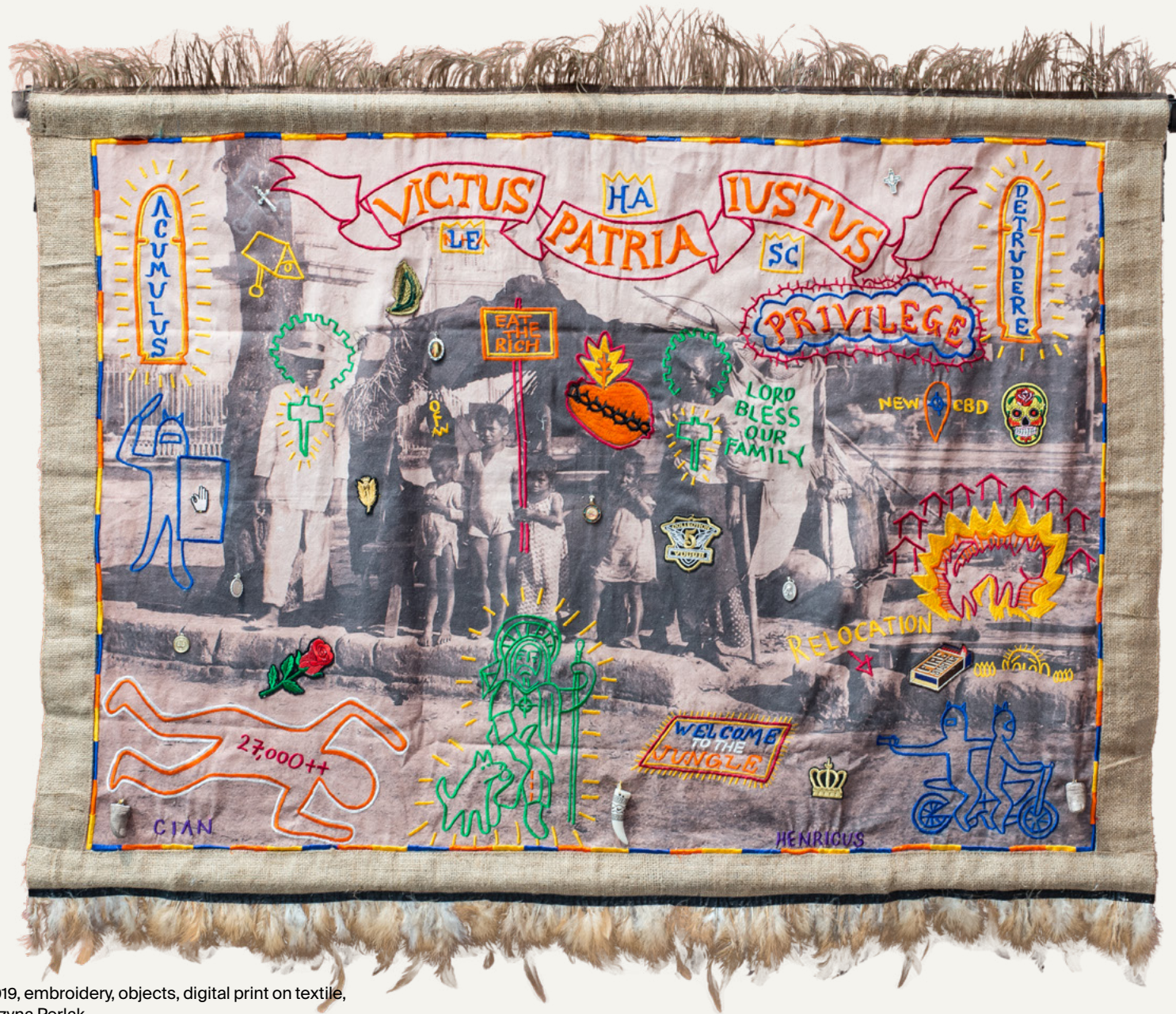


Cian Dayrit, *The Currency of Plunder*, 2019, embroidery on textile, 65x45 inches, photo: Mabini



Cian Dayrit, *Adversus Contradictores I*, 2019, embroidery on textile, 48x65 inches, photo: Pinto

Cian Dayrit, *Adversus Contradictores II*, 2019, embroidery on textile, 48x65 inches, photo: Pinto



Cian Dayrit, *Eat The Rich*, 2019, embroidery, objects, digital print on textile, 62x45 inches, photo: Katarzyna Perlak



FEMINIST MOVEMENTS IN A PANDEMIC WORLD - TOWARDS A NEW CLASS POLITICS

Cinzia Arruzza

Cian Dayrit, *Psidium Esse Perniciosius*, 2020, embroidery on textile, 30x42 inches, photo: Cian Dayrit

In November 2020, Khitam Al-Saafin, the head of the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees, UPWC, was taken from her house in occupied Beitunia by Israeli security forces, along with six other Palestinian activists and defenders of human rights. Currently, Khitam Al-Saafin is being held in prison under administrative detention, that is, without either a charge or a trial. In October 2020, Khitam Al-Saafin spoke at a webinar organised by the World March of Women:

As a global movement of women and as Palestinians, we definitely converge in our anti-imperialist objectives, because we consider imperialism, capitalism, colonialism, and occupation the main forces persecuting the peoples and creating social and economic crises on Earth – from the creation of poverty, hunger, and disease to issues related to the environment, wellbeing, social life, oppression, violence, and militarisation.¹

Although Al-Saafin spoke these words in reference to the World March of Women, they reflect many of the characteristic features of the global feminist movement of recent years. As such, they are particularly apt to describe some of the core commitments of the transnational feminist strike movement.

The feminist reinvention of the strike

The contemporary feminist strike movement began in autumn 2016 with the large-scale strikes organised in Poland and Argentina – for reproductive rights and against gender-based violence, respectively. It rapidly expanded to dozens of countries: between 2017 and 2021, five transnationally coordinated feminist strikes and days of action took place every 8 March. Women's strikes are not however a recent invention.

The precursor of the current transnational wave of feminist strikes took place in 1975: the Icelandic women's strike for equal wages, which 90 per cent of Icelandic women participated in, resulting in a historic legislative victory.² The spirit of the reinvention of the feminist strike over the past five years could be summarised through one of its most widespread slogans: 'If we stop, the world stops.'

The power of this slogan lies in its ability to convey at once a critique of capitalist social relations that exploit and undervalue the work of social reproduction, and a sense of collective, rather than individual, empowerment, based on the centrality of social reproductive labour (both waged and unwaged) to capitalist societies, and on the collective possibility of refusing that labour. This practical and theoretical reconceptualisation of the strike operated in two main ways: to reject the representation of women and gender or sexual dissidents as passive victims to be rescued by the state, through its carceral system or by well-intentioned men, and to anchor the feminist mobilisation in class struggle, its history and tradition.

In order to achieve this, the feminist strike had to expand the scope of what is habitually considered as work or labour, considering the specificities of the exploitation of women's work in capitalist societies. Women's work in the formal labour market is only one part of the work performed by women: by organising feminist strikes, the movement drew attention to

1. Khitam Al-Saafin, 'Feminist Struggle for Freedom and Sovereignty in Palestine', edited version of speech for 'Anti-Imperialist Feminist Struggles Against Militarization, War, and Sanctions', *Capire* (trans. Aline Scátola), 7 October 2020, <https://capiremov.org/en/analysis/feminist-struggle-for-freedom-and-sovereignty-in-palestine/>. There are currently around 500 administrative prisoners held in Israeli detention centres.
2. Annadis Rudolfsdottir, 'The day the women went on strike', *Guardian*, 18 October 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2005/oct/18/gender.uk>.



Rafal Milach, *The Archive of Public Protests* [series], 2018
Warsaw, 08.03.2017, Protest
against the tightening of
anti-abortion law
Courtesy Museum of Modern
Art in Warsaw

3. On social reproduction theory, see Tithi Bhattacharya (ed.), *Social Reproduction Theory. Remapping Class, Recentering Gender*, London: Pluto Press, 2017.

the crucially important work of social reproduction, which women often do without compensation or social recognition within the household, or in various precarious forms in the informal economy.³ The feminist strike made this unpaid and unstable work visible,

stressing its contribution to the creation of social wealth as well as to the maintenance and reproduction of human life, understood not just in biological terms but as *socialised* life, endowed with meanings, affects, aspirations and desires.

Launching feminist strikes also posed major organisational challenges. If a vast number of women and gender or sexual dissidents hold precarious jobs, do not have access to labour rights, are unemployed, work in the informal economy or are undocumented workers, how could they be involved in a classical workplace strike? To tackle this question, the transnational feminist movement had to expand the meaning and scope of the strike in such a way as to include a pause in unpaid social reproductive work, part-time strikes, calls to employers to close businesses earlier than usual, boycotts, the organisation of mutualistic childcare, and other forms of protest that are sensitive to the gendered nature of social relations. For example, the Chilean Coordinadora Feminista 8M published a pamphlet detailing one hundred ways to participate in the feminist strike, from symbolic participation to taking to the streets and becoming involved with acts of civil disobedience. ‘Strike’ therefore became the umbrella term under which all these forms of action are included, and the term that best emphasises the importance of social reproductive labour, whatever form this work takes.

This feminist reinvention of the strike significantly blurred the lines between what is commonly considered as labour or

class struggle and what is understood as ‘identity-based’ or ‘anti-oppression’ politics. The term ‘identity politics’ was coined in 1977 by the Black feminist Combahee River Collective, to signal the centrality of anti-racist feminist politics to any anti-capitalist project of liberation.⁴ In subsequent decades, however, identity politics was appropriated by liberal feminism, which tended to pit it against class politics, erasing its original revolutionary orientation.⁵ At the same time, economic reductionist theories of class have also contributed to the divorce between anti-oppression and class politics, by reducing class to an abstract and quantifiable sociological category mostly tied to income and redistribution in a narrowly understood sense – that is without taking racial, gender and sexual inequalities, and the key issues of emancipation and liberation, into account. Yet if we consider class to be a political agent born from struggle and not simply a static economic entity,⁶ we should also recognise gender, race and sexuality as structural mediations of the way people experience class belonging, their relation to the world and their conditions of existence, and so as a necessary part of their processes of politicisation.

The concrete experience of the feminist strikes, as well as the theories of social reproduction that inspired many of their organisers, contributed to making the question of whether

4. ‘The Combahee River Collective Statement’, 1978, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/combahee-river-collective-statement-1977/>.
5. For a history of the Combahee River Collective’s statement, see Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (ed.), *How We Get Free. Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2018.
6. See E.P. Thompson, ‘Eighteenth-Century English Society: Class Struggle Without Class?’, *Social History*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1978, pp. 133–65; Ellen Meiksins Wood, ‘The Politics of Theory and the Concept of Class: E.P. Thompson and his Critics’, *Studies in Political Economy*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1982, pp. 45–75; Daniel Bensaïd, *Marx for Our Times: Adventures and Misadventures of a Critique*, London: Verso, 2002.

7. Cinzia Arruzza, Tithi Bhattacharya and Nancy Fraser, *Feminism for the 99%: A Manifesto*, London: Verso, 2019.

class struggle should have priority over ‘identity-based’ or ‘anti-oppression’ struggles not only obsolete but also entirely misleading. By organising feminist strikes, the transnational fem-

inist movement demonstrated the possibility of rearticulating a project of non-reductionist class struggle capable of having a mass appeal and of encompassing the complexity of the various ways in which class is concretely experienced through the mediation of gender, race and sexuality.

Finally, the adoption of the strike as both a main form of struggle and as the feminist movement’s political identity marked the movement’s distance from liberal feminism and its separation of identity and class in the service of a small sector of elite, upper-middle-class women and LGBTQ+ people. Against the liberal feminist perspective of ‘equal opportunity of domination’ (as we dubbed it in *Feminism for the 99%*⁷), the feminist strike movement emphasised the inseparability of gender and sexual liberation from the overcoming of inherently racist and sexist capitalist social relations. As the Spanish feminist movement summed up succinctly, women and gender or sexual dissidents went on strike not to break the glass ceiling but to ‘*cambiarlo todo*’ – to change everything.

Shared features

This leads me back to the words of Khitam Al-Saafin, foregrounding the interlocked forces of capitalism and colonialism as the common obstacles to liberation, across places, peoples and identities. Despite local differences and specificities, in most cases, the feminist strike movement took a squarely and explicitly anti-capitalist stance. Ni una menos (Not one [woman] less), for example, which originated in

Argentina and spread across Latin America, played a crucial role in reformulating gender-based violence as an anti-capitalist struggle. Rather than framing the notion of gender-based violence within the narrower terms of interpersonal violence or domestic abuse, Ni una menos draws attention to the continuum that unites forms of violence against women with the institutional violence of the state, the existence of borders, and capitalist relations of exploitation and oppression. In its call for the 2017 strike, Ni una menos denounced altogether the economic violence of exploitation; the violence of the nation state and policies of migration; the carceral system; the violence of the state against sex workers and trans women; femicides and sexual violence, both at an interpersonal and an institutional level; and symbolic and cultural violence. One of the hashtags adopted in the region was #noestamostodas: ‘We are not all here’:

8. Ni una menos, ‘Llamamiento al Paro Internacional de Mujeres – 8 de marzo 2017’, 23 January 2017, <http://niunamenos.org.ar/manifiestos/llamamiento-al-paro-internacional-de-mujeres-8-de-marzo-2017/> (my translation). For a discussion of prison abolitionism within the Latin American feminist movement, see Susana Draper, ‘No estamos todas, faltan las presas! Contemporary Feminist Practices Building Paths toward Prison Abolition’, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3842>.

The political prisoners, the persecuted, those murdered in our Latin American territory for defending the land and its resources, are missing. The women incarcerated for minor crimes that criminalise forms of survival, while the crimes of corporations and drug trafficking go unpunished because they benefit capital, are missing. Those who died from or were imprisoned for having unsafe abortions are missing. Those disappeared by trafficking networks and the victims of sexual exploitation are missing.⁸



Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future*, Warsaw, 2008
The text reads: "Women Destroy Walls"
Courtesy Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw



Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future*, Warsaw, 2008
The text reads: "Was, Is, Will Be"
Courtesy Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

From the very beginning, and thanks to the crucial influence and role of Ni una menos, most regional feminist movements articulated both local and transnational perspectives, not only in terms of organising but also as an active contestation of bordering, racism, imperialism and colonialism. Moreover, the broad movement reiterated the point that racism, colonialism and imperialism *are* key feminist issues. In this spirit, for example, the Chilean feminist movement centred the issue of the colonial oppression of Mapuche women, while in Europe several movements adopted a position for open borders, attacking the EU's immigration policies and its murderous record in the Mediterranean Sea.

The feminist movement's response to the pandemic

The year 2020 marked the beginning of a new global challenge for the feminist strike movement: the Covid-19 pandemic. In April 2020, a transnational network of feminist movements and organisations, Cross Border Feminists, called for a day of action on May Day, borrowing an impactful slogan from the Chilean rebellion against neoliberal president Sebastián Piñera: 'We will not go back to normality, because normality was the problem.'

The group's manifesto continued:

The global feminist and trans-feminist movement, confronted with this new global health, economic, food, and ecological crisis, will not surrender to isolation and will not silence its struggles in the face of the restrictive measures undertaken in our territories to deal with the coronavirus. All over

the world, women and LGBTQI* people are refusing to submit to the multiple forms of violence that are exacerbated by the global pandemic and are beginning to organise by intertwining our rebellious practices, empowered by the strength of the recent years of global feminist strikes.⁹

The document emphasised that the current pandemic should not be seen as an exceptional situation from which we will recover to go back to a presumed normality. Rather, the pandemic should be seen as what I would call a 'magnifying lens' on the exploitative, oppressive and unsustainable nature of capitalist social relations, an accelerator of the multiple ongoing crises of capitalist societies.

The feminist strike movement arguably emerged in response to both the rise of an authoritarian and neoliberal right and an ongoing crisis of social reproduction prompted by the triumph of neoliberalism worldwide with its weapon of choice: debt.¹⁰ The Covid-19 pandemic clearly brought to light the fundamental contradiction between social reproduction, or the activity of life-making, and the mad pursuit of profit by capitalist production.¹¹ The new virus is not only a consequence of the capitalist organisation of agricultural production and environmental (mis)management.¹² The political and social management of the pandemic is also determined by dynamics that have to do with capitalism's constraints on social reproduction. The defunding of healthcare systems, one of the first causes of the

9. 'Cross-Border Feminist Manifesto', *Spectre Journal*, 20 April 2020, <https://spectrejournal.com/cross-border-feminist-manifesto/>.
10. Lucí Cavallero and Verónica Gago, *A Feminist Reading of Debt*, London: Pluto Press, 2021.
11. Nancy Fraser, 'Contradictions of Capital and Care', *New Left Review*, 100, 2016, pp. 99–117, <https://newleftreview.org/issues/ii100/articles/nancy-fraser-contradictions-of-capital-and-care>.
12. See Mike Davis, *The Monster Enters: COVID-19, Avian Flu and the Plagues of Capitalism*, New York: OR Books, 2020.

Rafał Milach, *The Archive of Public Protests* [series], 2018
Warsaw, 04.10.2016, Protest against the tightening of anti-abortion law
Courtesy Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw



13. Rob Wallace, Alex Liebman, Luis Fernando Chaves and Rodrick Wallace, 'Covid-19 and Circuits of Capital', *Monthly Review*, 1 May 2020, <https://monthlyreview.org/2020/05/01/covid-19-and-circuits-of-capital/>. See also Rob Wallace, *Dead Epidemiologist: On the Origins of Covid-19*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2020.

skyrocketing death toll in certain countries across the globe, is part of a set of austerity policies that have attacked social reproduction on various fronts – from social services and housing for victims of domestic abuse, to childcare, community services, care for the elderly, education, social housing, abortion services, and more.

