This is all to say something quite profound: Black radical feminisms, with their embedded queer and trans circulatory systems, refuse subsumption into neoliberal markets or mainstream notions of revolution. They reject the creation of another nation-state; they reject a female-headed ruling class—it is a radical feminism for the 99%, which is "Far from celebrating women CEOs who occupy corner offices"; "we want to get rid of CEOs and corner offices."[9] It continually questions, refusing an end point or knowable future. It is a quotidian praxis that, in suspending the knowability of the intricacies of an anarchic vision, allows for an anarchic world to arise inasmuch as the anarchic world defies intelligible elaborations (elaborations predicated on the world as such).

…

Though anarchism is a method and praxis of thought that is non-hierarchical, there has nevertheless been an insistent sexism within many anarchist circles. Indeed, the first self-proclaimed anarchist, Proudhon, is noted as having said that, when "one compares sex with sex, women are inferior."[10] Proudhon and many of his followers retained the sense that the father held a legitimate position of power—an instantiation of a masculine, tough, honorable, and independent affect—and that women, unfortunately so, were "chained to nature" and entered society only through (heterosexual) marriage. A kind of "anarcho-sexism" has been a repeated current in anarchist movements and theories.[11] But while Proudhon's belief

[9] Nancy Fraser, Cinzia Arruzza, and Tithi Bhattacharya, *Feminism for the 99%* (London: Verso, 2019), 13.

[10] George Woodcock, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: A Biography* (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1987), 34.

[11] Sharif Gemie put this clearly in his 1996 article "Anarchism and Feminism: A Historical Survey" in *Women's History Review* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 1996), 418: "the anarchists, so proud of their anti-authoritarianism, of their skeptical analysis of power structures, of their real ability to challenge the dominant political cultures of the nineteenth century, were yet so blind to the existence of gender-based tyrannies."



# Anarcho-Blackness

## Notes Toward a Black Anarchism

Marquis Bey

2020

men at the top (though this is certainly very much the case), but as a name for the oppressiveness of the State and authority. State and authority are metonymized by reference to white male rule, which the CRC, as Black and woman—as operating through Black feminism—feels acutely and wants no part of. They are uninterested in seizing the State or capital; they are uninterested in flipping the racialized and gendered script and becoming the master class. "We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind," they write in their Statement. "To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough."[6] A horizontal, mutually aiding, radically non-hierarchical world is what they seek. An anarchic world.

I know, I know, they don't call themselves anarchists. But as stated at the outset of this volume, I care little about only claiming Black people, and in this case Black women, who deem themselves anarchists. I care little, too, about bringing people into the institutional fold of anarchism. What strikes me about the CRC is how their socialism, which critiques socialism, expands socialism, moves by way of anarchic principles and forces. They radicalize their socialism by anarchizing it, in other words. If anarchists hold that "until all are free then no one is free," we can note the express anarchism of the CRC when they argue that "if Black women were free, it would mean that everyone else would have to be free since our freedom would necessitate the destruction of all the systems of oppression."[7] This demonstrates, as Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor writes, "the dialectic connecting the struggle for Black liberation to the struggle for a liberated United States and, ultimately, the world."[8]

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Anonymous, *Anarchism, A History of Anti-Racism* (The Anarchist Library, n.d.), 3, theanarchistlibrary.org; Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 274.

[8] Keeanga-Yamahta Taylor, *How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 11.

in black women's humanity, intellectual labor, and political visionary work, anyone with an investment in theorizing black genders and sexualities in complex and nuanced ways"; it is a Black feminism that references the nexus of Black and woman but that "always transcend[s] attempts to limit the tradition by rooting it in embodied performances."[3] It is, in short, a Black feminism that is, first and foremost, "an anticaptivity project."[4]

The CRC's notion of interlocking oppressions understands that all the systems and discourses that contain and curtail us—what anarchists would loosely understand as the State and authority—are connected. The "synthesis of these oppressions" is what they understand as the State. Thus their political aim of "the destruction of the political-economic systems of capitalism and imperialism as well as patriarchy" is an anarchic politic.[5] Destruction of the State, which is understood robustly as being attended by racial, gendered, and imperialist baggage, is an attempt at moving toward an anarchist society. The State and the governmental/material ills of the world are the product of "white male rule" that they feel viscerally. There is no saving it; through and through, it is toxic. No reforming white male rule. So it becomes appropriate, on a certain reading, to see "white male rule" as not merely about people who are white and cis

[3] Jennifer C. Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 5. Nash, like me, does not concede that Black feminism is the sole province of Black women. In her cogent account, "it is the ongoing conception that black feminism is the exclusive territory of black women that traps and limits black feminists and black women academics who continue to be conscripted into performing and embodying their intellectual investments" (5). We can also turn to Anderson and Samudzi in this regard, who note in *As Black As Resistance*, "There are many politicians and state operatives of color, Black and otherwise, working for white supremacy. Diversity in the seats of power will not solve our problems. Simply because someone shares race, gender, or another aspect of identity does not guarantee loyalty or that they will act in the best interests of Black communities" (13).

[4] Nash, *Black Feminism*, 26.

[5] Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," 274.



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# Uncouth

> A serious anarchism must also be feminist, otherwise it is a question of patriarchal half-anarchism, and not real anarchism.
>
> —Anarchist Federation of Norway[1]

I can only begin this chapter with the Combahee River Collective (CRC). The CRC's "Black Feminist Statement" is touted as a foundational Black feminist document, having spawned terms like "identity politics" and given rise to intersectionality as a concept by their meditation on interlocking oppressions. What is less remarked upon, though, is their fierce commitment to socialism. Indeed, they state very explicitly that they are socialists, but while they affirm their socialism and "essential agreement with Marx's theory," they disagree with a class-reductionist analysis.[2] Their socialism is not class first; it is expansive and encompasses the capacity of Black feminist subjective world-making. That is to say, their socialist analysis comes from the particularity—which is no particularity but a capacious and broad insight into structuring mechanisms in the social milieu—of the nexus of Black and woman. That vantage, that nexus, is indeed about people who are Black women but also, I want to argue, about an indexation of a Black feminism that expansively "welcome[s] anyone with an investment

[1] *Errata*: A serious anarcha-feminism must also be Black, otherwise it is a question of white, solipsistic half-anarchism, and not real anarchism. (Addendum: I do not presume to know what "real" means in "real anarchism.")

[2] The Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3/4 (2014): 274.

We know what's really up. We've known for a while. We've known, in the final instance, that as the seventeenth-century folk poem goes,

> The law locks up the man or woman
> Who steals the goose off the common
> But leaves the greater villain loose
> Who steals the common from the goose.
> .....
> The poor and wretched don't escape
> If they conspire the law to break;
> This must be so but they endure
> Those who conspire to make the law.



# Introduction: Black Anarchic Notes

> I myself am an anarchist, but of another type.
>
> —Mahatma Gandhi, Benares University Speech, February 4, 1916

This endeavor into what might be understood as Black anarchism, a Black anarchism that is indebted to and circulates endemically within Black queer and trans feminisms, is a brief attempt to crystallize but also depart from tenets found in established Black anarchism, anarcha-feminism, and "classical anarchism"—the likes of Pyotr Kropotkin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Mikhail Bakunin, and the like. While my aim will be to articulate a theoretical praxis for Black anarchism through what I will deem an *anarcho-Blackness* springing from but also supplementing (and even disagreeing with) self-described Black anarchists, in this meditation—a pamphlet, of sorts—I do not take as my sole purpose to demonstrate a fidelity to Black people who are anarchists. Nor, I must state, is my goal to recover Black people who demonstrated anarchic tendencies and induct them into the fold of anarchism. I want to in fact resist the penchant to absorb various thinkers into the fold of anarchism; I do not want to "claim" them necessarily as anarchists when they do not avow themselves anarchists. Rather, my intent is a reconfigurative project, to express what anarchism might be, what it might look like, when encountering a sustained engagement with Blackness in general, and Black queer and trans feminisms more specifically.

In this sense, I take as a propelling force that, "Anarchism, like anything else," as Hannibal Abdul Shakur notes, "finds a radical new meaning when it meets blackness."[1] The anarchism of, say, Bakunin is no longer anarchism proper when it meets Blackness. To clarify, there are certainly threads that connect different iterations of anarchism, making them all, in some sense, "anarchist" (e.g., emphasis on mutual aid, direct participation, anti-authoritarianism, etc.). But to meet with Blackness entails that anarchism undergoes a shift in focus and tenor. Classical anarchism, for example, rested on an axiomatic commitment to the dismantling of the State and capitalism as a defining factor for anarchist sentiments, but this foundation often does not consider the racialization and gendering of either of them, nor how hierarchization bears a racialized and gendered texture. To be sure, this project will advance beyond mere finger-pointing of the racist and sexist habits of anarchists past—an argument that many Black anarchists and anarcha-feminists have made to a valid but, to be frank, boring and expected effect. As I will discuss momentarily, the dramatic shift entailed in this iteration of Black anarchism is, perhaps more accurately, an anarcho-Blackness in that it is not Black people practicing an anarchism that goes unchanged; it is anarchism as expressed through and necessarily corrupted by the radicality, the lawlessness, the mutinous primordiality of Blackness.

If indeed, as remarked upon by Dana M. Williams, "The term *Black anarchism* implies an interaction between 'Black' and 'anarchism,'" *Anarcho-Blackness: Notes Toward a Black Anarchism* dwells in the texture of that interaction.[2] This text is an effort to mine what that interaction entails: What happens

[1] Black Rose Anarchist Federation, "Introduction," in *Black Anarchism: A Reader*, 2016, 2, www.blackrosefed.org.

[2] Dana M. Williams, "Black Panther Radical Factionalization and the Development of Black Anarchism," *Journal of Black Studies* 46, no. 7 (October 2015): 694, doi.org. Emphasis in original.



We demand the impossible, yes, and that impossible is a way to live without being owned and without owning; a way to be done with properties and the private without giving up sensibilities of holding and relating in specific, idiosyncratic ways is what we want. In contrast to the colonial and imperialist drive to capture and claim as one's own, characterized by an expansive masculine whiteness that subjugates bodies of Color and uses the rape of feminized people as a propelling force for colonization, the anarchism of Blackness, as Williams and Samudzi would say, demands a new beginning that has as its precipitating force the end of this. The anarchism of Blackness indexes an unpropertied relationship to the world and others inasmuch as it discloses the impropriety of freedom, freedom's unboundedness, which is to say its inability and unwillingness to demarcate the limits of sanctioned relationality—or, to propertize. The imperialist, settler-colonizer drive is manifested in white self-possession—whiteness as property par excellence—so Blackness comes to un-possess itself in order to become unbounded by the propertied, the heteropatriarchal.[9]

Racial and gendered capitalism rest at the heart of the will to possess and privatize the ownership of possessable things. Thus, anarchism demands its abolition, not a conciliatory reform, for "it is impossible to reform the system of racial capitalism."[10] The capitalist demand for property and its ownership by those in power recognizes only gluttony, and the necessity for exploitation to maximize that gluttony's expansion. This theft is of the first order, and to move toward anarchic life is to steal on the second order, to steal back and let free what is unownable. Indeed, property and capitalism have deemed this stealing back a negatively connoted theft without recognition of its own theft. But we are on to that ol' tired smokescreen.

[9] See Sarah Jane Cervenak and J. Kameron Carter, "Untitled and Outdoors: Thinking with Saidiya Hartman," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 27, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 46, doi.org.

[10] Anderson and Samudzi, *As Black As Resistance*, 13.

and infectious ether that *is* Blackness—is the givenness of parapossession and holding in a way that does not commit to having, to ownership. Reading *anarcho-* as a getting outside and away from sovereignty, and Blackness in the aforementioned way, Black anarchism is constituted by an anarcho-Blackness that resides in, builds life within, a parapossessive, insovereign, fence-breaking space. This is the world anarcho-Blackness yearns for. It emphasizes mutual aid and care and joy by a collective, assemblic relationality predicated on something more flexible than privatized ownership. Indeed, fence-breaking leads to a society that is much more open and mutually caring.

The anarcho- of Blackness, and Black anarchism in general, demands a more philosophical unholding from property as well. What I am asserting here is a Black anarchism that inducts the denizens of an anarchic society into unpropertied relationship with one another, because property moves through relationality just like the State. So if Blackness's anarchic character defines this, the demand placed upon those who seek an anarchic society is a becoming-Black where Blackness is what happens to you when anarchism takes hold of you. Carter and Cervenak again: "This is all to say that this ethereal movement otherwise—black movement unheld by its ambulations into music, alongside unavailable dreams—disaggregates blackness from its entrenchment with state interest, with property, and with this world's holdings."[8] The racialized Blackness one usually understands as Blackness as such is embedded in the logics of the State and property. Thus to be and become unpropertied, to be moved by the anarchic, is to disaggregate Blackness from this relationship and, if we wish for an anarchic society, which is to say an unpropertied and un-Stated world, Blackness becomes the adhesive for those who refuse the State's holdings over us.

[8] Ibid, 219.



to Blackness when circulating with and through anarchism? What happens to anarchism when being acted on by and in Blackness? What is yielded in this interaction—an additive sum, a multiplicative product, an exponential result? Neither anarchism nor Blackness can be what it once was (which is itself an unsettled open question) after colliding in a critical, generative intimacy with one another, so I attempt here in this text to illustrate a facet of that intimacy. That intimacy is anarcho-Blackness; it is a Black queer feminist anarchism that disorders the various mechanisms that hierarchize, circumscribe, and do violence to the moments that do life on the outskirts of order (those moments of, as it were, unfettered and ungoverned sociality), an anticolonial sensibility. Anarcho-Blackness, and Black anarchism more broadly, is an anarchism of another type, to purloin Gandhi. It is another type that recognizes its intimacy with anarchism as conventionally understood, but it revises anarchism, anarchizes anarchism, remixes and samples anarchism to produce something distinct but very much indebted.

Anarchism is to be rightly understood as a more radical theoretical praxis than Maoism, socialism, or nationalist revolution because, from the Black radical perspective of Kuwasi Balagoon, "the goals of anarchy don't include replacing one ruling class with another, neither in the guise of a fairer boss or as a party." Indeed, it is the name for the radical world-making project that, unlike the aforementioned political ideologies, refuses the "socialization process that makes exploitation and oppression possible and prevalent in the first place," Balagoon continues. *Black* anarchic notes, as the chapters herein, deemphasize representational politics, as if having Black people as one's oppressors makes oppression more bearable—we know

that "oppressors never have a problem finding Black leaders to condemn their blatant disregard for life."[3]

When researching anarchism and Black people's relationship to it for this book, there was a notable dearth of self-described Black anarchists. Perhaps the reason for this, I pondered, even though the history of Black radicality is a history of anarchic thought, is because Blackness necessarily alters anarchism's capacity. Perhaps what I am designating as anarcho-Blackness, as the operative modality for Black anarchism, is no mere incorporation of Black people into the folds of anarchism—i.e. add and stir. I am thus designating Black anarchism's anarcho-Blackness as a Black feminist critique and taking up of anarchism, asserting that 1) the "Black" in front of anarchism is to be understood not as a "mere" marker of identity but as a political and capaciously politicized affixation. It designates more of a mode and posture of reading, engaging, and undermining the tenets upon which hegemonic sociality rest. 2) Inherent to (Black) feminist mobilizations is ground-disturbing, and thus to disturb grounds—even its own grounds—is a necessary component of the project at hand. Anarcho-Blackness thus designates the disturbing of anarchism's ground, which capacitates what anarchism can be and who it can liberate. And 3) processes of racialization and gendering must be at the forefront of any and all radical politics. More specifically, the radical work that queerness and gender nonnormativity do, as expressed in Black queer and trans feminisms, is anarchic par excellence in that the dismantling of racial and gender hierarchies too often overlooked or merely glossed in classical anarchism is a fundamental rebuking of authoritarian rule, hierarchies, determination from without, and injustice.

[3] Kuwasi Balagoon, *A Soldier's Story: Revolutionary Writings by a New Afrikan Anarchist*, ed. Karl Kersplebedeb and Matt Meyer (Oakland: PM Press, 2019), 158.



Mackey, "announces a kind of 'holding without having.'"[5] How to hold but not have? Such an outlook is all the more pressing when shifting from an understanding of possessive relationships with *things* to possessive relationships with *people* (though again, it cannot be elided that historically there have been people understood *as things*). This interstitial space between property and grasplessness, this parapossession, is an attempt to maintain mutuality in which one can care for and share affinity with others without needing to possess them, without needing to own them as one's own. Similar to anarchist distinctions between *property* as organized around a "sovereign lord" who uses propertized objects to exploit others, and *possession* as rooted in use rights or "usufruct" rather than exploiting others, parapossession builds on this history. Parapossession allows for "I am relating to this now in a particular, perhaps singular, way" in the rubble of "This is mine"; it is a being and becoming with and through as opposed to an *I am* garnered by the refusal of the other. Black anarchists who move toward inhabiting an anarchic world become through a subjectivity that constitutes them via this holding without having, their subjectivity becoming that of being "held in noncoalescence against worldly misholding"; this anarchism is to practice "'unprepossessive (nonprepossessive) aplomb' in the spirit."[6] And this caressing and holding that subverts the propertied possessiveness of having "is black life's experimentalism, a fence-breaking, boundary-crossing, paratheological, paraontological, insovereign, paralegal, and parapossessive ambulation."[7]

Black life—which Carter and Cervenak understand not only as the material conditions that apportion life's vagaries amongst Black people but as a general liveliness, a pervasive

[5] J. Kameron Carter and Sarah Jane Cervenak, "Black Ether," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 16, no. 2 (2016): 210.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid, 211.

that of cis masculinity, which not only grants a sense of entitlement to any and all spaces/territories (the history of the white cis masculinity of colonialism looms large here) but also is the subjectivity that underwrites access to the very subjective tenets upon which self-possession rest; and that of heteropatriarchal conquest, accumulating and consuming bodies for reproductive means, whether that of cis white women to create generations of conquerors and ensure the purity of whiteness, or that of cis Black women to claim ownership and violation of a sentient reproductive object to further wealth in fungible human labor.

Fundamental to this "bad" anarchism is an obsession with security and possession. Anarcho-Blackness or Black anarchism provide a rejoinder to this. To inhabit a world on anarchic grounds is to inhabit, necessarily, an "unsafe neighborhood" because safety and security are characterized by an implicit, constitutive whiteness that allows for safety and in fact serves as the obverse of abolitionist liberation (recall Kriege, who opposed abolition and Black emancipation to protect white laboring men).[4] Security necessitates biometric regulations that work to the detriment of gender nonnormativity, femme and feminized bodies, and bodies of Color which may or may not be adorned with racialized and thus suspect accouterments (see, for example, the turban or the afro). What the advancement of anarcho-Blackness puts forth is recognition of how histories of gender and racialization underpin capitalist notions of security and possession.

