The Incendo Crew
Gender and Classes
The widespread insurrection that will destroy men and women
2012

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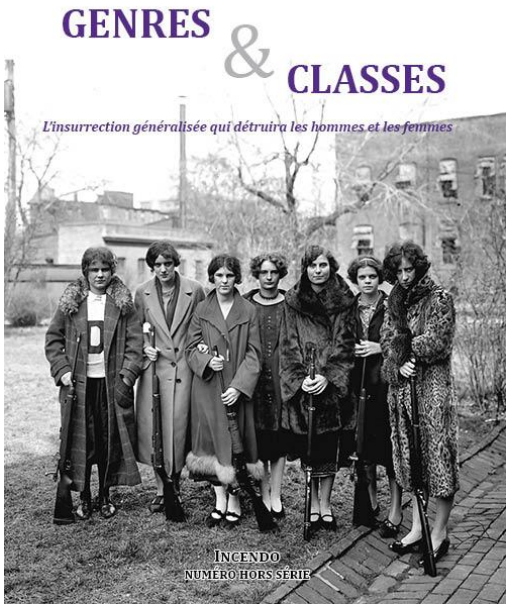

2012

place with the proletarian women, and it is this implication which will allow a qualitative leap hitherto impossible. Hence the abolition of the public and private spheres will come to the fore as the end of genders and sexuation. In this conflictual and problematic process, the role of women will be a major determinant… as well as the role of men reacting to how women change. We can neither evade the gender question in a revolutionary perspective, nor in daily life and survival.

Let us be optimistic because, chronologically speaking, we have never been so close to the communist revolution!

Down with the proletariat! Down with men ! Down with women !

Long live anarchy, long live Communism!

The Incendo Crew

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Conclusion

Today, sporadically, many proletarians, men and women, explode with anger, revolt and refuse to submit to exploitation and domination, participating in fact in this real movement that will abolish the existing order of things. These struggles have the limits of their time and, in this period of relative social calm (as long as everything keeps functioning), they can only be partial, reformist, etc. But a period of crisis / insurrection will offer the potentialities of a radical and qualitative break with the current struggles.

Though we are not passively waiting for these moments of collective emotion, it is not up to us (the more or less self-proclaimed « revolutionaries ») to trigger struggles, nor to decide objectives, nor angles of attack. We take part in them like all the proletarians. If personal (or as a small group) initiatives are obviously not to be rejected, one must be aware that only a massive collective struggle (the revolution) can abolish classes and genders in a necessarily unique simultaneous and converging movement.[1]

The participation of women in the revolt movements of the past has often been perceived as an indicator of radicality. But since their massive and direct entry into wage labor and therefore into strikes, their mere involvement has led to the emergence of questions of reproduction. The revolution will take

[1] Supposing it's "consciousness-raising" we need, above all let's be conscious of our limits and of the modesty of our actions and capacities. As the popular saying goes, « *it is not the revolutionaries who will make the revolution, but the revolution that will make the revolutionaries.*« . Kind of puts things in perspective, doesn't it?...

weapon, communism will not exist only on the day when the last armed confrontation is over. Despite all upheavals, « mentalities » (the fruit of social relations) will not yet be communist. If the term was not so historically charged, one could speak of a kind of *transitional period* (not the withering of the State, but of capitalist mentality) towards communism.

Communism will not be paradise, it will not abolish all possibilities of conflict, but they will no longer be mediated by capital or other forms of domination; They will undoubtedly find new forms of resolution. The conditions explaining and enabling male dominance and all forms of domination or oppression will have disappeared, which is a good starting point. Immediately social individuals (already transformed during communisation) will have conditions of existence particularly favourable to a « positive » evolution. The next generation (which has only known communism but will undergo the influence of adults who will probably have kept remnants from the past) will be much less subject to the flaws of the old world… and perhaps not at all. One dare not imagine what it will be like ten generations later…

Some Historical References

Back to the origins[1]

Sexuation, it seems, characterizes all societies existing or having existed. It necessarily implies an assignment of individuals to a definite social role, but with varying degrees of male dominance.

It is impossible to date or explain the appearance of this sexuation, which undoubtedly goes back to prehistory. Maternity and its constraints are generally put forward as an explanation of the origin of sexuation. According to these assumptions, pregnancy and breastfeeding prevented « women » from participating fully in the group's other activities, such as hunting. From there, a shift would have occurred from the protection of pregnant women (vital for the survival of the group) to the « protection » of women because of their *potential* reproductive capacity. But this does not tell us anything about the appearance of the women's group, which amounts to saying that this group would be a natural entity. Similarly, pregnancy is perceived as a natural phenomenon, not as a socially organized process. Present in all known societies, sexuation has taken various forms in primitive societies. While in all cases men have a monopoly on arms and political power, this does not automatically lead to total male dominance (which is sometimes counterbalanced by the economic power of women).

[1] For this chapter, see Christophe Darmangeat, *Le communisme primitif n'est plus ce qu'il était… Aux origines de l'oppression des femmes*, Toulouse, Smolny, 2009, 466 p.

According to Friedrich Engels, whose theses had a great influence on the socialist movement, male dominance originated in the emergence of private property (sedentarisation and agriculture allowing the constitution of that could be appropriated). However, discoveries in ethnology question this view, for forms of male dominance are found in certain primitive societies (including hunter-gatherers), though they were economically egalitarian (ie they ignored wealth and poverty).

Nevertheless, the emergence of non-egalitarian societies (from an economic point of view) led to the reinforcement of male dominance. In some societies where power was (nearly) shared, the question was decided in favor of men. From the appearance of private property arises the need to ensure the transmission of the patrimony and therefore the filiation ; hence the need to organize breeding by controlling female bodies. This is reflected in their appropriation (such as cattle) by the father or husband via family and marriage. Although the hierarchy between men and women varies according to the organization of society, male dominance becomes very clear with the appearance of class societies.

Over the millennia and in the majority of societies, this masculine domination, in order to ensure perpetuation and stability, is institutionalized (state, law, religion, politics, etc.), although in different forms. The family is an essential element of this, since it allows for ascent/descent and the transmission of heritage (which has long been mainly made up of land), and thus ensures a certain social stability.[2] In this sense, we can speak of patriarchy or patriarchal society (*institutionalized* power of the head of the family).

[2] See, for example, Sabine Melchior-Bonnet et Catherine Salles (dir.), *Histoire du mariage*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2009, 1229 p.

Communism

Gender abolition does not mean standardization, levelling and sadness. It is impossible *today* to imagine what pregnancy, raising of (probably collective) children, sentimental, bodily and / or sexual relationships, bodies, etc., will be in a communist world. In any case, the vocabulary available to us is not up to the task.

With the revolution, sexuation and genders will in fact have been abolished by the immediately social individuals. But communism will not, of course, abolish the distinction between who carries the children and who does not carry them. However, pregnancy is not a natural phenomenon, it is socially organized (differently according to the epochs, societies and regions[17]). Today this implies the constitution of the women's group and male dominance. The way in which the organization of pregnancy during communisation will be treated and resolved is crucial and very problematic. Maternity and motherhood are one of the questions on which the abolition of genders[18] — therefore communisation — risks stumbling.

Communism cannot be considered as concomitant with the existence of any social hierarchy (and therefore with the persistence of male dominance) or with social determinations. Although the idea of a period of transition (to establish the basis of communism) is to be rejected, we cannot believe that humanity will be truly happy when the last capitalist has been hanged. In other words, even if communisation means creating *communist relationships*, and will be the revolutionaries' main

[17] See Paola Tabet, *op. cit.* : To compensate for the low fertility in the human species, women must be exposed to optimal coitus, and therefore to the risk of pregnancy. The best technique is marriage (or couple life). Thus, women are not « always receptive, » but they are « always copulable. »

[18] A comrade thinks that when communism is established, « *we will not have children, but there will be children everywhere*« . Another person, equally a comrade, thinks « *There won't be children any more*« .

To these upheavals of daily life we must add the impact of the new operating modes that will be put in place in the struggle in order to solve the many difficulties (such as food supplies[15]): multiple assemblies and discussion rooms, collective canteens, collective housing, collective education and children raising (end of the nuclear family), genuine sexual liberation (disappearance of fossilising social and moral frameworks), etc. (Here we have to admit the weakness of our imagination).

A matter of time

It will be possible to get rid of the old world after a few years of a frightful, bloody and perhaps a little joyful struggle, but although the struggle transforms those who participate, it may not be the same for the many nuisances of an ideological nature. In particular, everything that comes from a life-long education and environment is deeply rooted in each and every one of us: sexism, racism, individualism, need and desire for order, discipline, hierarchy, the couple model (which is likely to be one of the last bastions of resistance of male dominance[16]), the appropriation of children, and so on. To put an end to all this may seem difficult *today*, but let us recall that the process of communisation will put on the table the problems of sexuation, and the evolution of mentalities will undoubtedly be much faster than one might think.