Already at the outset of the pandemic, evolutionary epidemiologist Rob

Wallace, among others, denounced that most mathematical models predicting the pandemic's evolution in order to advise on mitigation measures were predicated upon an implicit acceptance of neoliberalism as our unquestionable horizon.¹³ This approach to the handling of the pandemic put a heavy burden on individual behaviours without either addressing the systemic reasons for the current catastrophe or developing a comprehensive politics of public support for those in need. The outcome has been especially disastrous for women and LGBTQ+ people. School closures occurred in many countries without making provisions for caregivers, who experienced a significant increase in childcare; due to the unequal division of social reproductive labour, this affected women in particular. Because of their social reproductive responsibilities in the absolute absence of support, along with business closures during lockdowns, women have withdrawn from the formal labour market on a large scale. In the United States, for example, 11.3 million jobs held by women vanished in the months immediately after the spring 2020 shutdowns, as women represent most of the workforce in the retail, restaurant, travel and hospitality sectors. It was estimated that, even after reopenings, it will take twenty-eight months to regain these pandemic losses. Finally, 'shelter-in-place' orders have made no or inadequate provisions

for victims of domestic abuse (women, children and LGBTQ+ people) for whom home is not a safe place at all, to the point that in April 2020 the United Nations already warned about an escalation in domestic violence.¹⁴

One of the lessons here is that, insofar as the pandemic is bringing to light, in such a clear and tragic way, the class, gender and racial relations that structure our societies, it should also compel us to criticise and denounce what passed as normality beforehand. Considering women's prominent role in the struggle to survive amid the pandemic – and in the struggle against its neoliberal governance – it is not by chance that some of the sharpest proposals for how not to return to 'normality' have come from feminist movements and activists.

In their *Seven Theses*, published in April 2020, the Marxist Feminist Collective called for the decommodification of 'health, education and other life-making activities'; the investment of stimulus packages, not in the bailout of private companies but in life-making work; the social recognition of social reproduction workers through better wages and working conditions; the immediate release of those imprisoned in immigrant detention centres, jails and prisons; and the adoption of modes and mechanisms of care being developed experimentally in mutual aid organising.¹⁵ In Italy, Non una di meno mobilised for an 'income for self-determination' in response to lockdowns and job losses and as a way to face the escalation in domestic violence.¹⁶ In Chile, the feminist movement combined

14. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Women website, 'Violence against women and girls: the shadow pandemic', 6 April 2020, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/4/statement-ed-phumzile-violence-against-women-during-pandemic>.
15. The Marxist Feminist Collective, 'Seven Theses on Social Reproduction and the Covid-19 Pandemic', *Spectre Journal*, 3 April 2020, <https://spectrejournal.com/seven-theses-on-social-reproduction-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>.
16. See <https://nonunadimeno.wordpress.com/tag/reddito/>.



Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future*, Warsaw, 2008
 Courtesy Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw

recent protests with the organisation of mutual aid to support women and queer people in need who have been abandoned by the government in its pandemic measures. Indeed, one of the most comprehensive sets of demands and proposals for addressing the pandemic crisis emerged from the Chilean Coordinadora Feminista 8M, whose ‘Emergency Plan’ surpassed the divide between mutual-aid-based politics and state intervention.¹⁷ One set of proposals aimed to strengthen mutual aid networks and community-based organisations in order to cater to people’s needs during the lockdown, by organising collective childcare or awareness-raising around health risks. Another set of proposals targeted the specific problem of the escalation in gender-based violence against women and queer people during the lockdown: from setting up an emergency phone number, to safe housing, and networks and centres for the support and protection of victims of gender-based violence. The plan, moreover, called for a ‘General Strike for Life’, demanding economic measures in support of workers in both the formal and informal economies, childcare provisions, paid medical leave, and a freeze on personal debt repayments and lay-offs. The plan also remembered the plight of imprisoned people and their disproportionate exposure to Covid-19 infections; it called for imprisonment to be converted into house arrest for all prisoners with health risks and for those waiting for trial.

17. See <https://media.elmostador.cl/2020/03/Plan-de-emergencia-feminista-ante-crisis-coronavirus-2.pdf>.

The pandemic crisis has been a bitter vindication of the feminist strike movement’s insistence on foregrounding social reproductive labour. With the outbreak of the virus, millions of women were suddenly celebrated, with a great deal of empty rhetoric, ‘as essential workers’. Meanwhile, they continued to be exploited in the workplace, to be exposed to greater risks of contagion, and to be left to their own devices in homes where they frequently had to carry the heavy burden of child or

elderly care, or to be exposed to domestic abuse with no way out. The pandemic makes clear that ‘barbarism’ is not a future possibility, it is our current form of social life. Our normality was barbaric, and the only way *not* to return to an even-worse version of it, is, as feminists in Spain have repeated for the past three years, to change everything.

ON SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. SEVEN THESES

The Marxist Feminist Collective

THESIS 1
CAPITALISM PRIORITIZES
PROFIT-MAKING OVER LIFE-MAKING:
WE WANT TO REVERSE IT

This pandemic, and the ruling class response to it, offers a clear and tragic illustration of the idea at the heart of Social Reproduction Theory: that life-making bows to the requirements of profit-making.

Capitalism's ability to produce its own life blood—profit—utterly depends upon the daily “production” of workers. That means it depends upon life-making processes that it does not fully and immediately control or dominate. At the same time, the logic of accumulation requires that it keeps as low as possible the wages and taxes that support the production and maintenance of life. This is the major contradiction at the heart of capitalism. It degrades and undervalues precisely those who make real social wealth: nurses and other workers in hospitals and healthcare, agricultural laborers, workers in food factories, supermarket employees and delivery drivers, waste collectors, teachers, child carers, elderly carers. These are the racialized, feminized workers that capitalism humiliates and stigmatizes with low wages and often dangerous working conditions. Yet the current pandemic makes clear that our society simply cannot survive without them. Society also cannot survive with pharmaceutical companies competing for profits and exploiting our right to stay alive. And it is apparent that the ‘invisible hand of the market’ will not make and run a planet-wide health infrastructure which, as the current pandemic is showing, humanity needs.

The health crisis is thus forcing capital to focus on life and life-making work such as healthcare, social care, food production and distribution. We demand that this focus remains

even when the pandemic has passed so that health, education and other life-making activities are decommodified and made accessible to all.

THESIS 2
SOCIAL REPRODUCTION WORKERS
ARE ESSENTIAL WORKERS:
WE DEMAND THEY BE RECOGNIZED
AS SUCH IN PERPETUITY

While most commodity-producing companies lacking workers have seen their profits and stock values drop precipitously, they find themselves beholden to the people-making organizations, communities, households and individuals. But, given capitalism's need to prioritize profit-making over life-making, such organizations, communities, households and individuals are barely equipped to meet the challenge. It is not just that Covid-19 has taken a toll on healthcare, public transit and grocery store workers, various community volunteers and others. Years and years of dismantling essential social services in the name of austerity means that social reproductive workforces are smaller than they used to be, and community organizations fewer and less well resourced.

To compensate for decades of neglect in a crisis, many capitalist states and corporations are shifting their priorities, but only partially and temporarily. They are sending cheques to households, extending unemployment insurance to precarious workers, ordering automakers to switch from producing cars to producing masks and ventilators. In Spain, the state temporarily took over for-profit hospitals; in the US, insurance companies are forfeiting co-payments for Covid-19 testing. Among other things, this shows just how readily available and plentiful are the resources to actually meet people's needs when there is political will.

We demand that workers in social reproduction sectors—nurses, hospital cleaners, teachers, garbage removal staff, food makers and supermarket employees—be permanently recognized for the essential service they perform, and their wages, benefit and social standing be improved to reflect their importance in maintaining society as a whole.

THESES 3 BAIL OUT PEOPLE NOT BANKS

Our rulers are devoting far more resources to bailing out businesses, in the hope of staving off an utter collapse of capitalist value. The very profits produced, we remind you, by the labor power that social reproductive labor supplies. CEOs of hotel and restaurant chains, tech and airline companies, and more are throwing millions of workers off their payroll, while largely preserving their own hyper-inflated salaries and benefits. This is because the capitalist system requires that the contradiction between life and wage labour always be resolved to the benefit of capital rather than people's lives.

We demand that all financial resources and stimulus packages be invested in life-making work, and not in keeping capitalist companies running.

THESES 4 OPEN BORDERS, CLOSE PRISONS

This pandemic is hitting immigrants and detainees very hard: those who are stuck in prisons or detention centers with indecent hygienic conditions and no health resources, those who are undocumented and suffer in silence for fear of seeking help and getting deported, those who work in life-making

activities (health and social care, agriculture, etc.) and are more at risk of being infected because they have no choice but go to work (lacking adequate or any protective gear), those who are in transit between countries trying to reach their families, and those who cannot leave their countries because of travel bans and sanctions.

Pandemic or not, Trump will retain the sanctions against Iran (where infection rates and deaths are skyrocketing). And neither Trump nor the European Union will pressure Israel to lift sanctions that rob the 2 million people imprisoned in Gaza of much needed medical supplies. This differentiated response to the pandemic draws upon and reinforces the racist and colonialist oppression that is capitalism's underbelly.

We demand that healthcare needs take precedence over any immigration regulations, that those imprisoned for most crimes be released immediately and alternative compassionate sanctions are found for those who are sick, that detention centers and other carceral institutions aimed at disciplining rather than nourishing life be closed.

THESES 5 SOLIDARITY IS OUR WEAPON: LET'S USE IT AGAINST CAPITAL

The pandemic has revealed to the world how working people in a crisis always get by through a wide and creative array of survival strategies. For most, that has meant relying on immediate friends and family. Some, however, are managing through mutual aid initiatives. For the homeless and those capitalist society has rejected as a burden, support has come from heroic initiatives of social reproduction volunteers who are offering to others nothing less than the right to life. Neighborhoods

across the UK are creating Whatsapp groups to stay in touch with the most vulnerable and help them obtain food and medication. Schools are sending food vouchers to poor families with children eligible for free meals. Food banks and charities are seeing the number of volunteers rising. Social reproduction commons are arising as an urgent necessity. But we have also learned the lessons of the past: we will not allow capitalist governments to use social reproduction commons as an excuse for the state's withdrawal from responsibility.

As socialist feminists, we need to push this further, to work together to call for *public* provision of all that is necessary for human life to thrive. This means building solidarity across the different communities that are unequally affected and resourced. This means supporting the most marginalized and arguing for those with any social resources—trade unions, NGOs, community organizations—to share and support those without. This means demanding that the state recognize social reproduction work as the cornerstone of social existence.

We demand that governments *learn from the people* and replicate in policy terms what ordinary people are doing to help and support each other.

THESES 6
FEMINIST SOLIDARITY AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The lockdown measures adopted by most countries to contain the spread of Covid-19, while absolutely necessary, have severe consequences for millions of people who live in abusive relationships. Reports of domestic violence against women and LGBTQ folk have multiplied during the pandemic as victims are forced to stay indoors with violent partners or family

members. Stay-at-home campaigns that do not take into account the specific plight of domestic abuse are particularly worrisome in a context in which years of rampant neoliberalism have meant that funds have been withdrawn from anti-violence shelters and services

We demand that governments immediately reverse years of defunding of anti-violence services, and provide the resources agencies need to operate and widely publicize their helplines.

THESES 7
SOCIAL REPRODUCTION WORKERS
HAVE SOCIAL POWER:
WE CAN USE IT TO REORGANIZE SOCIETY

This pandemic can, and should, be a moment when the left puts forward a concrete agenda for how to support life over profit in a way that will help us move beyond capitalism. This pandemic has already shown us how much capitalism needs social reproductive workers—waged and unwaged, in hospitals and infrastructure work, in households, in communities. Let's keep reminding ourselves of that, and of the social power that such workers hold. This is the moment when we, as social reproduction workers, must develop the consciousness of the social power we hold, in our national contexts, at the borders that divide us, and across the globe.

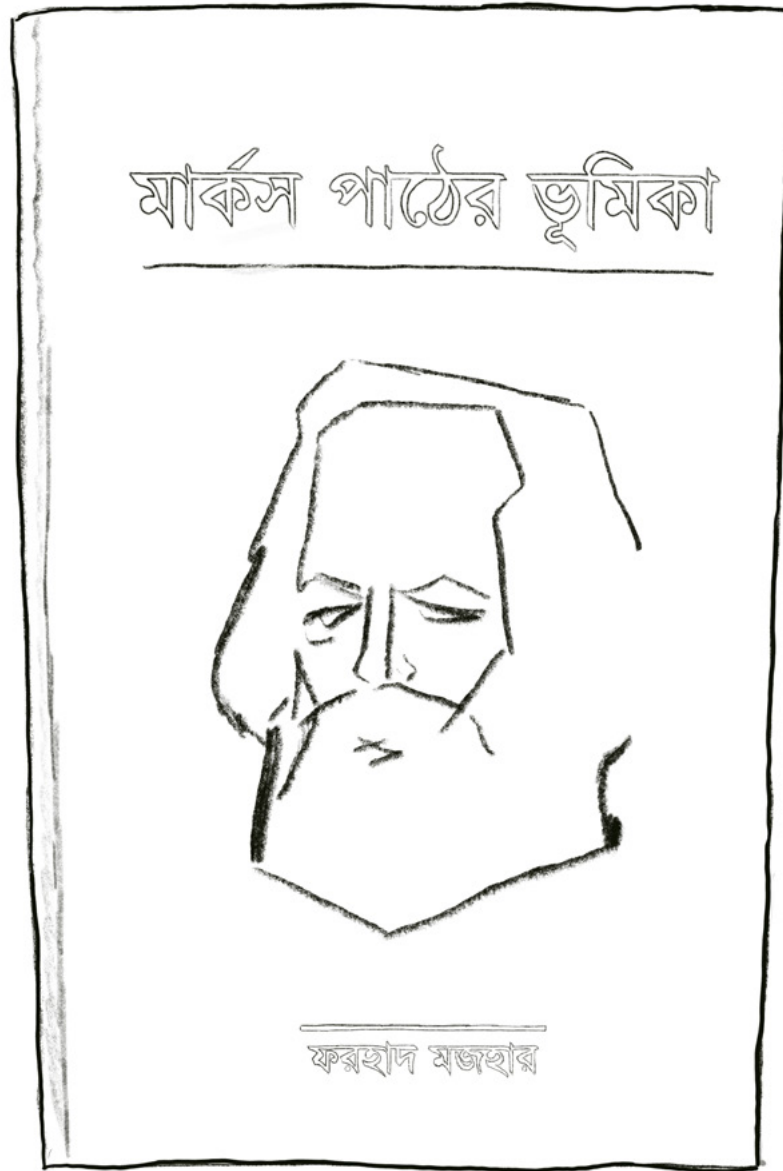
If we stop, the world stops. That insight can be the basis of policies that respect our work, it can also be the basis of political action that builds the infrastructure for a renewed anti-capitalist agenda in which it is not profit-making but life-making that drives our societies.

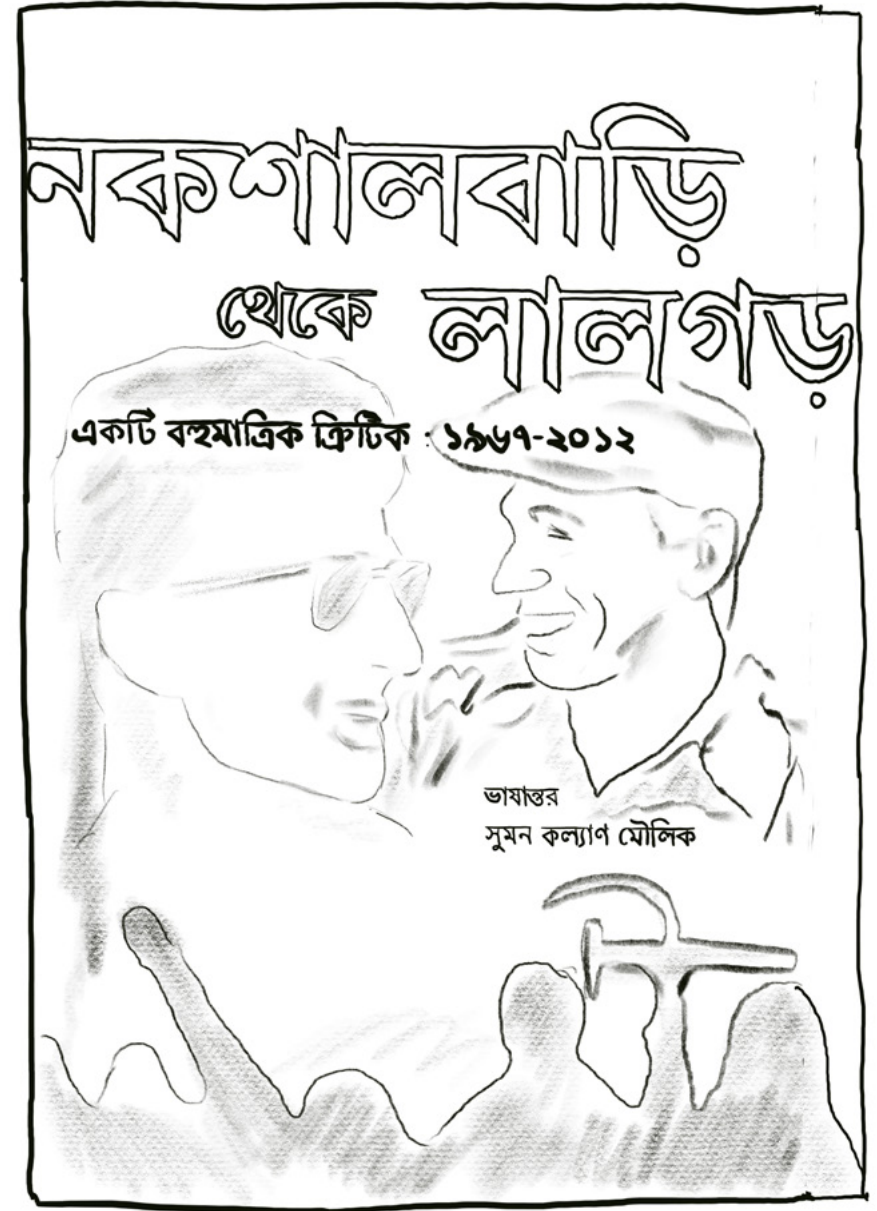
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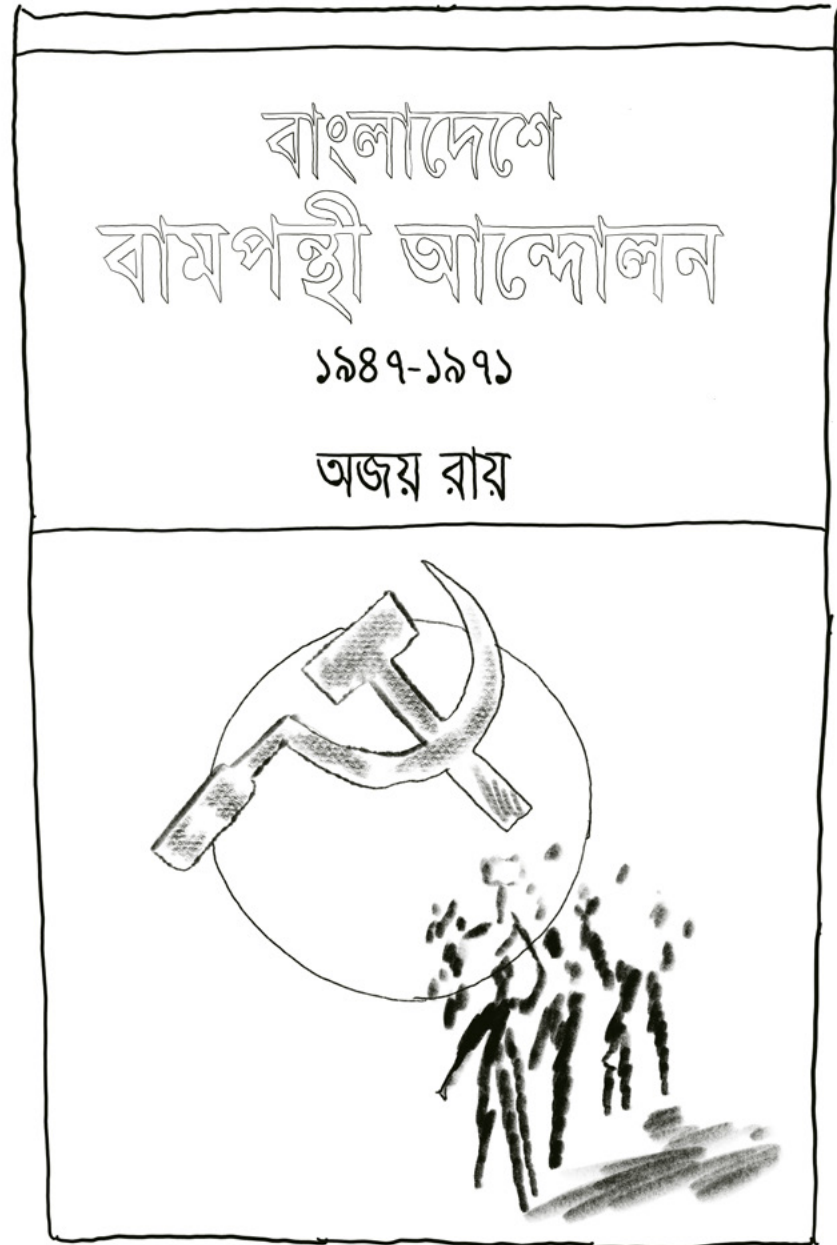
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MARX PATHER BHUMIKA 1