…

I want to argue for what J. Kameron Carter and Sarah Jane Cervenak call "parapossession" as anarcho-Blackness's relationship to property. In "Black Ether," Carter and Cervenak tie Blackness to an ethereality that, following Nathaniel

[4] Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 28.



The titular anarcho-Blackness of this volume moves toward an anarchic social life in that it is delinked from oppressive forms of governance and rule. This is why each of the chapters in this book are prefixed "un"—this volume's commitment to anarchism stretches to subjective, intersubjective, discursive, systemic, and historical realms via a fundamental commitment to being and becoming unraced, ungendered, unclassed, unruled, and unbound. These notes toward a Black anarchism argue that, oddly enough, it is not necessary to find all the Black people who are anarchists and the anarchists who are Black people and roll out their writings and thoughts as the definitive statement on what constitutes Black Anarchism proper. Rather, the reason why this volume is titled "Anarcho-Blackness" and not simply "Black Anarchism" (aside from the fact that the Black Rose Federation's reader, *Black Anarchism*, already exists) is because affixation of Blackness is itself an anarchic extension and disruption of political ideologies like anarchism and Marxism and socialism. We may not "need" a clearly defined Black Anarchism because to anarchically push anarchism, as it were, is to introduce to it a Blackness—or more specifically, an anarcho-Blackness—that radicalizes any and every political ideology that moves toward liberation and freedom. Whereas historians like Carl Levy have focused on the *-ism* of anarchism, anarchism as a defined social movement that arose in the late-nineteenth century with clear originators, I focus instead on the *anarcho-*, the prefixal thrust and spirit, as it were, of anarchic tendencies and modalities.[4] Focus on the anarcho- is to focus on a world-making sensibility that I am interested in, not a particular political cadre of writing and movements. *Anarcho*-Blackness in apposition to (not "rather than") Black anarchism does not dwell in delineating criteria for a discernible Black anarchism as a movement but concerns

[4] See Carl Levy, "Social Histories of Anarchism," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 4, no. 2 (2010): 1–44, doi.org.

the variegated modalities, methodologies, habits, trends, thoughts, and imaginaries that might be given to anarchic—which is to say unruled, non-coercive, coalitional—affinities and textures for being with others.

Anarcho-Blackness expresses what *might be* understood as a Black anarchism insofar as it designates a gratuitous disorder that engenders the possibility of living unbounded by law, which is to say unbounded by violence and circumscription. Black anarchist histories attest to how, in imagining what comes after the collapse of the State, one should not "design" this future beforehand as if we know what we will need. Black anarchism is critical in the destructive sense that it unclothes fallacies and injustices; too, though, it is aspirational, searching and hoping for other modes of life and living that depart from "this." Contrary to the Marxian castigation of anarchists as vitiating the world only to imagine one that cannot exist, anarchists writ large, but more importantly *Anarcho-Blackness*'s conceptualization of Black anarchism specifically, demands the impossible (á la Peter Marshall's encyclopedic history of anarchism). The impossible is the name for the world outside of, or after, or differently within, an anarchic destruction of the racial and sexual capitalist State. This world-outside is Black, or lawless; this world-outside is anarchic, or stateless, radically liberated.

I take my cue in this from an etymological source. One of the first recorded uses of "anarchy" comes in 1539 from Richard Taverner, who writes, "This unleful lyberty or lycence of the multytude is called an Anarchie." Anarchy becomes more than what classical anarchists note: the negation of a head or chief; without a ruler or leader; stateless. Though Taverner surely connoted his usage of anarchy negatively, one can read this iteration in a way that precisely captures how the anarchism of Black anarchism seeks to operate. That is, an "unleful lyberty" is a freedom or liberation that arises not as a product of a bestowal by the State. Unlawful liberty is an *illegal* liberty, a



is seen as a way to stick it to an authoritarian government, and anarchists have a founding tenet of anti-authoritarianism, so look at us being "anarchists" with our multimillion-dollar vacation homes. They claim the label "anarchist" (as do the oxymoronic, so-called "anarcho-capitalists"). How should one respond? We must do more than simply note that there is an eclectic array of anarchic strands: communist, syndicalist, libertarian socialist, anarcha-feminist, primitivist, individualist, insurrectionary, vegan. Such an anything-goes strategy potentially dilutes the ability to root out the dangerous political relations supported by something like "anarcho-capitalism." The goal here is not to create an ironclad, unbreachable, unbending definition of anarchism that disallows fluidity, flexibility, and different textures. That would employ a spirit of governance hostile to what might lie outside of anarchism's tenets, making it unable to think the unthought.

So how to proceed? There are strands of individualist anarchism, for example, that amount ultimately to "Get your hands off my property!" There are also capitalist ideologies that have borrowed (stolen) the label "anarchist" to describe deregulated access to financial wealth. Both, however, operate on an incredibly regulated internality. The space the latter wishes to occupy may seem ungovernable and thoroughly deregulated, but it is predicated on highly regulated and exclusionary—and hierarchical, with its racial, gendered, and classed valences—criteria. The purported deregulated space is *enabled* by extreme regulation of who might access that space. Too, when not constituted by the literal wage of capitalism's master–(wage)slave dialectic, they are defined by the implicit wages of whiteness, which garner a kind of capital on the grounds that they have provided access to the territory, economies, and uninhibited assumptions that allow for such an "anarcho-capitalism" (better understood as a *minarchist* position, or wanting *minimal* government that retains cops and armies but eradicates, say, social welfare);

of acknowledging and forming a politicized movement around the fact that the history of Blackness is testament to the fact that there are some whose property (essential characteristic) was property (an ownable thing).

To approach the matter of property—things divorcing the owner from the user—from the perspective of Black anarchism, from an anarcho-Blackness, is to begin from the assumption that to *let go* is a kind of salvific grace. To clarify: letting go points to a willingness to *leap*, in that Kierkegaardian sense, to immerse oneself in what might be. I offer these notes toward a Black anarchism with precisely this yearning for what might be possible, a world unfettered by ontological and epistemological straitjackets or by structural and dominative oppressions. Uncertainty is endemic to this anarchism: wanting *that* without knowing what it will be, but understanding it as an anarchic salvation precisely because it is not *this*. Property has at its base the thorough holding on and possessive spirit of its owner, an encompassing knowingness of the property possessed. To rebuke privatized ownership and property is to then let go and allow the possibility of something and some way else to be to, oddly enough, take hold.

…

But what of this term "anarchism"? Some in recent years have deployed it in ways that in fact deify possession and property. I want briefly to address how there have been attempts to use anarchist language for non-anarchist ends. While it is thorny territory to attempt to parse "good" anarchism and "bad" anarchism, it is perhaps necessary in order to best stave off co-optation. This becomes all the more important on the topic of property, as it can sometimes be language fraught with conflations and misinterpretations. For instance, certain right-wing capitalists and corporate fat cats seek deregulated access to unhindered capital accumulation, claiming to be "disrupting" the ethos of taxation and "liberating" us from impediments to massive wealth. Ownership of private property



liberation achieved by other means not beholden to the juridical sphere or a general lawfulness. Perhaps this is liberty as such, liberty that is taken without making recourse or appeal to governmental agencies. We grant our own "lycence" to be free, and it is multitudinous, a mass, a heady swarm, that takes this liberty and license. A promotion of disorder inasmuch as it is an anarchy that refuses to cater to order as instantiated by regimes of governance.[5] The prefix *anarcho-*, an index of all of this, embraces a political disorder *begotten by* an encounter with Blackness's troubling ethos, its radicalization of radicality. The history of Blackness, in short, is a history of disruption toward freedom. How anarchic.

…

The idea to write about Black anarchism came from a question I received during a Q&A session following a reading of my first book, *Them Goon Rules: Fugitive Essays on Radical Black Feminism*. The student, a white woman who studies anarchism, asked about the dearth of self-identified Black anarchists even though so much of what she's read about the Black Radical Tradition and Black feminism expresses anarchic sentiments. I received her question genuinely; she was curious, yearning for a way to bring strands of Leftist thought and politics together in a way she had not yet encountered. I could not provide her with a substantive answer. What I mustered was, in short, an elaborated and extended "I don't know." Subsequent to the reading, a colleague of mine—a Black man, scholar of

[5] It bears mentioning that an anarchist like William Godwin, for example, was, as his 1795 *Considerations* signature describes him, "a lover of order." His order was one that he felt could only be achieved by anarchy, a society that was free yet ordered. I want to embrace the disorder, however, as order necessitates a particular adherence to a preordained structure, itself a normative—and hence violent, circumscriptive—ideal. I am not faulting Godwin necessarily. After all, he is writing about a society that is still put together, as it were, despite the lack of government and authority. I am, though, parting with the implicit buttressing of an ideal normality that is embedded within a conception of order.

twentieth-century African American literature—apprised me of some of the work being done by the admittedly few Black anarchists out there. He named the Black Rose Federation and Zoé Samudzi, the latter being quite foundational for my meditation in this text. We came, ultimately, to the question: Does there *need* to be a "Black anarchism"? That is, if Black radicals are doing work that is anarchic without calling themselves anarchists, does there need to be a proliferation of a discernible Black anarchism? It is a valid position that one must not be overly concerned with whether someone calls themselves an anarchist or what have you. Such a concern mimics an experience I had in college, being obsessed with calling myself, and making sure others called themselves, feminists, to the detriment of a concern with whether one did feminist work. Make yourself legible to me and others on terms not your own, this sentiment implies. But it may be precisely the point of the anarcho- to blur such legibilities, finding freedom in escaping political ontologies. One does not, in short, *need* to call oneself a Black anarchist to be doing Black and anarchic work. And the work is where our interests should lie.

Nevertheless, though one does not *need* to deem themselves such does not mean that one cannot or should not. Too, part of the work might be in the declaration, an unwavering commitment to be identified as and through a denigrated political subjectivity, and a steadfast rejoice over occupying at least a titular subversive relation to the State. Furthermore, there might be some utility in articulating not so much a Black genealogy of anarchism but a differently inflected mode of relating to being amongst others that finds radical expression at the nexus of Black and anarchist. To make Blackness and anarchism meet is doing a particular kind of work, and that work—when acknowledging the inherent Black queer feminist resonances of theorizations of Blackness—is much less likely to be done when simply following the classical strain of anarchism. To follow, and deviate from, the beaten and unbeaten path of the history



sentimental philistines and, interestingly, "liberty-intoxicated ladies." Is Kriege embarrassed about supporting abolition in any way because, were he to do so, he'd be not only sentimental but likened to a "lady"? Both of these might in fact have a common thread, that of femininity. Underlying Kriege's opposition to abolition, his opposition to anarchy, is its support by things that connote femininity, which is to say anarchy's latent and spectral femininity. More, a femininity that is "liberty-intoxicated." This movement away from the feminine is no coincidence, as there might be said to be a "feminine character" to resistance, as Cedric Robinson claims. That there is, or might be, a feminine character to resistance—that "All resistance, in effect, manifests in gender, manifests as gender"; that "resistance itself is gendered"—is also concatenated with the Black Radical Tradition not simply in that we are discussing abolition of slavery in the U.S. but also because that tradition utilizes gender for liberatory aims (see, for example, Harriet Tubman's flouting and revising of gender to engender others' freedom), that tradition, like this resistant aspect of gender, quests for freedom, which is the aim of resistance.[3] And to be intoxicated with liberty, to refuse enslavement, one must seek the abolition, too, of property.

…

What is property? There is of course the definition of property as a state-protected monopoly over resources or privileges that are then deployed to others' exploitation (e.g. to own land and then rent that land to others for one's own profit). But there is also the sense of property as an essential or peculiar characteristic of a thing. Anarchism seeks, then, to remove the private ownership of property that sustains capital accumulation. Black anarchism must consider both senses by way

[3] H.L.T. Quan, "Geniuses of Resistance: Feminist Consciousness and the Black Radical Tradition," *Race & Class* 47, no. 2 (October 2005): 47, 39, doi.org; see also Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin, eds., *Futures of Black Radicalism* (New York: Verso, 2017).

the U.S., the emancipatory result of getting closer to freeing Black people. Put differently, I read anarchism's abolitionist spirit here as an anarcho-Blackness.

Interestingly, Kriege is purportedly motivated by a sense of keeping the peace, which serves as the opposite of anarchy. White rule = peace; Black freedom = chaos—or, the word he goes on to use, "degradation." To degrade something is to cheapen, and this bears a link to another term that we might meditate on usefully, as we briefly did in a previous chapter: *destitute*. To destitute something is to impoverish it, to extract its value. The degradation that would ensue post-abolition, the destitution that would take hold, is necessary "in order to free the revolutionary imaginary of all the old constituent fantasies that weigh it down, of the whole deceptive legacy" of the hegemonic logic of the white and cis male supremacy woven into the West's capitalist state.[2] What Kriege is afraid of is precisely the aim of (Black) anarchism: the extreme degradation, the thoroughgoing destitution of the world and that which sustains it. Classical anarchist sentiment is clear on the point that depriving the world of the things that sustain the accumulation of capital is one of the chief goals for anarchist world-making. A further point, however, is how fundamental (anarcho-)Blackness is to this, for the things that have had a significant impact on capitalism's expansion have been racial enslavement's accumulation of free Black labor. This is to see as necessary the constant affixation of *racial* to *capitalism*. Abolition is always *both* abolition of racism/white supremacy and capitalism.

And finally, Kriege's offhanded, seemingly hand-waving concluding comment. Abolition is to be opposed, certainly for the aforementioned reason of leaving intact the current conditions of labor as the province of white men. But further, it is to be opposed despite—and because it is supported by—both

[2] Invisible Committee, *Now*, 76.



of Blackness, a history that is always already queer, always already Black feminist, and, most fundamentally, always and already trans and nonnormative, is to bring an archive of radicality that breaches all major confines of sociality and subjectivity. (If Blackness does the work of disturbing assumed grounds that make things legible in a hegemonic way, this shares an affinity with the queer and feminist projects of undoing and dislodging gender and sexual normativity. There is thus an overlapping circulation happening with Blackness, queerness, and feminism.) It is for these reasons that it might be necessary to move toward a *Black* anarchism.

So while I was unable to answer the student's question adequately during the Q&A, I've committed to giving her something of a response in the form of this text. I am still unsure why there are few who describe themselves as Black anarchists despite the strong resonances of anarchism within Black feminism and the Black Radical Tradition, but this is the beginning of an answer.

…

I am unsure if I would call myself an anarchist, nor am I certain that I care about whether others do so. Perhaps I am, the consequences of which I "own." But my concern is in doing anarchic work. I am concerned with how to bring about an anarchic world and commit to an emancipatory, liberatory vision that somehow, somewhere, gets entwined with one's subjectivity; I am concerned with treading "anarchic ground," unsettling the world as-is and bringing about something radically different—an immersive rebuking of capitalism, white and cis male supremacy, imperialism. Such a world, if we are to tread the whispered roads of Kropotkin and Cedric Robinson, Emma Goldman and Zoé Samudzi, is anarchic in a robust sense. I want to live and do and become that, irrespective of whether those who bring about that world have declared themselves anarchists. That subjectivity, the performative product of committing to anarchic work, is what concerns me. If subjectivity

implies an anarchist identity, lovely. If not, so be it. But subjectivity is the terrain on which anarchic aims are struggled over, so that must be my concern.



despite all the importunities of sentimental philistines and despite all the poetical effusions of liberty-intoxicated ladies.[1]

The passage is dense with assumptions, implications, and slights. Kriege suggests, rightly, that "the slavery question" is one, in part, of property. Enslaved people were themselves property, disallowed personhood. Such a history is imperative to bring to anarchist theorizations, as one cannot assert the ills of private property without noting that not only is the factory or storefront over there "property" but there are *people* who have historically *been property*, and the descendants of those people—or those who might optically or politically be placed in proximity to those people—are living with the effects of, as it were, property's afterlife. Kriege is right, in a slanted way: the question of property at the base of slavery cannot "be settled by itself alone," but because, in the context of anarchist argumentation, it must account for racialized populations—and, as I must also argue, gendered domestic and interpersonal labor.

Kriege continues. Abolition for him has the inevitable end result of anarchy, which is then equated with the negative and unnecessary competition with the "free workingmen" [*sic*] (read "free working *white* men") and to devalue their hard-working labor. To abolish slavery would be to effectively, at least in part, abolish a substantive sector of property ownership—an anarchist move, one might say—so it is opposed in order to sustain the labor value of white men. It is the "white brothers" who will suffer acutely if slavery were abolished; it is the "white brothers" who do not want to see abolition, anarchy, succeed. Implicit in anarchism's inverse is the maintenance of property and the State (with its attendant vertical relationality), which maintain white labor. Anarchism's abolitionist spirit, then, has at its foundation in

[1] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1935), 23.

# Unpropertied

> Property, the dominion of human needs…represent[s] the stronghold of man's [*sic*] enslavement and all the horrors it entails.
>
> —Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For"

In W.E.B. Du Bois's impressively encyclopedic *Black Reconstruction: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*, he cites Hermann Kriege, a German American revolutionary and proto-socialist who, incidentally, opposed the abolition of slavery. In 1846 he advocated land reform and free soil, yet also that same year made clear his opposition to abolishing slavery on the grounds of property rights. He is quoted thusly:

That we see in the slavery question a property question which cannot be settled by itself alone. That we should declare ourselves in favor of the abolitionist movement if it were our intention to throw the Republic into a state of anarchy, to extend the competition of "free workingmen" beyond all measure, and to depress labor itself to the last extremity. That we could not improve the lot of our "black brothers" by abolition under the conditions prevailing in modern society, but make infinitely worse the lot of our "white brothers." That we believe in the peaceable development of society in the United States and do not, therefore, here at least see our only hope in condition of the extremest degradation. That we feel constrained, therefore, to oppose Abolition with all our might,



# Unblack

> Anarchism portends the promise of the absence of authority/order…[it] is intent on creating mayhem against those epistemological and metaphorical foundations that have so violently scripted Black people and communities as a people without history, without knowledge, and without dream.
>
> —H.L.T. Quan, "Emancipatory Social Inquiry: Democratic Anarchism and the Robinsonian Method"

William Godwin, Max Stirner, Mikhail Bakunin, Pyotr Kropotkin, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Emma Goldman, and Errico Malatesta didn't really talk about Blackness, were not really concerned with Blackness, didn't bring Blackness to bear on their thinking, and didn't think that Blackness's specificity demanded attention. Not to mention that, save, really, for Goldman, anarchists didn't really think about the specificities of gender, let alone how gender circulates necessarily within capitalist and white supremacist formations (how race and class, that is, are constituted through and by gender). It was capitalism this, government that, authority, individualism, rulers, the State, and on and on.

But I am actually quite uninterested in the expected rhetorical move that implicitly garners one a kind of validity: that of pointing out racial and gendered elisions as the totality of one's argument. I will, however, do just that, but only for a moment, before more importantly speaking of Blackness and

its constitutive factors in this meditation (namely, queerness and [Black] feminism) on their own terms.