[15] « *In comparison with capitalist criteria, communist abundance may be rather frugal and basic.* » Collectif, *Histoire critique de l'ultragauche*, Marseille, Senonevero, 2009, p. 205.

[16] In the Russian and Spanish episodes, we frequently find the figure of the revolutionary who, after his day of militancy, returns to his home where male dominance persists and where he behaves as a husband and treats his wife as a skivvy… But in this case women were not participating in the struggle and the revolutionary process had already lost its momentum.

Medieval and Modern Periods

During this period, the population is predominantly rural and peasant. The household (which corresponds to the family) is then a unit of production *and* reproduction.

Women participate in agricultural activities, alone (eg the vegetable garden) or with men. Their tasks are not necessarily devalued, as they are equally important for survival and production (mainly for family consumption and maintenance of the nobility and the clergy). The tasks performed by women, now referred to as « housewives » (kitchen, laundry, household), are limited and not distinct from other activities. As for the child care (a notion which only appeared at the end of the eighteenth century[3]), it was also quite basic. Although women are housewives, men are the heads of the family (a family that is often enlarged), on which they have strong power. The vision of a very dark period, notably marked by a deeply misogynistic religion (women are creatures of the devil, have no soul, witch hunts, etc.), requires qualification.[4]

It should be noted that women are very involved (often in the front rows) in the struggles, food riots, struggles for bread, which punctuate the modern period and find their culmination in the years 1789–1795.

XIXth century

The rise to power of the bourgeoisie marks at first a regression for the situation of women. Subsequently, the Napoleon Code (1804) institutes their inferiority and a real segregation: women have almost no right except to obey men (their father

[3] See Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, Paris, Seuil, 1975, 322 p.

[4] See, for example, Jacques Le Goff, « Le christianisme a libéré les femmes » [sic], *L'Histoire*, n° 245, juillet-août 2000, p. 34–38.

or husband), and were legally treated as minors in France until 1965 !

The literature and science of the time mostly present them as inferior beings, intellectually and physically incapable of doing anything other than caring for children and the home.

Nevertheless, the new bourgeois egalitarian ideology (including the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen) makes it possible *to imagine* formal equality between men and women, a hypothesis hitherto impossible. The ideology of the capitalist class (which itself evolves) becomes very logically the dominant ideology, thus enabling it to secure its position and to perpetuate the system: freedom, democracy, labor value, success, competition, individualism, etc. The capitalist worm is in the patriarchal fruit.

The industrialization of the nineteenth century, by dispossessing the workers of the means of production and subsistence, creates a real separation between the place of production (wage labor / factory / men) and the place of reproduction (home / women). The public (male) and private (female) spheres appear. It is a great novelty that will completely reorganize the relations between men and women.[5]

Capitalism, in full expansion, is based on existing structures and notably on patriarchy.[6] In the first place, the labor force of women and children, at low cost (at most 50% of a man's

[5] Beware, the public sphere does not only cover what concerns production (for example, politics). The unseen separation into two spheres is a necessary condition for capitalism, which needs the worker to be « free » (unlike the slave).

[6] It is only through ease or laziness that we sometimes write that « capitalism does this or that. » It is neither a monster who makes perverse decisions, nor a cold machine run by a secret committee, but a social relationship. It must therefore be understood as « the development of capitalism entails… » or « has consequences… », etc. Nevertheless, the State is there to give the broad guidelines necessary for the development of the capitalist mode of production (sometimes against the particular interests of the capitalists but often following the indications of the most lucid of them).

self-organization of women (versus men?)[12] not to reverse domination, but to dissolve gender.[13] Is it just a possibility or a necessity? The question remains, as well as that of the risk of confirming the gender division. In this hypothesis, if the self-organization of women is a step in the process of communisation, the rest (abolishing gender) will be carried out against this self-organization.

The vectors of social construction

The fighting and destruction, the abolition of property, money, value, the State, etc., will *in fact* also undermine many daily life *vectors* of social construction by rendering them inoperative, unusable, obsolete or forcing them to disappear. It is impossible to make an exhaustive list (since it is the whole life that will be transformed and disrupted), but we can give a few examples: the pornographic *industry*, advertising, media (TV / newspapers), religious institutions, the school system, civil status / administration / Family Benefits Funds and no more marriages, divorces, marriage contracts, filiations, inheritances, etc.[14]), prostitution, fashion industry, "Miss Britain" beauty contests, nightclubs, Walt Disney, etc.

[12] Men will therefore have to roll up their sleeves (and thereby contribute to the end of sexuation), or they will not (which would in fact derail the revolutionary process).

[13] An example sometimes mentioned is the creation in 2005 of Movimiento de Mujeres Desocupadas that broke with the piqueteros majority movements. See Bruno Astarian, *Le Mouvement des piqueteros. Argentine 1994–2006*, Paris, Échanges et Mouvement, 2007, p. 42–43.

[14] There will undoubtedly still be some lost souls wishing to marry for example to « prove their love », but there will be no more mayor to do it, no more civil status to register, no law to enshrine it in, etc. (Too bad for gays who will just have won the right to marry !). There will also probably be some others who « need » authority, discipline, or who have a taste for power… but, unlike in the present world, nothing will exist to flatter such « defects »…

Historical examples show that very often, in the early days of a revolutionary period, women are active, take up arms, therefore social relations and gender division are upset (Paris in 1871, Russia in 1917,[10] Spain in 1936). It may, however, be objected that they quickly found themselves confined to female tasks (infirmary, kitchen, laundry, etc.), which is true. It is not so much that the revolutionary process reinstates sexuation, but it is because this process is stopped. Because the foundations of the old world are maintained (especially wage-earning), the management of a more or less normal social order becomes necessary, and the bureaucracies (Bolshevik Party or CNT[11]) emerge or rise. Returning women to the home or to the kitchen is easy, for such is then their central place in society at that time (proletarians' women); this is no longer the case today.

During the revolutionary process, women's issues will expose themselves, explode and inevitably provoke conflicts (who will take care of the kids, the infirmaries, the canteen, etc.?). To resolve them will probably involve forms of

or can we imagine that they would also intervene as women? What forms could this take? Although this seems unlikely, can we imagine « solidarities » between women, beyond the classes? In both ways ? This leads to another question no less thorny and equally fundamental : is there a contradiction between genders ? In other words, is there a double contradiction (within classes and within genders) ? Big debate in our small team…

[10] For example, Kollontai shows that the new economic and social conditions at the beginning of the Russian Revolution led to the dissolution of the nuclear family (collective canteens, etc.) and that « *the Communist State can do nothing about it*« , op. cit., p. 211.

[11] The booklet of Michael Seidman, "Women's Subversive Individualism in Barcelona during the 1930s", *International Review of Modern History*, n° XXXVII (1992) (https://libcom.org/files/women-subversive.pdf) shows the resistance of women (strikes, anti-work actions) to the persistence of the old world. Here the CNT-UGT administration tried to rationalize the exploitation, and did not take into account at all the reproduction question.

wage), is massively used by exploiters. But in the middle of the century the most clear-sighted elements of the capitalist class saw in it the risk of a physical and moral « degeneration » of future proletarians (conditions of work and life were so poor that the majority of young workers were exempted from military service due to small size, malformations, diseases, etc.). Some workers were then sent back home to ensure a real reproduction of labor power[7] (laws regulating the work of women and children): this is the birth of domestic labour. It is not surprising that this role rests with women because capitalism, while transforming them, has relied on pre-existing modes of organization and domination, in this case patriarchy. After having disrupted the traditional family and altered the father figure (among proletarians by factory work), it is the bourgeois model of the family that is put forward: the emergence of the private sphere (associated with women). Thus intimacy, strengthening the notion of childhood (and maternal love), marriage allegedly based on love, the authority of the household head, the increasing intrusion of the State into the process of reproduction of labor power (education, medicine), etc. These were the elements of the new social norms then put in place that were going to develop throughout the twentieth century.

Second half of the 20th century

Throughout the twentieth century, capitalism has been transforming society and all aspects of life with increasing speed. In the second half of the century, which corresponds to the massive entry of women into the labor market and to the development of the consumer society, the most important changes in relations between men and women are taking place.

[7] The reproduction of the labor power includes the daily reproduction of the worker (food, clothing, heating, etc.) and the « generational » reproduction of the working class (making and raising children).