Naeem Mohaiemen







Naeem Mohaiemen studied at two schools run by imported leaders—New Tripoli in Libya with a Maltese headmaster, and St Joseph in Bangladesh with Jesuit priests. Colonel Gaddafi explained *Jamahiriya* as a “state of the masses.” Perhaps the thirty medical families imported to run Okba Ibn Nafaa Air Force Hospital were part of those masses as well. The Gurji school was an experiment in socialist cohabitation; Egyptian, Jordanian, Bangladeshi, and Polish students together. Our Arabic teacher was quick with his slaps, he thought of us as children of a lesser tongue. It was some kind of early lesson in *realpolitik*.

CREDITS:

Marx Pather Bhumika 1

Drawings by Naeem Mohaiemen, 2021

Based on book designs by Shibu Kumar Shil, Mehedi Banu Mita, Dilip Ghosh, and Munir.

DRAWINGS IN ORDER:

- Farhad Mazhar, *Marx Pather Bhumika* [Introduction to Reading Marx], Agamee Prakashani, 2011. Original book cover design by Shibu Kumar Shil.
- Sheikh Rafiq (ed.), *Shata Nari Biplobi* [Hundred Women Revolutionaries], Biplabider Kotha Prokashon, 2014. Original book cover design by Mehedi Banu Mita.
- Manoj Das, *Uttar Adhunikata Bonam Marxbad* [Postmodernism versus Marxism], Jatiya Sahitya Prakashani, 2012. Original book cover design by Mehedi Banu Mita.
- Suman Kalyan Bhaumik (trans.), *Naxalbari Theke Lalgar: Ekti Bohumatrik Critique 1967-2012* [From Naxalbari to Lalgarh: A Multidimensional Critique 1967-2012], Setu Prakashani, 2013. Original book cover design by Dilip Ghosh.
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ON THE POLITICS OF EXTRACTION, EXHAUSTION AND SUFFOCATION¹

Françoise Vergès

1. This text is an edited and abridged version of a lecture given on 3 March 2021 at the Antiracist Research and Policy Center, American University, Washington DC.

2. S'bu Zikode 'The Living Politics of Abahlali' for the series 'Thinking Freedom from the Global South', hosted by Irene Calis, American University, 21 March 2021, <https://youtu.be/VJ0BOVLMRUY>.
3. Françoise Vergès, 'Racial Capitalocene' in Gaye Johnson and Alex Lubin (ed.), *Futures of Black Radicalism*, London: Verso, 2017; and 'Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender', e-flux Journal, no. 100, May 2019, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/>.
4. Françoise Vergès, *Une théorie féministe de la violence, pour une politique antiraciste de la protection*, Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2020, forthcoming in English, *A Feminist Theory of Violence, A Decolonial Perspective*, London: Pluto, 2022.

The words of S'bu Zikode (founding president of the South African Abahlali baseMjondolo shack dwellers' movement) on rehumanising the world, still resonate for me.² He underlines, in the dark times we are living, the importance of celebrating all the gestures, all the efforts, that go towards the humanisation of the world, when what Audre Lorde called 'the master's house' still prevails, with its predatory economy, its brutal patriarchy, and its political devastation.

What I'm presenting tonight is a work in process, which I have touched upon previously in the articles 'Racial Capitalocene' and 'Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender',³ as well as in my latest book, *Une théorie féministe de la violence, pour une politique antiraciste de la protection (A Feminist Theory of Violence, A Decolonial Perspective)*, in which I reflect on the twin project of unleashing systemic and structural violence on the Global South and

on minorities in the North, and the accumulation of laws of 'protection' and 'security'.⁴ In this book, I tackle the question of who these laws are supposed to protect, the wars of punitive feminism, and strategies for developing anti-racist political protection. As ever, the dual notions of imperialism and racial capitalism, quite often forgotten in feminist theory, are very important for me.

Here I will move through five interlinked points:

1. It is clear that colonial slavery, colonization, capitalism and imperialism extract and exhaust. To accumulate wealth, the capitalist economy mines the life force of people of colour around the world until their deaths, and mines the resources of soil, subsoil, plants, animals, rivers and oceans. This economy inevitably leaves behind ruins, toxic waste, pollution; poisoned land, air and water.
How then can we clean centuries' worth of waste? How do we repair a world damaged by racism and colonialism, which have ravaged spirits and bodies, the Earth, its seas and animals? How do we dismantle the economy of extraction, exhaustion and suffocation that is killing everything around us? How do we humanise the world?
2. If racial capitalism is the production of waste – not of goods but of waste – where does it dump its tonnes of waste? And how does this relate to the West's construction of who is considered 'clean' or 'unclean'?
3. Who is cleaning the world and its waste, and under which conditions? What does it mean to clean, in this economy of wasting? This work that has been historically racialised, gendered and underpaid. We know that white feminism has long lamented the fact that women are locked into domesticity. They have denounced its burden and demanded that it be shared, overlooking that the burden has more often been carried by women of colour.
I should add that I do not make a rigid distinction between cleaning and caring. There is always some caring in the work of cleaning and vice versa.

4. How to make the right to breathe a transnational struggle for humanising the world? According to the United Nations, one in four deaths worldwide can be linked to pollution; air pollution causes seven million premature deaths every year. It is a global public health disaster that does not get the attention it deserves because most people who die are poor or otherwise vulnerable people of colour. Air pollution does not respect national boundaries, but it is usually most severe in poor, dense neighbourhoods, and in countries of the Global South.
5. To conclude, I will ask: Taking into account these histories of extraction, exhaustion and suffocation, and the accumulation of land and wealth by colonialism through the centuries, how can we imagine a new politics of cleaning, repairing and protecting?

1. Extraction and exhaustion

The economy of the transatlantic slave trade, on which capitalism was built, destroyed the cultural and natural world of Indigenous peoples and of the continents colonized by European powers. The slave trade had a long-term effect on the African continent, its population and landscape, bringing desolation and death. The slave ship was a space of filth, blood and flesh, rotted by the shackles of slavery. Race became a code for designing and designating people and places that could be destroyed. The lives of Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans were made disposable; the flesh, bones and blood of their dead bodies were mixed with the earth of the plantation and the earth of silver and gold mines. They were, in a way, the humus in the soils of capitalism.

Black women's wombs were made into capital and their children transformed into currency. As Christina Sharpe has written, slavery turned the womb into the factory, producing blackness as a section, like the hold of the slave ship or the prison cell.⁵ Nature was transformed into a commodity – and a cheap one, at that – there for the enjoyment, pleasure and profit of the master, the banker, the owner of industry. Primitive accumulation rested on the privatisation of the commons; on the rape of Black women to produce children that would be enslaved; on the extraction and exhaustion of the life force of Indigenous and Black peoples, of forests, rocks and soils, all worked to death.

There is, then, another history of geology to be made. As Kathryn Yusoff delineates in *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*: 'The transformation of the mineralogy of the earth in the extraction of gold, silver, salt, and copper to the massive transformation of ecologies in the movement of people, plants, and animals across territories, coupled with the intensive implementation of monocultures of indigo, tobacco, cotton, sugar, and other "alien" ecologies in the New World.'⁶ She is speaking specifically about Ghana, where captives and gold were taken and extracted, but she could just as well have been speaking about the mines of Potosí [in Bolivia] or the plantations in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Americas.

The global economy of extraction, exhaustion and slavery shaped how non-white lives, work and environment were conceived. That economy of exhaustion/extraction could not exist without a politics of terror, torture and murder: African villages and cities being burned, their communities destroyed;

5. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake, On Blackness and Being*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

6. Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019.

armies practising rape and public torture, the dismemberment of bodies – an arsenal of dread and shock.

And yet, the impact on the environment that this accumulation of land and people had was often experienced at a delay. Environmental historian Joachim Radkau has shown that the ecological damage of colonialism came less in the immediate than in the long term, with the extent of its impact becoming apparent centuries later, in the era of modern technologies, and in many cases only after the colonized states had acquired their independence.

On the level of time: I do believe that we have to rethink the question of temporality in relation to cleaning and repairing, so that it is not about a linear before and after – cleaning, then becoming clean. We are working with a multi-temporality: with a past that needs to be cleaned and repaired; with this present, which is being damaged, and which we have to repair; and with a future – because we already know from the present reality that things are being destroyed for future generations. So, when we consider an anti-racist politics of cleaning, repairing and protecting against the politics of extraction, exhaustion and suffocation, we have to move between these different temporal levels.

2. Where is all this waste dumped?

How does colonialism's production of waste – and the question of where to dispose of it – relate to who or what the West then considers 'clean' or 'unclean'?

Even during the era of the transatlantic slave trade, a huge amount of waste was produced. The mines that disturbed the Earth, the forests razed to make way for plantations of cotton,

sugar, tobacco and coffee, or even to provide the wood for building the slave ships. Colonial slavery and its legacies produced all this waste, while claiming to produce goods and commodities, and with this, it produced and imposed a distinction between what (for the West) was clean and what was unclean.

Colonial slavery constructed the plantation as a domain of cleanliness and civilisation, standing apart from the unclean world of non-white people. Europe, said the colonial fiction, was a cradle of cleanliness and hygiene; two key elements in the making of the discourse of white supremacy and civilisation. Racialisation served to make the white world clean, while destroying and then 'cleaning' other worlds. White supremacy created a clean/dirty divide that posited a clean, civilised Europe against a dirty, uncivilised world, even though archives testify to the fact that non-European people were aghast at the uncleanliness of white people.

During the Crusades, populations in the Middle East and the Levant observed the lack of personal hygiene among Europeans, and their ignorance of contamination that was already part of the basic principles of medicine. Europeans were often in awe of the cleanliness of the city they entered but then destroyed, and of the people they subsequently massacred. Then by the nineteenth century, in the age of imperialism and of the 'science of race', Europeans drew a strong contrast between, on the one hand, a 'clean' Europe with 'clean' European bodies, and, on the other hand, 'dirty' Indigenous dwelling bodies and their unhealthy habits of food, care, health and sexuality. To this day, for example in relation to the pandemic, there are echoes of this racialised ideology of what is clean and unclean.

According to the World Bank, an average of 0.74 kilograms of solid waste is produced per person every day. In 2016 the

world's cities generated 2.1 billion tonnes of solid waste, and by 2050, this is expected to increase by 70 percent. Of course, this waste production is far from equally distributed. What is more, this data does not take in to account the huge amount of waste generated by imperialism, including the arms that are left behind, and the countries and bodies that are mutilated. Just imagine what is being done in Iraq and Afghanistan, all the detritus the US Army is leaving in its wake, polluting the land, resulting in cancer and other problems for the population. As we well know, this can have very long-term effects – in Vietnam, babies who are born even now can be victims of the Agent Orange sprayed by the US Army during the war. So, we need to hold in mind the *longue durée* of what is being done.

In other words, Western imperialism generates waste or produce for the comforting consumption of privileged white people, which ends up being dumped on racialised people either at home in impoverished neighbourhoods or in the countries of the Global South. Ships are sent to Bangladesh, e-waste is sent to Accra and other parts of Ghana, and so on. The way in which the amount of waste per person is calculated shows deep inequality. It also sets up the idea of a personal responsibility and deflects the problem of waste production and disposal on to the individual.

For me, the question is: How do we dismantle the economy of hyper-consumption that is producing so much waste? And the answer is not to preach individual resilience and responsibility or green capitalism, nor to propose sustainable development, which continues to deprive people in the Global South of basic rights.

3. Who is cleaning the world?

Every day in every urban centre across the globe, thousands of black and brown (mainly) women invisibly open up the city. They clean the space necessary for patriarchy and neo-liberalism to function. They are doing dangerous work. They inhale toxic chemical products, and push or carry heavy loads – not mention the increased risk they face of being exposed to Covid-19 and other viruses. They usually make lengthy journeys at the crack of dawn or late at night; their work is underpaid and considered to be unskilled. Another group, who share with the first an intersection of class, race and gender, travel to middle-class homes to cook, clean and take care of the children and the elderly, so that those who employ them can go to work in the place that the former group of women have cleaned.

Meanwhile, in the same hours of the early morning, in the same metropole, bourgeois white bodies jog in the streets, or rush to the nearest gym or yoga centre. They are striving to maintain a healthy, clean and lean body, as mandated by late capitalism. They will follow their workout with a shower, an avocado toast, and a detox green shake before heading to their office – or, in the time of the pandemic, to their Zoom meetings.

Meanwhile, women of colour try to find a seat for their exhausted bodies on public transport, after having cleaned the gym, the bank, the insurance or investment office, the newspaper headquarters, the restaurant. They doze off soon after sitting down, their fatigue visible to those who care to notice.

The working body that is made visible is the focus of an ever-growing industry, dedicated to the cleanliness and healthiness of body and mind, the better to serve racial capitalism. The other working bodies are made invisible, even though they perform a necessary function for the first: to clean the

space in which the ‘clean’ ones circulate, work, eat, sleep, have sex and be parents. The pandemic has made this overlooked dependency all the more apparent, where what are deemed ‘essential jobs’ are carried out overwhelmingly by people of colour.

There is a dialectical relation between the white performing body and the racialised exhausted body; between the visibility of the final product of the cleaning/caring and the invisibility – along with the feminisation and racialisation – of the worker who does this cleaning/caring; between the growing industry of cleaning/caring and the conception of clean/dirty, the gentrification of the city, and racialised environmental politics.

The owner of the performing body is expected to demonstrate their willingness to spend long hours at the gym and the office; this being the sign of success, the same way that spending is the sign of hyper-consumption. The performative body of neoliberal masculinity, perpetually speeding through many tasks, masks the under-rested and invisible body. The owner of the invisible body is most often a woman of colour. Her exhaustion is a consequence of the historical logic of extractivism, which builds the primitive accumulation of capital, extracting labour. Indeed, women who clean – whether they live in Maputo, Rio de Janeiro, Riyadh, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta or Paris – speak of their limited time to sleep, of the long hours of commute, and of the work they have to do when they return home.

The economy of exhaustion is therefore very important to comprehend. It is upon these precarious lives, this endangered life, this worn-out body, that the comfortable lives of the middle classes and the world of the powerful rest. The struggle of black and brown women who work in the cleaning/caring sector – whether in private homes or in institutions – against

sexism, sexual violence, rape, and all kinds of abuses of power, their critiques of racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy, are absolutely revolutionary.

The invisibility of the cleaning jobs of women and men of colour produces the visibility of clean homes and public space, effectively erasing everything that could disturb that cleanliness. The representation of cleanliness/dirtiness constructs a racial specialisation that is not just about the city, but about the world. Indeed, the accumulation of images of filth and garbage in the Global South fills the Western public with horror: ‘Why are these countries so dirty?’ ‘Can’t they clean their streets?’, ‘How can people work in this filthy place?’ Warning about hygiene and health when travelling to these countries adds to the creation (fictive and real) of a clean world versus an unclean world, populated by unclean people. Images of mountains of garbage, dirty streets, dirty rivers, dirty beaches, dirty neighbourhoods; of fields covered in plastic; people searching through garbage or pushing carts filled with refuse; of children swimming in polluted water – such images contribute to the creation of a naturalised division between dirty and clean.