But, ahh, the classics… The anarchist canon, as it were, has had its central tenets—if such an anti-authoritarian, non-doctrinal intellectual praxis like anarchism can be said to have tenets—expressed by many of the aforementioned figures. To summarize, anarchism is the general critique of centralized, hierarchical, and thus oppressively coercive systems of power and authority. State power and capitalism are the culprits responsible for the horrors that surround us, being deemed by anarchists as monopolistic and coercive, and hence illegitimate. The State, for instance, is inextricable from domination, Bakunin arguing that, "If there is a State, there must be domination of one class by another."[1] In theory, anarchism is touted to oppose all kinds of oppression, be it racism, sexism, transanatagonism, classism, colonialism, ageism, etc. While there has been much less explicit meditation on the anarchist stance toward transanatagonism than, say, capitalism, the overarching claim of anarchist ideology is that any kind of coercive, dominative oppression is to be quashed. To be established instead is a society based on direct democratic collaboration, mutual aid, diversity, and equity. "From each according to his [*sic*] ability, to each according to his [*sic*] need."

Though there are those who are more strict about incorporating those who preceded the nineteenth-century heyday of people beginning to explicitly call themselves, and rally around a political movement called *anarchism*, I will not partake in such gatekeeping, for better (where a longer lineage of anarchist thought can be mobilized) or worse (where any form of dissent might be unjustifiably subsumed under anarchism, diluting its specificity and historical situatedness).

[1] Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*, trans. Marshall Shatz (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 178.



crime itself."[16] To be ungoverned is not to oppose governance; to be ungoverned is to operate beyond governance, to become disaffected by it, not even acknowledging its legitimacy, being, in other words, ungoverned by governance.

[16] Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 61. A similar sentiment is expressed by Emma Goldman when she writes of the ethicality of purported criminal acts: "it is ethical in the best sense, since it helps society to get rid of its worst foe, the most detrimental factor of social life. Sabotage is mainly concerned with obstructing, by every possible method, the regular process of production, thereby demonstrating the determination of the workers to give according to what they receive, and no more": Emma Goldman, *Syndicalism: The Modern Menace to Capitalism* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1913), 9.

wisdom, nor virtue…To be governed means that at every move, operation, or transaction one is noted, registered, entered in a census, taxed, stamped, priced, assessed, patented, licensed, authorized, recommended, admonished, prevented, reformed, set right, corrected….Then, at the first sign of resistance or word of complaint, one is repressed, fined, despised, vexed, pursued, hustled, beaten up, garroted, imprisoned, shot, machine-gunned, judged, sentenced, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed, and to cap it all, ridiculed, mocked, outraged, and dishonored. That is government, that is its justice and its morality![15]

Those who are surveilled with the most scrutiny ("watched over, inspected, spied on…") are Black, nonnormatively gendered, and femme, and thus to seek the liberation of those who live through these nexuses requires the promotion of a Black anarchic ungovernance. The insurgent history of slave uprisings, wayward movements, racial and gender "passing," and illicit sexualities is a swerve away from being regulated and registered. They are the people who did not have papers, but traversed colonized territories in search of land they could live with. They are the people who did not change their licenses and birth certificates, not caring about judicial and legal mandates to "align" with perinatal impositions, driving and traveling and getting stolen resources anyway. They are the people who did not care for biological dictates of kinship sold to them for tax purposes, and instead insisted on the closeness of "cousins," "aunts," "uncles," "bruthas," "sistahs," and "sibs" despite having no "*real*" ties to them. They resisted these regimes because they knew that when they did they would be "despised, vexed, pursued, hustled, beaten up, garroted, imprisoned…" but understood that to be positioned this way, in proximity to criminality, meant that they were doing something, because indeed, "collective resistance and revolution [occurs] at the scene of

[15] Quoted in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 1.



Like Kropotkin, one might understand the Epicureans and Cynics as anarchists, since they avoided participation in the political sphere, retreated from governmental life, and advocated allegiance to no state or party. They lacked the "desire to belong either to the governing or the governed class." Kropotkin understands this as a proto-anarchic anti-State and anti-authoritarian disposition.

Far from meaning that everyone is left alone and unorganized, anarchism in the classical sense privileges democratic and communal relationality, obviating external rule and control. This is a positive conception of anarchism as voluntary participation predicated on each individual's autonomy and agreement with communal values. It bears noting, though, that an anarchist society may take different forms: socialist anarchism, which emphasizes developing communal groups that are intended to thrive in the absence of hierarchies and a centralized governmental structure; or individualist anarchism, some of which reject any and all group identities, communal mores of the good, and venerate individual autonomy. Max Stirner represented perhaps the furthest pole of this tendency, with his refusal to obey *any* law or *any* state, even if it was collectively arrived at. The self is the only arbiter of one's life. As well, there is anarcho-syndicalism, which supports workers in a capitalist society gaining control over parts of the economy, and emphasizes solidarity, direct participation, and the self-management of workers. Additionally, anarcho-syndicalism has the aim of abolishing the wage system, seeing it as inextricable from wage slavery.

Life under non-anarchist rule conceives of the political arena as a good that exists to protect and serve the people; or better, a system chosen by the people. So much of ancient Greek philosophies, modern liberal philosophies, and political philosophies assert, in various ways, that obedience to the law is a *prima facie* duty and inarguable good. Anarchism has called this very foundation into question. What arises in the

hopeful disintegration of rule by an authoritarian nation-state is a society that cares for one another communally and democratically without the need for a tyrannical force of coercion and sovereignty. Anarchists like Godwin and Proudhon and Bakunin based this anarchist society on beliefs in reason, universal moral law, education, and conscience.

With this very brief overview, the task set forth here is slightly different. It parallels yet departs from, as well as stands in contrast to, this anarchist history—an anarchic "shadow history," if you will, a para-anarchism that anarchizes anarchism. What is not being done here is an attempt to find heads or figures of Black anarchism to give clout to it as a wing of anarchism as a whole. While I will surely cite throughout this chapter, as well as subsequent chapters, the thought of people like Lucy Parsons, the Black Rose Anarchist Federation, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, and Zoé Samudzi, this project is in fact not concerned with simply trotting out a list of anarchist Black people *as* the meaning of Black anarchism. I am articulating an anarcho-Blackness, first and foremost, as an inhabitable modality of anarchic subjectivity and engagement. This may lead to a discernible Black anarchism. Fine. But the aim is not to arrive at Black anarchism; it is, rather, to engage an anarcho-Blackness that moves toward what might be called a Black anarchism.

…

There are a number of racialized, gendered, and racialized gendered elisions present in classical anarchist theorizations that demand being pointed out. Bakunin: "If there is a State, there must be domination of one class by another and, as a result, slavery; the State without slavery is unthinkable—and this is why we are the enemies of the State."[2] Overlooked here is how the history of the enslavement of peoples of Color, specifically Black people in the Western world, is the haunting specter

[2] Ibid.



labor; a system that is propelled by exploitative racialized and gendered labor practices, which have always been part and parcel of white/European economies; a system whose ethic is one of non-ethics, rebuking sentient life's needs and desires and wellbeing in favor of a lethal combination of economic policies and cultural practices that collectively benefit hoarders of wealth to the detriment of poor people and poor folks of Color; a system of privatizing public services and functions, marketization, and commodification of social life—in short, as DJ Quik once put it, "If it don't make dollars, it don't make sense." Learn, then, from Diogenes the Cynic, whom Kropotkin touts as an anarchist of the ancient world, and *deface the currency*.

One might also note, though, that those "anarchists"—(scare quotes because it would be a dubious claim to anarchism, and doubly bracketed here in an em dash as well as parentheses because I resent having to give airtime to such ideologies)—who take their crypto-currency and rush to South America to "not be governed" and instead instantiate regimes of stake-claiming and unencumbered accumulation of capital, are in fact merely capitalists; they are Ron Swanson-esque libertarians who reject all forms of being told what to do with their lives and their property and venerate unbridled capitalism and the free market because of a disdain for regulation. Such conditions are always highly regulated, however. Locks and chains are on the doors and the doorperson looks you up and down before turning you away because you called out the management on their privatizing, commodifying, tyrannical bullshit.

An anarchist disdain for governance, if I may be permitted to slip into a conflation with government for a moment, is predicated on an understanding of it as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon described it:

To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied on, directed, legislated, regimented, closed in, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, assessed, evaluated, censored, commanded; all by creatures that have neither the right, nor

about the assertion of an identity as its heft and more about the breakdown of impositions of racialization. Racialization understood as the child and not the parent of racism, gleaning this Blackness from the Black Radical Tradition is an anarchic, ungoverned disorder, an "anarchy of a radicalism that must oppose the form *as well as the content* of racial hate."[13] This is anarcho-Blackness. It emerges through a political subjectivity that lays the groundwork for the runaways and renegades, the apostates and defectors, who refuse to pay debts and, in that anarchic refusal, possess an untold wealth because metrics for quantifying this wealth are not beholden to the logics of the financial sector.

There is a dovetailing here with traditional anarchist claims, to "reject all forms of external government and the State," but also a rejection of *governance*—a distinction that tears the texture of sociality and encompasses affective, emotional, interpersonal relationships on the intersubjective level that are not quite captured in the larger institutions of government and the State.[14] Advancing an anticapitalist mode of thinking and interaction, not simply one that is "anticlassist," requires a radical break from capitalist relations: a world system dependent on racial slavery, violence, colonialism, genocide, and gendered

[13] Jack Halberstam, "Go Gaga: Anarchy, Chaos, and the Wild," *Social Text* 31, no. 3 (116) (September 1, 2013): 130, doi.org. Emphasis added.

[14] Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London/New York: Harper Perennial, 1992), xiii. To the anarchists' complete rejection of the State, Marshall contrasts the "libertarians" who "take liberty to be a supreme value and would like to limit the powers of government to a minimum compatible with security." Black anarchism is clearly more akin to the former; it is fixated on *freedom* or *liberation*—rather than a liberty that is, to my mind, dependent on a rights-based juridical bestowal. However, moving beyond classical anarchist concerns, it is deeply skeptical of the racialized and gendered tenor of "security" inasmuch as to be secure is often to be removed from proximity of the Black and queer and trans. One cannot beatify security when, in seeking the anarchic ground, one necessarily traverses "an unsafe neighborhood" (Moten and Harney, *The Undercommons*, 28).



of his claim. The condition of the slave, which is on one plane the condition of Blackness, is the relationship between a people to the State. Thus, anarchism, in its anti-Statism, must reckon full force with Blackness as Blackness serves as the distinct angle of vision for encountering the effects of State-sanctioned enslavement and oppression. To abolish slavery necessitates the liberation of Blackness, making anarchism an emancipatory project, a project that has as its foundation a grappling with Blackness.

On the topic of the State, there has also been the tendency to collapse the relative effects of violence. That is, if it is indeed true that the State bears a hostile relationship to those it controls, there are some who are controlled in different ways and who feel the force of the State in more acute ways. To rest at the nexus of Black and trans, for example, is to feel the brunt of the State in scrutinizing, gender binaristic, and racializing ways, which give one over to the likelihood of poor housing conditions, lack of job access, increased rates of incarceration (which then subjects one to the gendered carcerality of prisons and its pervasive mis-gendering violence), and the like. Examine the lives of Miss Major, Marsha P. Johnson, CeCe McDonald. Anarchic meditation on the terrors of the State begin in the right direction, but they fall short of taking the critique as deeply as it demands.

A critique of the State is in order too, though. A traditional focus on the State as the end-all be-all of oppression must be thought of as more than simply a governmental agency or bastion up on high doling out sentences and decrees. The State is, too, a *relation*, a way of dictating how people are to be interacted with. We encounter one another on the logics of intelligibility that the State demands, and that structures how one can appear to others, circumscribing subjective parts and desires that fall outside of this framework. And this is a violence. We must also note how this relation is not only in the public sphere but characterizes any sphere in which interaction is had.

And furthermore, these relations are textured by racial and gender hierarchies. One relates to others on their presumed gender, their presumed race, and disallows them to be otherwise than this fundamentally externally imposed subjectivity. The other has had no opportunity to announce themselves to us on non-State grounds. Any anarchism, then, must recognize this and commit to dismantling their hierarchies within relationality and move toward the disorderly, disruptive refusal to continue living by State laws.

So if anarchism truly does represent "to the unthinking what the proverbial bad man does to the child—a black monster bent on swallowing everything," then we must recognize that the *blackness* of the "black monster" is no accident.[3] It is in fact constitutive.

To infuse anarchism with anarcho-Blackness is to push anarchism's logics further. Many anarchists did not organize on the grounds of difference and differentiation, even as they sought ways to prevent their silencing. Hence, anarcho-Blackness supplements these oversights via an insistence on perhaps *assemblage* or *swarm* or *ensemble,* whereby there is a consensus, or consent, not to be individuated—which is another way to say an affirmation to emanate from difference toward the insistence on collectivity and agential singularity. It is not unanimous we seek to be; it is ensemblic, assemblic, a distinction that manifests in the proliferation of life for those who might queerly emerge when conditions are saturated with the elimination of institutions that curtail such life.

Saidiya Hartman writes in "The Terrible Beauty of the Slum": "Better the fields and the shotgun houses and the dusty towns and the interminable cycle of credit and debt, better this than black anarchy." These "zones of nonbeing" Hartman says, purloining Frantz Fanon, are the regulated domains of Black peo-

[3] Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What It Really Stands For," in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Dover, 1969), 49.



planning with and for fugitives, studying the effects of Blackness.

...

To be ungoverned is, yes, disorderly. Many castigate this yearning, assert the utility and, indeed, value of order. But the order they speak of, and the order the ungoverned reject, is the order of the present society, a society ordered by virtue of its violent quelling of all those deemed disorderly. But ours is an order that arises by way of ungoverned disorder, an order that is more accurately a harmony, a beautiful ensemblic swarm that supplants the order of the State. That is what ungovernance strives for. It is an ungovernability that characterizes life and livability. Motivating this urge to "not [be] governed quite so much," but pushing this famous Foucauldian dictum beyond his reluctance to embrace (a negatively connoted) anarchism, is an insistence on the livability of ungovernance.[10] Propelled in this pursuit by an "anoriginary drive" that, by its negating "an-," rejects the hierarchization that "originary" would imply, an anarcho-Blackness promotes what Moten and Harney deem "the runaway anarchic ground of unpayable debt and untold wealth."[11] And this, they conclude, "is blackness which must be understood in its ontological difference from black people who are, nevertheless, (under)privileged insofar as they are given (to) an understanding of it."[12] We return obliquely to the opening definitional claim of anarcho-Blackness. This understanding of Blackness, and what the prefix *anarcho-* signifies, is a Blackness that implies not (only or "merely") an epidermal saturation but a driving force that provides a certain kind of subversive disposition, "ungoverned" by physical or biological logics. It is the general sensoria we might call Blackness that arises from a radical aesthetic tradition, one that cares less

[10] Michel Foucault, "What is critique?" in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. S. Lotringer (Los Angeles: Semiotext[e], 2007), 45.

[11] Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 47.

[12] Ibid.

ularity and, as Moten expressed to me in an email exchange, "must be claimed by any and every body" who seeks to do anarchic work. What is being asked for, what is to be done, is a Blackening that inducts all those who live and be in the undercommons, stealing life so it can steal more life, pilfering resources and asking no permission, taking no responsibility, because the ones who need this stuff might not know they need it, and neither do we. But if we must hack into government security systems and disseminate the firewalled information, that is what is to be done; if we must lie about the destination of funding we are given, allocating it to unauthorized and unadvised and undisclosed locations, that is what is to be done; if we must sully ourselves by hanging around a bad crowd that is bad only because the good's violent optics and ethics deem it so, then that is what is to be done.

So because the queer is a figurative specter haunting normativity, and because the trans is a generative disruption that opens into an otherwise realm of possibility, and because the Black is a lawlessness that marks a terrain of ethics because Law ain't never been ethical, only disciplinary, then what is to be done is a becoming in the illustrious muck of the queerness, the transness, the Blackness of the undercommons. If fugitive planning and Black study is an invitation to be and remain broken, to refuse fixedness and fixity and being fixed, then, to conclude this meditative strain, what is to be done is precisely the kind of study practiced in consciousness-raising coalitions by Black feminists and anarcha-feminists. "Instead of getting discouraged and isolated now, we should be in our small groups—discussing, planning, creating, and making trouble…we should always be actively engaging in and creating feminist activity, because we all thrive on it."[9] Fugitive planning and Black study;

[9] Cathy Levine, "The Tyranny of Tyranny," in *Quiet Rumours*, ed. Dark Star Collective (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 32. Originally published in *Black Rose*, Issue 1, 1979.



ples, or more precisely of those who inhabit the rebellious posture of anarcho-Blackness. They are attempts to corral what Hartman calls "black anarchy," or what William C. Anderson and Zoé Samudzi call "the anarchism of blackness."[4] This is anarcho-Blackness: the primordial mutiny to which regulation responds. It concerns what Michael Hardt, reading Foucault's reading of Marx, calls a priority of the resistance to power. If Marx understood dominative disciplining in the workplace as a *response* to worker insurgency, and if we understand the era of U.S. enslavement as a response to the anticaptivity expressed through Blackness (and further, if we understand capitalism's constitutive racial differentiation and reproduction of [re]productive and disposable humanity rooted in the commodification of Blackened subjects), then anarcho-Blackness comes in to describe the anarchic insurgency that defines the abolition of the State and hierarchization.[5]

[4] Saidiya Hartman, "The Terrible Beauty of the Slum," *Brick: A Literary Journal*, July 28, 2017, brickmag.com; William C. Anderson and Zoé Samudzi, *As Black as Resistance: Finding the Conditions for Liberation* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2018), 60. There is a notable difference, too, between *Anarchy* and *Anarchism. Anarchy* is often used as a synonym for chaos and disorder, a purely negative construal, whereas *anarchism* is defined as a positivized doctrine that does not do away completely with social order, but recalibrates order without government and from the bottom up.

[5] Nikhil Pal Singh, "On Race, Violence, and So-Called Primitive Accumulation," *Social Text* 34, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 27–50, doi:10.1215/01642472-3607564. Singh reveals how Marx's analysis of capitalism as a "veiled slavery" understands it as predicated on an intrinsic racial differentiation—"a directly violent, and yet also typically flexible and fungible mode of ascription" (31)—and on the theft of indigenous land and the "hunting of black-skins" (33). Forcefully, Singh writes that the division capitalism makes between productive humans and disposable humans "is mediated by the shifting productions of race as a logic of depreciation linked to (a) proletarianization as a condition of 'wageless life'—the norm of capitalism insofar as it produces radical market dependency and surplus labor—and (b) the regular application of force and violence within those parts of the social that subsequently have no part" (39).