The mass and direct entry of women into the wage-earning system enables them to obtain a certain degree of economic independence (towards their husbands or fathers), whereas progressively formal equality is essential.[8] The authority of the head of the household takes another blow, but still prevails and the women always bear the burden of the domestic labour, that is to say the reproduction of labor power . As for their salary, which is much lower than that of men, it is only a supplementary salary. This situation is unacceptable to many and opens the door to the women's struggles of the 1970s: Women's Liberation Movement (MLF), the Freedom of Abortion and Contraception Movement (MLAC in France), etc. As Engels put it, « *When there are equal rights, this is when the infighting starts.* »[9] The material conditions of existence of women during this period underwent powerful upheavals : the legalization of contraception and abortion are both a sign and a consequence . If these measures are fatal blows to patriarchy, they (like feminist struggles) are part of a process of modernization of the capitalist mode of production in France, but also in other Western countries which are then undergoing similar reforms. *Capitalism does not « free » women for nothing.*

This massive entry of women into wage-earning also means their *direct* and massive involvement in the class struggle, in factories but also in the service sector (department stores, banks), not as women *of* proletarians but as woman proletarians. In the capitalist mode of production, to define them as

[8] In France, women got the right to vote in 1944 ; in 1945, the legal notion of a "woman's salary" was abolished; in 1965, married women were (at long last !) allowed to have a professional activity or open a bank account without their husbands' permission.

[9] Or, according to another translation: "*the peculiar character of the supremacy of the husband over the wife in the modern family, the necessity of creating real social equality between them, and the way to do it, will only be seen in the clear light of day when both possess legally complete equality of rights.* » Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884).

The self-negation of proletarian women... and men

The strikes of proletarian women (especially in the 1970s), in fact, highlight, and sometimes even question male dominance.[8] The struggle removes women from home, unites them, and these are moments of sharing that bring about and modify practices. Performing or not performing domestic labour becomes a problem : either it is no longer done or the women are assigned to it at the expense of the struggle. This has a direct impact on the life at home, the couple, the family: women are no longer available for meals, laundry, child care... Faced with this, the couple undergoes a crisis which undermines sexuation. Reproductive issues (not the general reproduction of labour power, but everyday survival) are necessarily and directly integrated into the struggle (which is no longer limited to wage labor issues). But again, when the struggle is over, everyday life retrieve its prerogatives and everything more or less goes back to normal.

These strikes are examples that help us *imagine* the intensity of such upheavals as created by a revolutionary period. The participation of women in the insurrection will be inescapable and massive. This will have an important impact on the private sphere (which, like the public sphere, will disappear), and on everyday life. They will no longer intervene as women of proletarians or housewives, which was mostly the case in the « revolutionary » episodes of the past. They will act as proletarians (they challenge classes) *and also* as women (they address issues related to reproduction and gender).[9]

[8] It would be necessary to study more specifically the involvement of women in contemporary struggles (in 2001 in Argentina or today in strikes in Bangladesh, China, France, etc.).

[9] This raises a perhaps fundamental question that we have not dealt with frontally: what would be the reaction of bourgeois women to the revolution? Will they only intervene as bourgeois (defend their class interests),

The revolution that transforms

The « classical » struggles (strikes, occupations, riots, insurrections, etc.) transform those who participate in them : the proletarians carry out actions / reflections that they themselves could not have imagined before. This is made possible because the tedium of everyday life, the alienating and mind-numbing daily activity, the usual social relations are upset and / or interrupted. New relationships are created : we have time to meet, to discuss, to think, and so on. One could say that « *class consciousness is formed in the struggle* » (Otto Rühle). And the more intense the struggle, the more profound is the transformation.[7]

So far, this type of situation has always been limited in time and space, and has therefore affected only a limited number of people each time. When a struggle ends, everyday life, especially work, resumes its course, everything returns to normal (minds as well, but sometimes not completely). Thanks to the revolution, this situation will no longer have any spatio-temporal limits.

[7] In a struggle, the most conservative prole, the most stupid social-democrat student can be transformed. Those who participated actively in struggles of a certain magnitude (from May 1968 to the CPE) probably realized this. [In France in 2006, the "CPE" — a law that increased labor deregulation and casualization, especially for young people — met with mass protests and demonstrations.] Otherwise, a few hundred books on the history of the class struggle are enough to prove it. Obviously, the capitalists not playing in the same camp cannot benefit from this transformation… Hence the special treatment that will be reserved for them. As for those who see the proletarians as vile, individualistic and self — deprecating (by nature?) beings, we can, for example, refer them to the many studies on the reactions of the victims of the « natural » catastrophes as long as the State does not interfere. See, for example, Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell : The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (Penguin Group, 2009).

proletarians is insufficient, it must also be pointed out that they are women. The modalities of exploitation define the modalities of the struggle: subsistence riots « for bread » in which *housewives* play a central role give way to strikes for wage increases (now euphemistically for » increase in purchasing power «), and even for equal pay with men, which in both cases obviously does not please the employers.[10] The 1970s were characterized by the appearance of women's strikes with occupation) in which gender issues generally obscured in mixed struggles emerged (child custody, husband's meal, etc.), so the private sphere was shaken. The struggles of women are then caught in the general reflux of the activity of proletarians of this period (crisis, unemployment, restructuring).

In the early 1980s, governments promoted the development of precarious work, part-time work, which particularly affected women, because it was more suited to raising children (again, there was not a question of altruism but of forced part-time[11]). This type of contract developed widely in the following decade and increasingly concerned men (which made it possible to bring down *all* wages and working conditions, and to introduce flexibility and precariousness).

Moreover, the jobs in which women are the majority of the workforce, as well as the jobs where most women find employment, are very specific, and they correspond to an extension of gendered patterns (for example, in cleaning companies,[12] personal care, child care, ie menial jobs, therefore poorly paid.

New problems coming up: double work day, differences in wages, sexism and oppression of women at work.

[10] See, for example, Nigel Cole's film, *We want sex equality*, Great Britain, 2010, 113 min.

[11] It also allows the State to limit the costs of collective equipment that provide part of the reproduction of the labor power.

[12] A very good example. In this sector, women are entrusted with the maintenance of the interior of the buildings while the men work outside.

Egalitarian ideology had opened the door to the idea of equality between men and women. It becomes a « possibility » in this period, because for the capitalist mode of production the kind of person who produces the commodity does not theoretically change the value of the commodity (anonymous worker, sexually abstracted human labor). However, the maintenance of a — rearranged — form of sexuation also makes it possible to satisfy the immediate interests of capitalists (additional division of proletarians, competition, differences in wages, etc.).

That is because this « liberation » of women by the wage-earning system above all fulfils the need for low-cost labor and a revival of consumption. Capitalism only frees women from patriarchy to better exploit them. Feminist struggles indeed contribute to it, but they are part of this process ; it is not only a balance of power that has brought about these substantial transformations. Capital has changed the form of sexuation in order to adapt it to its needs. Chains change forms and hands, passing from those of men to those of the State, and therefore of capitalism, from a structuring individual appropriation to a collective appropriation.[13]

Today

For many years now, there has been an explosion of the classical nuclear family, which is no longer the only mechanism for the reproduction of labor power (increased divorce rate, single-parent families, reconstituted families, social recognition of homosexual couples, adoption, *in vitro* fertilization, etc.). Traditional marriage has become obsolete. But the *model* persists and the couple, which remains the indispensable instrument

[13] On appropriation, see Paola Tabet, *La Construction sociale de l'inégalité des sexes. Des outils et des corps*, Paris-Montréal, L'Harmattan, 1998, 206 p

in the forms of general strikes, riots, generalized insurrection, and the seizure of certain means of production useful for the revolution (and the shutdown / destruction of others). Communisation will act as a decisive break, composed of advances and setbacks where violence and confrontations will unfortunately be inevitable (against cops of all kinds, the army, private military companies, etc.). As for the physical elements of capital (not only the factories) which now allow it to go on, they will be rendered useless, unusable or destroyed: money, banks, gold reserves, titles of property, solicitors' offices, administrations, business headquarters, barracks, "*cathedrals which are for us so many absurdities* » [as Charles d'Avray (1878–1960) wrote in his *Triumph of Anarchy*], etc., which are the more or less traditional targets of proletarian wrath.[6] The revolution will not of course limit itself to storming a few buildings : the main weapons of the insurgents will be implementing communist "measures" and creating new social relations.

This movement definitively abolishes the existing order of things, that is, the social relations of this world of shit (State, property, capitalism, exploitation, value, money, wages, exchange, classes, etc.), which at the same time removes *the need* to reproduce labor power, family and gender. The abolition of wage-earning and revolutionary activity an end to the distinction between social activity and individual activity, between the various separations (working, rest, leisure time, etc.) : this undermines the foundations of the separation between the private / reproductive sphere and the public / productive sphere. New relationships are established between immediate social individuals, against all mediation, class belonging, and so on.