What lies behind the white person’s Eden? The legacies of colonialism, of colonial urbanisation and the racial restructuring of the landscape, the externalisation of polluting industry. This slowly ingrains the feeling that cleaning *that other world* is an impossible task. What becomes the pressing issue, instead, is how to keep externalised pollution from reaching clean areas.

The geopolitics of clean/dirty draws a line between areas of dirtiness, characterised by disease, an unsustainable birth rate, violence against women, crime and gangs, and areas of cleanliness, which are overly policed and where children can safely play, women can walk freely at night, and streets are

occasionally closed to traffic for shopping, dining, and other leisure activities. The clean/dirty division is connected to the militarisation and gentrification of cities, with poor people of colour blamed for the inner city's dirtiness and driven out of their neighbourhoods in order to make the city 'clean'. Political discourse around the current pandemic also assures that hygiene, public health and protection remain highly racialised.

4. The right to breathe

The amount of deaths caused by extraction, exhaustion and suffocation shows a deep disregard for black and brown life. Racial capitalism decided, without blinking an eye, that millions of people would be deprived of clean water and clean air; that toxic industry would be built in poor neighbourhoods; that corporations can lie, dissimulate proof, and drag trials on for years, until people are too exhausted to continue. Fatigue, depletion of life energy and lassitude have long been the weapons of heteropatriarchy, along with dread and the feelings of burnout, impotency and weariness.

Exhaustion, ever the product of crippling, debilitating conditions of transportation, work and nutrition, impedes love. Growing up on Réunion Island, I witnessed the exhaustion of both body and mind. I also saw how the struggle for equality and dignity against racism and colonialism can bring back energy, joy and desire to the people, so that their exhaustion somehow goes away. This is why the state was determined to crush the hope for social justice using all the tools at its disposal, offering consumption rather than community and social life, targeting activists with defamation and censorship. The whole politics of divide and rule, offering respectability for abiding by norms, or using the weapon of pacification. In France, it was during the colonial era that what was then

called 'the doctrine of races' (*la politique des races*, proposed by French military officer Joseph Simon Gallieni) was instituted – administration through race, in order to create divisions among communities and tribes, and to assert colonial power.

All this exhaustion is also linked, from colonial times to this day, with killing by suffocation. During imperialist wars in Africa and North Africa, one tactic was to lock people in caves, start a fire and let them suffocate; or in the Vietnam War, there was the tactic of burning forests. Think of all these sides to the politics of suffocation: from lynching, to air pollution, or even to oceanic dead zones, which have too little oxygen for marine life to survive, and which have increased at least tenfold since 1950 due to human activities. Forest fires are more and more widespread, shores are disappearing, islands are drowning, and piles of waste asphyxiate the Earth and its peoples.

We should recognise that this suffocation, this politics of death, extends to animals. When there is disease, it is not just the animal that is sick that is killed, but the entire herd. For instance, with the outbreak of BSE in the UK in the 1990s, 4.4 million cows were slaughtered. These dead animals must be buried somewhere, and their corpses can then leak toxic fluid, which contaminates the land. We are constantly living on top of various levels of toxicity, all produced by racial capitalism.

We should understand the connection between the magnitude of the pollution crisis and the places where racialised and impoverished people are housed – in hostile, toxic environments of polluted air, water and land. The United States is among the top ten deadliest countries for pollution-related fatalities. One analysis showed that more than nine thousand federally subsidised properties sit within a mile of what are called Superfund sites – hazardously polluted locations where there is a high

7. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.

concentration of lead, arsenic or other carcinogens. And we should be aware that the state and the army have said they are already preparing themselves, knowing that, increasingly, they will have to protect enclaves with green

forest, clean air, and clean water for white and wealthy people. The Department of Defense refers to what it calls the ‘future war over water, food and energy,’ and how they will curb this.

5. Towards an anti-racist politics of cleaning, repairing and protecting

To come back to what I said to begin, the accumulation of laws said to protect women, children and everyone – also in terms of protection from disease – are not in fact universal, but part of a very racialised politics. The politics of protection and hygiene advocated by white feminism, ‘for the children’, actually only protect a particular demographic of children. As Palestinian legal scholar Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian raises with the idea of ‘unchilding’, some children will never be children, will never have access to childhood.⁷ She’s speaking about Palestine, but we know that non-white children are criminalised elsewhere – think of the murder of Black minors by police and citizens in the US. By this logic, even the bodies of children are extracted from and made disposable. Meanwhile, neoliberal and green capitalist solutions remain wilfully ignorant of the political history of the West, perpetuated through racist policy, and reliant on the role of black and brown women, exhausted bodies, trying to clean.

I suggested earlier that in order to address these histories of extraction, exhaustion and suffocation, as they lead into the present, we need to think about other temporalities than that

which is suggested by the Anthropocene today. If we look beyond the Western temporality that has been imposed, we must study the temporalities of cleaning. The time needed to clean the world, to repair what has been broken by slavery and colonialism, and which continues to be broken by the ravages of capitalism – so many wounds. The time taken by women of colour to care, clean and cook for their own families, and then to commute to the homes of middle-class families in order to clean their houses, and to care for the world. The time taken for the production of capitalist goods, and the temporality that this production imposes on the bodies of women and men of colour; for those young women working long hours in polluted factories, barely eating, with no time to go to the bathroom or to care for themselves during menstruation. Here again we see how this political extraction and exhaustion affects women’s bodies in particular – for instance, in India, how women in the sugar cane fields are often forced to have a hysterectomy so that they can work more efficiently.

The fact is that none of this work is ever really finished because somewhere, something else is being broken, damaged or wounded. The time of decolonial caring, cleaning and repairing clashes with the accelerated time of neoliberalism. As we repair the past, we must simultaneously repair the ongoing damage, which increases the vulnerability and decreases the life expectancy of millions of people in the Global South. We have to rethink our own temporality. The past, in a way, is our present, and it is within mixed temporalities that futurity can be imagined, and new politics of cleaning, repairing and protecting can be developed.

THE GIANT PIT

Noah Fischer

IT BEGAN WITH THE PANDEMIC

Days and nights shut inside

We were confronted by what was essential...

And what was not.

(I took this personally)

Then ever so gradually...

The future arrived.

WE'RE OFF TRACK THIS QUARTER.

I NEED THE WHOLE TEAM MATCHING TO MUSEUMS UNTIL WE MEET OUR GOALS.

I love this job!

I was, by now, indisputably old.

Matching to a museum means they scan your complete social media ledgers, analyze your DNA, and you are transported to a full sensory rendering of one of countless museums around the solar system...

Exactly the one you need to encounter.

We must expand our position in arctic blockchain securities

Studies indicate that museum matching increases creative epiphanies by over 900%.

It's credited for the record-breaking market boom.

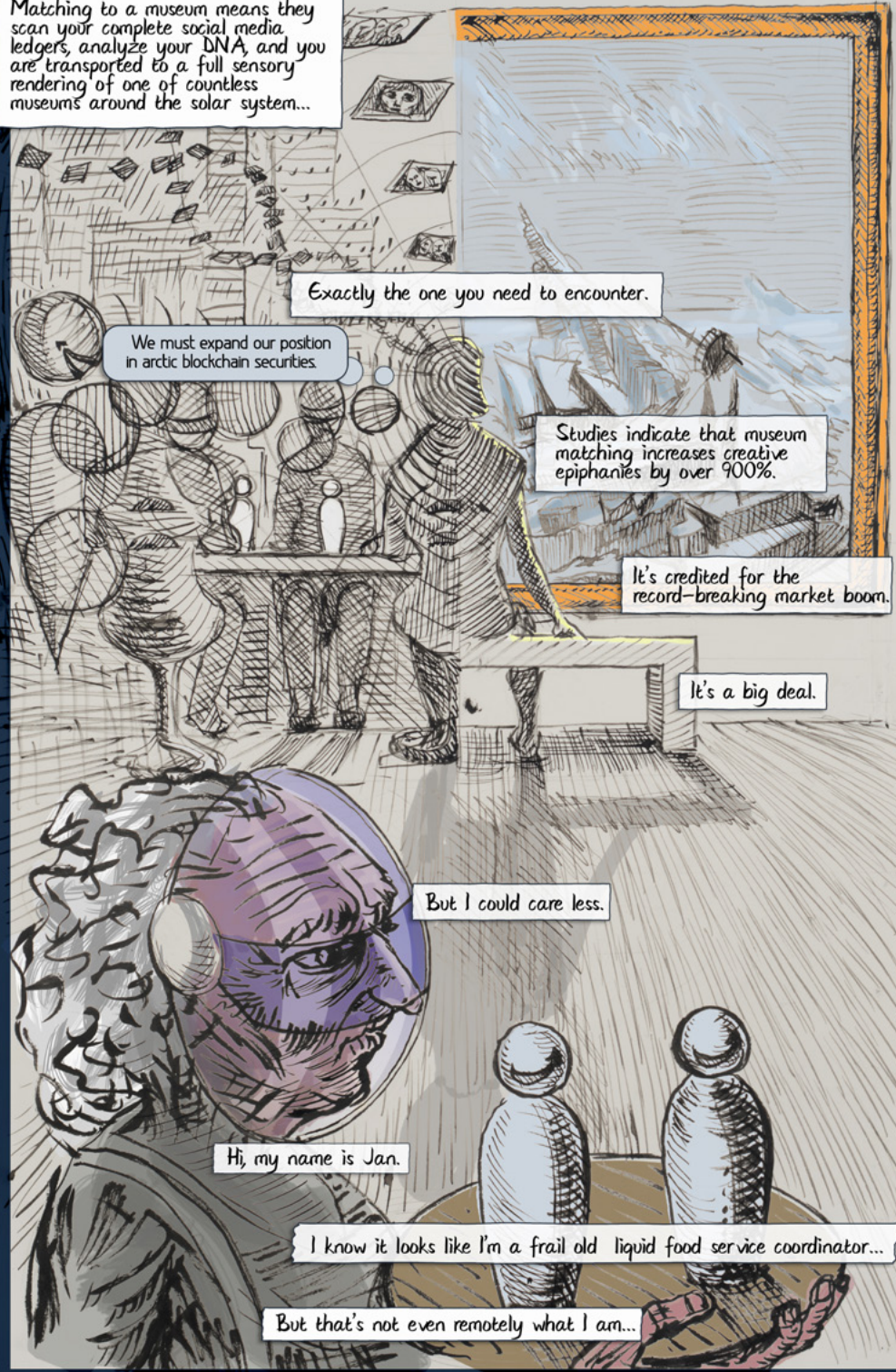
It's a big deal.

But I could care less.

Hi, my name is Jan.

I know it looks like I'm a frail old liquid food service coordinator...

But that's not even remotely what I am...



I'm an artist.

But I refuse to perform any sort of creative labor.

I've been on art-strike for decades, in protest against the colonization of cultural institutions by AI capitalism.

I can't understand why more people don't find it disgusting.

To those who call me bitter, I say, there are worse things to be... Much worse.

And I would surely never set foot in a museum again...

IF THEY HADN'T BECOME MANDATORY

INITIATING YOUR MATCH IN 5...4...3...2...

By the way, they don't reveal the match until you get there...

Last time it was the Yaacov Agam museum in Rishon LeZion.

Still can't figure out the exact psy-ops on that one.

Did I care what it would be this time?

I did not...

Hey, wait...

WHAT THE FUCK!?

Must be some kind of glitch...

WELCOME TO GUGGENHEIM ABU DHABI.

Truth was, the name rang a distant bell. But that wasn't the guide's business.

Oh right, when you match, you get a chaperone called a guide. Most people style them like celebrities or sexy dates.

Actually, they're more like scorpions than pigs.

But I prefer not to put lipstick on a pig.

Hey idiot...there's nothing here!

You've glitched.

I'M SORRY. THIS IS A 98.99999999% MATCH.
THIS MUSEUM IS MORE RELEVANT THAN YOUR BRAIN
IS CURRENTLY CAPABLE OF PROCESSING.

I hate guides. They're so condescending...

And there's really nothing you can do about it.

Because it's their world now.
And I'm forced to live in it.

But anyway...

HOURS PASSED...

The sun beat down with withering force.

In the distance, a city wobbled in the heat.

I trudged toward it, hit the end of the rendering.

I smelled salt. The sea must have been nearby...

The guide shadowed me.

Finally I laid down in the desert sand...

Just waiting for this to end.

The guide loomed over me.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS
ABOUT THE COLLECTION?

I was convinced it was mocking me

And I refused to humor it.

Go fuck yourself

I repeat, go....

go...

I soon found that my mind was blank.

The sun had incinerated my resistance.

I was overcome with a childlike curiosity.

Why am I here?

BECAUSE YOUR PROFILE INDICATED A
PERFECT MATCH TO AN UNBUILT MUSEUM.

But why?

Why wasn't it built?

At my question, a smile spread
across the guide's face.

Oh, by the way...

GUIDES LOVE TO EXPLAIN THINGS....

WORKERS ARRIVED TO BUILD THE MUSEUM. THEY HAD GIVEN UP THEIR PASSPORTS AND THEIR RIGHTS, TO WORK UNDER THE BLAZING SUN. BUT INSTEAD OF SENDING MONEY BACK TO THEIR FAMILIES, MANY ENDED UP WORKING FOR FREE, UNABLE TO PAY BACK THE TRANSIT DEBTS THAT GOT THEM THERE. THEY HAD BEEN TRICKED.



ORGANIZING WAS ILLEGAL, AND STRIKING WORKERS WERE SUMMARILY BOOTED OUT OF THE COUNTRY WITHOUT PAY. ARTISTS HEARD OF THIS AND CALLED A BOYCOTT. LATER, THEY PLANNED SOLIDARITY ACTIONS AT THE NEW YORK GUGGENHEIM. THEY TRIED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MUSEUM TRUSTEES TO ESTABLISH LABOR RIGHTS. PEOPLE READ ABOUT THE LABOR ISSUES AT THE GUGGENHEIM ABU DHABI.



The guide rattled on...

THE GLOBAL EXPANSION WAS BACKFIRING; IT WAS HURTING THE GUGGENHEIM'S BRAND.

THE FALLING PRICE OF OIL DIDN'T HELP EITHER.

SO THE MUSEUM HUNG AT ZERO, AND THAT'S GOOD. IT COULD HAVE BECOME A GIANT PIT.

A GIANT PIT?



Now, don't go thinking guides give one tenth of a shit about labor rights...

It was undoubtedly performing some ideological surgery, which was the regimen of psycho-cultural control that museums had become..

At least as far as I could guess...

Yet that was exactly the problem: I couldn't discern why the guide was reflecting my own withering criticism of museums back to me. It was obviously insidious. But how?

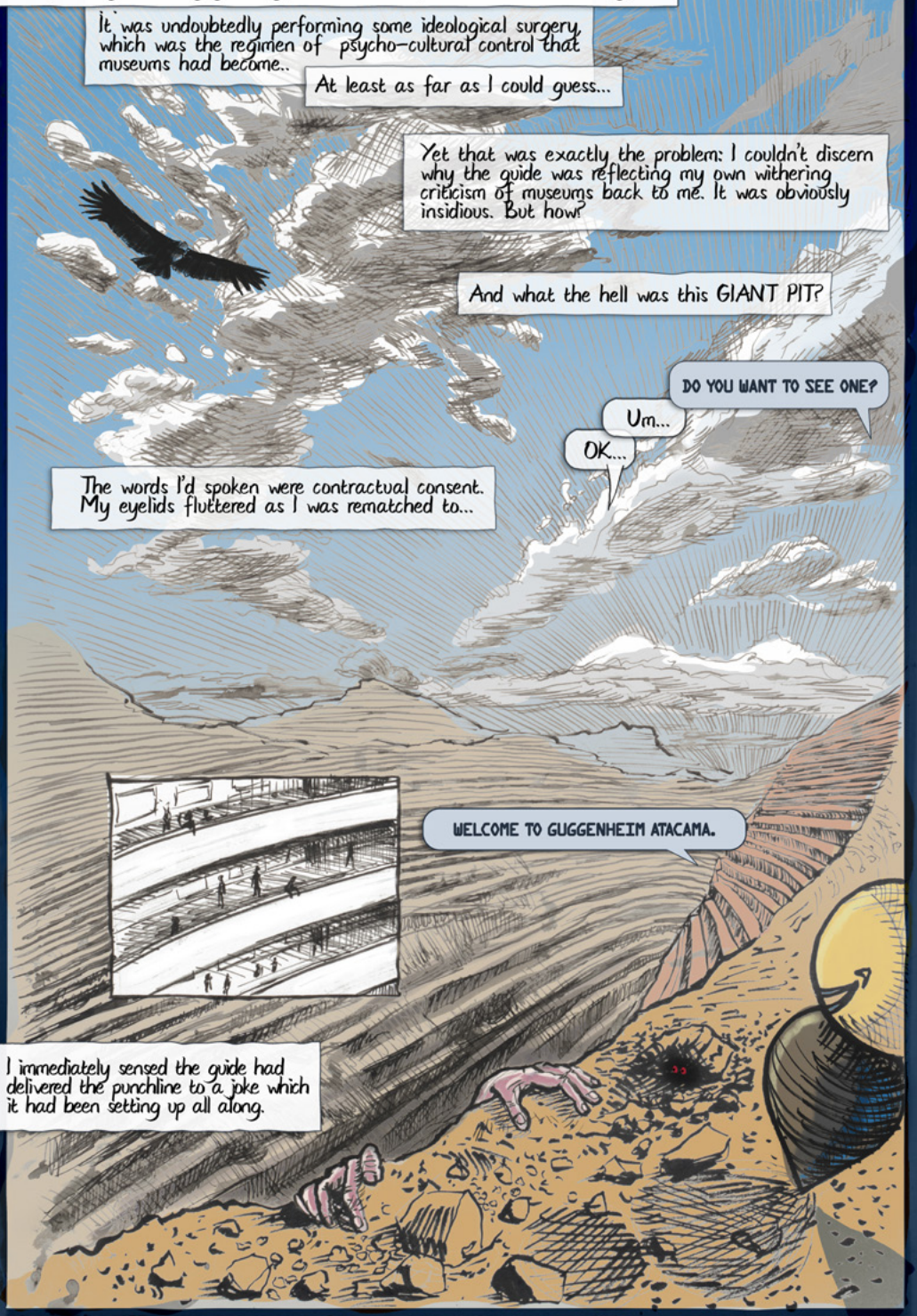
And what the hell was this GIANT PIT?