This is about what Blackness does to and through anarchism, not against it. We need anarchism's musings and movement strategies, so it would be antithetical to radical world transformation to jettison anarchism's gifts. Too, though, anarchism cannot simply do what it has always done (which is itself a multifarious enterprise) as such has been predicated on, in part, an elision of the weight of white (and cis male) supremacy. That is, we cannot just add in racial and gendered perspectives to an already-functioning anarchism; we cannot, also, simply throw out anarchism on the grounds of these elisions. The task is to mobilize the effects of Black feminism and anarchism colliding in harmoniously complex chaos. This mobilization is what I've deemed anarcho-Blackness, an "anarchaos," to borrow a beautifully apt lexicon from Christopher R. Williams and Bruce A. Arrigo.[6]

…

It should be clear that the racial and gendered elisions of classical anarchism demand critique. "The deceptive absence of Black anarchist politics in the existing literature," writes the Black Rose Anarchist Federation, "can be attributed to an inherent contradiction found within the Eurocentric canon of classical anarchism which, in its allegiance to a Western conception of universalism, overlooks and actively mutes the contributions by colonized peoples," namely Black peoples.[7] But Black anarchism does not begin and end at that critique. What might a Black anarchism look like to itself, not simply a reactionary posture toward the implicit whiteness in classical anarchism?

Blackness enters anarchism, and anarchism enters Blackness, as an enabling ethics of precedence. That is, it is and was important that, "it is not just European people who can

[6] See Christopher R. Williams and Bruce A. Arrigo, "Anarchaos and Order: On the Emergence of Social Justice," *Theoretical Criminology* 5, no. 2 (May 2001): 223–52, doi.org.

[7] Black Rose Anarchist Federation, *Black Anarchism: A Reader*, 2.



are being chased we must let them in. Again, "the door swings open…" Each entity that crosses the threshold is another possible signatory on our missives for "the antipolitics of dissent."[7]

To take praxis seriously, a praxis that has as its never-ending end the proliferation of nonnormative life and the livelihood of the unemerged, is to risk what we ultimately come to. We cannot be afraid of what we find in our critical praxis precisely because, if it commits to the aforementioned, it will indeed be scary and impossible to prepare for. That is the work of the monstrous—a liberatory, unanticipated salvation, that troubling interrogation of gender Susan Stryker finds in the trans; that divine portent that Derrida would argue is unannounceable, which is to say untamable, unable to be absorbed into existing logics; that claimable thingliness that Hortense Spillers says might "rewrite after all a radically different text."[8] Critical praxis in the undercommons—insurgent work being done by folks who were let in without paperwork and without vouchers because they, despite where they came from, got down to work for the revolution—is work for monsters, monstrous work.

In the end, what I am asking for is assemblic work for those who are impoverished in spirit, who come together, an intimate proximity reached *because* we are doing the work not because of an ontologized accident. What I am asking for is a willingness to move toward becoming subjectivated by an analytical queerness, a radical transitivity, an anoriginal Blackness, where Blackness names a sociopoetic force of subversive irreg-

[7] Julietta Singh, "Errands for the Wild," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117, no. 3 (July 2018): 567–80, doi.org.

[8] Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (June 1, 1994): 237–54, doi.org; Jacques Derrida, "Some Statements and Truisms About Neo-Logisms, Newisms, Postisms, Parasitisms, and Other Small Seismisms," in *The States of "Theory": History, Art, and Critical Discourse*, ed. David Carroll (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 80; Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (July 1, 1987): 80, doi.org.

ary overturning we seek is one that does not discriminate or develop criteria for inclusion and, consequently, exclusion.

If the door swings open without a bouncer checking names, it means that whoever shows up will be let in, unconditionally, without conditions. The ethical demand here is to be monstrously inclusive, a lesson learned in the Black Radical Tradition, Black feminisms, and trans activism. Yes, the Law might send agents to infiltrate our conspiratorial sessions. Or, even worse, as has happened, our enemy might show up and sit with us in prayer before gunning us down. But, at the same time, a salvational figure might show up or, better yet, a fugitive might show up, asking us to provide her refuge and a safe harbor. And we must let her in—*this* is what is to be done—we must feed and shelter her, because this fugitive, any fugitive, might be the one we didn't know we were doing all this insurgent conspiratorial work for.

Answering "What is to be done?" carries a deeply ethical valence. The manner by which things get done and the result of the doing inflects to whom we owe allegiances, who is or is not on our minds, and most fundamentally for whom we wish to see the world changed. The doing we seek is committed to making a world for people we don't yet know, people who might need a drastically different world, while understanding that even our idea of "worldness" might be predicated on the logics of normative regimes that limit our horizons. It is imperative, then, to commit to the work without presuming to know who the work is for, only committing to the work because it might allow for those we did not know existed to finally live. When we volunteer at the soup kitchen we must turn no one away, even and especially when they look like they just ate a hearty bowl of soup; when we are faced with imminent violence we must refuse to proliferate violence, because we've come into being via a violation and this bestows upon us the ethical commitment to mitigate that violence; when we hear a knock at the door and someone asking for help because they



function in an anti-authoritarian way, but that we all can."[8] But what is more apropos to anarcho-Blackness's concerns is how Blackness and those in proximity to its work and histories operate anarchically. On one register, Black communities themselves are, one might say, anarchist communities: they don't "involve the state, the police, or the politicians. We look out for each other, we care for each other's kids, we go to the store for each other, we find ways to protect our communities."[9] More expressive of the *anarcho-*, however, is dissolving the homogeneity often imposed onto Blackness. Ashanti Alston articulates his Black anarchism in a way that allows for Blackness to not be reduced to a monolith. Alston remarks, "I think of being Black not so much as an ethnic category but as an oppositional force or touchstone for looking at situations differently," concluding, "So, when I speak of a Black anarchism, it is not so tied to the color of my skin but to who I am as a person, as someone who can resist, who can see differently when I am stuck, and thus live differently."[10]

The Blackness here marks a non-homogeneous descriptor of subjectivity. Said subjectivity, however, is not so much skin color, as Alston notes. Blackness does not merely consolidate all those who meet a racial quantum. Such a measure would collapse and monolithize those under its rubric. What Alston advances is not Blackness as people who are Black; he advances an anarcho-Blackness: a conceptualization of Blackness as tied to a politicality and radical penchant for sociality and social arrangement. The implications of this make the Blackness of anarcho-Blackness open to whoever is committed to expressing the liberatory politics it calls for.

[8] Ashanti Alston, "Black Anarchism," *Perspectives on Anarchist Theory* (Spring 2004): 7. This is the transcript of a talk given at Hunter College on October 24, 2003. Also available at black-ink.info.

[9] Ibid, 8.

[10] Ibid, 7–8.

Of course, the "Anarchist movement…is overwhelmingly white," as Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin notes in *Anarchism and the Black Revolution.* What else is new? I am grateful to Ervin for making this plain, but it is not a substantive argument around which to build a political thought and movement. What does Black anarchism do in excess of reacting to white people? That is my concern, and I maintain that Black anarchism troubles the ground on which we stand, taps into a mutinous force that behaves in subversion of regulation, and attends to how people may be differently positioned (or differently position themselves). Developing spaces for "new revolutionaries" is one of the various iterations of anarchism, as is establishing a "political home" that, in my reading, the Black Rose Anarchist Federation sees as a different society in which *everyone* can live. It is not a parochial endeavor, as if focus on Blackness ever was; it is not particular to a specific demographic (though it is unapologetic in its focus on a particular demographic). Blackness as anarchy provides a glimpse into another kind of world by heeding the abundant trove of epistemological richness that can be found in that synecdoche for Blackness: the Negro. To C.W.E. Bigsby, the Negro is "a convenient image of the dark, spontaneous and anarchic dimension of human life" who has "anarchic impulses." And this has "metaphysical as well as pragmatic implications."[11] The implications are vast. Blackness possesses a grounding anarchic impulse, an impulse to move without permission and live without rule. Human life flourishes in this; it thrives in this terrain. So, to speak of anarchism, one must speak of these dark impulses. One must speak of Blackness.

[11] C.W.E. Bigsby, "The Divided Mind of James Baldwin," *Journal of American Studies* 13, no. 3 (December 1979): 327, doi.org.



lutions to reproduce what they have driven out, shattering the iron cage of counter-revolution."[4] Following this line of thinking, we might also say that destitution is another name for the position of Blackness, that "irreparable disturbance."[5] Destituting the world-as-is, the Blackening of the world, shifts what counts as the "real" terrain of politics. To be ungoverned is a quotidian practice (a way of life), and the space in which that practice is lived is a space of anarchy—not nihilism or chaos but life by other means. Anarcho-life.

What Black anarchists seek to do is to found a new society, not necessarily by bringing about the destruction of myriad edifices of terror, violence, circumscription, and normativity but by cultivating the spaces and places that, by dint of their existence, instantiate the impossibility of the normative bastions that now surround us. We might call this justice, might call this a non-utopic utopia, a sanctuary. We might call it the undercommons.

How, then, to do this? Upon a re-reading of *The Undercommons*, I was drawn, obsessively, to one phrase, one that struck me at first as dangerously wrongheaded. But, then, the revolutionary will always be dangerous. The revolutionary call that Moten and Harney require and that I've been obsessed with is this: they insist that our radical politics, our anarchic world-building must be "unconditional—the door swings open for refuge even though it may let in police agents and destruction."[6] As my grandmother might quip, what kind of foolishness is this? But it is not foolishness precisely because the only ethical call that could bring about the radical revolution-

[4] Invisible Committee, *Now*, trans. Robert Hurley (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext[e], 2017), 76.

[5] Fred Moten, "Blackness and Nothingness (Mysticism in the Flesh)," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 112, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 739. I must also note that this line of argumentation is being further fleshed out in Jack Halberstam's work on anarchism and wildness.

[6] Moten and Harney, *The Undercommons*, 38.

# Ungovernable

> The internal difference of blackness is a violent and cruel re-routing, by way and outside of critique, that is predicated on the notion…that there's *nothing wrong with us* (precisely insofar as there is something wrong, something off, something ungovernably, fugitively living in us that is constantly taken for the pathogen it instantiates).
>
> —Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "Blackness and Governance"

It is misguided to presume that an anarchic world, a world in which, for classical anarchists, the State is eliminated—or a world in which, for Black queer feminist anarchists, racial capitalism and cisheteronormative patriarchy is overturned—is the "end" of anarchist pursuits. Anarcho-Blackness, with its disruptive disorderly conduct—its mode of conducting itself as, in other words, disorderly—advances a critical praxis that answers the fundamental political question, "What is to be done?" Kind of. The question "What is to be done?" demands an answer, not that the texture, tenor, or terms of that answer can be readily discerned. Nor does admitting this exculpate us from needing to, nevertheless, provide an answer. So again: what is to be done?

Indeed, accosted by right-wing populism, virulent white supremacy, transantagonism, heteronormative patriarchy, and the litany of other violent regimes in our midst, we so earnestly want them to cease. We demand that it all end, now, and for justifiable reasons. I, though, animated by anarchism's



cial life."[2] I submit that one's concern must be an ethical one that—to supplement an oversight in Moten and Harney—not only sets its sights on social life that "actually" (I shiver at the hubris of this word) exists but, more substantively, *fertilizes the conditions of possibility for otherwise and unsung and unknown emergence*. There is no "end" because to *know* the end is to think one knows the totality of the landscape, a line of thinking that cannot account for that which falls outside the dictates of legibility. There might always be something else just outside, and we cannot close the discussion when *we* think it is over. Fugitive planning plans for what it cannot plan for by refusing to plan for it. So there is no end in sight because sight is not the only sense available to us. (But there is also no end in touch, smell, feel, or taste—or any other "sense.") There is no end in sight because our end may only be someone else's beginning or middle. Thus, our critical praxis, our interrogative social enactment, does something precisely when it commits to a political endeavor proliferating life where no life is said to be found.

And the "where" of "life where no life is said to be found" is the place brought about by abolition. Abolition is fundamentally anarchic, as will be discussed at greater length in the final chapter. It is the eradication "of a society that could have prisons, that could have slavery, that could have the wage, and therefore not abolition as the elimination of anything but abolition as the founding of a new society."[3] This entails, to put it simply, the eradication of society inasmuch as "Society" is predicated on, constituted by, the existence of these things. Anarchism is the ground on which we assert the *destitution* of the terrain, a destitution that marks, according to the Invisible Committee, "a rupture in the fatality that condemns revo-

[2] Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 20.

[3] Ibid, 42.

critical praxis—its practice of a criticality—do not place my crosshairs on a moment beyond now, when things might come to a close. This is not motivated by a nihilistic pessimism about the fate of the current political moment, where I cannot fathom cessation or even mitigation of various violences; this is not motivated by a perverse infatuation with the bounding persistence of hegemonic terrors. It is motivated by a kind of zeal, in fact, one where refusing an end allows for a perpetual openness that enables, always, the possibility of another beginning.

Black anarchism's emphasis on the constitutivity of the concepts of *critical* and *praxis* is fundamental here, as it itself is constituted through an indebtedness to Black queer and trans feminisms. This project is deeply theoretical, but also practical and material, because there is nothing more theoretically practical than trying to figure out how to fundamentally change the very system by which we live; indeed, to quote Zoé Samudzi, "What does it mean to create community that is safe for Black women, for Black trans women? That's an incredibly theoretical exercise because that requires that we have all of these conversations and start to create material politics around misogynoir and trans misogynoir."[1] So the critical praxis and its theoretical heft is a ruthless interrogation of the established and institutionalized—in the vein of Marx's 1843 call for *die rücksichtlose Kritik alles Bestehenden* (the ruthless criticism of all that exists); and if praxis is a doing, an agential enactment that bears on sociality, then a critical praxis marks an interrogative social enactment. What kind of politics might this lead to? What kind of world might this engender, and who might show up to this promiscuous gathering?

[1] "Black Feminist Anarchism & Leftist Neglect of the African Continent with Zoé Samudzi," *Millennials Are Killing Capitalism* podcast, October 24, 2017. Transcript available at libcom.org.



The space cultivated by this critical praxis is where a Black anarchic politics and those subjectivated by an anarcho-Blackness, its attendant Black queer feminist electrical circuitry, show up. Those maroons, subversive intellectuals, fugitives, queers, feminists, anarchists, and rebellious workers meet to conspire together in the undercommons: a non-place where everyone is Black, queer, anarchic, because they are changed by the undercommons, which is not a place you enter but a groove that enters you. Critical praxis becomes a radical invitation to not only do but to be done by the undercommon insurgency that makes its own demands. And such an interrogation must suspend the presumption of an end goal. We know from Moten and Harney, and Jack Halberstam, that what we think we want before the crisis that precipitates our insurgency will necessarily shift after we've attained the limits of what our coalitional knowledge could compile. It is not because we are insufficient, as if insufficiency is a deficiency rather than a willingness to risk getting at the outer limits of what we dared to think; it is because we cannot, and must not, assume that the logics and rubrics we have when moving within the maelstrom of the hegemonic—radically altered as they may be—can operate to our benefit when we've unseated the hegemon. We will need new rubrics and metrics, unrubrics and unmetrics, because a radically other-world requires radically other means to love it, to caress it, to be all the way in it.

So why is there no "end"? To assert this might seem to sidestep what Foucault claims in the Preface of *Anti-Oedipus*: to be "less concerned with *why* this or that than with *how* to proceed." Refusing to bank on the "end" *is*, at least in part, how to proceed. "An abdication of political responsibility?" Moten and Harney write, anticipating the accusation. "OK. Whatever. We're just anti-politically romantic about actually existing so-

Marquis Bey
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that women's role is essentially to be the subordinated right hand to her husband, others like French anarcho-communist Joseph Déjacque state firmly that feminism and anarchism are inextricable. Anarchism and feminism have a fraught history, because still, while most male anarchist writers, like many leftist men in general, gave lip service to the "equality of the sexes," groups of women within the movement's ranks had to fight for anything resembling equality.

I assert unequivocally that anarchism must be feminist. Further, what I pose in this chapter is an explicitly Black feminist anarchism, an anarcho-Blackness where the "Blackness" is necessarily and fundamentally—as it must always be, in whatever realm—feminist. Following the CRC, the anarchist revolution can only become actualized if it is a feminist and antiracist revolution, which is to say, succinctly: anarchism that is not Black feminist is not doing anarchic work.

The approach toward the world that is classified under the heading of anarcha-feminism finds early rumblings as an identifiable political movement during the Spanish Civil War in 1936 by *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women), but in various less-defined iterations centuries before this. (Though as something people called themselves and their collective organizations, "anarcha-feminism" didn't really appear until the 1970s.) Put simply, anarcha-feminism has critiqued the pervasive sexism and gendered hierarchies within anarchist movements. Historically, it was difficult for anarcha-feminism to emerge legibly, as there existed a simplistic political binarism between, on one hand, anti-State feminist liberalism (which saw the state as a potential source of despotism, but that embraced free market capitalism) and, on the other hand, pro-State socialist/feminist radicalism (which, while sharing anarchism's predominant economic philosophy, also embraced women's

suffrage and their entry into the machinery of the State).[12] Anarcha-feminism needed to emerge as radical *and* anti-State. In many ways, anarcha-feminists understand anarchism as a type of feminism due to its avowed rejection of hierarchies and authority. As noted, a persistent underlying sexism was present within anarchism, many collectives being characterized by "quasi-support for male-female equality [that] coexisted with a deep-rooted, full-blown misogyny," but also, according to Sharif Gemie, easily being understood as having only a veneer of misogyny and a more foundational feminist impulse of equality.[13]

Historically, anarcha-feminists have insisted on the gendered nature of capitalism and power. They saw that, while (even male) anarchists would concede that patriarchy is linked to class, there also needed to be a fundamental understanding that experiences under capitalism are differentiated and inflected by gender. Traditionally, anarchism relegated revolutionary, anarchic work to the public sphere as if the (waged) workplace was the only place work and labor was being done, and from which people had to be liberated. Anarcha-feminists have insisted that the family and domestic sphere are also sites of valid anarchist conflict. Of course, the implicit assumption that *all* women occupied the unwaged, domestic workplace fails to consider how Black women in particular had an estranged relationship to this simplistic differentiation between workplace and home life, because Black women often worked in other people's homes, usually for white women. The task is to understand anarchism as always and necessarily, for anarcha-feminists, a feminist endeavor to "bring down the patriarchy."

[12] See Sharif Gemie, "Anarchism and Feminism" *Women's History Review* 5, no. 3 (September 1, 1996).

[13] Ibid, 437.



And *maybe* it is imperative for us to demand free education for all, no educational resources withheld based on zip code, no more disciplinary pedagogical habits (inclusive of all things from metal detectors to grades). No child, teen, or adult will go to school hungry. We educate for freedom, as freedom.

And abolish the police. Abolish prisons. Abolish the gender binary. Full stop.