[6] The french punk band *Rage against the kebab* sings it melodiously : « To communise is to destroy »… but there's more to it.

cess was theorized by several ultra-left groups who called it *communisation*.[2]

> « *Insurrection and communisation are intimately linked. There will not be the insurrection and then, afterwards, allowed by the insurrection, the transformation of social reality. The insurrectional process derives its strength from communisation itself.* »[3]

This process will inevitably integrate the question of genders, and ultimately lead to their abolition (otherwise it would sink into the mire of counter-revolution).

To achieve that, no need for decrees to be drafted and then implemented: instead, a lot of bonfires, and above all communist « measures »,[4] in order to bring the system down, to prevent any going back, to wipe the slate clean and keep it so for a new world.

Capitalism is based, among other things, on a social relation, wage labor, which is to be disposed of and which is blocked at the time of the revolution.[5] When the proletariat bursts on the scene, it is both cause and effect of this historical crisis,

[2] For some years now, the concept of communisation has been echoed at international level.

[3] Quatre millions de jeunes travailleurs, *A world without money: communism*, 1975.

[4] " *In the course of the revolutionary struggle, the abolition of the division of labour, of the State, of exchange, of any kind of property; the extension of a situation in which everything is freely available as the unification of human activity, that is to say the abolition of classes, of both public and private spheres — these are all 'measures' for the abolition of capital, imposed by the very needs of the struggle against the capitalist class. The revolution is communisation; communism is not its project or result. One does not abolish capital for communism but by communism, or more specifically, by its production.* ", « Editorial », *SIC*, n° 1, november 2011, p. 6.

[5] It cannot be an « anti-capitalist » revolution. The State is not, in itself, capitalist, it is only a tool at the service of the ruling class. See Bernard Lyon, « Nous ne sommes pas Anti », *Meeting*, n° 2, septembre 2005, p. 4–6.

for the control of births, is no longer a fixed structure and has been liberalized. Turnover in relationships is much more frequent (monogamy is usually replaced by serial monogamy). The persistence of the couple can be explained in particular by the multiple economic difficulties that come with raising a child.[14] Sociologists can try to explain this situation, but it is clear that the traditional family is no longer adapted to the evolutions of society for example, it puts a brake on the mobility of workers. Nevertheless, the State still needs a model for the reproduction of the labor force and, during the rearing period, for the reproduction of the dominant ideology (it is not a matter of making children but of producing future proletarians).

In spite of evolutions since the 1970s, it is always the women who are mainly responsible for the reproduction of labor power : that is to say the carrying out of domestic labour and therefore especially the raising of children. The number of lone-parent families (mostly mothers bringing up children on their own) shows that man is no longer indispensable to this task.[15]

With the massive entry of women into wage labor, the figure of the housewife disappears, replaced by that of the female worker (who must always, but differently, perform household chores).

The persistence of wage inequalities (less obvious than in the nineteenth century or in the 1970s) can be explained by the fact that women's work is still predominantly precarious, part-time, unskilled, often confined to quasi-feminine sectors (cleaning jobs, social work, health and child care) and the fact that maternity hinders career development. Some sectors have

[14] Raising a child on only one wage is difficult. Compared to the 1960s and 1970s, women's wages are no longer a supplementary wage, but the necessary second wage, generally lower than that of men.

[15] In 1970, the French State set up the first financial aid for women raising children on their own. These measures were subsequently developed with the increase in the number of single-parent families. The State partially substitutes itself for the missing parent (usually the father).

been largely gender-mixed over the past 40 years, while others have only begun this process, not without difficulties, including the male strongholds of the police and the army.[16] There is also a slow but seemingly inevitable feminization of the classical positions of power and prestige (note that the university courses and the elite universities have very slowly gone gender-mixed since the 1970s[17]).

Other manifestations of male dominance persist: violence against women, rape, sexism, etc. We can even ask ourselves about the possibility of all these changes and the transformation of the public sphere causing a retreat (or reinforcement) of male dominance to the private sphere and in inter-individual relations (in the street, for example). This reality apparently weighs down on women of all classes, but are they all subjected to it in the same way? It is this reality that can allow an aclassist reading, *whereas in fact genders and male dominance clearly have a usefulness for any class society* ; violence and rape are undoubtedly much more a consequence of this domination than a cause.

[16] These are only early days in France. US troops deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan comprised 12% of women. In these two countries, the Marines have been testing for a few years an entirely female *combat* unit whose results are highly appreciated by their command. We have not finished with sexuation…

[17] The male (non-mixed) sectors tend to be reduced to a few bastions of very high-level positions, which can be explained by co-option and fear of competition (the number of places is not extensible, and the old financial sharks do not look favourably on young sharks swimming near them…). The slowness of the feminisation of positions of power or prestige is also explained by a process of replacement of the generations: *today* women are in the majority in many schools and the famous example of the antagonism between man surgeons and woman nurses will soon be over. In France, in 1995, women accounted for 16% of surgeons under 35 years of age, 36.6% in 2006, and 60% of surgical graduates in 2006. Among judges, parity was achieved in 2001, but 2005, 82% of future magistrates were women. On these issues, see especially Sylvie Schweitzer, *Femmes de pouvoir. Une histoire de l'égalité professionnelle en Europe (XIXe-XXIe siècle)*, Paris, Payot, 2010, 258 p.

Genders and Revolution

It is not possible to know what revolution and communism will be, by just taking into account what the proletarians are *today* and what they think (our present mentalities are forged by today's society). Nevertheless, in studying past revolutionary periods, the present course of the class struggle, and the present state of the relationship between men and women, we may try to put forward some hypotheses.

The Communist Revolution

Our vision obviously does not relate to the programmatic (Leninist or other) conceptions of the revolution, in which the proletariat must grow more and more powerful in this society, then take political power, seize the State, factories and all the old crap *and then*, during a period of transition, put in place the conditions of communism. It is not for us to radically change the way in which the economy is managed (it is not a matter of appropriating companies).

Rather, we believe that the phase of destruction of the old world is, *at the same time*, the phase of construction of communism (suppression of the State, property, value, money, exchange, and classes by the proletarian action,[1] which means the self-negation of the proletariat, etc.). In the 1970s, this pro-

[1] Only the proletarians, because of their interests contradictory to those of the capitalists, can « trigger » the revolution.

Question 3: Can we talk about a class of women?

Some feminists have attempted to combine the criticism of capitalism with that of patriarchy. For some, capitalism is a fruit of patriarchy. Sexism is one of the foundations of capitalism : one cannot defeat one without the other (but feminism's main enemy remains patriarchy).

Radical feminists (Delphy) believe that patriarchy is an autonomous mode of production (with two classes, men and women, the first exploiting the second), which they call « domestic production mode » or « patriarchal mode ». They use the term « class » because for them women have a specific common place in a specific mode of production where they are exploited by domestic labour. Nevertheless, to us, it seems inappropriate to describe domestic labour as a « mode of production ». Women constitute a dominated group because of their supposed reproductive abilities. But if all bourgeois or proletarians undergo male dominance at present, they are not all subjected to the same material conditions and have contradictory interests (there is no match between belonging to gender and belonging to a class). Genders relate to a specific place in the reproduction process, classes to a specific place in the production process. We cannot therefore speak of a class of women but of a group whose members are assigned to a specific common place. Genders are not classes… they are genders.

A striking trend at the beginning of the 21st century is the growing gender mix of the capitalist class in the strict sense of the term. The bourgeoisie is no longer, as in the 1970s, the wife of the bourgeois, but the woman who has direct capitalist vested interests : woman entrepreneur, Human Resources Director, senior manager, etc. This trend seems to be accentuated in recent years, following the publication of numerous studies, analyses and recommendations showing the profits that companies can derive from this mix (a highly sensitive issue since the 2008 crisis, which showed that companies run by women perhaps suffered less than the others.)[18] It is important not to deprive oneself of certain skills and economic advantages. The most « enlightened » fraction of the capitalist class has been convinced of the positive nature of this mix, and many large companies have been pursuing policies aimed at feminizing leadership and supervision over the last few years. Nothing to do with ethical issues, even if the image of the company can benefit from it and bosses' mind possibly evolve.[19] Of course, being exploited by a woman does not soften the exploitation…

Because of democratic and egalitarian ideology, women also access political power in many countries, and this is more than surprising exceptions. This is a great novelty, because until recently the existence of sexuation made political power a man's monopoly. If we add to this the massive salary of women, it is clear that the public sphere is undergoing transformation and has lost the masculine character that characterized it (this change is of real interest only to bourgeois women). The same

[18] See, for example, « Plus de femmes, plus de profits », *Libération*, 04/03/2004. In France, in 2010, the purpose of setting quotas on boards of directors in large companies was not ethical but economic. To achieve leadership positions, women need to be more skilled than men. This may explain that.