DO YOU WANT TO SEE ONE?

Um...

OK...

The words I'd spoken were contractual consent. My eyelids fluttered as I was rematched to...



WELCOME TO GUGGENHEIM ATACAMA.

I immediately sensed the guide had delivered the punchline to a joke which it had been setting up all along.

I TRIED TO CALL BULLSHIT

It's not possible. I've never heard of a Guggenheim Atacama.

I'm an artist, I would know.

For an algorithm, you are certainly fast and loose with facts!

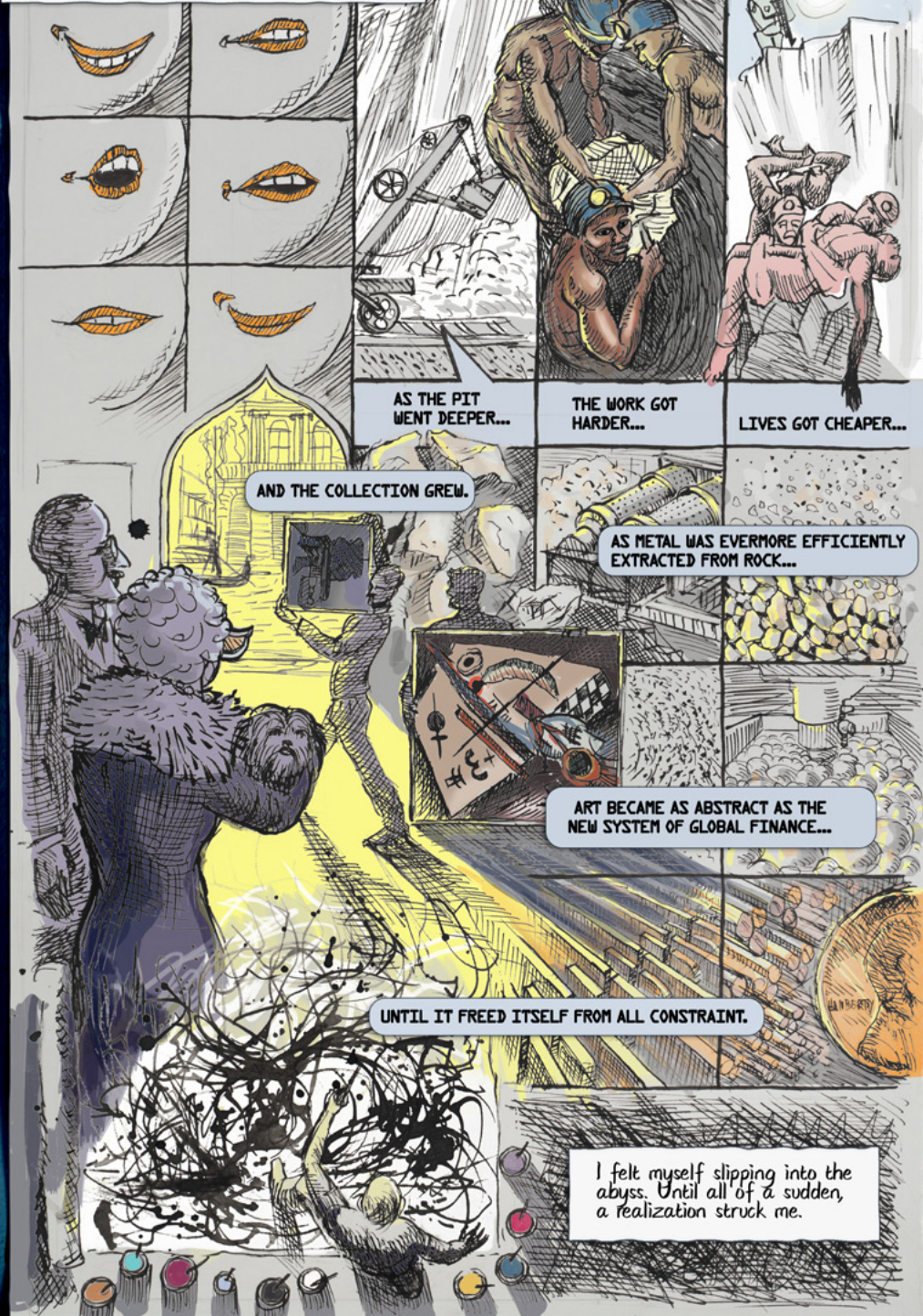
But the guide simply took it to another level.

THIS GIANT PIT IS PRECISELY WHERE THE GUGGENHEIM'S WEALTH ORIGINATED. IS IT A STRETCH TO CONSIDER IT A MUSEUM? I DON'T THINK SO. NOT IF YOU UNDERSTAND THE VOID PROPERLY.

WITHOUT THIS PIT, THERE WOULD BE NO INSTITUTION. NO COLLECTION. IT WOULD ALL HAVE BEEN A HOLLOW ASPIRATION AT BEST. THIS IS CONCRETE POWER—POWER EXTRACTED FROM SILVER IN COLORADO, GOLD IN ALASKA... BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH. THEY FANNED OUT OVER THE GLOBE: SOUTH AFRICA, BELGIAN CONGO, MEXICO, CHILE...

TO ESCAPE THE RISING LABOR MOVEMENT.

As the guide went on, I couldn't help notice it was relishing the narrative immensely....



AS THE PIT WENT DEEPER...

THE WORK GOT HARDER...

LIVES GOT CHEAPER...

AND THE COLLECTION GREW.

AS METAL WAS EVERMORE EFFICIENTLY EXTRACTED FROM ROCK...

ART BECAME AS ABSTRACT AS THE NEW SYSTEM OF GLOBAL FINANCE...

UNTIL IT FREED ITSELF FROM ALL CONSTRAINT.

I felt myself slipping into the abyss. Until all of a sudden, a realization struck me.

As the guide's critique darkened...

OF COURSE, NOT EVERYONE COULD
BUILD MUSEUMS LIKE THE GUGGENHEIMS...

BUT NONETHELESS, EVERYONE WANTED TO PARTICIPATE...

AND TO PROVE THEIR PARTICIPATION...

IMAGES BEGAN TO CIRCULATE LIKE CURRENCY...

ACTIVATING ECONOMIES OF RAGE AND JEALOUSY.

I became certain...

PEOPLE BUILT PRIVATE MUSEUMS IN THEIR MINDS...

...WITH CORRESPONDING PITS

I'd gotten it backwards...

I wasn't living in the guide's world at all...

Instead, they were trying desparately to remake
the world according to my own cynicism.

Because it was a perfect cover, a perfect match...

For the trap they were building.

Believing I faced both life and death alone...

I had misread the threat...

But I was not alone.

OILBIRD WITH NESTLING

Ingela Ihrman



Ingela Ihrman, *Oilbird with Nestling*, 2021, stills from video: https://www.internationaleonline.org/research/politics_of_life_and_death/196_oilbird_with_nestling_2021



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The oilbird, locally known as guácharo, is a nocturnal fruit-eating bird species that breed in colonies in caves in the northern parts of South America. Oilbirds live their life in constant darkness and use clicking or shrieking noises, advanced nocturnal vision and their sense of smell to forage and navigate without daylight. The species' young develop slowly and are very obese. In the past indigenous peoples used to harvest and cook oilbird nestlings to extract oil for lamps. Some were always left untouched because a curse was said to be put on the deepest part of the cave.

Camera and assistant:
Frida Peterson

MARX WITHIN FEMINISM¹

Frigga Haug

1. Talk at the Complutense University of Madrid in the section of Philosophy, Summer 2003, taken from an elaborated version for print in a book on Marx, which never appeared.

Preliminary Remarks

The problem is how to begin and how to proceed in a context where I don't know anything about the level of knowledge both in marxism as well as in feminism. So I will tell something about both, about the Women's Movement and their fights in Europe and abroad as well as on Marx.

It is probably well known that the women's movement of 1968 developed out of the socialist student's movement. The beginning was sort of a push of, a necessary rejection of a lot which was taken for granted in the workers' and the students' movements. There was a specific distinction a hope to do without a party, without a strict organization; the rejection was also directed against Marx, who was hold responsible for the politics of the workers movement. I come back to this later.

After a common beginning, almost all ove the world, around the fights against abortion laws, the Women's Movement split into two strands at first; I do not mention further later splittings here. The bigger strand, called the autonomous movement quickly forgot about Marx. But marxism-feminism as a new very creative strand, which was the fundament for the other part of the movement, remained in lots of countries, especially in the anglo-saxon worlds e.g. in the USA, but also in Latin America. For those who want to know about marxist feminism it is always good to go back to Marx, read his writings and find out for themselves, where there is something to inherit, where to reread forgotten impulses which are still valid and helpful.

I will talk about three points, where lessons can be drawn from Marx that are fruitful for, if not even indispensable to, contemporary, practical feminism:

(1) the role of "real life," where Marx's theses on Feuerbach are significant to feminist research and criticism of mainstream science;
 (2) the question of Marx's concept of work, where, on the one hand, it has shaped feminist debates up to now and, on the other, it resonates with the current "crisis of labor society"² and thus should be more accurately recalled and precisely grasped;
 (3) and finally, the elaboration of the Marxian version of family and housework.

Since I already considered myself a marxist at the beginning of the Women's Movement, there is an autobiographical aspect to my account, which I highlight by means of personal anecdote.

2. With the term "crisis of labour society" mainly sociologists and political scientists try to understand the consequences of the enormous development of the productive forces by high technology accompanied by a growing structural unemployment.
3. Karl Marx, "Concerning Feuerbach", in Early Writings, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, in association with New Left Review, 1992 (1975), 421; hereafter cited as "CF".

1. Starting with the Critique of Feuerbach

In his shortest essential work, "*Concerning Feuerbach*," Marx wrote: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism (that of Feuerbach included) is that the thing, reality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the *object*, or of *contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the *active* side was developed abstractly by idealism - which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach [...] therefore does not understand the importance of the ^revolutionary^, of the ^practical-critical^^activity."³ This critique of existing materialism had little significance for

4. This essay, originally published in *Das Argument*, 123 (1980), was based on a talk I gave at the first peoples' university in Berlin. It has since been translated into seven languages and appeared in approximately twenty publications, including, most recently, as "Women, Actors or Culprits?" in my *Beyond Female Masochism*, (London, Verso, 1992).

the reception of Marxian thought in the labour movement but it now reads like direct instruction for feminist theory and practice of today. The disconnection of science from the real practices of people, the deducing of all human activity from the highest categories, and the neglect of sensuous human activity are major critical points that feminist-informed science asserts against the scientific canon. That the

reigning social sciences have been conceptualized without regard for the experiences and practices of women was one of the first critiques by the Women's Movement, one which intervened in existing traditions of thought in revolutionary ways, even if it was not related by the women themselves to Marx's critique of Feuerbach.

I had already studied the theses on Feuerbach and considered them useful for the initial claims of the slowly strengthening Women's Movement. In the large cities of the Western capitalist nations, including West Germany, mass rallies of women regularly occurred during the late 1960s and early 1970s, in which they would articulate their protests, tribunal-style, with denunciations of their degrading treatment by men. *Violence against women* was one of the insurgent themes that moved these women to rage and indignation. At that time I considered such gatherings to be actions which contributed mainly to despair, not to the force of spoken action that was needed. So I formulated a short text as a political intervention - "Women: Victims or Actors?"⁴ - in which I basically tried to apply what I had learned from Marx's Feuerbach theses to the woman question. I drew certain conclusions from theses 3 and 6 that I still maintain are on the whole fundamental to any kind of interventionist thought. From Thesis 3 - "The coincidence of

the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice." ("CF" 422) - I concluded that personal transformation was a necessary moment and itself an essential component of the alteration of oppressive conditions; it would therefore be crucial that every intervention into society (i.e., each political act) be carried out by those individuals whose liberation was at stake. (Or in the words of Peter Weiß: "If we do not take our liberation into our own hands, it will remain without consequences for us.")⁵ I considered this a simple idea but one which indicated how crucial it was for women to take their history into their own hands and not wait for liberation through others, such as workers. Moreover, this idea connected personal, subjective issues to societal interventions for political change, so that neither the interests of and reference to the whole society as the condition of our lives nor ourselves, who were struggling and upholding actors, would get lost.

5. Peter Weiss, *The Aesthetics of Resistance*

To my surprise, the double movement of taking self-change as a dimension of revolutionary practice while also thinking of women as political agents aroused an unexpectedly violent reaction in the labour movement organizations. Their opposition continued to be furiously voiced over the next ten years in various journals and newspapers, where I was accused of "bourgeois deviance", among other things, by those men who occupied chairs of even the women's committees. Proclaiming women to be political subjects who wished to articulate themselves was heresy, contravening the dogma of the male worker's organization as the only legitimate representative of the politics from within which the hierarchy of chains to be broken in our fight for liberation should be formulated. "Capital as the principal enemy" as it was then termed, must first be fought jointly, with the woman question

- “a subordinate contradiction” - later taking its place on the new society’s agenda. The labour movement ultimately directed its criticism at the very existence of the Women’s Movement, which was taken to be an aloof, bourgeois trouble-maker; hence its real revolutionary dimensions went unrecognized, while the connection between capitalism and women’s oppression was never grasped at all.

The self-righteous tone and abstract tenor that prevailed in discussions by labor-organization intellectuals pushed the Women’s Movement, practically from its inception, into an oppositional stance toward the Socialist movement out of which it had sprung. The crisis soon became so acute that many women’ groups in England, Italy, France, and Germany withdrew from labor organizations, some even reorganizing as parallel groups, which amounted to what Italian feminists called “double militancy.” Despite the claims of priority for the Worker’s Movement - and for capitalist exploitation as the sole manifestation of power and oppression - men’s dominance over women was identified and exposed as historically powerful. This idea rang from the beginning with essentialist assumptions about the higher nature of women, though, and victim theories were formulated in accordance with the denunciation of the abovementioned tribunal-rallies. But the labour movement critique was conducted neither by appeal to nor even under the influence of Marx, who, though officially acknowledged, enjoyed no vivid theoretic moment in the development of organized labor.

Thesis six of Marx’s Feuerbach critique seemed to have great potential usefulness for a dialogue between the protests of the Women’s Movement and the theory and practice of feminism: “(T)he human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.” (“CF” 423).

This turn from speaking of humanity in the singular, behind which gender relations inevitably disappear, seems to me to have been fundamental to every attempt to formulate the problematic of women in our societies. Over and above this, however, I read it as a research mandate to study the participation of women in their own oppression, their engagement in social relations, their need for self-change, their subjection.

Absorbing the human essence into the social structures and relations that the individual appropriates in order to become a member of the human socius, into which he is then born, marks a departure from metaphysics that allows to immediately recognize the problematic of woman as a historical production in which women themselves have been actors. Their position in society could not, therefore, be understood without taking their own involvement into account. Understanding the connection between different social practices and the culturally supported formation of gender seemed like a research task that could show, more pointedly than before, the gaps left by the absence of the female from the production of knowledge. At the same time, this approach could indicate the extent to which any knowledge about women’s socialization must be a liberating knowledge. Ultimately, it would lead to a break with a series of traditions in social scientific research: “real life,” or the everyday, coming to be understood as a problematic; the objects of research turning into its subjects, as experts of their own socialization; and remembered history becoming the material with and about which to do research.

In this way I endeavored to develop an empirical methodology that would advance research in which women, as subjects, could collectively figure out the problematic of their position in society - their participation in the reproduction of their own oppression - so that they themselves could determine where change was necessary and possible. With this methodology,

which I called “memory work”, I developed a praxis from Marx’s Feuerbach theses that aimed to overcome the problem of robbing women of their practical-subjective inclusion, that is, of making them research objects on the order of insects. It was important to bring women’s implicit knowledge to the fore and make it public. This methodology also worked against the essentialism then emerging in feminism (i.e., the “higher nature of women” thematic), attempting instead to track a connection between self change and social change. The Feuerbach theses provided a space in which the vexed questions of a developing feminism could be posed - questions that are no less valid today and that continue to urgently recommend themselves for feminist research. Since concrete research on them has only just begun, in fact, they are by no means fully answered yet. With respect to Marx, however, it is always better to study him not as a theorist who has already done our thinking for us, but rather as one whose ways of intervening in conventional thought can teach us the art of shifting the subject of knowledge for the sake of a greater knowledge.

2. Marx and Work

The initial feminist wrath against Marx, which finally resulted in a renunciation of Marxist thought, was not directed, however, at his theses on Feuerbach (whose importance for a scientific feminism has never been elaborated anywhere, so far as I know), but rather at Marx’s concept of work and his theories of the production of surplus-value. What are we to make of feminist concerns that Marx’s concept of work excludes women and prevents them from perceiving the reality of their oppression?

Feminist criticism has focused primarily on Marx’s arguments about the “dual character of work.” The idea of work as a force which can create both use-value and exchange-value is

fundamental to his analysis of capitalism and its dynamic, as well as to his theory of revolution. A society driven by the desire to turn living labor into dead labor (to use Marx’s own imagery) – and then to endow that dead labor with power over the living in the form of capital, machines, and factories – would maneuver itself into catastrophe unless radical measures were taken. Such measures would have to destroy the basic structures of social regime, that is, profit as the driving force and the corresponding domination of value over living labor on the basis of the division of labor and the rule of property. In his analysis of the dual character of work, Marx focuses on wage labor as the dominant mode of life-deforming activity, with the first step toward change being the abolition of private ownership of the means of production. His analysis had the effect of focusing too narrowly on the male worker’s historical role as family breadwinner and on the working class as the political subject. Women’s protests against this theoretical configuration seem justified, for even if we agree that such a situation is the product of capitalist society rather than the creation of Marx’s analysis of it, his terms are remarkable for a certain vacuity and silence on women.