We offer dances of thought, possibilities for how you, who hold this text in your hands, and those who your hands guide and nurture and build with, might go out into the world you find yourself in and begin, or continue, to manifest the fact that we are not yet broken. We are not subdued at the present time and are still here loving others, loving ourselves, loving those who may not yet be able to appear, and yes, loving those who have orchestrated this mess. It is a multifaceted love, caressing some while slapping the shit out of others. We want you, yes you, are you listening? We want you to demand better by planting a garden and calling out white supremacist patriarchal cisheteropatriarchy; demand better by asking comrades and accomplices "You good?" and punching Nazis; demand better by opening the door for the many-and-non-gendered kinfolk who you've just met for the first time and literally stealing from universities and jails and corporations. Do what you can, do all you can, where you're at right now and wherever else you might end up.

precisely what affirms our subjectivity, allowing us to live in this moment unhindered by given scripts. This is a self-determination unconcerned with individuated identity, discrete and singular; it is, rather, the ethical comportment toward proliferating unrecognized forms of life. That is our aim: we seek to allow others and non-persons and un-people and impossible people and no ones—and those of us living by normative subjectivities because we believed they were all we had—to live. What we are cannot be fixed. We are becoming.

Or, *perhaps* the scribbles on the perforated leaflets of Black anarchism invite not rights, which will continually have us beholden to a State apparatus, but ethics, modalities of inter- and intrarelation. We must encourage different ways of being-together, opening our homes to those who need them without charging rent, opening the park or the rooftops to those who wish to sleep outdoors under the stars without being disturbed, opening the abandoned houses down the way where squatters become instead stewards of the space because it is now their home. All because what it means to be a society, a commune, a swarm, a togetherness is to live in the groove of the anarcho-: needing nothing but wanting to share; answering to no one but responding to all. Our sociality needs no permission and we express it in defiance of all laws of property and propriety.

Further still, how might it *possibly* benefit our world if there was medical treatment on demand, treatments that span the common cold to gender confirmation surgeries to therapy. And, we must note, the abrupt cessation of medical "treatments" that coercively alter intersexed newborn genitals, and the cessation of psychological evaluations for gender transition. The cessation, too, of medico-juridical, State-regulated requirements for identity document changes. The cessation of public and private regulation of appearance, of social comportment, of neurotypicality, of sartorial expression. Our bodies/minds/desires refuse State, or any other, regulation.



This is not, as already alluded to, to reverse power relations. Misguided "female empowerment"-type feminism has no place in this political thought. Such feminism merely wishes to replace men at the top 1% with cis women. "[Anarcha-]Feminism doesn't mean female corporate power or a woman President; it means no corporate power and no Presidents."[14] Discourses of "leaning in," feminist-friendly capitalism, and rights-based equality that permit non-men to insinuate themselves into the still-functioning system as-is will not transform society in an anarchic way. Dismantling *all* hierarchies and authority *means an anarcha-feminist revolution.*

A solid encapsulation of anarcha-feminism, particularly as it ends where Black feminism might be said to begin, is articulated in Fionnghuala Nic Roibeaird's 2015 "A Basic Introduction to Anarcha Feminism":

We believe our freedom lies in the abolition of oppression, in its many forms; economic; racist; homophobic; sectarian; and of course, sexist, etc. Anarchists strive for a society that is community based, where we make decisions over our lives and communities directly through a system of local councils and delegates. Most importantly, we aim for a society free from coercion and oppression. With anarchism, there is no end goal—we will always have to keep an eye out for creeping inequalities and unequal power structures within interpersonal and community relations. Anarchist-feminism is the gelling together of these anarchist principles and goals with the black feminist theory of Intersectionality.[15]

Anarcha-feminism necessitates intersectionality because it, in Roibeaird's argument, is the gelling together of anarchism and the "*black feminist theory*" of intersectionality. One might

[14] Peggy Kornegger, "Anarchism: The Feminist Connection," in *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Reader*, ed. Dark Star Collective (Oakland: AK Press/Dark Star, 2012), 31.

[15] Fionnghuala Nic Roibeaird, "A Basic Introduction to Anarcha Feminism," Workers Solidarity Movement website, March 4, 2015, www.wsm.ie.

ask, then, what role Black feminist theory as a whole—beyond intersectionality (which is not to be conflated with Black feminist theory, nor is it the only contribution of Black feminist theory)—has in anarchism.

So, wherefore art thou *Black* anarcha-feminism (or would it be anarcha-Black feminism)? We see a glimpse of anarchic strains of Black feminism in the CRC's Statement, but what of those Black women who affirm their own anarchism?

To this end we must turn to Lucy Parsons. Parsons, a Black woman who was born enslaved in Montgomery, Alabama, on June 20, 1848, was a vehement anarchist, criticizing the exercise of dominative power. She "called the working-class to arms" in an intellectual and social ideology she came to by combining the tenets of socialism and anarchism—"social anarchism." This social anarchism by which Parsons lived "examines the organization of society from the point of view of an anarchist, but also views self-determination as 'conceptually connected with social equality' and emphasizes 'community and mutual aid.'"[16] Parsons's anarchism was deeply committed to the poor, though this tended sometimes to border on a Marxian "class-first" analysis that reduced all oppressions to class oppression. Nevertheless, her emphasis on impoverished people allowed her to glimpse the plight of working women, which ultimately led to an analysis of how capitalism affected women acutely.

Parsons, in Willie J. Harrell Jr.'s account, was "an ardent feminist."[17] She was adamant about alleviating the most marginalized—poor, working women—from the burdens of capitalism. Her revolution was one that dissolved the State and capitalism, which necessarily, for Parsons, was a precondition

[16] Willie J. Harrell Jr, "'I Am an Anarchist': The Social Anarchism of Lucy E. Parsons," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 13, no. 1 (2012): 2.

[17] Ibid., 11.



Blackness within the anarcho-. Intentionally and explicitly. As Blackness has historically sought political concretization, there have been many false starts and dead-ends, however beautiful and however much they have taught us: from hierarchical forms of Marxist-Leninism and Maoism in the 1960s and '70s, through various strategies of compromise and co-optation that have led to today's failed attempts to squeeze the anarchic vastness of Blackness into the straitjacket of the Democratic Party (and partisan political shuffling in general).

But, as with the shortcomings of classical anarchism, let's not waste time with condemnation, with detailing the failings of those who came before. The swinging door of Blackness is accommodating and generous. It has no bouncer and it looks to the future without wallowing in the past or present missteps of potential allies, let alone siblings in the struggle—comrades. To meet that future, I am saying that we must allow ourselves to be permeated by the anarcho-. What this looks like—well, no one can say. But, then, what *can* we say?

Blackness demands abolition. Anarchism *is* abolition. This reality has always been hidden right where we can see it, if we look from the right angle, if we do the work to tease it out. But what might it look like if we did more than tease? What would it look like to actually *build* with the destructive, abolitionist material of anarcho-Blackness? One hesitates to offer blueprints for something that cannot be restrained, so let's consider some impressions, unhinged and uncontrolled flights of fancy; let's consider.

An Anarcho-Blackness Manifesto

We must not prescribe, for prescriptions skew too rigidly, too masterfully. Anarcho-Blackness does not seek rigidity and definitiveness even in its definitional folds. It prefers instead an openness to possibilities; it prefers what ifs, perhapses, possibles, and maybes. Too many to name but, as a start…

*What if* anarcho-Blackness moved toward radical self-determination whereby we become, to ourselves and others,

to maintain, holds the capacity for "capitulations" without denigrating such efforts as characteristic of a person's or organization's entire enterprise.

In our particular moment, then, Black anarchism can be found—or sometimes be glimpsed—in movements like that of BLM, or Anarchist People of Color, or Critical Resistance, or the Audre Lorde Project, and in a range of other formal and informal groupings. The point I want to make is twofold: that organizations catering specifically to, and arising from, people who experience the forces surrounding Blackness are doing anarchic work without needing to affix the label to their mastheads. There are organizations that center Blackness that, perhaps by virtue of centering Blackness, politicize themselves anarchically. If they are centering Blackness as larger radical movements, they are given the opportunity to *think like* anarchists. To *think like* an anarchist is the aim rather than to hunker down in an ontologized "being" that one considers politically sufficient. To think like an anarchist, and thus to come into performative being by way of such thinking, is the propulsion of the anarcho-. Second, there is already (implicitly) anarchist work being done by people and movements that center Blackness, work that does not concede to a parochial, narrowly identitarian or ontological understanding of the "Black" in their Black anarchism. For these groups and individuals, Blackness is a demand, a critical modality, one in which a racialized situatedness inflects a broader concern about forces of taxonomy and how to subvert them, for racialized ontologies imposed from without are a prominent form of taxonomizing that indexes the more central concern of subverting taxonomizing gestures writ large—taxonomizing gestures that might be described, in other words, as authority.

The paths forward are many. To get anywhere, though, I think they will require that we understand, cultivate, and nurture the inherent, rhizomatic anarcho- within Blackness and



"for the creation of an anti-racist" and anti-sexist society.[18] Envisioning a world that was free of capitalist oppression, Parsons emphasized how important it was to condemn what she termed "the robbery of our sisters."[19] What this amounted to was her belief, much like the Combahee River Collective, that women were not free until women globally were free.

We get Parsons's perhaps fiercest gendered denunciation of the capitalist system in 1905. In her speech to the IWW, she remarks: "We are the slaves of slaves. We are exploited more ruthlessly than men. Whenever wages are to be reduced the capitalist class use women to reduce them."[20] Here she demonstrates how capitalism utilizes cis male supremacy to cut costs by way of women's labor. The devaluation of women's labor—not to mention the unwaged gendered labor in the household that helps sustain capitalism—makes women the "slaves of slaves." (To be sure, here Parsons requires castigation for the implicit overlooking of Black women, who themselves were literally enslaved in the plantocratic antebellum South, and the conflation of unpaid labor that is part of the economic market to the condition of racial slavery—Frank B. Wilderson's "ruse of analogy.")[21] This is one of the few times we see Parsons noting quite explicitly that "we [women] are exploited more ruthlessly than men," an acknowledgment that capitalism is fundamentally gendered,

[18] Ibid.

[19] Quoted in ibid, 13.

[20] Lucy Parsons, "Speech to the IWW in 1905," in *A Lifelong Anarchist! Selected Words and Writings of Lucy Parsons*, ed. T.S. Greer (Colorado Springs: Ignacio Hills Press, 2010), 17.

[21] Put simply, to say that the economic or wage slavery of white women is the same kind of slavery that Black peoples in the antebellum South endured confuses a mutable *condition* with an immutable *ontology*, according to Wilderson's argument. See Frank Wilderson III, "The Ruse of Analogy," in *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

that capitalism survives and thrives by leaning on cis male supremacy. An emergent anarcha-feminism.

But there was often a notable slippage that Parsons, not to mention many male Black anarchists, committed. As Ervin has remarked, "Although there will definitely be an attempt to involve women and white workers; where they are willing to cooperate, the strike would be under Black leadership because only Black workers can effectively raise those issues which most effect them."[22] The juxtaposition between "women and white workers" to "Black workers" omits Black women, an erasure so worn at this point that noticing it seems automatic. Parsons never made any explicit connections between the capitalist oppressions she railed against and how they specifically affected Black women or other women of Color. Not much about *racial* capitalism or the conditions of working Black women. She also made problematic statements that erase the import of racialized identity, including her own, often taking pains to obscure and deny her African and enslaved past.[23] She noted, for example, it is not because Black men are Black that they have faced numerous oppressions; rather, "It is because he is poor. It is because he is dependent"; it is "Because he is poorer as a class than his white wage-slave brother of the North."[24] For Parsons, white supremacy is not a thing unto itself but simply the manifestation of the ravages of capitalism, a product of class oppression. It is imperative that anarchism and "Black anarchism" be interrogated through a Black feminist lens to avoid these kinds of slippages. Reading anarchic strains in extant Black feminist

[22] Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*, PDF, 22. Originally published in 1993. Available at theanarchistlibrary.org.

[23] Detailed in Jacqueline Jones, *Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical* (New York: Basic Books, 2017). See specifically page 56.

[24] Lucy Parsons, "The Negro: Let Him Leave Politics to the Politician and Prayers to the Preacher," in *Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality and Solidarity* ed. G. Aherns. (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2004), 54.



people's government is no government at all—it is, in a slant and perhaps admittedly an insufficient way, anarchist society. Revolutionary people's government, with its attention to the most marginalized and care work for oppressed people, is a proto-nongovernmental government, one in which the organization of care, aid, participation, and non-authority is named under the nominative "revolutionary people's government." STAR is making a key distinction between *this* government, the one that fucks people over and treats them like scum, and a different kind of government, which might simply be an organizational method or characterization of modes of life that arise in the jettisoning of "this government." "This government" is the State; "revolutionary people's government" is anarchism, it is anarchy.

…

"In an Anarchist society," writes Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, "prisons would be done away with, along with courts and police…and be replaced with community-run programs and centers interested solely with human regeneration and social training, rather than custodial supervision in a[n] inhuman lockup."[19] This eradication of prisons need not be a one-and-done gesture, that is, the razing of all prisons in one fell swoop. Abolition, to be sure, is not interested in mere reform and holds in contempt those who seek modest proposals such as having *some* prisons for the *really* bad apples. Abolition is not about that life. At the same time, it is acknowledged that there are steps toward abolition; there are, in other words, things to be done between now and the dismantling of all prisons, and the things done in the interim may not have the look of complete abolition but are nonetheless in service of that end. In other words, I want to shy ever so modestly away from political purity as a requisite for affiliation; anarchism, I want

[19] Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution* (The Anarchist Library, 1993), 37.

subjectivity. The "STAR House kids," as Rivera and Johnson's mentees were called, were gifted Rivera and Johnson's love. Their "primary goal was to help kids on the street find food, clothing, and a place to live" along with eventually "establishing a school for kids who'd never learned to read and write because their formal education was interrupted because of discrimination and bullying."[17] This is nothing but anarchic love. This is what anarcho- looks like, irrespective of a political affiliation.

STAR wanted something akin to anarchism; or, they lived and moved through the world propelled by the anarcho-. As a concluding testament, we might turn to the ninth point in the list of demands that STAR published in 1971. It reads: "We want a revolutionary peoples' government, where transvestites, street people, women, homosexuals, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and all oppressed people are free, and not fucked over by this government who treat us like the scum of the earth and kill us off like flies, one by one, and throw us into jail to rot."[18] What they envisioned from the experiential and social modality of their transness, their queerness, their Blackness and Latinxness was a different kind of "government." Surely, an anarchist might question the yearning for any government at all, as governments operate through the means and intentions of the State. It could be argued, however, that STAR's vision is not "governmental" in this sense, that "a revolutionary people's government" is a radically re-understood approach to governance that bears few, if any, of the filigree and organs of a government in the traditional sense. For houseless, trans, gay, and otherwise oppressed people of Color to be free in fact necessitates the tearing down of "government," thus the revolutionary

[17] Susan Stryker, *Transgender History* (Berkeley: Seal Press, 2008), 86–87.

[18] Quoted in Stephen L. Cohen, *The Gay Liberation Movement in New York: "An Army of Lovers Cannot Fail,"* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 37.



texts like the CRC's Statement; and noting the similarities in the end goals of anarchism and Black feminism, namely skepticism toward the benevolence of the State, non-coercion, dismantling of hierarchies, and the like, may bring us closer to actualizing the radical world transformation we seek.

…

After all, what good is an insurrection if some of us are left behind?

—J. Rogue and Abbey Volcano, "Insurrection at the Intersections"

Black feminist anarchism borrows indirectly from the spirit of the 1992 International Anarcha-Feminist meeting in Paris organized by the Women's Commission of the *Fédération Anarchiste Française* and commits to the "anarchization" of feminist theory and praxis by way of a refusal of "the totalitarianism of sisterhood."[25] The discourse of a universal sisterhood has long erased the specificities of Black women, engaging in a cis, white, heterosexual, middle-class solipsism that assumed the provincial experiences of certain women as the experience of all women. Black feminism simultaneously interrupts this endeavor and, on its own, acts as a perpetual politicization of the gifts of the outside and unincorporable. Allowing Black feminism and anarchism to converse brings about the anarchization of anarcha-feminism by highlighting the shortcomings of much anarcha-feminism, and the anarchic valences of Black feminism.

Black feminist anarchist Zoé Samudzi asserts rightly "that the analysis of Black feminism has a particularly deep resonance with anarchist understandings of mechanisms of power, which similarly foreground a linking across all systems of

[25] See Cinzia Arruzza, "Of What Is Anarcha-Feminism the Name?," in *The Anarchist Turn*, eds., Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici, and Simon Critchley (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 111–24.

domination."[26] Both Black feminism and anarchism share a deep skepticism or outright rejection of various mechanisms of power, which are all predicated not merely on a nebulous or materialized State or authority but are always embedded in—and imposed onto us by—white, cis male, and heteronormative frameworks of organizing the social order. Struggle against authoritarianism, as a firm pillar in anarchist theory and praxis, is strengthened by Black feminist theory, which promotes a "shift in orientation away from a more fragmented conceptualization of struggle, and toward the idea of our struggles as interdependent."[27] This is anarchism anarchically pushed, as it were. Long have Black people been tied to a communist Marxism, but such an automatic linking and erasure of Black anarchists de-emphasizes how Black feminist assertions of the interlocking oppressions befalling Black women *is* an anarchic framework. Or, at least anarchism "anarchized." There are resonances of this in classical anarchist texts and thinkers. For example, Bakunin writes in his 1867 "Solidarity in Liberty: The Workers' Path to Freedom":

What all other men [*sic*] are is of the greatest importance to me. However independent I may imagine myself to be, however far removed I may appear from mundane considerations by my social status, I am enslaved to the misery of the meanest member of society. The outcast is my daily menace. Whether I am Pope, Czar, Emperor, or even Prime Minister, I am always the creature of their circumstance, the conscious product of their ignorance, want and clamoring. They are in slavery, and I, the superior one, am enslaved in consequence.[28]

[26] SoleCast, "Solecast: An Interview with Zoe Samudzi on 'As Black As Resistance,'" *It's Going Down* blog, August 25, 2018, itsgoingdown.org.

[27] See FoxAlive, *Zoé Samudzi—On A Black Feminist Anarchism (OC Anarchist Bookfair 2017)*, video, accessed June 21, 2019, www.youtube.com.

[28] Mikhail Bakunin, "Solidarity in Liberty: The Workers' Path to Freedom," in *Bakunin's Writings*, ed. Guy A. Aldred (Indore, India: Modern Publishers, 1947), 20. Available at dwardmac.pitzer.edu.



most marginalized. She could not abide order or exclusion; her politics and orientation toward life always moved to include, not exclude, to increase participation in decisions that mattered, not decrease it. STAR House became a shelter, of sorts, for houseless youth, impoverished people of Color, street queens, and others seeking community with people who have also been marginalized. Rivera, and Johnson, resisted assimilation into mainstream gay organizations that mimicked State operations of nation-building, exclusion, hierarchy, and normativity (not to mention implicit white supremacy and cisnormativity).