[19] « What business leaders have accepted for their wives, they no longer tolerate for their daughters », see Christine Ducros, Marie-Amélie Lombard, « Ces femmes à la conquête des conseils d'administration », 14/10/2010, www.lefigaro.fr

cannot be said of the private sphere, which remains a feminine domain.[20] For it is also a matter of ensuring a reproduction of all classes, of the whole population, and therefore of capitalist social relations. Both bourgeois women and proletarian women remain determined by their reproductive function (even though the higher they rise in the social hierarchy, the fewer children they have.[21]). The capitalist class also needs to ensure its reproduction (if only to ensure filiation and inheritance).

This evolution is a severe blow to the patriarchal « ideology », but does not question the sexuation which politicians and bosses benefit from : women's lower wages and part-time jobs, but also reproduction of labor power. Their interests are by definition contradictory to those of the proletarians, men and women.

This increasing mixing of the dominant class (women, men, straight, homos,[22] blacks, whites, Asians, etc.) has the consequence of partially masking gender oppression, but basically it reflects reality : the commodity world does not give a fuck about a proletarian's gender, and even less about a capitalist's. These developments cannot, as we have seen,

[20] Even if one can find examples of husbands staying at home to care for the kids because he earns less than his wife, these are only a few exceptions. Social mixing being what it is, it is more common to see a couple of senior Parisian executives have domestic labor done by a nanny of African origin (idem for the Shanghai bourgeois couple and their Filipino maid).

[21] One even gets extreme cases where, as one study has shown, German scholars choose not to have children : between 60 and 80% depending on the landers. See Sylvie Schweitzer, *op. cit.*, p. 170. Would capitalist women no longer ensure their reproductive function?

[22] In the 1970s, the FHAR proclaimed that, by definition, homosexuals do not perpetuate the property of the bourgeoisie : »*Thanks to us, heritage is fucked ! No more heirs!*". So homosexuals were to play a revolutionary role. Today, this becomes an issue for gays and lesbians from the bourgeois classes, which explains the current evolution of legislation in favor of homosexual adoption and marriage. In the bourgeois classes, the possibilities of transgressing social norms are greater.

Question 2: An equal distribution of household tasks?

A recent OECD report[7] encourages States to take action because women's work is the key to tomorrow's growth:

- financial support for child care;
- establishment or development of reception services (crèches, etc.);
- reorganization of working time for parents with young children;
- encouraging men to take and share parental leave, to participate more in childcare and « *domestic responsibilities*« .

The aim is to improve the rate of women's return to work following maternity leave (a period which hinders the participation of women in the labor market and their careers).[8]

Would an egalitarian distribution of household tasks call into question the definition of domestic labor? An egalitarian distribution of hours is imaginable, but the end of any sexuation of tasks is much less so. The statistics show that the problem lies in the tasks of raising children. Domestic labour time by women explodes with the arrival of a child in the household (whereas it is equivalent to domestic labor time performed by single people).

[7] OECD, *op. cit.*

[8] In France, for example, women are more highly educated than men. Education and training are an investment. Motherhood therefore acts as a brake on the return on investment… for the upper classes.

- part-time woman work — involuntary and imposed upon them — makes it possible to articulate (more or less well) production and reproduction.

Question 1: Can one draw a parallel with wage labor?

The preceding points show that it is hazardous to draw a parallel between domestic labour and wage labor.

Moreover, one of the characteristics of wage labor is the so-called freedom of the individual who sells his labor power. It is not the same for women, who, despite capitalist freedom, remain appropriated subjects.

On the other hand, domestic labour is not just salaried, but *indirectly remunerated*. It does not produce surplus value, and no production is placed on the market.[5] When certain tasks of the household are not carried out by the mother / wife but by an employed woman, then it no longer is domestic labour.

Wage labor and domestic labour therefore do not follow the same logic and are organized differently. And if domestic labour directly benefits the husband, it mainly indirectly benefits capital.[6]

[5] While not all young proletarians entering the labor market have the same « value », this is partly due to their parents' "cultural capital" which has little to do with domestic labor : yet the main cause is the schooling and training they've had in public institutions. Home is not a labor-power producing factory.

[6] Single mothers perform domestic labour for the sole benefit of capital.

represent an advance for the women's group, but for bourgeois women only, which should caution us against an aclassist reading of sexuation. At first, this tendency to gender mixing preserves, or maybe reinforces, gendered identities. But one might ask whether, in the longer term, this could entail, if not a dissolution, at least a restructuring of gender identities and sexuation.

The evolutions of gender relations since the nineteenth century and the development of the capitalist mode of production forces us to question the use of the term "patriarchy"[23] to describe male dominance. If we do not take these changes into account, we risk slipping into the ahistoric vision of a patriarchy that has always existed (and which always will). Since patriarchy is a form of social, political and legal organization founded on / for the perpetuation of the power of men (to the detriment of women), this term does not seem adequate to describe our society where those who hold power are *mostly* men.

In 1998, Paola Tabet, referring to these changes, put forward the hypothesis of a (capitalist) liberation of women, comparable to that of serfs (which led to upheavals, notably the transition to a new mode of production). With the end of patriarchy (but not male dominance) in some countries, the transition from a structurally individual appropriation to collective appropriation, the evolution of the family, the integration of women into a deeply transformed public sphere, the question arises : aren't we witnessing a restructuring of the relationship between men and women. This domination / integration of this relationship by capital, which has been indeed significant since the beginnings of capitalism, has been considerably accentuated and accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century and up to our days when it is still in progress. This pro-

[23] There is no definition of that term. Each feminist group uses it at will, often as an equivalent of « male dominance. » Hence the need, in order to use it, to define it.

cess can be linked to the transition from a formal domination of capital over labor to real domination: the transition to the real domination of capital over the relationship between men and women (persistent sexuation but restructured gender).

Question I

What are the consequences of the current economic crisis? Austerity measures and budget cuts against public services and the social sector at European level often affect women (health, closure of hospitals, family-friendly measures to drive them out of the labor market, etc.), but this concerns especially proletarian women : other women have the means to resort to the private sector. Nevertheless, the 1973 crisis showed that the attempts to force women back to their homes have only a marginal impact. On the contrary, OECD experts consider that the continuation and enhancement of women's wages is the key to tomorrow's growth.[24]

Question II

What is really happening with the struggles of proletarian women today in France? In the 1970s, strikes by proletarian women were still unusual. They could have feminist claims (equal pay), had consequences for the home (custody of children, « *who would wash my socks?*« , etc.) and often developed in complete opposition with men. Today, women's strikes no longer seem exceptional. It seems that they no longer have the blatant character of an opposition between men and women (management and trade union management as well as labor have become gender mixed, differences between male and

[24] OCDE, *Assurer le bien-être des familles*, 2011, 275 p.

- a large number of tasks were taken over by the State or socialized (eating outside of the home, crèches, etc.) during the 20th century;

- Domestic labor is infinite. When a technological innovation (or socialization) saves time, another task appears (hence the considerable evolution since even the 1950s). Proletarian women always have something to do. However, for an employed woman as well as an unemployed woman, the number of hours of domestic labour amount to much less than for a housewife. This shows the superfluity of the number of household chores. Domestic labor is therefore quite different from a list of tasks. It is the activity of women in the home;

- it is perceived as « free ». In fact, its remuneration is included in the proletarian's salary, which is not the payment of labor but the cost of reproducing the labor-power (of the worker and his family);

- it is not socially recognized, it is invisible;

- it is not carried out by bourgeois women (who entrust it to proletarian women in exchange for a salary);

- it is an asset for capital, since the daily maintenance of workers also allows a reduction of the necessary working time, thus a drop in the value of the labor power. This also makes it possible in a work day to increase surplus labor (the rest of the working time).[4] For example, if domestic labor is not done by women, the wage earner must resort to dry cleaning and eat sandwiches. Thus the value of his labor power will have increased;

[4] See, for those brave enough to read it, « Distinction de genres, programmatisme et communisation », *Théorie communiste*, n° 23, mai 2010, p. 99–128.

without disappearing), that of the mother has remained constant and essential (with variations on the form, notably on the centrality of motherhood in women's lives).

One wonders whether individual appropriation has completely disappeared. Is it always structural in sexuation and in male dominance? Has it become an element among others in the service of this structure?

The couple is still the dominant model for reproduction, even though it is now characterized by a turnover, and is no longer hegemonic.