The domestic-labor debate of the late 1960s, which in a way is still percolating in the late 1990s on the Internet (at least in the United States), and has been taken up in a publication of Lise Vogel in 2000 (Domestic Labor revisited) broadened the scope of a complaint about the centrality of the male worker into an evaluation of the validity of Marx’s theory of value as a whole.

Widely discussed since 1973 when Maria Rosa dalla Costa published a violent article Marx’s theory was extended to include domestic labor, which can be considered “productive” because it reproduces labor-power as a commodity in the form of personal services and, accordingly, allows surplus-value to be increased behind the back of industrial production. Women’s

work is thus rendered invisible as *family work*; moreover, women also produce more value than is necessary for their own reproduction, the gratis appropriation of which then flows into capital's profit (a consequence not considered by Marx). In these analyses, then, the family becomes central to social production. (Domestic labor was later emphasized as “a blind spot in the critique of political economy.”)

However, wage discrimination against women was supposedly justified by their producing less value than men, for although women reproduced men, that entailed a withdrawal of their own reproduction from their labor-power. In this respect, men literally had more value for their employers, since in purchasing the commodity male labor-power they also got a bonus ration of women's work. This overlooking of the work performed by women in the home was based on disregarding an essential component of the surplus-value appropriated by the capitalist. If the secret of the commodity labor-power was its ability to produce more than it needed for its own reproduction, then this must also be true of women's labor-power; what remained to be discovered was how it contributed to the capitalist-manufactured commodity (Pohl, 1984). One practical consequence of this analysis was the demand for domestic labor's compensation as wage labor, on the one hand, and for simply doing away with this sphere of unpaid female labor altogether, on the other. In 1985, Christel Neusüss added a further twist to the argument when she calculated that the commodity labor-power, as something belonging to the worker, could not figure in any account of commodity production and value because it rendered the work of *mothers* (i.e., giving birth to children) invisible together with domestic labor (Her book includes a survey of ideas from the history of the labor movement, all of which show an absolute ignorance of the production of life, as well as domestic labor.) While the plausibility of such arguments cannot be denied, it seems

problematic to me that they sort of ended in a purely academic debate, which became more and more complicated but led to no corresponding political strategy.

The other line of argument pursued in the domestic-labor debate, namely, that housework was productive and should be socially acknowledged as such by being compensated like any other form of wage labor, proved to have political potential: the demand that wages be paid for domestic labor was embraced by the more conservative parties in West Germany because it enabled them both to promote “family values” and, in the face of rising unemployment, to uphold their seemingly ever more justified opposition to include women into the labour-force. But with this support for compensating domestic labor almost everything else with which the Women's Movement had begun its struggle was given up: the critique of family form, of the gendered division of labor, of the alienated form of wage labor, and of capitalism itself. Claiming that domestic labor was productive could presumably – if only by the magic force of conceptualization – remove the stain from a division of labor that denied women the possibility of existing without a male breadwinner as long as they remained housewives.

The debate continued for the most part in the United States. In 1994, Fraad, Resnick, and Wolff published *Bringing It All Back Home: Class, Gender and Power in the Modern Household*, where they tried to apply the concept of class to household practices and concluded that such an approach was a fertile one: As these authors saw it, two different modes of class production from two different eras were operating together in the present: a feudal mode alongside a capitalist one. This point of entry allowed them to depict separate practices as possibly self-contradictory and the structure of demands by those who inhabit both the domestic and the public sphere as nonhomologous. While not incompatible with Marx, this representation

shifts the analytic weight from the critique of the ruling mode of domination and economy to the problematic of the coexistence of differently organized power relations. But Marx had also spoken of the fact that being a productive worker would be no luck but misfortune. Before I suggest another approach to the question of the function of unpaid housework for the reproduction of capitalist society as a critique of Marx, however, let me return to the original series of arguments that arose from the domestic-labor debate in relation to his concept of work. In my opinion, they relate less to Marx than to the Marxism of the labor movement. That would in itself pose no problem had not Marx made some important points for feminists to take into account precisely on the question of work – which therefore brings me to a rereading of Marx himself.

From the philosophical tradition and the latter-day developments in political economy (e.g., Smith, Ricardo), Marx drew a concept of work in relation to a significantly controversial sphere. Work was the activity of the poor: it was laborious toil that exhausted people's lives; indeed, for many it had replaced life. But work was also the source of wealth and of all value:

>[B]ut it is the interest of all rich nations, that the greatest part of the poor should never be idle, and yet continually spend what they get [...] Those that get their living by their daily labour [...] have nothing to stir them up to be serviceable but their wants which it is prudence to relieve, but folly to cure [...] From what has been said, it is manifest, that, in a free nation, where slaves are not allowed of, the surest wealth consists in a multitude of the laborious poor.< (Mandeville)

Work as the connecting link between poverty and wealth, as the contradictory foundation of both – Marx begins by elaborating on the position of work in this provocative contradiction. He sees it as a dimension of domination:

“[T]he emancipation of society [...] is expressed in the *political* form of the *emancipation of the workers*” because “the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and all relations of servitude are nothing but modifications and consequences of this relation.” In Marx's early writings, we find a number of statements that, in the language of the day, define work as alienation: “For in the first place labour, *life activity, productive life* itself appears to man only as a *means* for the satisfaction of a need, the need to preserve physical existence. But productive life is species-life”; and, “all human activity up to now has been labour, i.e. industry, self-estranged activity” (“EPM” 328, 354). This idea, that work is domination does not differentiate between the material side and the economic forms and therefore leads to the logical conclusion, that work itself should be abolished: “One of the greatest misunderstandings is to speak of free, social, human work, of work without private property. ‘Work’ is by nature unfree, inhuman, unsocial, activity which is both controlled by private property and which creates it. The abolition of private property, therefore, only becomes reality when it is seen as the abolition of work.” Finally, from the conception of history we have sketched, we obtain these further conclusions: “In all revolutions up till now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was only a question of the distribution of this activity, a new distribution of labour to other persons, whilst the communist is directed against the preceding *mode* of activity, does away with labour.”

I do not think that Marx actually contemplated the abolition of work as man's metabolic interchange with nature, promising eternal idleness, or that he imagined the abolition of industry to be compatible with the survival of the race. But thinking of work in formal conceptual terms compels us to reconstruct what has become deformed in his concept of work, and hence what “substance” remains to be liberated. In work's alienated

form Marx found the free expression and enjoyment of life, the free, spontaneous activity of the human community, the opportunity to know oneself affirmed in the thought and love of another; the development of each individual into a whole person, the intercourse of individuals as such (*GI* 86–87), and free, conscious life activity as species-life (“EPM” 329). The emphasis is on “free activity,” or “self-activity,” and this is always connected to the life of the species as a species-specific characteristic. As species-beings, people are active on each other’s behalf, which determines their intercourse with one another and with the community, as well as their development as individuals. This free activity is a pleasure; life itself is a pleasurable, productive activity.

Taking such statements as our starting point, we could posit self-activity as “the primary need of life,” conceive of the community as a productive framework, and speak of the development of individuals through their own free activity—but we would never thereby arrive at the modern, defensive sociological reaction to work as what should no longer stand at the center of social theory (as it allegedly did for Marx), but rather as what is to be replaced by “communication” or “way of life” (life-world). It is crystal clear that Marx never distinguished between life-world and “work-world,” having been more concerned with revolutionizing what is nowadays called our “way of life,” which he understood as the collectively active, enjoyable union of the individuals in a community (including the form of their intercourse—love and life itself—although by “life” he always meant *active* life).

Our way of life is distorted by the relations of production, the means by which people produce their material lives, as they have done throughout the course of history, initially so that some could indulge in free activity whilst their material existence

was produced by others (*GI* 84ff.). (Deutsche Ideologie, MEW 3, 67)

Self-activity, as a perspective on liberation, is related to the production of material life, and this relationship is essential to conceiving the possibility of life without domination. The production of material life passes through a number of stages and forms, one of which is work: the most direct form of perversion, the “negative form of self-activity” (*ibid.*). Thus does life become divided against itself. Enfolded in this negative form are the analytical categories that Marx would later deploy in *Capital*:

“Thus through *estranged, alienated labour* the worker creates the relationship of another man, who is alien to labour and stands outside it, to that labour. The relation of the worker to labour creates the relation of the capitalist—or whatever other word one chooses for the master of labour—to that labour. *Private property* is therefore the product, result and necessary consequence of *alienated labour*, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself.” (“EPM” 331–32)

Although we can already see here his later linguistic usage, in subsequent writings. The global condemnation of labour is substituted by the older Marx by a differentiation of its being determined by form on the one hand and natural necessities on the other. About work Marx would go on to say in *Capital*: “Labour, then, as the creator of use-values, as useful labour, is a condition of human existence which is independent of all forms of society; it is an eternal necessity which mediates the metabolism between man and nature, and therefore human life itself” (*CI* 133). Labour has always an anthropological dimension: because the working individual changes external nature,

it changes his own nature at the same time. (vgl. MEW 23, 192). In its alienated form work has a dual nature. On the one hand, it is a producer of use-values, purposive and, in that sense, independent of social formations. On the other, it produces exchange-values and creates wealth, but only under certain social conditions. The distortions or alienations that arise as a consequence are thoroughly analyzed in *Capital*. The dual nature of work is fundamental to capitalism as a system that produces commodities, but what remains decisive in Marx is the production of material existence as a form of free activity. It includes the idea of production without domination and hence the elimination of private property (the accumulation of exchange-values) as a regulative principle, as well as the reconciliation with nature by understanding its laws. The emancipation of men is the developing spending of force for a common self-determined goal. This thought connects his early writings with his late ones.

At stake in the idea of free activity, conceived as a process, is the relationship between freedom and necessity. As an aspect of material production, the bounds of necessity should be pushed back as far as possible for the sake of free activity. Work, in the realm of necessity, is a problem of distribution—everyone should perform an equal share of necessary labor. In the realm of freedom, however, the activity is of a different kind, one to which the traditional divisions of labor—above all, its division into mental and manual labor—no longer applies. The route from one realm to the other proceeds via the development of the productive forces which will moderate the aspect of necessity in the production of material existence. And it proceeds likewise through the division of human labor, its alienation, for alienated labor has to be overcome in a process whereby human beings take comprehensive possession of the productive forces that they themselves have created. All the relations of production have to be overturned, since these have

distorted the human species to the point where all development, all wealth and culture, and the actual conditions of work have become objective realities that oppose the workers and gain power over them. This contradiction can be resolved only by rupture.

In the “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” Marx sketches the cooperative phase of society (social ownership of the means of production), which—precisely because it has emerged from capitalist society—bears the birthmarks of that society “in every respect, economically, morally, intellectually.” He goes on to describe a more advanced “communist society,” a community in which the distortions of labor have been overcome, and it is in this context that we encounter the reference to work as “the primary need of life”:

“[W]hen the enslaving subjugation of individuals to the division of labour, and thereby the antithesis between intellectual and physical labour, have disappeared; when labour is no longer just a means of keeping alive, but has itself become the primary need of life; when the all-round development of individuals has also increased their productive powers and all the springs of cooperative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can society wholly cross the narrow horizon of bourgeois right and inscribe on its banner: From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs!”

These remarks have led to widespread misunderstandings. On Marx’s authority individuals could be accused of a “work-shy” mentality and then “reeducated” as people for whom work was “the primary need of life.” Worse yet, the final proclamation, “to each according to his needs,” triggered both hopes and fears. Had Marx been expressing a yearning for a society in

which needs which had been molded by capitalism and superfluous production, on the one hand, and by poverty, on the other should be satisfied? The context, however, makes his meaning unambiguously clear. If human beings succeeded in liberating themselves from domination, the production of material life would become a source of productive pleasure and an opportunity for people to experience this “primary need” and, to that extent, realize their humanity. This would include the abolition of those divisions of labor which had served to institute our social formations: manual versus mental labor, men’s versus women’s labor, in urban against rural labour, and finally the ruling pseudo division of labour, the class-division of society in working and non-working people and people out of work.

It is self-evident that when we speak of work we should take its (frequently overlooked) formal character into account. The failure to make distinctions when we think and talk about work is the source of most misunderstandings. We speak of “wage labor,” imagining it as the be-all and end-all of the matter, and - with this understanding in mind - are critical of any talk about work as “the primary need of life.” But conversely, educating people to view work as this primary need is not only senseless; for the most part it is no more than educating them to accept wage labor in its various guises, which is to say, teaching them to submit to the discipline of industry. When we speak of work’s “substance,” which in our societies has been submitted to paid work in a division-of-labor system, we really ought to use the cumbersome phrase “self-activation in the production of material existence.”

3. Feminist Issues

My own studying and rethinking of the arguments in the domestic-labor debate since the 1960s – more recently the

materialist-feminist discussion on the Internet (in August/September 1997 and March 1998, see the mat.fem list and the marx.fem list) – has led me to develop Marx’s arguments about work more consistently and to look at them from a feminist perspective. Consequently, I have underlined and stressed here some ideas of his that have been forgotten in the heat of debate and to which we should give more weight. Instead of hastily consigning Marx to the rubbish bin of history, we should step back and see whether the Women’s Movement could not make good use of his formulation about “enjoyable free activity in the production of material existence,” for Marx in fact placed the question of women’s oppression squarely in the context of alienated labor: “This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others” (*GI* 44).

Here we can easily see that Marx speaks of all human activities to analyse capitalist society and not only of wage labour as most feminists assume. Is not the framework Marx proposed for human society and the individuals who live in it so constructed as to enable the oppression of women, with its mixture of “natural” and social origins, to acquire a tremendous dynamism? The sexual division of labor is inscribed in an altogether diabolical fashion as the division between the production of life and the production of the means of life, as well as in the major division between work and free activity. The sphere of actual life is marginalized from the vantage point of the social production of the means of life, and with it those people – women – who largely inhabit it. Meanwhile, at the center of society, activity is alienated such that all hope of liberation is displaced onto the living activity at the margins of society. Women, who are still being oppressed, are irrationally expected to bear the

weight of society's hopes for a better life, for enjoyment and sensuous pleasure.

In Marx we find the worker described as “at home when he is not working, and not at home when he is working” (“EPM” 326). Not without some justification, feminists have made this remark a target of criticism. Does Marx not speak here from the standpoint of the male worker while overlooking the situation of the other half of humankind, who do indeed work at home and therefore are at home when they are working? However, this criticism overlooks the problems hinted at by Marx, particularly the double cleavage of sensuous pleasure and the meaning of life from work along with paid work, from work that (apparently) counts for nought. This is implicit in the metaphor of the worker who “is not at home when he is working.” In this deformation women occupy the home, the marginal realm which is also a refuge, a deformed place of hope. The oppressive idealization of women becomes essential to the survival of the male wage-laborer – an idealization that is then reinforced by the cooperation of the two sexes within the family. Would it not be a revolutionary act to introduce some disorder into this system so as to establish the basis for a new order? If we are to salvage the marginalized realms of life, they must be universalized and hence revalorized. At the same time, the privileged realm of social labor must now be occupied by women and its authority weakened. The very sharing of the different spheres of activity by both sexes would deal a blow to one element of domination that has up to now affirmed the old destructive order. In my view, this is a precondition for bringing love back into the realm of work, a rehumanization of society for which the Women's Movement is crucial.

Although the domestic-labor debate has introduced a considerable number of necessary and healthy rebellious notions

into established Marxism, this very rebellion should be used to rethink the role and function of women's oppression in the reproduction of capitalist society. Both Marx's early hopes concerning labor and his sharp analysis of its fate as wage labor (i.e., the main source of profit and hence of capitalist progress) are of real value now in this time of modern capitalism. I do not think that the situation of women would be improved by smuggling domestic labor in under the laws of wage labor and thereby attributing to Marx's analysis the problematic of unpaid female labor in the home. Rather, our critique should proceed the other way around, beginning with an understanding of housework and its role in the different stages of capitalism, which will uncover another problematic in Marx.

4. Family Work/Housework and Domestic Labor

While the feminist argument with Marx took issue with his analysis of wage labor, no connection was made to Marx's or Engels's position on housework (a critical deficit that I hope to remedy here). Marx and Engels conceptualized housework primarily as wage labor performed in the home, treating as “family work” what in the twentieth century has generally been understood as housework. (In order to account for this difference, we need to formulate it as a “double concept”: family work/housework.) It is nonsensical in the context of such work to limit the discussion – and the critique – to Marx when the ongoing reception of Engels's ideas within feminism makes it obvious that the latter should be addressed as well.

In his preface to the first edition of *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Engels sketches what he considers the “production and reproduction of immediate life”: “On the one side, the production of the means of existence,

of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species.” In using “production” in both cases, Engels provided a starting point for a theory of women’s oppression, the elaboration of which he blocked, however, by formulating the two forms of production as *on the one hand [...] labor, on the other [...] the family*.

Dividing the labor of producing food, clothing, shelter, and so on, from the family rendered the latter, for Engels and thus for any theory of women’s oppression he might have developed, exclusively a matter of biological processes and their incorporation into the law and the state; family labor was not a consideration. Consequently, he examines the organization of procreation, but not how the work performed within the family relates to the totality of labor and to the reproduction of society. (He therefore, very close to the autonomous women’s movement thinks women’s subjection as sexual exploitation and violence.)

Elsewhere, Engels makes his awareness that labor is also performed within the family perfectly clear. In *Anti-Dühring*, he takes a historical perspective: “The entire development of human society beyond the stage of animal savagery dates from the day when the labor of the family creates more products than were necessary for its maintenance, from the day where a part of the labor, no longer used in the production of bare means of subsistence could be diverted to production of means of production.” Engels was not interested in the consequences of this diversion for the remaining part, which he calls “production of bare means of subsistence,” but only in whatever social effects might come of the surplus produced by labor over the cost of labor’s maintenance, which he considered the basis of all “continued social, political and intellectual progress” (ibid.).