Beyond a basic commitment to survival, STAR could be primarily characterized by *defiance*. STAR and its members were defiant as they opposed numerous systems and discourses that sought to police and discipline them as poor, as of Color, as queer, as trans, as queens, and as sex workers. It is the fundamental operation of the State and racial/gender capitalism to impose rigidity and order onto sociality, quelling movement that deviates from the tenets they inscribe. The violent normativity—which is to say, normativity as such—of centralized and privatized atmospheric control that regulates sociality expunges non-adherents to purported birth sex or the gender binary. *Sex assignation and demarcation within the gender binary is inherent to, and compulsory under, the State.* Thus STAR's opposition to the State manifested deeply in their expressions of transness. Put differently: sufficient anarchism necessitates a trans relation to the State.

As well, STAR expressly demonstrated the pervasiveness of mutual caregiving in trans communities among trans and nonbinary people, sharing not only food but tips for survival, ways to move throughout the city, and methods to navigate the terrain of their identities. Rivera and Johnson practiced anarchism in excess of the name; they practiced the propelling anarcho-, bringing to bear on their caregiving the importance of racialized and gendered (specifically, trans and nonbinary)

of politics found in avowed anarchist organizations prior to the start of the Vietnam War. In this vein, the mid-twentieth century's eruptive counterculture of the New Left might be described "not implausibly, as 'the new anarchism'" and as "anarchist in its deepest impulses."[14]

The Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries was formed by Sylvia Rivera, a Latinx trans drag queen, and Marsha P. Johnson, a Black trans drag queen. Rivera and Johnson started STAR after feelings of estrangement with the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA). GLF and GAA were not radical enough for Rivera and Johnson, in part because of their refusal to combat the police, and their lack of militancy with respect to the needs of those who were then called poor street queens, or impoverished queer and trans houseless sex workers in a contemporary lexicon. Following the Stonewall rebellions of June 1969, Rivera joined gay rights organizations only to be treated hostilely with transantagonism and racism. These organizations very often "willingly replicated exclusionary, nationalist notions of good citizenship," valorizing the criteria of the State.[15] Importantly, such a Statist outlook with respect to Rivera took the form of "deploring her rude anarchism as inimical to order."[16] Rivera was uncompromising in her quest to help the

[14] Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 542–43; Mitchell Goodman, "Introduction," in *The Movement Towards a New America: The Beginnings of a Long Revolution* (New York: Knopf; 1970), vii (cited in Marshall). This is not to say, as Marshall cautions, that all Leftists in the mid-twentieth century could be rightly subsumed under the ambit of anarchism. C. Wright Mills "merely looked for reforms within a more enlightened form of capitalism" and many New Left leaders "rarely challenged the fundamental premises of late capitalist society." Too, the Black Panthers adhered largely to the Marxism of Mao and Frantz Fanon, a Marxism that sought to maintain (though in a reformed way) the State (542).

[15] Gabriel Mayora, "Her Stonewall Legend: The Fictionalization of Sylvia Rivera in Nigel Finch's Stonewall," *Centro Journal* 30, no. 2 (2018): 461.

[16] Martin B. Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993), 236.



Bakunin is arguing a radical position. He asserts, in no uncertain terms, that anyone else's suffering means that he suffers. Though he had a physical stake in many struggles, he did not, however, have a physical stake in every struggle, namely the struggles the likes of the Black or enslaved peoples of the Western world. Nevertheless, he articulated a radical commitment to the marginalized, an identification with the oppressed and marginalized even. Bakunin writes here, essentially, that until the lowest are free and unfettered by oppression—that is, in the CRC's formulation, Black women—neither he, nor the Pope, nor the Czar, nor the emperor, can be free. His and others' freedom rests on the memory-foam pillow of the freedom of the meekest. After linking this quote to the CRC's perspective on interrelated and interlocking struggle, Hillary Lazar notes that foundational anarchist principles of reciprocity, mutual aid, interdependence, and direct action are the "other mainstays in both Black feminist and anarchist practice."[29]

Samudzi is interested in the centuries-long lineage of anarchic insurrection that can be found on the slave ship, on the plantation, in maroon communities, up to more contemporary uprisings against law enforcement (that white masculine arm of the State). She is engaging in historical *theorizing* of Black feminist anarchism because imagining a radically transformed world is a deeply theoretical endeavor; it is an "incredibly theoretical exercise" that is "creat[ing a] community that is safe for Black women, for Black trans women…because that requires that we have all of these conversations and start to create material politics around misogynoir and trans misogynoir, around disability, around the relationships that men have with one another and the ways that they demand and hold one another accountable."[30] Imagining something radically other than a so-

[29] Hillary Lazar, "Until All Are Free: Black Feminism, Anarchism, and Interlocking Oppression," *IAS* blog, December 16, 2016, anarchiststudies.org.

[30] "Black Feminist Anarchism."

ciality reliant on the State and its authorities requires thinking about a space in which Black women across a range of gender expressions can be safe—because, lest we forget, the State operates under the assumption of the non-importance of Black women's safety. There is no way anarchism can do anarchism to the fullest if it does not heed Black feminist theory. If anarchism seeks to actualize *that* world, it must focus on the plight of Black women, as that is a nexus that holds precisely the very systems anarchism needs to understand and destroy.

Samudzi goes in on capitalism. As a structuring force of contemporary society, capitalism harbors many of the systems anarchists seek to combat. But Black feminist anarchism's response to capitalism, Samudzi argues, needs to be described in

the way that Cedric Robinson was describing it in terms of being racial Capitalism, in terms of understanding the contours of capitalism being shaped by, at least in the United States or globally through colonialism, through the genocide of indigenous communities and the expropriation of their land and resources, through slavery and—in the United States—the afterlife of slavery…If we're not understanding specifically the ways in which economic violence is inextricably linked to racialized violence and commodification of non-white bodies, then we actually have no understanding of how capitalism works.[31]

Though I would wager to say that this is implicit in Samudzi's argument, I need to also make explicit "*the indispensable role played by gendered, unpaid work in capitalist society*," that "*capitalist societies are also by definition wellsprings of gender oppression.* Far from being accidental, sexism is hardwired into [capitalist societies'] very structure."[32]

[31] Ibid.

[32] Fraser, Arruzza, and Bhattacharya, *Feminism for the 99%*, 8, 20–21. Emphasis in original.



tion and Leftist politics had as their aim the toppling of white supremacy's racist power structure (as the Black Panthers were fond of terming it) and "abolishing the oppressive institutions that reinforced traditional sex roles and…freeing individuals from the constraints of a sex/gender system that locked them into mutually exclusive roles of homosexual/heterosexual and feminine/masculine."[12]

This coalitional drive navigates through the apogee of the anarcho-, as its promiscuous and politically driven coming together rested on a common desire to topple the state. And in this is a radically rewound and remixed Blackness that concretizes Ashanti Alston's inquiries:

How can we bring all these different strands together? How can we bring in the Rastas? How can we bring in the people on the west coast who are still fighting the government strip-mining of indigenous land? How can we bring together all of these peoples to begin to create a vision of America that is for all of us?

Oppositional thinking and oppositional risks are necessary. I think that is very important right now and one of the reasons why I think anarchism has so much potential to help us move forward. It is not asking of us to dogmatically adhere to the founders of the tradition, but to be open to whatever increases our democratic participation, our creativity, and our happiness.[13]

And this effort to bring together, to organize and be-with one another in anarchic assemblages that aim to bring down racial and gender capitalism is, as the title of the source of the above quote illuminates brilliantly, Ashanti Alston's *Black anarchism*.

The politics of that era, with its increasing radicalism and deviation from State imperatives, mirrored very closely the kind

[12] Jerimarie Liesengang, "Tyranny of the State and Trans Liberation," 93–94.

[13] Ashanti Alston, "Black Anarchism," 8.

toward—those Black futures Kara Keeling finds harbored in the ungovernable and anarchic. There are people who have lived, and are living, this life. I find some of those people in the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) precisely because it foregrounded Black and Brown queer and trans life through anarchic practices; I find some of those people in the long tradition of Black organizations doing anarchic work. Hence, in this section I want to home in on the movement politics of STAR and the longer *durée* of Black people doing and thinking anarchic shit as examples of how feminist movements that center Black queer and trans people display anarchic valences and tendencies; indeed, how these organizations and people retool what anarchism can mean and how it might circulate.

The mid-twentieth century is when Left politics really intensified. Opposition to the Vietnam War, and civil rights, and Black Power, and gay liberation, and women's liberation all converged in the 1960s and '70s to create an ethos of radicalism. They put forth a profound sentiment that things needed to change. While they all expressed the need for change differently, emphasizing different aspects of social life and expressing disdain at times for the emphases of other movements, they all nonetheless coalesced into a prevailing atmosphere of Leftist radicalism and a departure from the status quo. A general sense of anti-authoritarianism characterized this "New Left." Members of the Gay Liberation Front collaborated with the Young Lords, who collaborated with the Black Panthers. There is a certain liberatory logic that pervades these organizations, and while that logic was muted and intensified in different ways, manifesting in some sexual liberation organizations being racist and some racial liberation movements being sexist for example, they all nonetheless are implementing anarchic inflections, I contend. The anti-authoritarian spirit, albeit unevenly realized and by no means universal, demanded full liberation for all oppressed communities, and these libera-



Capitalist exploitation is experienced through, and seeks out the vectors of, race and gender. Bringing Blackness and gender to the fore in discussions of the centralized regime of capitalism and governance gives anarchist analysis a more robust texture.

Perhaps few Black people, and even fewer Black women, identify as anarchists because of how radical Leftism has been mired in racist and sexist discourses seeking to dissuade marginalized demographics from finding coalitions that strengthen the possibility of their liberation. The tone of this dissuasion was set, Samudzi says, by moderate Black folks and white folks warning Black communities against radical "outside agitators." Such warnings today harken back to "the language that these white, southern lawmakers and politicians would use to prevent Black communities from doing work with white, communist organizers or anti-racist organizers."[33] Her Black feminist anarchism mends this wedge being driven into these politics to stave off interracial coalition building. "Black and Brown folks having a more thorough understanding of these kinds of radical, anti-capitalist class interests" is the aim of her Black feminist anarchism, and must be the aim of anyone's anarchism.[34]

…

"Her way of living was nothing short of anarchy," writes Saidiya Hartman in *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval*.[35] What might anarchism be if we understood the small movements, the micro-politics—the "collective assemblages of enunciation" that "flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations, the resonance apparatus, and the overcoding machine"; that which brings politicality into play on different scales and in different forms—of Black girls

[33] "Black Feminist Anarchism."

[34] Ibid.

[35] Saidiya V. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 230.

as subjective anarchic enunciations of other modes of life?[36] What could anarchism be if the go-to theorists were the various incarnations of Hartman's "her," a Black girl?

We have a slightly altered definition of anarchy and anarchism in Hartman. What if we embraced it as our start to anarchist politics? She writes:

To embrace the anarchy—the complete program of disorder, the abiding desire to change the world, the tumult, upheaval, open rebellion…is to attend to other forms of social life, which cannot be reduced to transgression or to nothing at all, and which emerge in the world marked by negation, but exceed it.[37]

Anarchy is an open rebellion. It cannot be closed, nor should it be closed, because its openness is what gives it its anarchic tenor for accepting the radical, the unknown that might arise when all we've known is dismantled. Tending to other forms of social life makes us attentive to the "lower frequencies." That is where something else might happen, something other than this. Conversing with Bakunin's assertion that, within anarchism, "the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too," Hartman does not wish to dwell in negation ("the passion for destruction") but emphasizes how that negation is exceeded in what we ultimately hope for—to create something new.

Like the ungoverned space of the undercommons where the doors swing open for anyone, "The beautiful anarchy of the corner," where Black life conspired to make other things imaginable, "refused no one."[38] In the anarchic ghettos where Black girls played and lived, they moved to the rhythm of another groove of life. Everyone could stay here; this was truly nonhierarchical, non-coercive inasmuch as they stayed here be-

[36] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7, 199, 216.

[37] Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, 62.

[38] Ibid, 87.



is, as Uri Gordon details, politically prefigurative—its means are consistent with its ends, performing the kinds of politics and worlds it seeks for its ends.[10] The shared commitments in abolitionism and anarchism are often cast as unrealistic, too radical, or pipe-dreamy, but the castigations of realism and reform and measure are in actuality rhetorical gestures to preserve hegemony. Indeed, "Abolitionist politics is not about what is possible, but about making the impossible a reality," as *Abolition* writes in their manifesto.[11] *Of course*, it is assumed by those proponents of "realism" that we *must* have at least some people who are incarcerated. *Of course* we must punish people who do egregious things, a world without punishment as the operative measure being a ridiculous one. Abolitionism and anarchism reject that "of course."

…

The ungovernable, anarchic here and now harbors Black futures.

—Kara Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*

We are already doing anarchist politics, now, living in our coalitions and communes that go by different names. Those ways of relating to one another on different, anarchic grounds is the way we live, now, the Black anarchism we shuffle

[10] See Uri Gordon, "Prefigurative Politics between Ethical Practice and Absent Promise," *Political Studies* 66, no. 2 (2018): 521–37.

[11] "Manifesto for Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics," *Abolition* blog, accessed January 18, 2020, abolitionjournal.org. They go on to write: "Ending slavery appeared to be an impossible challenge for Sojourner Truth, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, John Brown, Harriet Tubman, and others, and yet they struggled for it anyway. Today we seek to abolish a number of seemingly immortal institutions, drawing inspiration from those who have sought the abolition of all systems of domination, exploitation, and oppression—from Jim Crow laws and prisons to patriarchy and capitalism… Recognizing that the institutions we fight against are both interconnected and unique, we refuse to take an easy path of reveling in abstract ideals while accepting mere reforms in practice. Instead, we seek to understand the specific power dynamics within and between these systems so we can make the impossible possible; so we can bring the entire monstrosity down."

ded in racism and sexism via assumed ownership over racialized and/or non-masculinely-gendered subjects, circumscription of who is permitted to appear in public space, regulation of movement and inhabitation of private space, and extraction of surplus goods and resources (be it labor, sex, sexual labor, time, etc.). In short, again following Rodriguez, abolition

interven[es] in patriarchal and masculinist constructions of freedom/self-determination and obliterat[es] liberal-optimistic paradigms of incrementalist, reformist social justice. Abolition, in its radical totality, consists of constant, critical assessment of the economic, ecological, political, cultural, and spiritual conditions for the security and liberation of subjected peoples' fullest collective being and posits that revolutions of material, economic, and political systems compose the necessary but not definitive or completed conditions for abolitionist praxis.[8]

Substituting "anarchism" for "abolition" might yield nearly the exact same outcomes.

Having parsed the connection between anarchism and abolitionism, and conveyed the links of abolitionism to (queer and feminist) Blackness, it is plain that there is a justifiable relation between anarchism and (queer and feminist) Blackness. The utility in teasing, albeit briefly, this relation is to provide a foundation for this chapter's emphasis on social movements and organizations. The people and organizations I will detail below have as their basis abolition, broadly conceived. They delineate abolition as more than mere negation; abolition is characterized as radically imaginative and generative, creative and world-building (again Bakunin's anarchism rears here: "the passion for destruction is a creative passion, too"). Abolitionism is a radical, anti-State, "socially productive communal (and community-building) practice."[9] It

[8] Dylan Rodriguez, "Abolition As Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword," *Harvard Law Review* 132 (2019): 1578–79.

[9] Ibid, 1576.



cause they were permitted to "resist the pull of roaming, hustling, and searching," those endeavors they felt compelled to partake in because racial capitalism did not want them to "stay briefly, catch their breath."[39] Here, gatherings were promiscuous; there were no criteria for entrance, only that you lived anarchically, which is to say you let the space fill you up when you got there. And when you got there, filled with the space, "strangers became intimates" because they shared the space and it didn't matter where you came from, only that you lived with the anarchy that provided insight into where y'all might go.[40]

"What did untested militants and smug ideologues know of [Sojourner] Truth and [Harriet] Tubman? Unlike unruly colored women, they failed to recognize that experience was capable of opening up new ways, yielding a thousand new forms and improvisations."[41] Truth and Tubman, Black women who knew a thing or two about anarchism. Because they experienced it in a way that more notable anarchists might not have, perhaps could not have. Definitely could not have. While they talked about the State in a way that did not seem to match how the State portrayed itself, Tubman and Truth made plain how the State got inside you and made you think anarchic thoughts, do anarchic things because you just couldn't take it anymore. Their bodies theorized an anarchic rejection of the terrors of/that are the State because they did not divide the State from the intimacy of their corporeality—they couldn't, because the State was the estate on which they found themselves captive, the State was the man who came into their quarters and violated their bodies in the night. Perhaps they dreamed of but could not know another world, because if it was indeed another world it would necessitate

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid, 230.

the troubling, the obliteration, or maybe a subtler dissolving, of the limbs of hegemony. These Black women—corporealized manifestations of, but not reducible to, Black feminism—show that anarchism needs to expand its thinking, see where its kin lie by seriously "recount[ing] the struggle against servitude, captivity, property, and enclosure that began in the barracoon and continued on the ship, where some fought, some jumped, some refused to eat. Others set the plantation and the fields on fire, poisoned the master."[42] Anarchism's history goes there, where the "fathers" of the term did not think to go. So Black anarchism, anarcho-Blackness and its attending, its embedded, Black feminism, is a misreading of anarchist key texts, because "Only a misreading of the key texts of anarchism could ever imagine a place for wayward colored girls."[43]

Hartman once more, in illustrious, anarchic prose on illustrious, anarchic life:

An everyday choreography of the possible unfolded in the collective movement, which was headless and spilling out in all directions, strollers drifted en masse, like a swarm or the swell of an ocean; it was a long poem of black hunger and striving. It was the wild rush from house service on the part of all who [could] scramble or run. It was a manner of walking that threatened to undo the city, steal back the body, break all the windows. The people ambling through the block and passing time on corners and hanging out on front steps were an assembly of the wretched and the visionary, the indolent and the dangerous. All the modalities sing a part in this chorus, and the refrains were of infinite variety. The rhythm and stride announced the possibilities, even if most were fleeting and too often unrealized. The map of what might be was not restricted to the literal trail of Esther's footsteps or anyone else's, and this unregulated movement encouraged the belief that something

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid, 231.



bears a striking resemblance to the extractive and exploitative relationship of anti-Black sociality to Blackness and Black subjects.