Domestic labor

Domestic labor means « free » work performed by women in the private sphere and for the benefit of the household. It appeared, after some historical trial and error, in the nineteenth century, with the separation between production place and reproduction place, women being assigned to the latter. But since that time, domestic labor has evolved considerably. It is this activity that defines women, characterizes their place in the social relationship between men and women.

It includes two essential functions:

- the « generational » reproduction of labor power (producing new proletarians) and, to a lesser extent, of the capitalist class. The reproduction of a "workers" race is the central element of domestic labor;
- « daily » reproduction of labor power (upkeep of existing proletarians).

It may be noted that:

- domestic labor includes tasks essential to the reproduction of the workforce (indispensable tasks, such as cooking and child care);

female wages persist but are no longer as abysmal as before[25]). As for the consequences on the home, they are still relevant. The problem of the double working day is a reality for every proletarian woman and, indeed, the question of who performs domestic labour arises as soon as she goes on strike. Moreover, the present level of proletarian combativity is relatively low, and the information on strikes is not abundant, and it tells us even less about their consequences on gender relations (especially within the home).

[25] But proletarian women can go on strike so that their working conditions are in line with their role as mothers (for example, to leave work earlier).

What to Do?

What Feminists Think

> « *Some feminists are vulgar, dishonest and full of hate.* »
> « *And I vainly seek for reasons to prove them wrong.* »
> Tag and answer on a wall of Valence, France, in 2006.

What are the struggles of feminist groups today? If there is no more movement of large magnitude as in the 1970s, some organizations, groups and currents feminists exist anyway… One cannot speak of feminism in the singular. As forty years ago, it is rather a swarm of contradictory ideas, practices, and debates that are opposed and mutually enriched. Its many tendencies often have no clear-cut boundaries and seem to permeate each other. It is impossible to give an exhaustive account of this (the following presentation may therefore appear somewhat caricatural). So here are some of their positions.

A widespread approach is activism in defence of women's rights: leagues of all kinds for the defence of women's rights, Watchdogs, Neither Whores nor Submissive, the World March of Women and many others.[1] For this kind of organisation,

[1] Watchdogs and Neither Whore nor Submissive are anti-sexist French organisations. *Les Chiennes de garde* ("chienne" is a female dog in French), founded in 1999, focuses on the media and public sphere, whereas *Ni Putes ni soumises* was initially created in 2003 against anti-woman violence in deprived areas. Broadly speaking, *Les Chiennes de garde* are more "middle

Today, this appropriation takes place mainly in a collective mode, and dominance becomes indirect, impersonal. This implies, as in the wage-earning system, an *appearance* of freedom which is part of the definition of capitalism).

The role of the State in this system, since the nineteenth century, has been essential, and it is on the rise:[3]

- it ensures, through medicine, control of women's bodies (contraception, voluntary termination of pregnancy, etc.);
- it takes over part of the tasks of reproduction of the labor power (*crèches*) , education, vocational training, health, etc.);
- it imposes legal equality between men and women;
- it ensures control over the family by socially and legally penetrating the private sphere (to the detriment of the husband's power) through various social control mechanisms (social workers and — in Britain — the NHS). It sets up various regulations concerning, for example, divorce, adoption, custody of children, violence in couples or marital rape (recognized *at least* on paper);
- it contributes to the overall reproduction of the labor power (social security, family allowances, unemployment benefits, etc.).

Today, the evolution of society makes the traditional couple no longer necessary for the renewal of the labor power: a woman can manage on her own with the help and control of the State. If the function of the father is no longer indispensable (his image has *deteriorated* since the nineteenth century

[3] The State cannot, however, entirely ensure the reproduction of the labor power, because the worker would no longer need to go to work.

Birth Control

Birth is an issue in all societies. Ensuring its control was a necessity for every class society, especially for capitalism, for which the increase (or at least the renewal) of the number of workers is the condition for economic expansion. This involves the control over women.

Far more than for the previous modes of production, the expansion of the number of workers was fundamental for capitalism, especially in its phase of formal domination. Hence (among others) important changes in the organization of sexuation. Today, it is imperative for capital to ensure rational control over the increase in labor power (or, at least, its renewal). Indeed, in areas where it has entered real domination, a disproportionate increase in labor power is less necessary than a rational management of the number of workers, especially skilled workers (a proportion of unskilled workers may be provided by immigration). This is manifested in some countries by pro-natalist policies, and in others by contrary dispositions (which may include sterilization and more or less forced abortions imposed on…women).

Individual and collective appropriation

Control over women involves the appropriation of the whole body and the whole mind (including through education). Until the twentieth century, this appropriation took place on an individual basis, mainly through marriage and the family. Marriage was an instrument of control that placed women in a situation of sexual availability and maximum risk of pregnancy (the husband acted as an intermediary in this control and derived advantages from it). It is a direct, personal domination (which can be compared to slavery or serfdom and which is sometimes called « *sexage* » in French).

male dominance is perceived as a series of defects that need only be corrected. It is therefore necessary to refer to the State and to put pressure on it (in particular by lobbying the institutions) to improve the « condition of women ». Among the main lines of battle are: parity, discrimination in recruitment, equal pay, the "Islamic veil",[2] defence of the right to abortion, homosexual adoption and marriage, etc. These campaigns have *at best* a superficial effect on masculine domination and sexuation, and they are also part of the evolutions of capitalism. They reinforce it by adapting the « condition of women » and by advocating democracy and equality between men and women, which obviously does not open a perspective of gender abolition. One can also find that it is an aberration for a feminist to refer to the State, which organizes and endorses male dominance.

Groups also carry out awareness campaigns « aimed at the general public », for the purpose of changing attitudes: they stand against sexist toys, sexism in advertising, rape and anti-woman violence, and supports contraception… (often carried out by Associations such as the Family Planning Movement, and others, less institutional). If one can sometimes appreciate their informative nature, inviting to reflection (or even more), one can only regret the limits: these campaigns can affect only a tiny minority of people, and have a very limited impact. They are usually premised on the theory that sexism draws its origins from education, media and advertising, which then are turned into issues: only by modifying education, purifying the media and advertising that we can abolish sexism.

class", and *Ni Putes ni soumises* allegedly more concerned with "people of color" and ethnic diversity: its woman president left office to hold a ministerial post between 2007 and 2010 (editor's note).

[2] In 2010, French law banned wearing face-covering headgear. This has created an on-going controversy loaded with religious and/or racist overtones (editor's note).

But women's oppression rests on much deeper foundations, and education is only a vector.

The structures organizing these campaigns are sometimes blamed for abandoning the « field of struggle » to act in favour of emergency measures, or even for « co-managing with women and men the misery of women ». However, these campaigns — and the structures that organize them — are more than a plaster on a wooden leg. Of course, for example, family planning (access to contraception, abortion, gynecological care, etc.), emergency shelters (for battered or other women), and counselling, are not a panacea. But there are currently very few other solutions, and this allows many women to survive on a daily basis or to get out of crappy situations.

In addition to this grassroots or "social services" activism, many non-institutional groups or individuals (ranging from anarcha-feminism to radical lesbians and feminists, materialists, etc.), as well as an important academic research sector, carry out often relevant analyses that highlight the need for the abolition of the « patriarchal society » and gender, and often also the abolition of all forms of oppression (in the ranks of which capitalist exploitation sometimes appears).

These more radical theses (which do not always benefit from the same means of dissemination) are less visible to the general public, less publicized — or not at all. These ideas and practices are disseminated through newspapers, brochures, radio programs, books, films, posters and leaflets, etc. The 1970s theses of Christine Delphy have had some influence, as well as those of Paola Tabet, Colette Guillaumin, Monique Wittig, and many others. One often encounters the idea that patriarchy is at the origin of capitalism (which is a system of white straight men), and that to bring down the first (the main enemy) necessarily entails the end of the second. The view of the relation-

permanently. It thus destroyed or transformed all the modes of production and organization that pre-existed it. He did the same with patriarchy.

In its evolution, capitalism encountered patriarchy, some fundamental aspects of which were no longer adapted to it (for example, the need for female labor is at odds with the confinement of women at home[1]). Patriarchy has therefore been altered. Capitalism is therefore the first mode of production which has a problem with women.

For a long time, the reins of capitalism were in the hands of heterosexual white men (which may have led to confusion, in particular the belief that the two systems are one, or that capitalism is *essentially* masculine), Which is no longer the case today.[2] Capitalism is therefore not in itself patriarchal, but it is necessarily gendered. It now could not do without sexuation and masculine domination, and he cannot, *at present*, abolish genders. Even in the very long term, the realization of this hypothesis would require enormous upheavals. Current trends do not go in this direction, and rather point to a restructuring of the relationship between men and women.