Marx is a different story. In the first volume of *Capital* he recognizes family work, if only in passing, and describes the organization of work typical of manufactory; performed in small, family-operated workshops, this “family work” is still distinguished from agriculture today. It involves the transformation of the “life time” of all family members, even children, into “work time.” In connection with the achievement of factory legislation, Marx wrote about the “regulating (of) so-called ‘domestic labour’ [...] as a direct attack on the *patria potestas*, or, in modern terms, parental authority,” a step “which the tender-hearted English Parliament long affected to shrink from taking”: “The power of facts, however, at last compelled it to acknowledge that large-scale industry, in overturning the economic foundation of the old family system, and the family labour corresponding to it had also dissolved the old family relationships” (C1 620). Marx also speaks here of the “rights of the children,” his target being the decomposition of the family through commodity production and, with it, the collision of two different modes of production and ways of life – the logic of the market, which presupposes the free commodity owner, and family work, with the relative disenfranchisement of women and children: “Previously the worker sold his own labour-power, which he disposed of as a free agent, formally speaking. Now he sells wife and child. He has become a slave-dealer”; and, in a footnote to the same page, he observes that, “in relation to this traffic in children, working-class parents have assumed characteristics that are truly revolting and thoroughly like slave-dealing” (ibid., 519 and n. 122). Marx quotes a number of factory reports specifically on children, all of which show how “the spheres of handicrafts and domestic industry become, in what is relatively an amazingly short time, dens of misery.” Then we come to his well-known perspective sentence: “However terrible and disgusting the dissolution of the old family ties within the capitalist system may appear, large-scale industry, by assigning an important part in

socially organized processes of production, outside the sphere of the domestic economy, to women, young persons and children of both sexes, does nevertheless create a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of relations between the sexes” (ibid., 620).

Marx’s gaze here is focused ahead to the societal organization of production and the necessary elimination of old, interfering forms. He takes absolutely no account of labor performed within the family, aside from the production of commodities, nor of how such labor of caring for humankind and nature contributes to the societalization process. He conceptualizes wage labor within the household as “household trade,” and in this context he also speaks of “domestic industry,” meaning an “external department of the factory, the manufacturing workshop, or the warehouse” (ibid., 591; cf. 533, where he shows some interest in housework as a “hybrid form” that is not directly subordinated to capital, but is susceptible to pressure from “usurers” or “merchants”). Finally, references to family work as separate from and in conflict with wage labor outside the home can be found in two footnotes. Writing of a report on the cotton crisis during the American Civil War, Marx says:

He [Dr. Edward Smith, F.H.] reported that from a hygienic point of view, and apart from the banishment of the operatives from the factory atmosphere, the crisis had several advantages. The women now had sufficient leisure to give their infants the breast, instead of poisoning them with “Godfrey’s Cordial” (an opiate). They also had the time to learn to cook. Unfortunately, the acquisition of this art occurred at a time when they had nothing to cook. But from this we see how capital, for the purposes of its self-valorization, has usurped the family labour necessary for consumption. (Ibid., 517 n. 38)

The conceptual proposition “family labour necessary for consumption” makes it possible to understand *family labor* as distinct from *wage labor*, yet Marx does not elaborate on this or on the “leisure” necessary for breastfeeding babies who would otherwise be “poisoned” instead of nourished. In other words, the question of what qualities of life are destroyed through the time-saving measures that rule in capitalist economy is not pursued. Marx treats the issue of breastfeeding only in terms of wages or profitability: “Since certain family functions, such as nursing and suckling children, cannot be entirely suppressed, the mothers who have been confiscated by capital must try substitutes of some sort. Domestic work, such as sewing and mending, must be replaced by the purchase of ready-made articles. Hence the diminished expenditure of labour in the house is accompanied by an increased expenditure of money outside” (ibid., 518 n. 39). What interests Marx here is that since women’s inclusion in the capitalist production process brings no additional revenue into the family, it is not really worth the cost.

Nevertheless, the repeated mention of “substitutes” opens up a space for further analysis.

In Marx’s analysis of the division of labor, we can discern the beginnings of a theory of family work:

“For an example of labour in common, i.e. directly associated labour, we do not need to go back to the spontaneously developed form, which we find at the threshold of the history of all civilized peoples. We have one nearer to hand in the patriarchal rural industry of a peasant family which produces corn, cattle, yarn, linen and clothing for its own use. These things confront the family as so many products of its collective labour, but they do not

confront each other as commodities. The different kinds of labour which create these products – such as tilling the fields, tending the cattle, spinning, weaving and making clothes – are already in their natural form social functions; for they are functions of the family which, just as much as a society based on commodity production, possesses its own spontaneously developed division of labour. The distribution of labour within the family and the labour-time expended by the individual members of the family are regulated by differences of sex and age as well as by seasonal variations in the natural conditions of labour. The fact that the expenditure of the individual labour-powers is measured by duration appears here, by its very nature, as a social characteristic of labour itself, because the individual labour-powers, by their very nature, act only as instruments of the joint labour-power of the family.” (Ibid., 171)

It is astonishing that Marx made no further examination of this finding that the various products were not measured and estimated as more or less valuable according to the time spent on them, even though it certainly had consequences not only for the sexual division of labor, but also for the capitalist model of civilization. After all, the calculation of time spent also makes value a curse for some products, and gives rise to the need to ^protect^ products from value. In the end, the only things that can withstand the social test of capitalism are those that eat up as little time as possible, making this a model of both progress and pauperization. At the same time, we get a hint of the still existent yearning to validate the family and to guarantee its continued existence, for it is the one place where production is not calculated solely in terms of labor costs.

Nowhere in Marx is there any analysis of the problem arising from the subordination of all those activities not subject to the wage structure under the logic of cost/benefit calculations – a problem in terms of both human needs and the development of humankind itself (i.e., of that which is regarded and acknowledged as socially meaningful). In his enthusiasm for comprehensive economizing, Marx basically subordinates all work and its valuation to the rationalization that he considers necessary for the further satisfaction of “life claims”: “The more the productivity of labour increases, the more the working day can be shortened, the more the intensity of labour can increase. From the point of view of society the productivity of labour also grows when economies are made in its use. This implies not only economizing on the means of production, but also avoiding all useless labour” (ibid., 667; For another, almost identical expression of this view, see Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 36). This statement conflicts with the belief (expressed in his “Critique of the Gotha Programme”) that in some future society time will no longer be geared to wealth.

The gender-specificity of the division of labor emerges only at the margins of Marx’s analysis of work under capitalism. He describes it as “naturally springing up” and, “based on a purely physiological foundation,” as developing through exchange into two, mutually dependent branches, but he does not pursue the configuration of these separate spheres that proved so crucial to the capitalist model of civilization. It seems equally odd that Marx and Engels failed to work out their dominative notion of the gender-specific division of labor articulated in *The German Ideology*: “This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first form of property, but even at this stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists, who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others” (GI 46). For it was on this basis

that a social formation developed in which only those things that proved more or less profitable were produced and that any work which could not be accommodated to this logic of time – and thus could not be rationalized, automatized, or accelerated – such as cherishing and nurturing nature or humankind, came to be neglected or left to women’s (unpaid) provision. Today, we can proceed on the assumption that the crisis associated with both the unrestrained (and now uncontrollable) development of the forces of production and the ruinous exhaustion of nature is due to the logic of profit, which rests on women’s oppression. The critique on Marx is, that the onesided analysis of waged labour instead of the correlation of socially necessary labour and its hierarchy results in an insufficient analysis of the reproduction of capitalist societies and the forces which support it. Here feminists have a lot to contribute and rearrange.

There was no further analysis of the relationship between family labor and wage labor by Marxists. (The study of “women’s work” within the family was taken up instead by ethnologists such as Claude Meillassoux.) Rosa Luxemburg pretty much followed Marx’s lead on this issue, seeing the family as something out of which proletarian women are “seized,”: “It was capitalism which seized women out of the family and threw them under the yoke of social production, on other peoples land, in workshops, construction sites, offices, factories and warehouses.” (See the small text “Die Proletarierin”, Werke 3). And Lenin was interested in the family only as a site of stupidity from which women had to be removed. (Werke, 30, 401). - It was not until the late 1970s that Women’s Studies emerged and began to take up the analysis of family work in the general context of social relations. This was the period during which Maria Mies, Veronica Bennholdt-Thommsen, and Claudia von Werlhoff (see note 6), among others, suggested that a practical generalization of subsistence work could

provide a solution to the global problem arising from the production of commodities and extending to the exploitation of the Third World.

From today’s standpoint, the development of humankind in relation to those products and activities that could pass the market test – and on which it therefore seemed worthwhile to spend time – led to the corresponding situation whereby those products and activities requiring extensive amounts of time without yielding anything sufficiently grand fell by the wayside. Most agricultural and nature-conservational activities, not to mention the rearing of children, were deemed incompatible with the logic of continually reduced expenditures of time. Although many such products may be indispensable for even the short-term survival of humankind, their development has also widened the gap between those members of the species who can pass the market test and those “partial people” who live at a level considerably lower than is now typical of the industrialized world. Here we find the Third World countries, with their continued immiseration becoming even worse in the wake of neoliberal globalization. The First World, on the other hand, is experiencing different and apparently more complex developments, while the women in these countries are still being kept economically dependent on the same breadwinner discussed by Marx and Engels more than a century ago, though he himself ceases to exist. Most women, if employed, fill low-paying “female” jobs below the poverty-line and perform time-consuming tasks that would otherwise simply remain undone.

In this respect, humankind has not progressed; on the contrary, as the forces of production have developed with industrialization, creating ever-new human needs in the capitalist West, a monstrous brutalization of humankind has occurred. Crime, drug addiction and alcoholism, and child abuse

(including the prostitution of children) are just the visible signs of a model of civilization in which human development has been utterly subordinated to rationalization and market forces, to the needs devised and the products generated to satisfy them under the rule of profit. The material progress realized by enhanced forces of production, far from freeing people to take up their development as human beings, has rather made such human development a mere by-product of industrial development and of the work done by women. To this extent, the claim that human liberation can be measured by the degree of liberation women achieve is completely realistic today. For women's liberation affects human interaction at every level, as well as human needs related to sensuality, to nature, to the work of hands and heads, and to women themselves as human beings.

Conclusion

Marx within feminism - the text wanted two things: to elaborate where Marx could be used and was already criticized within feminism, where we could inherit from him where he should be repudiated, where to be improved. His methodological and theoretical break with metaphysics is for sure a fundament without which feminist research is hardly conceivable. We speak it as "starting from experience" or from "everyday life", Marx named it to start with "the language of real life". Therefore his theses against Feuerbach belong to the basic texts of every serious feminism. Everybody who deals with the relationship of feminism and marxism has to discuss the domestic labour debate and the critique of the theory of surplusvalue. Ironically this critique has led to a withdrawal of feminism from a critique of capitalism. A new reading of Marx' ideas on labour can show instead that it is more than useful in all dimensions for feminist thinking and never gets

caught in the trap to subject all activities under the wageform which is in fact the case with the demand to pay for housework. Here a lot is to be gained for a contemporary feminism. This is different when we look instead at Marx' and Engels' paragraphs on domestic labour/familywork, which have not been discussed within feminism. Here we can watch Marx as a patriarch, always forgetting the qualitative side of housework, the real activity, the language of real life, and instead quickly switch to the fate of labour, which is done as wage labour. This has consequences for the critique of political economy, for the analysis of capitalism. Because here Marx does not understand that it is one of the crucial elements of capitalism to subject the production of life the work with the living as an interfering factor (Störfaktor) for the production of profit, to marginalize it, to destroy it. A solid critique of the capitalist mode of production needs the analysis of the interrelation of these two modes of production, that of the means of production and that of life itself - and only here the feminist questions are both selfevident and fundamental.

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AUNT YELLOW

Aykan Safoğlu

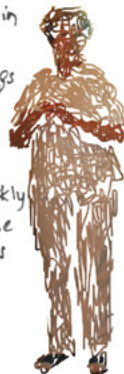
Aunt Yellow
by Aykan Safoğlu*

1.

Zerrin is my most beloved aunt on my mother's side. Her name originates from Farsi and means 'golden.' I don't know what exactly my grandparents had in mind by naming her—their fifth child, fourth daughter—as such, but Zerrin rhymes well with the names of my other aunts—Nesrin, Bernin, and Nermin—and with my mother's name, Nevin. In choosing this name, my grandparents must have reflected on the hardships they endured during World War II, thus wanting to wish good fortune for their daughter. Zerrin first cried in 1948, the first year of economic support the young Turkish Republic received from the US as part of its notorious Marshall Plan. In retrospect, I wonder why my grandparents were so determined to give their girls Farsi names, whereas their boys were to be called Kerim and Selim—both prominent Arabic names. I do not know if they prioritized one language over the other, though they were certainly very well aware of the meaning of these foreign names. Or at least my grandfather knew as he spent his adolescence in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia as a runaway from home—embarking on this challenging journey as an act of rebellion against his parents' unjust order. The naming decisions of my grandparents must have had something to do with what they wished for their sons and what they generally expected from 'men': to be Kerim, 'generous;' and Selim, 'flawless.' According to this reasoning, Auntie Zerrin is my only true 'uncle.'

2.

The church bell tolls. It is raining and cold, and Zerrin is holding a cigarette in her right hand. The smoke is barely visible, though the image is not overexposed. Indeed, the smoke must have been traveling within her lungs at the time when the shutter was released. The photograph stems from February of 2008, from a brief journey that I took to be interviewed at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. When I showed up at her door, she welcomed me with her generous hospitality—even if she had to then quickly return to her sewing machine, running the needle continuously through the garments of her clients. Her tailor shop is locally renowned; she is famous



for delivering her clients' orders on time. Here, she is pictured during her smoke break in front of her tailor shop in Paffersath—a small village in the region of Cologne/Bonn. At the moment of exposure, she had been in business for more than twenty years; on a day-to-day basis, she retailed the clothing of her customers, mostly local Germans. When you entered the shop—besides the many calendar pages exhibiting touristic sites from Turkey—one would notice the framed pricing lists on the walls showing how much it would cost for my aunt to refit the clothes of her customers to their unique desires. I always thought that the customers secretly knew what my aunt knew all too well: their desires would always betray physics over time, leaving them estranged from their 'good old' material conditions. Before the clients, with some reflection, could admit to this fact—which occurred only rarely—they surrendered to their estrangement, and then quickly sought comfort from my aunt. When they knocked on my aunt's door, she would ruin the magic, never disclosing that she—in fact—does not have the skills to undo time. Without much talk, she would turn the 'old,' with her magic wand, into a familiar 'new.' With each alteration thus came a new way of seeing. Rather than my aunt, it was the political conditions that demanded such submission. The many governments that ruled in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s and '80s—whether Social Democrats or Christian Democrats—mastered an ability to maintain the status quo by branding the 'outdated' as something 'refreshing.' The era of the German economic boom was nothing other than repressive as the collective aspirations and rhythms of subcultures were rendered a hopeless dystopian genre. As long as the governments promoted economic stability with little change, stagnation could be tolerated. From the packages of the products that my aunt regularly sent me as gifts, and the pages of my high school textbooks, I always had an image of Germany as highly saturated, so much so that the country reminded me of the colors of a desert during sunset. In this desert of saturated colors, I imagined, thirst was eternal—reminiscent of Zerrin's clients. The more this 'regime of saturation' dominated the real needs of society, the more political leaders comforted voters by promoting conservatism anew. In pointing to the oasis, they thereby allowed the capitalist conditions of despair to remain intact. It was in 1996 when I first witnessed this silent vow, the historicity of this political game, as I was



Spending two weeks beside my aunt, practicing German. Zerrin had to send me an official invitation since I needed a tourist visa to be able to travel to the land of 'highly saturated' freedoms. I helped her during those two weeks by receiving customers and their requests, impressing them with my German skills. What a lovely little Turkish boy, they thought; I was making much effort to speak with excellent grammar. Yet I also understood, while conversing in my *Hochdeutsch*, this grammar of maintenance and the conservative wish to go against their desire for the new. Their thirst for drastic change seemed inextinguishable but remained taboo.

3.

This unspoken rule became even more evident when my mother sent me to Germany to spend the next summer with my aunt. The more this community and their mysterious manners grew on me, the more my accent improved — also due to my aunt's increasing number of customers. The daughter of the Italian family that lived just across from the shop — in a former farmhouse — became my pen pal. I remember exchanging lengthy letters with Tiziana that could easily pass as love letters. In these frequent teenage exchanges, we were, however, not any different from my aunt's clients. Although we knew very well that we wanted something else, we could not afford to go against conformism, compelling us to trick our desires. We continued this game until our campaign for the 'familiar yet new' became a luxury. I think my aunt, unable to hide her sadness as we heard of Lady Di's passing on the German radio, indirectly motivated and empowered me to later end our distant 'affair.' It's not that my aunt was a believer in the royal order, but she could acknowledge and celebrate a civic Diana who stood by her will and went against conformism in pursuit of collective happiness. It was then that, for the first time, I grasped what the labor of my aunt constituted as a 'guest worker' in the capitalist society of Germany. She had silently invested all her emotional and mental energy, over decades, to inspire her customers to become attuned to their inner frequency. Such a frequency of life might liberate from suffering and provoke emancipation, no matter how blinding the saturation. That was the only tool Zerrin could use to enable political change as she was a 'guest worker' and they have never been granted the right to vote in Germany.



In that photograph, I now see a smoking Zerrin with her back to Tiziana's house. She always smoked gracefully and continues to do so. With the Marlboros she bought from the vendor next to the entrance of her shop, she smoked her shifts away. In the summers of 1996 and '97, I also secretly smoked, not to impress Tiziana, but to impress the boys hanging at the playground. And when I returned to Cologne in the winter of 2008, I captured my aunt in front of this vendor with my Nikon camera. She looks at me listening, knowing perfectly well what the customers also know all too well. But she seems to have entrusted me behind the camera with a future transference about why things did not work with Tiziana, and ensures me that she won't yet break the spell of secrecy about what had come between us.

4.