Abolitionism is a visionary and political praxis and modality that struggles against the regimes of capitalism, white supremacy, heteronormative patriarchy, and cissexism. It is a daring rooted in a Black liberatory history of maroons—Black Proto-anarchists, one might say—"who dared to imagine their lives without shackles."[7] The desire to deshackle from any and all fetters imagines one's being-in-the-world as anarchic—no gods, no masters, the old saying goes. To deshackle oneself marks a radical act of freedom in the broadest sense, a way of living not in defiance but in refusal and subversion of the State. It is imperative, as alluded to in previous chapters, to understand the State not merely as an institutional entity; it is a relation. And more, the State manifests an underlying logic of carcerality—which is to say, the bedrock ground for intelligibility and, at a more fundamental level, reality; logic as the very grammar by which things are expressible and understandable and, indeed, possible. This forces many social relations to depend on various mechanisms of confinement, punishment, capture, or circumscription. Anarchism is a deshackling from capitalism and the State and its attending conscripts; anarchism is a kind of abolitionism.

Like Dylan Rodriguez, I would argue that abolitionism "is inseparable from its roots in (feminist, queer) Black liberation." Black liberation's queer and feminist fundament is clarified in abolition's departure from the tenets of white and cis male supremacy, as they uphold capitalism and carcerality. Logics of carcerality, by which I mean the penchant to proliferate capture and expropriation along racist and sexist axes, are embed-

[7] Patrisse Cullors, "Abolition And Reparations: Histories of Resistance, Transformative Justice, and Accountability," *Harvard Law Review* 132 (2019): 1685.

all who are oppressed and subject to hierarchical tyranny. In short, movements for Black and queer and trans liberation are "indeed…radical movement[s] inspired by tenants [*sic*; tenets] of the anarchist tradition often demonized by state and corporate power."[6]

…

Prison, a social protection? What monstrous mind ever conceived such an idea? Just as well say that health can be promoted by a widespread contagion.

—Emma Goldman, "Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure"

The undercurrent of many contemporary, and even some not so contemporary, social justice movements that carry out the Black Radical Tradition is a marked abolitionism. Kropotkin—the poster-boy of classical anarchism—himself expressed a clear desire to end imprisonment, condemning carcerality's dehumanizing tendencies, advocating for education programs for the formerly incarcerated, and firmly supporting the reintroduction of prison populations into general society: in a nutshell, our boy Pyotr was an abolitionist. Abolitionism, I want to argue, is fundamentally anarchic, not because avowed anarchists argue for abolition in name but because abolitionism, with its complete extrication from the State, from racial and gender capitalism, and from carcerality, mobilizes the anarcho- I have argued for throughout this text. The prefixal "anarcho-" describes a world-making, a creative imaginative praxis reliant upon a pervasive *un-* that erects as much, even more, than it destroys. Agreeing that abolitionism is an anarchic modality brings to the fore an unaddressed Blackness in anarchism inasmuch as it makes plain the historical proximity of Blackness to abolitionism and thus anarchism; and it forces a recognition of capitalism's exploitative and extractive relationship to "free" labor that

[6] Joaquin A. Pedroso, "Black Lives Matter or, How to Think Like an Anarchist," *Class, Race, and Corporate Power* 4, no. 2 (2016).



great could happen despite everything you knew, despite the ruin and the obstacles. What might be was unforeseen, and improvisation was the art of reckoning with chance and accident. Hers was an errant path cut through the heart of Harlem in search of the open city, l'ouverture, inside the ghetto. Wandering and drifting was how she engaged the world and how she understood it; this repertoire of practices composed her knowledge. Her thoughts were indistinguishable from the transient rush and flight of black folks in this city-within-the-city. The flow of it carried everyone along, propelled and encouraged all to keep on moving.[44]

A coalitional, collective quotidian choreography of possibility. That is not anarchism understood in the traditional sense; that is not anarchism begotten merely by adherence to what Kropotkin has preached. It is anarchism that is choreographed through the way we move and think about our bodies. Anarchic subjectivity in that we come into being through an *anarchy of becoming*, a way to exist in the world where our existence is predicated on how we aid each other mutually, refuse the violence of the State, dismantle hierarchies, concede to a non-coerced ethic (not *right*, with all its judiciary baggage) of opacity.

This choreography is "headless"—rulerless, without ruler, *an-archist*—and it spills out. The spilling makes it hard for the State to clamp down the movement. Such a Black feminist anarchism cannot be contained by inclusion into any organization; it has to be a modality, a "manner of walking that threaten[s] to undo the city, steal back the body, break all the windows" because that is where anarchy happens, in the theft of that which should never have been property, in the destruction of the State, in the ultimate undoing of the miniaturized State—the city. The quotidian is where it's at, and Black women and Black feminism alert us to that everyday

[44] Ibid, 234–35.

life. In continuing to "illuminate and inspire the quotidian struggles that black women must carry on to make a way out of no way for ourselves and other black women and girls," the anarchic arteries of Black feminism emphasize the necessity to "still tend those discursive gardens, which excite and move us to action and change and teach us the value of women's lives and living."[45] We must ensure the life and livelihood of those small moments, those moments that sustain life that is lived on the margins in that "assembly of the wretched and the visionary." Those moments populated by the Black and women, the Black and femme. The moments that glimpse some other way of life, the "no way" out of which a way is made by Black women.

This unregulated, ambulatory movement flexes with an arrhythmic rhythm that reverberates on another scale. Another frequency to which we need to attune ourselves. Despite everything we know and all the horrors that lay about us, the something else is what we look to cultivate through our movements and actions, thoughts and desires, gardens and pots of food. There is something deeply apt about the Dark Star Collective's decision to title their anarcha-feminist anthology *Quiet Rumours*. Instead of the brash anarchic exclamations of anarchists past, something quiet invites a whole host of reverberatory tremors to unmoor instantiated ways of life. We might not hear it at first, but that doesn't mean it's not there, working, giving us an anarchic world to look forward to. It is unheard and unseen because its sights and sounds have refused the structuring logic of the State and hierarchy. Hartman's "she" roams the world with a knowledge begotten by drifting, without the rule of roads and paths. There is a different city within this city, a city that is not recognized as a city—because

[45] Cheryl Clarke, "But Some of Us Are Brave and the Transformation of the Academy: Transformation?," *Signs* 35, no. 4 (2010): 786–87, doi.org.



anarchism of someone like Kuwasi Balagoon seeks to get rid of borders: "it seems to me that Anarchy would have to be anti-imperialist, that there's no other ideology that refuses to recognize borders," he says in his July 28, 1984 letter from prison.[5] The link between anarchism and Black Power/the Black Panthers is given more strength by that fact that many of the key figures in expressed Black anarchism—Ashanti Alston, Kuwasi Balagoon, Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, Ojore Lutalo—were members of the Panthers. Although it is crucial to note that these thinkers and activists, and the organizations they were a part of, do not necessarily possess the "right" conception of (Black) anarchism, they can be thought of as instances of the work Blackness does to anarchism.

This concluding chapter takes aim at movement goals, such as abolition and tending to the material needs of the most marginalized, to round out what anarcho-Blackness can and has looked like. As I think explicitly about abolition, I am using as its definition, simply, the political strategy of *eradicating* rather than *reforming* systems, discourses, and institutions that structure life and livability. These systems (e.g. prisons, the gender binary, etc.) have at their foundation an ongoing violence that masquerades as banal or, worse, natural and good. Abolition, then, promotes a dismantling of these systems in search of life and livability by other means not predicated on violence. In meditating on abolition's relationship to anarchism, STAR, and *thinking like* an anarchist, I want to highlight the beautifully sporadic embrace of free association, direct participation, and radical democracy (what might also be termed non-hierarchical relationality); the emphasis on consent rather than coercion, and on self- and communal "governance" (or, a conception of organization); the advancement of direct action; the advocacy for the dismantling of all hierarchies and expressed global solidarity with

[5] Quoted in ibid, 679.

acting that future."[1] Anarchism, too, "has traditionally drawn upon ideas of coherence between theory and practice," which is to say that doing theory is a critical praxis, that what we seek to engender in the world on a material level is itself a profound theoretical apparatus.[2]

Movement-oriented politics often orbit around the concept of domination. They also, though, orbit around conceptions of world-making and futurity—that is, not only the plights of the current moment but also the world in which we envision ourselves after and in excess of the plight. Radical feminist, queer, and Black liberationist movements from the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) to Black Lives Matter (BLM) to Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) all, because of their resistance to domination and imagining of a radical futurity, bear affinities with anarchism. In line with the recalibrating work of the Black anarchism expressed in this text, one might argue that Black movements like Black Power and the BPP—though at times, from some of their more Marxist-Leninist perspectives, critical of anarchism proper—are anarchic despite not having been affiliated with anarchism, precisely because "Black anarchism did not originate within anarchism, but external to it."[3] The Black anarchism of, say, the Black Panthers is one in which they "blended anarchist positions with their revolutionary nationalism," though there is a distinction to be made: Black anarchists do not hold on to a nationalist conception of an exclusionary, bordered State, as Marxist-Leninist Black Panthers do.[4] Nationalism should be understood as anathema to anarchist sentiments, and the Black

[1] Joshua Myers, "Lecture Notes: Ontologically Total," *Speaktomekhet* blog, September 19, 2017, speaktomekhet.wordpress.com.

[2] Richard J. White, Simon Springer, and Marcelo Lopes de Souza, eds., *The Practice of Freedom: Anarchism, Geography, and the Spirit of Revolt* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2016), 2.

[3] Dana M. Williams, "Black Panther Radical Factionalization," 679.

[4] Ibid.



it isn't one. It is something else, another kind of sociality, an anarchic sociality where we can live free.

# Unhinged

> Let's dynamite the sex and gender binomial as a political practice.
>
> —The WhoreDykeBlackTransFeminist Network, "Manifesto for the Trans-Feminist Insurrection"

Put simply, the gender binary is part and parcel of capitalism's division and devaluation of gendered labor, and socio-political gender transgression marks a distinctly anarchic practice. I have argued up to this point that capitalism—the Marxist's analytic baby—is not reducible to simply patriarchy, much less all society's ills reducible to *it*. A further question remains though, in typical academic one-upsmanship [*sic*] fashion: is capitalism reducible to cis patriarchy? That is, where are the trans people in all of this, the genderqueer and nonbinary, the agendered and gender neutral?

The fact that this or that particular critique of patriarchy is unaccompanied by an adequately lengthy meditation on the interstices of the gender binary does not automatically make its entire socio-political apparatus suspect. Often, stating that a theoretical mode omits a marginalized group is seen as sufficiently rigorous scholarship and argumentation. I find this trite, to be frank. Surely any narrowness in who gets included among the marginalized has deep implications, hence the always-necessary acknowledgment of the gender normative assumptions of many critiques of patriarchy. But the discussion can't stop there. In this chapter, I will move beyond the practice of pointing out insufficiencies latent in critiques of "patriarchy" that are made without



# Uncontrolled

> Instead of eye-for-eye punishment, there should be restitution to the victims, their families or society. No revenge, such as the death penalty will bring a murder victim back, nor will long-term imprisonment serve either justice or the protection of society. After all, prisons are only human trashcans for those that society has discarded as worthless. No sane and just society would adopt such a course. Society makes criminals and must be responsible for their treatment. White capitalist society is itself a crime, and is the greatest teacher of corruption and violence.
>
> —Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin, *Anarchism and the Black Revolution*

Anarchism has long seen the establishment of an organized movement as a necessity for bringing about an anarchist society. Direct action and committed, sustained activism often manifest in organizations in order to have a critical cadre of bodies willing to put in work for the movement's goals. As movement-oriented, or at least oriented toward understanding the importance of collectives and communes with substantive numbers to stave off political quashing, anarchism bears deep affinities to Black queer and trans movements to bring about social justice. Surely there have been many demographics who have organized in order to change society, so movement orientation is not unique to Black people. My point is that the Black Radical Tradition has consistently rejected the seemingly stark divide between theory and practice, refusing the false assumption that "one could separate the articulation of ideas that would govern how we envision the future from actually en-

women would not necessarily lead us in the right direction) but understands them as ways of inhabiting social and political space. (White) Masculinity has oriented us toward war, coercion, violence, force, and the like; transness, as what Kai M. Green calls in the first instance "a reorientation to orientation," provides another way of (un)structuring sociality.[19] It is this radical reorientation to which the prefixal anarcho- refers, a departure from the normative, a normativity characterized by the white masculinity of a hierarchical, coercive State.

Perhaps, then, what we are striving for is another genre of life. What we have now is one saturated with a stultifying violence. Looking to other and otherwise ways of life being lived outside the State gives us different genres of life and sociality. The Sylvia Wynter-esque "genre of Man" that has structured both our world and how we relate to others is a racialized and gendered violence that disallows—indeed, instantiates the violent exclusion of—the validity of modes of life and embodiment outside its constitutive whiteness and cis masculinity. The "White Man" is an illusion that, per Wynter, "we no longer need" because it "inter alia threaten[s] the livability of our species' planetary habitat."[20] The Black and trans of our anarchic pursuits, the anarcho-, is our guide "to remak[ing], consciously and collectively, the new society in which our existential referent 'we in the horizon of humanity'"—those who mobilize the masterless and rulerless anarcho- of the Black and trans of our ante- and anti-matter—"will all now live."[21]

[19] Kai M. Green, "Troubling the Waters: Mobilizing a Trans* Analytic," in *No Tea, No Shade: New Writings in Black Queer Studies*, ed. E. Patrick Johnson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 67.

[20] Sylvia Wynter, "The Ceremony Found: Towards the Autopoetic Turn/Overturn, Its Autonomy of Human Agency and Extraterritoriality of (Self-)Cognition," in *Black Knowledges/Black Struggles: Essays in Critical Epistemology*, eds. Jason R. Ambroise and Sabine Bröck-Sallah (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 245.

[21] Ibid.



an acknowledgment of its assumed cis genders and, as the WhoreDykeBlackTransFeminist Network insists, dynamite the gender binary *as* my political practice, not an afterthought of political practice. My aim is to begin there and carry out not only a destructive critique but a productive supplementation (á la Bakunin's creative-destructive passions) that articulates what comes after. If we start with a series of explosions, what does the terrain look like after the smoke dissipates?

By exploding the sex and gender binary we reject distinctions between the naturalness of sex and the cultural-ness of gender. Black and trans feminist anarchism here does not abide such claims and insists on noting the externally imposed, coercive construction of sex as well.[1] Sex, in other words, is gendered. We can't find solace in presumed biological naturalness as something outside the coercions of the State.

[1] I am drawing on a number of thinkers, namely C. Riley Snorton, Denise Riley, Judith Butler, and Stacy/Sally Darity. Snorton, in *Black on Both Sides: a Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), argues that the "question of sex" is always imbricated with gendering practices and asserts that "gender socially constructs sex," a fact highlighted by the position of Blackness with respect to its troubling of gender (33). Riley and Butler in turn take the position of noting that, following Riley, sex has a history, that sex is always a fluctuating state of ontology without a naturalized bedrock (*New Formations* no. 1 [Spring 1987]). In terms of Butler's theorizing in *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), sex is a regulatory ideal that is subject to a process of materialization rather than simply being materiality. This makes sex "not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is" (xii). Sex, in short, is consumed by the various mediating vagaries of socio-historical life, providing no access to an untouched, "natural" sex. As Butler notes, "If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this 'sex' except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that 'sex' becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access" (xv). Lastly, Stacy/Sally Darity, from a queer anarcha-feminist perspective, believes that the sex binary is itself gendered. Stacy/Sally Darity, "Anarcha-Feminism and the Newer 'Woman Question,'" in *Quiet Rumours: An Anarcha-Feminist Reader* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012).

How we are gendered is a product of how the State and its various apparatuses seek to discipline and produce, to coerce and hierarchize different desires, bodies, and comportments. There is a political and ethical interest in the question of gender, which becomes anarchically pertinent when viewing it as not an unmediated natural phenomenon but a historical production that serves the interest of the State. Those anarchistically concerned with gender—who have been called "anarchist sex radicals"—argue that gender as binaristically construed rests at the heart of society's structuration. Binary gender is regulated by the law, institutions, religion, medicine, and various other societal authorities. A radical departure from the State, then, necessitates a radical departure from compulsory binary genders.

This ultimately requires seeing gender and its transgressions as more than a mere lifestyle choice without political ramifications. Transgressions of gender must not be filed only under personal preference; and transgressions of gender are not, in and of themselves, the anarchic act we seek. Gender transgression must have a *sociogenic* effect, that is, more than doing gender radically for oneself (which is still a valiant and meaningful act), one must subjectivate the social landscape via gender transgressivity or ungendering. If the very ground on which we stand is buttressed by adherence to the gender binary, to traverse anarchic ground requires a vitiation of the constitutive binary gender of that ground. The Blackness of anarchic ground is inextricable from the gender transgression of anarchic ground. Blackness does not abide upholding binaristic gender—Blackness as "too cute for binaries," Blackness as persistent and insistent "gender trouble," Blackness's (and its embedded feminism) "trans inscrutability," to borrow insightful language from Che Gossett.[2] The world we traverse

[2] Che Gossett, "Entanglement: Racial Capitalism, Animality and Abolition," presentation at "What Time Is It on the Clock of the World: Inter-



of the White Man. To care for those of different and variant gender expressions and desires means a disdain for those discourses, systems, and subjectivities that instantiate the impossibility (and, if shown to be possible, extermination) of variations in gender identification. Such is epitomized by the subject of the White Man, a subjectivity one tries to attain in order to come into a particular kind of being rather than simply an ontological fact about a certain demographic. More clearly, Zylinska puts it this way:

So, even though the "end of man" [and, embedded within it, an implicit whiteness and cisness] may indeed signal the possible withering of a particular form of white Christian masculine subjectivity as the dominant orientation of our cultural and political discourses, it is meant to read as a diagnosis of a political condition and a positing of a political opportunity rather than as a psychological or biological diagnosis of the extinction of a particular species. (It also needs to be acknowledged that, structurally, there is nothing about the imaginary reign of, say, women that would guarantee a fullness of society and a happily ever after.)[18]

She is referring to a particular worldly orientation that foregrounds white (Christian) masculinity, where this orientation is the lay of the land that defines the State and social hierarchies. Disruption of this begets a political and existential opportunity to explore alternative possibilities of life—anarchic possibilities. The current political schema is the result of the onslaught of white masculinity pervading how we structure sociality. Thus Blackness and transness, as perversions or torques of such an orientation spurned by white masculinity, provide a kind of medicinal cure to the world in which we find ourselves. A focus on transness as a radical critique of masculinity doesn't pit particular bodies against one another (since, as Zylinska notes, the reign of

[18] Zylinska, *The End of Man*, 46.

racial and gender capitalism, our anarchic yearning must be for "a world before globalization and before neoliberal capitalism," which might be aptly read as and through Susan Stryker's "anarchic womb," a trans and transitive primordiality that gives us over to something non-categorical.[17] From the Blackness and transness of an anarchic critique (of Western civilization, á la Cedric Robinson's definitional Black Radical Tradition) we are motivated to change that which touts itself immutable. The devastation wrought by the capitalist model that our globalized world now depends on requires rethinking from the ambit of an anarcho-Blackness articulable through radical trans and feminist critiques of sociality.