[1] Depending on the country and according to its stage of development, capital is organized differently. The societies that we can rightly call « patriarchal » are still numerous (in the Maghreb, in Asia, etc.). Nevertheless, the development of the capitalist mode of production (especially because of the entry of women into the labor market) leads to the inevitable evolution of sexuation and the appearance of the « problem » of women (see China, the Middle East, Argentina, etc.). The West cannot be delimited geographically : its categories impose themselves on the planet as the capitalist mode of production unfolds and deepens.

[2] This does not, of course, prevent the black, Arab or female proletarians in Western countries from becoming more discriminated against and exploited. Each country needs overexploited and underpaid workers, which vary in different regions of the world.

Conclusions and Assumptions

Capitalism *vs.* Patriarchy

From the nineteenth century onwards, there were two systems, patriarchy (social organization) and capitalism (mode of production), distinct but linked. Liaison does not necessarily mean harmony (each system using and reinforcing the other), and may also involve oppositions or contradictions, or even lead to breaking point.

Male dominance, mainly in its patriarchal form, has always been *necessary* and characterized all class societies. It was particularly adapted to precapitalist societies characterized by their economic and social stability (based on the family unit, the unit of production and reproduction).

Sexuation is the backdrop against which the different modes of production have followed each other; its evolution is not an autonomous historical dynamic. On the contrary, the relationship between men and women is modified with each mode of production while retaining its main characteristics (assignment of women to animal husbandry, men's power).

Capitalism has taken root in the feudal mode of production, but, let us recall, sexuation was structural, decisive from the economic and social point of view. Patriarchy was necessary for the development of capitalism, in particular to ensure the reproduction of the labor power (by continuing to structure society). But because of its revolutionary character (as Marx said), capitalism modifies this by altering society as a whole,

ship between men and women as « exploitation of one class by another »[3] is fairly widespread.

These reflections deal with social movements[4] as much as with women's daily lives. But there is a frequent confusion between all forms of domination (sexism, racism, capitalism, speciesism, validism, ageism, etc.), placed on an equal footing and not envisaged from the point of view of their origins or their functions in our time.

Among the angles of reflection is the criticism of heterosexuality defined as a norm that organizes sexuality for reproduction. The pressure to conform to the heterosexual standard has been violently criticized since the 1970s by the MLF or, in France for example, by homosexual groups such as the Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action (FHAR).[5]

Today, although homosexuality tends more and more to be integrated by capital, criticism of heteronormativity and its counterpart, the pressure to conform to the motherhood model, are still in force. This criticism can lead to the theory of lesbianism as a political strategy. One can only regret that this sometimes goes as far as anti-*men* separatist tendencies, denouncing heterosexuality as a form of collaboration with the enemy or voluntary submission. Such an attitude does reject masculine dominance, but certainly not sexism, let alone gender…

We are also witnessing, even in the most radical circles, a return to essentialist theses. A whole section of feminist reflections promotes the value of "being a woman", defends a so-called feminine « nature », overwhelmed by patriarchy and capitalism, and believes that women have to retrieve this "na-

[3] Guess who exploits whom.

[4] For example, the program *Le Complot des cagoles* [a feminist radio show] on the strike of the cashiers of Carrefour in Marseille in 2008.

[5] The FHAR was a famous Parisian movement founded in 1971, resulting from a union between lesbian feminists and gay activists. For more information, see: Constance Chatterley, Gilles Dauvé, *Feminism Illustrated*, 2018 (translation of a French brochure) (editor's note).

ture" by reconnecting with a "woman" behaviour and way of life. The American neopaganist Starhawk, who claims to be a witch, is an extreme caricature. These theories advocate a « return to the natural » and defend the idea (quite sexist actually) that women are much closer than men to nature, to « *trees*« , even to « *stars*« , and what about animals ? Motherhood, seen as « so natural » and sometimes understood as a « force », must therefore be positively reappraised. These theses often go hand in hand with an idealization of precapitalist societies, and with the will to reappropriate old techniques and knowledge (such as breastfeeding, abortive plants, and washable nappies are *so much more ecological than disposable ones* !).[6]

The idea of getting rid of the social norm to reconnect with her « nature-woman » is a return to essentialism. For those feminists, genders are perceived and criticized as imposed social roles, but it is for the benefit of a supposedly « true », « natural » identity. This echoes the theories of the 1970s, especially those of Antoinette Fouque and the *Sorcières* [Witches] magazine (1975–1982). There is, of course, no prospect whatsoever of overcoming gender in his way, nor of surpassing anything else.

Some of these discourses are marked by a refusal (an occultation?) of conflict which is analysed as typically masculine. This is related to the idea of sorority,[7] for the goal is to dismiss discord between women and build a common front against male oppressors. The desire to bring back to life and to reassess the memory of feminist movements, sometimes goes as far as denying conflicts, errors and contradictions.

The watchword of the reappropriation of the body is very present in feminist reflections. Since the 1970s, « *my body be-*

[6] It is this ideological character that we criticize, not the fact of seeking those ancient techniques which can prove useful in our daily life (and which will be very useful to us after the revolution).

[7] Concept forged by feminists in counterpoint to male fraternity. All women are sisters and must develop relationships of deep solidarity.

the public and the private spheres practically but only for a while. However, when the strike ends, everything very often returns to the old order of things, with its share of disappointments and depressions.

The struggles of proletarian women link, in fact, capitalism and male dominance, highlighting gender issues. But they are not posed as such (in practice). This explains the lack of information (and hence analyses) on the inevitable impact of such struggles on the relationship between men and women, and in particular on the private sphere.

terial conditions change, and it is necessary, from a communist perspective, to take them into account.

The struggles of proletarian women

Beyond activism, proletarian women are involved in struggles, without putting forward feminist demands, for example during strikes. Let's bear in mind that the massive entry of women into wage labor, and directly into the class struggle, has led to the emergence of specific problems, resulting in new conflicts within the private sphere (home, reproduction). However, the latter are generally invisible because of the « pre-eminence » of the fight against exploitation, and therefore rarely analysed as « women's struggles ».

The documentary fiction of Marin Karmitz, *Coup pour coup*,[17] based on real facts, shows this well. In the 1970s, woman workers in a textile factory went on strike and occupied the factory. As a result, they no longer took care of domestic labour, with immediate consequences on their households. The reactions of husbands are significant : lost, alone and forced to manage their home, their children and their own reproduction, they become, in fact, a brake on the struggle. Many of them went so far as to openly oppose their partners' strike. Dads unable to take care of their children would drop them off at the factory, which suddenly started looking like a crib. Woman workers nevertheless emerged victorious against the bosses, and strengthened from the challenge with their husbands (at least for a while). There is no shortage of real examples.

It can be assumed that a workers' strike has as much impact on the home, if not more, than feminist propaganda. The strikes of proletarian women make private matters public (for example, *crèches* in factories question the separation between

[17] Marin Karmitz, *Coup pour coup*, France, 1972, 90 mn.

longs to me » has remained a creed. This may concern both the « choice » of being a mother or not, rape, aesthetic norms or medicine. This slogan is a response to the appropriation of women by men. An aspect that certain ultra-left theorists have been unable to take into account, reproaching feminists for defending and thus extending the notion of private property.

Among the different feminist activities, gender non-mixing is always topical and always causes polemics, whether considered as a means or as an end in itself. Since women are isolated from each other (each in each in her own home, for example), to meet, to share experiences and reflections, organizing is therefore essential. The self-organization of the oppressed, what could be more logical? What could be more logical than to meet outside the camp of the oppressors? Non-mixity can also logically lead proletarian women and bourgeois women to organize together, which is not without posing other problems... However, the gender conflict can be resolved only by the dissolution of the categories men and women. It is therefore necessary that the subject is also posed as a mixture.

Feminism is often lacking in a global analysis seeking to understand the relationship between class relations and gender relations. A historical vision shows us a fluctuating patriarchal system, knowing and experiencing perpetual evolutions, modelled by successive modes of production (today, an ever-changing capitalist system). However, there is a present tendency to deprive feminism of a necessary *ahistorical* outlook. This confuses the analysis of the problem in perspective and in practice (as if it were enough to take up the slogans and methods which were those of the French MLF forty years ago).

Note I: deconstruction

« Deconstruction » is an idea (and a practice) that currently prevails in parts of the feminist movement.[8] It takes as its starting point the idea that genders are social constructions and that « the private is political » . On the basis of individual awareness (or in small groups), it is necessary to modify one's behavior in order to correct one's sexist constructions and, in the long run, to eliminate sexism.