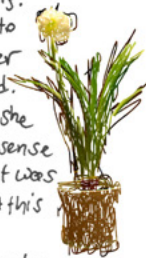
When I called Zerrin last month to conduct an interview on her life experiences as a 'guest worker' in Germany, I started with a question on consent: would she wish to remain anonymous? Shedding my doubts, she quickly assured me by saying: 'Don't be afraid. Enquiries like these I find pleasant!' When we deepened our conversation on her relationships with customers, she sighed for a second. In one breath, she named many encounters about which she was fond, but I could grasp a hesitancy in that 'sigh,' a moment of resistance in not wanting to recall unpleasant memories. Later, she told me that Heidi Klum's parents were among her loyal clients; and, naturally, some excitement was introduced into our conversation, a sensation she then carefully weaved into her subsequent objective observations. She has compassion for her German clients, for their unjust actions, even for their racist resentments, which she believes followed from the traumatic past of the country. Hers are poignant and accurate observations on the societal dynamics in Germany. To me, these revelations almost mimic a sociological analysis, a quality — I figure — she has acquired and altered during her meticulous and continuous labor in the service sector. She trained herself in this rigor to attentively listen to others' needs and desires, to repair the collective. She remembers the Turkish Airlines flight that brought her to Germany in 1971; the chic dresses of the stewardesses and their beauty, which she still finds worth flattering. They



were serving coffee and cigarettes, she adds, and I—a heavy smoker—make a goofy joke expressing my envy, which she then leaves uncommented.

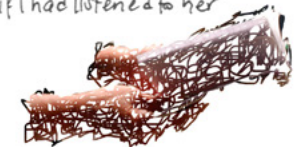
5.

She recalls her first year in Cologne, extremely isolated. She set foot in Germany, not through a labor agency, as many did back then, but upon marrying my uncle Musa—another ‘guest worker.’ She had zero German skills. Their plan was to stay in Germany only until my uncle had gathered enough savings to finance their marital life in Istanbul. Yet life never flows according to a plan, she reflects. When she could no longer stand their one-room apartment in Königsforst, she voiced her will to be more engaged in life—and so she obtained a work contract. Her first job was on the assembly line at the Ford factory. She was among a group of migrant women who were sewing together car seat covers. I asked if she had made friends after her very first week of shifts in the factory, and her answer resembled the ‘staircase’ scene from Fassbinder’s *Angot essen Seele auf* [Fear Eats the Soul]—in which older German cleaning women gossiped about the new migrant staff member. Like the quiet, young woman in that scene, Zerrin mostly listened prudently to her colleagues while smoking in the bathroom—as going to the toilet was the only possible excuse to smoke. In closely observing the dynamics of the group during those smoking breaks, and the emotional intensities that usually followed from hard labor, she decided that she would benefit more from deep listening than from verbally engaging. These brief conversations were—according to Zerrin—always bound to misinterpretation and physical exhaustion, and would have affected her commitment to the collective if she had become more verbally involved. Although the factory was extremely loud, it mesmerizes me now that she assigned more validity to her hearing than her seeing to navigate her sense of justice. She trusted her ears, not only to understand a language that was not yet hers, but also to acquire remedies for the harsh conditions that this capitalist setting was demanding. In an environment where no radical change was excused, and only a few mistakes were forgiven, listening also became a vital strategy to refrain from drama, thereby protecting her working conditions and emotional safety. However, it took her very long to establish long-lasting friendships, and when she did, both parties enjoyed



reciprocity. She still reminisces about how she filed her resignation at the factory, and, while walking out, she was stopped by her only friend of the time, who wanted to join her. No matter how hard she tried, my aunt re-collects, it was impossible to convince her friend not to quit. A steady job on the assembly line of the Ford factory did not matter without a good friend. Suddenly, I realize why she completely ignored my previous comment on smoking: her smoking-time was an earnest methodology for understanding the nuances of living.

I'm also certain that smoking must have always paused time for Zerrin, carving out an interval that was especially well deserved after a sweaty shift. As much as it allowed her mind to rest, it also accommodated her need to finally assess and reflect on the effects of her instant labor. One could argue that she was like a camera during her shifts, gradually exposing her rolls of film as the assembly line proceeded. And while smoking, she was finally developing her films. The act of smoking slows down our pace of inhaling and exhaling, detaching us from capitalist time. What broke during her shift could be reassembled in the smoking intervals. There again, she could retrieve her memories, dreams, and reflections from the assembly line, reassembling them through deep listening, and developing them, ultimately, into a single row of images that many call a ‘life experience.’ I believe a migrant’s soul lives twice: once in the moment as things happen, and once again as incidents are told or reported to those who live faraway. By doing so, we grieve the past. And in those moments of ebb, after the flow, one always recollects and reorganizes lived experience. My aunt smoked for that, her daily strategy of resistance, refusal, and pleasure—but also of grieving her motherland while in Germany. A deep regret reveals itself as I hear my aunt’s voice on the phone now. I was admitted into the Academy of Media Arts Cologne but decided not to accept their offer. I could have learned so much as an artist from her insightful listening practice, her ‘smoke cinema,’ if I had chosen to move to Cologne to live beside her. But thinking in retrospect, I must admit that my aunt played a crucial role in my future reasoning to find a solid ground in Germany, and this soothes me now. I wonder how different my life could have been if I had listened to her



more attentively in the summer of 2008. That summer marks the end of my pre-migration time as I moved to Germany in the fall of 2008.

6.

My friend Belgin holds a pink fan in her hand; it is a very hot day in July 2008. I am once again in Cologne, this time in the company of Belgin and Cihan—two fellow activists from our queer organization LambdaIstanbul. We were invited by the City of Cologne to attend Pride Week events as Istanbul has been a sister city to Cologne since the late 1990s. The three of us were supposed to represent our community and the obstacles faced by LGBTQ citizens of Turkey on the long road to emancipation. We strolled the city, attending many bureaucratic meetings and boring political activities. At such gatherings, I could also sadly attest to the many prejudices and ignorances, related to Turkey, that were projected onto us by our German colleagues. I remember that it was surprising for me that our conversation partners claimed to know more about us than we knew ourselves—addressing us as 'you' in plural, which led me to question what actually constituted this 'you' to which they referred. Their 'you' was a stranger to me. In some correspondences with our German counterparts, it also became clear how rigid their conception of 'gender' was, and how little they knew about Istanbul, despite their righteousness in asserting how we were meant to be. Compared to the resilience of my aunt, who always listened to outspoken resentments and hostility by preserving her coolness—I must confess—I could not always contain my temper against this colonial backdrop. Luckily, when we had breaks from this ongoing institutional cascade of bureaucracy, we walked along the shore of the Rhine and picnicked on the spot. Ford was the main sponsor of Pride Week, and they organized a lottery in honor of the events, awarding a car to a lucky Pride attendee. I remember questioning if and how emancipation could be reduced to such an exclusive expression. In retrospect, all that spectacle seems to have left so little room for inner reflection, not allowing pride attendees to dwell on the episteme of their emotions. Everyone was seemingly more interested in celebrating an 'outstanding' coming-out-of-the-drawer, and hence of despair and self-pity, rather than interrogating what had locked us up there in the first place. 'I am because I am visible' was a popular mantra,



thus setting the tone of the events. It was as if this colonial theatricality had commissioned us, queers from Istanbul, to show up at the parade and radiate 'our' gay message into the universe, 'WE HAVE ALSO COME OUT'—hereby relegating us again to the historicity of 'also.'

Out, loud, and proud, we were just tourists. This was Belgin's first time abroad, but for me, Cologne was familiar. I was proud to guide Belgin through the city. The Rhine took us to the Cologne Cathedral, and I remember speaking with Belgin about the black-and-white photographs I had once seen of the immense destruction to the city after the bombardments of the allied air forces. We spontaneously decided to take a train from the central station to Paffrath. It was my idea to pay a surprise visit to my aunt Zerrin, always fond of surprises and never disclosing the dates of her holidays to Turkey prior to her arrival. When we showed up at her tailor's shop, my aunt welcomed us with tears in her eyes. She tenderly invited us to lunch. 'Generous' and 'flawless.' We objected to her kindness, but she insisted, and we surrendered. During lunch, Belgin spoke of the daily violence that transgender women encounter in Istanbul. My aunt listened quietly as we all chain-smoked. Zerrin then took us to her little garden at the back of her shop. A prominent cherry tree now grows there from a seed that she once threw away during one of her smoking breaks. With the taste of cherry and the smell of coffee, we rested in the shadow of that almost-four-meter-tall tree. Later, Belgin happily pointed out the plantain in the green meadow that lies in front of the tailor shop. And when she told us that it is good for the stomach, I was pleased to hear it as much as my aunt, both of us hopeful that it could undo the harms of smoking. It must have been late afternoon when we left to return to the city. On the way back, I realized that I had just come out to my aunt, as she smoke-listened to us the entire time. Belgin snapped her fan open like the shutter of a camera—I still dream about this today—thus taking a photograph of this revelation. It felt like we were going back to Cologne on the seats of that Ford car but its seat covers were handsewn by my aunt. Zerrin must have seen inside all of her customers' closets—she who, against all conventions, likes to wear pants rather than skirts. Now I see how many different meanings the erotic can allude to when it is not overwritten by the excesses of exclusive



expression — as that beautiful hot afternoon swings eternally between Belgin's fan and my aperture.



7.

I recently listened to a recording of Audre Lorde reading aloud her essay, 'The Uses of Erotic: The Erotic as Power.'** Addressing the womxn in the audience, Lorde elaborates on the erotic as a form of power in this beautiful public speech. In her essay, she uses a visual metaphor to embody her concept of the erotic: margarine. Indeed, I was so inspired by her little metaphor that I researched the history of this mass product. During World War II, when milk products were no longer affordable, a war on patents broke out. The milk and dairy producers did not want this industrial, mass-produced vegetable fat to compete with butter and, potentially, replace it on the market. Lorde beautifully elaborates on her metaphor:

'During World War II, we bought sealed plastic packets of white, uncolored margarine, with a tiny, intense pellet of yellow coloring perched like a topaz just inside the clear skin of the bag. We would leave the margarine out for a while to soften, and then we would pinch the little pellet to break it inside the bag, releasing the rich yellowness into the soft pale mass of margarine. Then taking it carefully between our fingers, we would knead it gently back and forth, over and over, until the color had spread throughout the whole pound bag of margarine, thoroughly coloring it. I find the erotic such a kernel within myself.'

Lorde 'patents' the erotic as an ultimate power for womxn that heightens, sensitizes, and strengthens the human experience. Listening to her, I am convinced that my aunt Zerrin was doing none other than that. She was also trying to release that kernel from its intense and constrained pellet. In her smoking breaks, Zerrin may have contemplated how she could let that energy flow through her. And then, later, she blew that energy into her commissions upon returning to her sewing machine. By turning moth-eaten robes into 'golden' nightgowns, she was not only altering the look of the garments, but also attempting to convince their owners of a different way of living together. With each new commission and client she received at her

shop counter, she carefully blew that energy upon them — releasing it, hoping that it would heighten, sensitize and strengthen the life experiences of her customers, if not her own.

Having listened to Zerrin, it feels right to assume that Europe didn't recover from the immense destruction of the war thanks to the Marshall Plan. Instead, it recovered because there were working womxn like Zerrin, and their invisible erotic power, this was more effective than the US credits poured onto Europe. Their migratory labor flowed into every corner of life, empowering each encounter, and indeed blowing energy into the deep wounds of a whole society to collectively deal with the trauma of the war. Zerrin is just one of the millions who have helped the social to heal by quietly attuning to its scarring. And in this land of saturated sorrow and despair — where speech is silver, yet silence is golden — there rises an erotic power. If you don't believe me, just ask my aunt's customers. They will surely tell you the story of her Farsi name, and how bright Zerrin's yellow has always shone against all that saturation.



*My gratitude goes to Todd Sekuler and Merve Elveren for their care in helping to preserve my writerly voice, and ensuring it hit the right tones in English.

**Lorde, Audre. 1984. 'The Uses of Erotic: The Erotic as Power'. Originally presented at the Fourth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, Mount Holyoke College, 25 August 1978, later published as a chapter in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, Berkeley, CA.

BIOGRAPHIES & COLOPHON

Farah Aksoy is a curator based in Istanbul, Turkey. Since 2017, she has been working as a Programmer at SALT, a non-profit institution producing research-based exhibitions, publications, web and digitization projects. Her research and writing interests include modernism and comparative avant-gardes, postcolonial and globalization studies, and cultural politics within WANA. She completed her master's degree at the Art History, Theory and Criticism program of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2016).

Cinzia Arruzza is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research and Eugene Lang College. She is the author of *A Wolf in the City. Tyranny and the Tyrant in Plato's Republic* (OUP 2018) and the co-author of *Feminism for the 99%. A Manifesto*, published in more than thirty languages.

Cian Dayrit (b. 1989, Manila, Philippines) is an artist working in painting, sculpture, and installation. His interdisciplinary practice explores colonialism and ethnography, archaeology, history, and mythology. Dayrit subverts the language and workings of institutions such as the state, museums, and the military to understand and visualize the contradictions these platforms and formats are built upon. Dayrit studied at the University of the Philippines. He has been exhibited in international biennials, including the Gwangju Biennale; Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art; Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh; New Museum Triennial "Songs for Sabotage" in New York; and Göteborg Biennial. In 2019 he was an artist in residence at Gasworks, London. His work will be included in the forthcoming edition of the Biennale of Sydney in 2022.

Meagan Down is an art historian and editor. Since 2017, she is managing editor of "Museum under Construction," a series of publications on exhibitions, artists and artistic movements published by the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw. She is a graduate of the University of Melbourne and Deakin University.

Brooklyn-based **Noah Fischer's** practice investigates financial power. Alternating between satire and activism, he has focused on the role cultural institutions play within capitalism, and on the indebtedness of creative communities. Fischer's work spans drawing, writing, organizing, direct action, performance, and sculpture; he is a member of Gulf Labor, and longtime collaborator with Berlin based theater group andcompany&Co. He is currently writing and illustrating a science fiction novel.

Frigga Haug (Dr.phil.habil., b. 1937) was a Professor of Sociology at the Hamburg University of Economics and Politics until 2001. Her visiting professorships include ones in Copenhagen (Denmark), Innsbruck and Klagenfurt (Austria), Sydney (Australia), Toronto (Canada), Durham (USA). She is the Chair of Berlin Institute of Critical Theory (InkriT), a lecturer of adult education Movements, Church, Numerous, Germany, 1966–2010; editor of *Journal For Critical Psychology*, Berlin, 1970–2010; coordinator and lecturer at People's University Berlin, 1980–1999; a Fellow at Inkrit and a member of the International Rosa Luxemburg Gesellschaft, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung.

Sharon Hayes (b. 1970) is an American performer and activist based in New York. The starting point for her art is public events: protests, demonstrations, political speeches, and recordings of the pseudo-trials of

Guantanamo prisoners. The artist references the pacifist lobby, mass movements to defend civil liberties and equal rights, and calls for freedom of speech, which reached their climax in 1960s America.

Ingela Ihrman (b. 1985, Kalmar, Sweden) lives and works in Malmö. Her work is sparked by the strong emotions of everyday life and a desire to understand, question or express certain aspects of being alive, social and human. It is particularly the pleasures and pain that come with co-existence, autonomy, loneliness and longing for belonging that intrigues her. She has a constant gaze towards the lifeforms and landscapes we refer to as Nature. Her practice includes sculpture, installation, performance, video and writing as well as collaborations within the fields of science, theatre and dance.

The Marxist Feminist Collective consists of Tithi Bhattacharya, Svenja Bromberg, Angela Dimitrakaki, Sara Farris, and Susan Ferguson. They are the organizers of the Marxist Feminist Stream at the Historical Materialism Conference.

Rafał Milach (b. 1978 in Gliwice, Poland) is a photographer, visual activist, educator and author of photography books. He is a professor at the Krzysztof Kieślowski Film School of the Silesian University in Katowice, Poland. His work focuses on topics related to the transformation in the former Eastern Bloc. A key focal point of his current artistic practice is the clash between non-heroic gestures and ostensibly neutral spaces, which are in fact set against a political background of current events. The oppressive nature of the areas Milach investigates is reflected in architecture, objects, and suitably formatted social structures. His award-winning photo

books include *The Winners*, *7 Rooms* and *The First March of Gentlemen*. Rafał Milach has received scholarships from the Polish Minister of Culture and National Heritage and European Cultural Foundation. He was the finalist of the *Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation Prize 2018*, *Polityka Passports Awards* and won the *World Press Photo* award. Milach is a co-founder of The Archive of Public Protests and Sputnik Photos collectives. His works have been widely exhibited worldwide, and among others can be found in the collections of the MSN Warsaw, CCA Ujazdowski Castle, the ING Polish Art Foundation or Kiyosato Museum of Photographic Arts. Rafał Milach is an associate member of Magnum Photos.

Naeem Mohaiemen combines films, photographs, drawings, sculpture, and essays to research the many forms of utopia-dystopia- beginning from Bangladesh's two postcolonial markers (1947, 1971) and radiating outward to unlikely, and unstable, transnational alliances. He is Associate Professor of Visual Arts & Concentration Head of Photography at Columbia University, New York.

Corina Oprea is the managing editor of *L'Internationale Online* since January 2019. She was artistic director of Konsthall C, where she curated a programme on decolonisation in the north. She holds a PhD from Loughborough University, UK, with the thesis 'The End of the Curator: On Curatorial Acts as Collective Production of Knowledge'.

Aykan Safoğlu received his MFA in Photography from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College, NY. He was an artist-in-residence at institutions such as Akademie Schloss Solitude, Ashkal Alwan, and Rijkakademie van beeldende kunsten between

2014-2018. Recipient of the Grand Prize of the City of Oberhausen at the 59th International Short Film Festival Oberhausen (2013), and Birgit Jürgenssen Prize (2021); Safoğlu is currently a PhD-Candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.

Françoise Vergès is Chair of Global South(s) at the Collège d'études mondiales in Paris, part of the Fondation Maison des sciences de l'homme. Vergès, who grew up in Réunion Island, lived in Algeria, Mexico and the United States, was a feminist and antiracist journalist and editor in the 1980s, before doing her BA and PhD in the United States (PhD in Political Theory at University of California/Berkeley). Vergès is an active teacher, scholar, and curator.

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Cian Dayrit, *Orbis Terrarum luxta Ripas*, 2017, oil on canvas,
60x48 inches, photo: At Maculangan