There can be no shortage of liberation if we will ourselves toward an anarchism that demands justice and liberation for the most marginalized—the Black and the trans. It is the current state of affairs that disallows their liberation. Any anarchism interested in devastating the State and its hierarchies must attend acutely to the margins where the Black and woman and trans reside. It is the life and livability of all, as anarchists purport, that is our concern, and that "all" will not be adequately tended to if we remain in a position of objectivity, a position that takes its cue from the vantage of white masculinity. So often presumed to be parochial and particular, anarchist opposition to the State and capitalism, coupled with racial and gender critiques—from the purview of Blackness and transness, from Black feminism, from anarcho-Blackness—is the perspective from which we gain the widest vision of the task at hand.

So we seek the end of white men in order to think more broadly. A commitment to dismantling all hierarchies and being concerned with all oppressed people demands the dismantling of the ontological and epistemological habitus

[17] Ibid, 40; Susan Stryker, "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 1, no. 3 (June 1, 1994): 241, doi.org.



must become saturated with the deregulation of gender, or unsaturated with gender, which then creates an anarchic world (dis)order. Flipping the script is not enough; it is not enough to simply insist on the femaleness of the future or yearn for Black people to rule the world. Wanting a representational subject that embodies all the marginalized demographics we can (and can't) imagine will not—I repeat: *will not*—actualize a radical anarchic world. Representation is not our end goal, not only because representation implies the non-participation of those whom the representative ultimately represents (that is, the representative holds power only when those they represent are absent, which is antithetical to the anarchic drive for direct participation); representation also assumes a legible subject, which must align with normative logics of socio-ontological existence—to represent someone or something, that someone or something has to already be known. But if anarchism wants to destroy the extant system, and if the extant system dictates what is and can be known, its destruction means that what arises after cannot be known or represented. It will be anarchic possibility, unanticipated and unbeholden to our current tenets of legibility.

So anarchism allows for nothing but what is unallowable. Not even "women"—that feminist go-to site for the historically oppressed—can be our political figure. It excludes too much and, as the WhoreDykeBlackTransFeminist Network note, "leaves out the dykes, trans, the whores, the one[s] who wear veils, the ones who earn little and don't go to the university, the ones who yell, the immigrants without legal resident papers, the fags."[3] These are the ones who encircle the kind of force that drives anarchism, which is to say the anarcho-.

national Festival on Feminism and Public Space," Stadtkurator in Hamburg, May 5th, 2016. Video available at vimeo.com

[3] The WhoreDykeBlackTransFeminist Network, "Manifesto for the Trans-Feminist Insurrection," *Anarcha Library* blog, October 20, 2010, anarchalibrary.blogspot.com.

Because, after all, we know that there are capitalists and proverbial masters who accept transgender folks and folks of Color and gay folks and women. All of these identifiable identities can be co-opted and serve power. I posit here the necessity of the Black and trans, synecdoches for what this chapter describes as "unhinged," because they name the anoriginal transitivity that radical gender theorizing has deemed the revolutionary force that gives racialized Blackness and trans genders over to what is often understood as radical politics. Black and trans name the "revolutionary force" uncapturable by racial capitalism and heteronormative cis patriarchy, and they are pushing us toward explosions in ways of being, ways of organizing, and ways of living.[4]

…

It is useful to meditate a bit on two anarchist concepts: what have been dubbed "anarchx-feminism" and "tranarchism." The former, anarchx-feminism, first makes a rhetorical move to distinguish women from femmes, advancing femmes as the category of analysis, as "women" too often presumes cisgender alignment and cannot hold those who express themselves femininely yet do not have "women's" or "female" bodies. Again, the WhoreDykeBlackTransFeminist Network's axiom that "women" is an exclusionary category presents itself. Anarchx-feminists mobilize for abolishing the hierarchical distinction between femmes and cis men, leveling the playing field as it were. It is a way to organize socially in a way that removes gendered hierarchies, a removal that is not obsessed, as traditional anarch*a*-feminists have been, merely with "men" and "women" but adds nuance to gendered expression, identification, and comportment. As a social organizing principle,

[4] Dark Star Collective, *Quiet Rumours*, 14; see also C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*; and C. Colebrook, "What Is It Like to Be a Human?," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, no. 2 (January 1, 2015): 227–43, doi.org.



with those we are not supposed to relate with/to. This is a trans-inflected way of recomposing subjectivities in the name of liberation from imposed captivity in identificatory regimes, flight from what they told us we have to always be. It is a trans Blackness that is an ante-anti-category, a preceding and subverting predilection for opposing cohesive categorization.

The anarcho- of Black and trans subverts capitalistic ownership, opens them up to para-possession, an unpropertied deployment and call to coalitional fugitivity begotten by disaggregating it "from its entrenchment with state interest, with property."[15] Capitalist tentacles are much less equipped to regulate purported strangers who create an ensemble on the grounds of unanticipated coalitional criteria—or non-criteria—and threaten to create treason. Changing and expanding Black radical politics provides for new opportunities, necessary opportunities, to contradict and undermine hegemonic forces.

All of this might lead to, in the provocative language of Joanna Zylinska, "The End of the White Man." In this section I have been attempting to bring about the obliteration of the purportedly impenetrable edifices that uphold white supremacy and cissexist patriarchy. What such an attempt ultimately amounts to is the end of the white man. This is not "[white] man-bashing." Few would advocate such a goal, as if this would eliminate the structures and histories that pervade all of our lives. Such a goal would wrongly presume that white supremacy and cissexist patriarchy are merely the product of individual people committing biased acts. To precipitate the end of white men is an apocalyptic, or anarchic, discourse that advances "an ethical opening rather than solely…an existential threat," an opening out into something that radically departs from the current state (and State).[16] If we live amid pervasive

[15] Carter and Cervenak, "Black Ether," 219.

[16] Joanna Zylinska, *The End of Man: A Feminist Counterapocalypse* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018), 7.

viance, nonnormativity, and subversion of power; it is more a meta-identification that is reluctant to conveniently take on identities in place of doing the work of living and politicizing one's subjectivity via volatile principles and pointed political aims. This engenders a more tactical combative modality in the face of capitalism. Because capitalism is "depende[nt] on racial subsidies," the Blackness of those who exceed the category "Black," for example, cultivates room for alliances that racial capitalism cannot anticipate since "racial differentiation is intrinsic to capitalist value-creation and financial speculation."[14] Indeed, capitalism has long co-opted epidermalized Blackness into its fold; capitalism, to be frank, has caught on to that game and continues to beat us at it. What I see as a kind of anarcho- thread through Blackness and transness must be claimed by anyone seeking to do the work. We must operate in other spaces, via other modalities of thought; we must render Blackness and transness as an anarchic sashay into another way of life.

My understanding of Blackness and transness stems from the way they act as forces of dispersal and differentiation. Blackness is inflected in and by transness (not Blackness *is* transness), a transness understood as a refusal of circumscription and transparent arrival/destination (or origin). Black and trans, as linked to movement, unfixation from normatively legible physiognomy, and a general refusal bear an intimate relationship and highlight that there can be no seamless partition between them under a racialized and gendered world. This is Blackness's otherwise identification located in the interstices, frictional relations, and rebellious communing

[14] Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 179. I read Mbembe posing a critique here in line with mine, namely that fixation on and investment in "racial subsidies," or racial categorizations, are the product of capitalism and subject to its aims of control; Johnson and Lubin, *Futures of Black Radicalism*, 44.



it must pervade all forms of social life, including the private sphere.

Femmes must be granted complete autonomy over their own bodies, according to anarchx-feminists, and be permitted to make decisions by themselves and with other femmes if matters concern only femmes, and on "equal footing" when concerning matters that bear on everyone. Collective matters concerning everyone might include cohabitation and communal dwellings, and individual or femme-specific matters might include, as they say, "contraception and childbirth." (We see here, though, a problematic assumption and persistent conflation of femme with those with the capacity to bear and birth children.) There is an emphasis on both individual and collective fighting back against (cis) male domination, ownership—over property and others', specifically femmes', bodies—and repressive juridical impediments, which will all contribute to achieving "femme's [*sic*] economic and social autonomy and independence."[5]

Anarchx-feminism also finds it imperative to establish crisis centers that address issues of gendered violence and livelihood, as well as centers for child care and elderly care. It has a sustained focus on study and discussion, reminiscent of feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and '70s, and on cultural activities that focus on femme life. All of these, anarchx-feminists insist, must be run under femmes' own direction. Furthermore, the family unit, historically and contemporarily patriarchal, "should be replaced by free associations between people with all kind of genders; based on equal right to decide for all parts and with respect for the individual person's autonomy and integrity." Like anarchists past, the driving force is not to replace the leaders of existing systems with

[5] New York City Anarchist Book Fair Collective, "Anarchx-Feminist Manifesto," New York City Anarchist Book Fair website, anarchistbookfair.net.

women or femmes. Anarchx-feminism, following in the vein of other radical feminists and anarchists, "does not stand for femme power or femme prime ministers, it stands for organization without power and without prime ministers."[6]

In turn, tranarchism, a term coined by Elis L. Herman, gives nominative testament to the convergences of transgender, or for this meditation *trans*, and anarchism. Tranarchism's critiques date back to classical anarchists, but more saliently respond to 1970s (U.S.) progressivism and sexual radicalism. For all the era's radicality, there was still the assumption, even within anarchist circles, of the immutability and naturalness of the gender binary. The gains of the era for (an essentialized, biologized notion of) women in the form of rape crisis centers and women's health collectives are monumental feats that should of course be lauded. Anarchism's "women's movement," too, contributed to these gains and amplified the importance of women's roles in bringing about a new society. Within all of this, the broader women's liberation movement and anarcha-feminism, there was still a unification on the basis of a shared womanhood and, more specifically, a genitally-defined understanding of sex that had "The Patriarchy" as its sole adversary.

To "bring in" transgender issues and epistemologies to anarchism would be reductive, if it only means that transgender people begin to take up the theorizations of Kropotkin and Bakunin. Furthermore, though much closer to what "tranarchism" might aim to be, it is not enough to say that people of trans experience "[are] radical and anarchistic, if not insurrectionary, in [their] embodiment."[7] There is truth to this insofar as to undergo a change, to whatever extent, in gender is to transgress the purported immutability of gender. Transgender

[6] Ibid.

[7] Jerimarie Liesegang, "Tyranny of the State and Trans Liberation," *Queering Anarchism: Addressing and Undressing Power and Desire* (Oakland: AK Press, 2012), 97.



ders. Surely if one is looking for how to unravel all hierarchies, race and gender chief among them, and surely if we recognize how endemic race and gender—or more accurately, white supremacy and cissexist heteropatriarchy—are to State capitalism, then it bears acknowledgment that those who transgress and virtually destroy the presumptions of these things should feature prominently. But no, one sees almost no mention of those who are not cisgender, and barely a mention of the very fact of trans existence. But if it is growing more known that, to quote Saidiya Hartman, "the gender non-conformity of the black community" is the axiom from which we begin Black liberatory work, then it becomes imperative to deeply wrestle with how transness bears on our conversations surrounding Blackness and, well, anything.[13]

Recognition of the interwovenness of Blackness and transness establishes an anarchic understanding of gender through self-determination, axiomatic in both transgender/gender nonnormative discourses and discourses of Black life. In this context, I want to understand self-determination as less a neoliberal rugged individualism and more as a coalitional ethics that is attentive to the kind of violence gendering does. In what sense, in other words, might we understand gender self-determination as a delinking and extrication from the gender binary that then gives us over to a more ethical sociality and relationality toward one another—a mutual aid and ethics of care for one another by way of a communal understanding of the "self"? In this way, we come to recognize the denizens of this anarchic commune, the Blackness and transness of those who live and choose to do life in this sociality, as not a list of legible identities that grant access or exclusion.

As stated above, Blackness and transness have an intimate relationship. They characterize more those who align with and inhabit the philosophical and existential milieu of rebellion, de-

[13] Hartman, "The Belly of the World," 169.

necessarily troubles and unfixes gender. Those who have been Blackened cannot be contained in the symbolic order of gender; the order of gender is anarchically obliterated by Blackness. Gender here is understood as a historical, contingent mode of socio-political comportment externally imposed upon bodies fixed into a binary. Blackness both as a miasmic fugitive spirit and as a discernible physiognomy has not abided this binary. Gender is predicated on whiteness. We see this in the era of U.S. enslavement, in which "No uniform or shared category of gender included the mistress and the enslaved [or, white women and Black 'women']" because "black laboring women troubled gender conventions."[10] We see this in how, as Black trans woman Shaadi Devereaux notes, Black women's womanhood "is inherently viewed as drag performance" and that the "assumption is always that Black women are all imitating 'true women'" and we usually "overlook this in how we view what it means to be trans and cis…and who has access to narratives of womanhood";[11] we see it, in short, in how "Blackness troubles gender. As non-sovereign and metapolitical, Blackness makes for gender trouble."[12] There is then a fundamental inextricability between Blackness and transness as, too, a metapolitical, disruptive force of binaristic, static gender. Anarcho-Blackness indexes this in its refusal of the State and its accouterments, which includes binary gender and imposed ontologies.

Reading Blackness into and as anarchism must engage the trans of the matter. No Black anarchist organization or discourse currently available gives any respectable, sustained meditation on the import of transgender or nonnormative gen-

[10] Saidiya Hartman, "The Belly of the World: A Note on Black Women's Labors," *Souls* 18, no. 1 (March 14, 2016): 169–70, doi.org.

[11] Shaadi Devereaux, "Rollersets & Realness: Black Womanhood Defined as Drag Performance," *Black Girl Dangerous* blog, July 24, 2014, www.bgdblog.org.

[12] Che Gossett, "Žižek's Trans/Gender Trouble," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, September 13, 2016, lareviewofbooks.org#!



embodiment—the limits and scope of which is to remain open and unencumbered by criteria for sufficient transness—might always be transgressive in some respect by virtue of its defiance of the binary restrictions on gender.

But this can only be taken so far. Transgender embodiment is not in and of itself an anarchic revolution. Herman takes issue with the belief that "the" transgender body (which is and looks like what exactly?) is "inherently revolutionary." Such a belief is problematic on a number of fronts. In Herman's own words,

The proclamation that trans embodiment possesses innately anarchic qualities, however, is problematic. The most obvious issue comes with the need to define transgender, which is deliberately unspecific and amorphous, as an expression or embodiment that always serves a single purpose. Do the non-operative transsexual sex worker and the post-mastectomy non-binary porn star possess the same potential (or desire) to dismantle the state? Looking at intersections of identity and oppression, the answer would probably be negative. Claiming that all transgender bodies possess inherent insurrectionary potential places the impetus upon transgender individuals to serve a revolutionary purpose, without regard for their own safety, survival, or preference. This perspective places the responsibility for critiquing and challenging gender norms upon trans people alone; cisgender individuals are, then, exempt from the expectation to use their genders for revolutionary purpose. When examining the role of (trans)gender in anti-authoritarianism, it is critical to remember that "anarchic" is an adjective, not an equalizer.[8]

The issue here is monolithizing "transgender" as having one sole purpose and thus one sole kind of body and bodily effect.

[8] Elis L. Herman, "Tranarchism: Transgender Embodiment and Destabilization of the State," *Contemporary Justice Review* 18, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 80, doi.org.

To say that "transgender embodiment" is itself transgressive presumes an epistemic stranglehold on the mutinous, riotous *refusal* of a proper body that the trans of transgender means in much of contemporary trans studies. This presumption disallows transgender to be other than what it has been defined-from-without as, and disallows different kinds of transnesses. It also forces upon trans people the burden of transgressing gender and thus having an interrogative relation to the gendered capitalist State. To fix gender transgression in transgender embodiment (whatever one defines this as) lets cisgender people off the hook, implying that they do not need to transgress the State's coercive gender impositions. As such, this critique asserts that the anarchic is not to be rooted in certain bodies that then bear the weight of taking on the State; rather, anarchic must be adjectival, modificatory, a descriptor of a way of relating to power and not an immutable claimed identity.

I will provide a meditation on the convergences of transness, as prefixal, and Blackness in the next section, so here I want simply to offer trans's link to Blackness through the anarcho-. My concern is how one bears a trans relationship to normativity, and specifically normative gender, which is not merely the clothes one wears or the inflection in one's voice but a relative mobilization of subjective gendered effect. To express a trans relationship to (gendered) normativity is to socio-politically deploy one's own gender as well as *gendered sociality* in nonnormative, subversive ways that bring about a different (un)gendered world. Those who bear a trans relationship to normative gender absolutely include those who identify as and may be identified as transgender and thus are subject to airport surveillance and bodily violation, being fired from jobs without recourse for redress, physical violence, and the like; it also, though, includes those who may "be" cisgender yet operate through space in ways that disrupt normative gendered assumption via interrogating



the act of gendering strangers, de-norming cisgender by making plain one's pronouns even when they are "obvious," or undermining linear gendered assumptions predicated on an asserted cisgender identity (that is, refusing the coercive expectations of cisgender behavior and comportment even though one might identify as cisgender).

In short, anarchism must exude a kind of transness inasmuch as gender's binaristic conception rests at the fundament of the State, and trans epistemologies, lives, and discourses provide a template for anarchic praxis, for getting outside and across and beyond—etymologically, *trans*—the cisgender racial State.

…

When it is operating at its best, anarchism is tearing down the borders of nation states, smashing the borders of capitalist control, and transgressing all borders of oppression and authoritarianism. When queer(ness) is operating at its best it is tearing down the borders of gender, smashing the confines of compulsory monogamy, and transgressing the moralism of sex and sexuality.

—Jason Lydon, "Tearing Down the Walls: Queerness, Anarchism and the Prison Industrial Complex"

I have argued for what C. Riley Snorton calls the referential overlapping of Blackness and transness in numerous places elsewhere in my work.[9] That is to say, Blackness's thrust as a paraontological—or subjectivity in excess of an imposed ontology, a way of inhabiting oneself in ways not beholden to State impositions of legible identity—as well as its racialized history

[9] See Snorton, *Black on Both Sides*; Marquis Bey, "The Trans*-Ness of Blackness, the Blackness of Trans*-Ness," *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (May 2017): 275–95, doi.org; Marquis Bey, "The Shape of Angels' Teeth: Toward a Blacktransfeminist Thought," *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research* 5, no. 3, Black Feminist Thought Special Issue (2016): 33–54; Kai M. Green and Marquis Bey, "Where Black Feminist Thought and Trans* Feminism Meet: A Conversation," *Souls* 19, no. 4 (October 2, 2017): 438–54, doi.org; and Marquis Bey, *Them Goon Rules: Fugitive Essays on Radical Black Feminism* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2019).