From there, the personal dimension takes on an oversized importance in relation to the structural, up to the point when it becomes the only field of action. « *Because of the disproportionate importance given to subjective experience,* [...] *the politics of subjectivity became an 'interiority', that is, a personal change without change in society.*«[9]

With the argument "the private is political", one recognizes that the private sphere is socially organized, that it is not outside society, and that our personal relationships are part of it. The private domain, therefore, is also a place of contradictions, conflicts, even struggles. Strikes and social movements, in the public sphere, where women are involved, necessarily have an impact on the private sphere (home, family: "*Who's going to cook my steak?*", "*Where do you put the sheets?*") In the absence of such movements, the activism falls back on the private sphere and is confined to it. A shift takes place: "Politics is the private".

The deconstruction consists of an individual and personal questioning of genders, seen as fixed identities, as a garment that that can be put on and off at will. On the contrary, if genders are a social construction, it is not possible to extricate oneself from the social relations of which they are the manifes-

[8] And also among pro-feminists.

[9] Rote Zora, « Chaque cœur est une bombe à retardement », *in* Anonyme, *En Catimini... histoire et communiqués des Rote Zora*, 2009, p. 72. Text originally published in No. 6 of *Revolutionäre Zorn*, January 1981.

Antisexism is also one of the facets of all leftist groups, with antiracism, ecology, animal liberation... as a desire to take full account of all oppressions, but merely but merely by juxtaposing them, because these groups are unable to think of society as an interrelated whole and therefore to envisage alternative perspectives. The reflections are often limited to a report-denunciation of the situation of women today. However, an increasing number of newspapers, groups, reviews[14] deal with this subject in articles that are not without interest.[15]

In recent years, therefore, there seems to be renewed interest in the issue, including an attempt to surpass theoretical considerations in groups from the ultra-left — and beyond — which had long been allergic to these issues.[16] Let's hope it will become more and more common...

Why this renewed interest? Or rather, why can the question be raised today in these circles, whereas feminist activity has been dedicated to it for a long time? Part of the answer might be in the evolution of relations between men and women over the past forty years (the end of patriarchy, the still relative but growing gender mix of the capitalist class, together with the persistence of sexuation, masculine domination, etc.) as well as in the evolution of class relations (end of working-class identity, restructuring, atomisation of the proletariat, etc.). The ma-

[14] And even *Barricata!* (cultural magazine of the redskins of Paris). Special dedication for their n° 21, summer 2010.

[15] As for example, the « Antipatriarchal Motion » adopted by the French Coordination des groupes anarchistes (CGA) in November 2011 (this caused the organisation to split) presents genders as a system of social categories, and firmly criticizes essentialism. If the finding is relevant, the proposed solutions are somewhat tame.

[16] For example, the groups / journals *Théorie communiste* and *SIC, International Journal for Communisation.* They are almost the only ones, in the ultra-left environments, to attempt an analysis of genders , and especially to affirm that one cannot evade the question (obviously, one has to cross the barrier of their very strange literary style). We are talking here about France, because reflections on gender issues seem less taboo in other countries.

dealt with *after* the revolution. Especially since it would risk « dividing the proletariat »…

The Anarchists

For anarchists, there is generally no feminine question per se, since it is embraced in the more general problem of human liberation. By definition, they oppose all oppressions, more or less perceived as a whole.

Anarchists make a severe theoretical criticism of institutions such as family or marriage and advocate equality between men and women. In this sense, the importance of education and propaganda is emphasized (for example, neo-Malthusian propaganda and especially vasectomy in the early twentieth century). It is an individual process of transformation that must put an end to the oppression of women, as if it were enough for everyone to read pamphlets or listen to anarchist speakers… (this approach can be compared with deconstruction).

Nevertheless, the strong discrepancy between the theory and the practices of the anarchist militants is particularly striking from the *Milieux libres* (French libertarian communal experiments) to the Spanish Revolution. Nothing very surprising about that, if we remember the ingrained misogyny displayed by some theorists, Proudhon particularly.

Today

A widespread position is that the gender issue is secondary and does not deserve a struggle in itself: after the revolution, the oppression of women will disappear by itself, as if by a magic wand (a good trick to evade the issue today… and to avoid changing the baby's nappies, you lazy sods !).

Kollontai (*Marxisme et révolution sexuelle*, Paris, Maspéro, 1973) and Clara Zetkin (*Batailles pour les femmes*, Paris, Editions sociales, 1980).

tation. One cannot *choose* to no longer be a man or a woman, for in this society there are only two boxes. In the NHS computer, you have to be either 1 or 2.

In other words, there is an inconsistency between the recognition of *structures and social relations* and the desire to free oneself from them by *individual* action. While individuals endeavour to deconstruct themselves, this social construction continues to affect billions of people, including you and me.[10]

Deconstruction poses the problem of choice in this society: can we *choose* to deconstruct? Who can do it? A single woman without children will *perhaps* have more energy to devote to deconstruction than a mother with three kids, whereas a bourgeois woman will have more leisure to do it than a woman paid a minimal wage, and so on. Despite its claimed subversive commitment — the disappearance of genders, no less –, deconstruction, like any alternative, is reduced to the search for individual happiness in capitalist society.

In practice, this quite attractive self-awareness brings about an elitist drift, a denigration and a culpabilisation of those who do not deconstruct : it creates a new standard, by definition ossifying and binding. We find ourselves faced with a new ideology.[11]

This is not to discourage any personal attempt to question his or her behavior. After all, it is here and now that we live, and it is quite normal to try to alleviate our plight and try not to behave like a bastard… Just as it makes sense that the oppressed rebel against their condition, individually or collectively. These

[10] Even if the deconstructed man were no longer oppressive in his circle, he would always be considered as such by the system, and this « default » position would continue to determine him in relation to the others.

[11] One is tempted to bring this ideology closer to the political lesbianism in line with Monique Wittig, who thought « *lesbians are not women* » because they escape masculine domination in the private sphere (« La pensée straight », Monique Wittig, *Questions féministes*, n° 7, février 1980). In reality, lesbians can escape individual appropriation, but not collective appropriation.

are survival practices. It is important to question our social constructions, but we must not lose sight of the fact that any attempt to extricate ourselves from them is doomed to fail as long as this society continues. The abolition of gender and male dominance will never be achieved by deconstruction.

Note II: the queer

Queer aims at subverting genders, and therefore the whole of society, the basis of which — we are told — would be shaken by gender collapse. This movement appears in response to the integration and institutionalization of gay and lesbian movements. Gays' struggles have had a revolutionary character, so long as they have not been integrated into the capital, precisely as an identity.

Its limitations lie in the personal nature of the change, which capital can easily make do with[12] (besides, queer theory ignores class relations). Dissent is contained in social relations, so it does not break with present society.

Queer is interesting in that it constitutes an experiment (although inevitably a limited one) since it takes place within this society). Queer theories show that *today* we can *think* of the abolition of genders. But in terms of practice, prospects or strategy, it sums up all the shortcomings we have pointed out regarding deconstruction.

Marxists, anarchists, etc.

Overall, with respect to gender and male dominance, *denial* prevails. That is, a refusal to approach this subject. In this

[12] One can quite be queer and teach in a great university, or director of the national Odéon theatre in Paris [allusion to Olivier Py, famous French playwright and director], and so on. Without these institutions being shaken. It is however more difficult today to be queer and bricklayer…

desert, both practical and theoretical, appear a few oases… and many mirages. A little historical reminder is necessary since the conceptions of the Marxists and the anarchists have finally evolved little, whereas the appearance and the diffusion of the gender theory should have provoked a renewed reflection.

The Marxists

Contrary to what is generally believed, Marx, Engels and some Marxist theorists Lafargue, Bebel were interested in the question of the relations between men and women and did not deny the oppression of the latter, especially when they approach the family issue. For them, this oppression is a consequence of the formation of class societies : with the disappearance of capitalism, which is the ultimate stage of class societies, it can only disappear in its turn. If the modification of living conditions is considered to be paramount in this process, the role of the socialist State is fundamental. It must implement measures to put an end to domestic labor: it will socialize all the tasks performed in the home by women by setting up collective canteens, day nurseries, etc. This vision was taken up in the 20th century by Marxist feminists (such as Alexandra Kollontai or Angela Davis). The example of the Russian Revolution partly confirms this thesis: the relations between men and women were overwhelmed by the collapse of the old system, chaos and revolution. The collectivization of certain aspects of life (canteens) seems to have played its part: but it is the catastrophic conditions of survival that were the cause, not the State. Moreover, everything quickly returned to normal, since the revolutionary process was interrupted and the State reorganized and took over the management of society.[13] Generally, throughout the 20th century this was treated as a minor issue, only to be

[13] This change in attitudes and relations between men and women during the early days of the Russian Revolution was highlighted by Alexandra